

CULTURAL COMPETENCE, EDUCATORS, AND  
MILITARY FAMILIES: UNDERSTANDING  
THE MILITARY IN A DEPARTMENT  
OF DEFENSE DEPENDENTS  
SCHOOL

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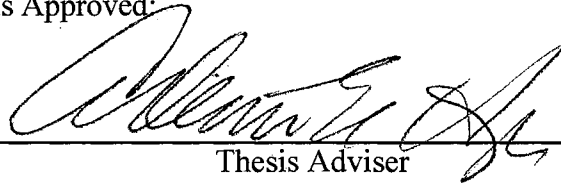
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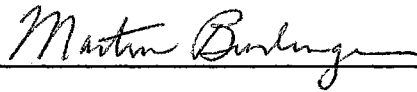
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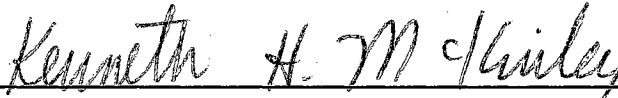


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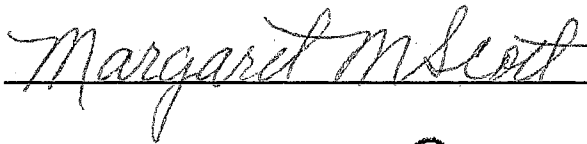
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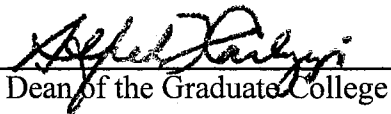
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## CHAPTER I

### DESIGN OF STUDY

*“Tengo una razon fuerte por la cual estoy considerando presentar mi candidatura a Presidente,”* (George W. Bush in a speech delivered to the Texas Presidential Exploratory Committee March 2, 1999). *“I have a strong reason to present myself as a presidential candidate.”* In his slick campaign ads, George W. Bush, wearing a plaid shirt and seated on a porch swing, appealed directly to Hispanic voters in surprisingly good Spanish. Securing 49% of the traditionally Democratic Hispanic vote, Bush was branded the candidate with “Tex-Mex” appeal. Any politician in Texas, with its large Hispanic constituency, would recognize the value of courting this powerful minority. However, with his Spanish campaign ads, Bush demonstrates the growing recognition of cultural pluralism in this country, and an example of *cultural competence*.

Cultural competence, simply stated, is the ability to communicate understanding of a culture other than one’s own. A term used across professional fields, it sometimes appears as *multi-cultural* or *cross-cultural* competence (Mason, 1995). Specifically, cultural competence is defined as knowledge, attitudes, and skills which enable an individual or an agency to adapt to cultural differences and practices (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The concept has been widely adopted by social and human services (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Issacs, 1989). It differs from earlier models of cultural

awareness and cultural sensitivity because of its emphasis on behavioral outcomes. For institutions, the cultural competence model requires programmatic or structural changes in attitudes, policies, and practices (Mason, 1995).

The concept of cultural competence is based on five basic principles: valuing diversity, self-assessment of behavior and attitudes, accessing cultural knowledge, understanding dynamics of difference, and adapting to diversity (Cross, et al., 1989). In another approach, Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) condense cultural competence to three major components; 1) *knowledge*, a flexible understanding of the critical dynamics of diverse culture; 2) *attitude*, a positive attitude toward diverse cultures; and 3) *skills*, communication, consultation, and advocacy skills. In both models cultural competence is viewed as a learned achievement requiring knowledge, practice, and commitment.

The drive for cultural competence is spurred by America's changing demographics. At the start of the new millennium, 30% of Americans will be identified as a member of a racial/ethnic minority group (Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs, 1995). With the rapid growth of racial/ethnic groups, cultural competence now includes the ability to work effectively with our nation's diverse minorities (Sue, 1991). In the new century, businesses and organizations will have sizable minority constituencies. Organizations serving a diverse clientele, businesses (Page, Puga, & Suarez, 1992), government agencies (Mason, 1995), social services (Orlandi 1992), are recognizing the need to hire employees who demonstrate an understanding of minority values and norms.

Cultural competence is predicated on the belief that a better understanding of the way diverse cultures clash or meld with the predominant belief system results in

organizational change and better services to clients (Cross, et al., 1989). The under-utilization of health and social services by minority groups has driven a decade of research aimed at determining the barriers that may exist for them. Barriers may be based on issues of trust, language, income, education, or other conflict (Mason, 1995). As no single multi-cultural strategy appears adequate, a wide variety of ethnic and cultural groups have been studied. Orlandi (1992) researched the competencies needed by caseworkers to deliver substance abuse services to urban African-American youth. Gary (1987) urged mental health workers to learn about the natural helper role that churches play in African American communities as a means of improving service. VanDenBerg and Minton (1987) investigated cultural competencies needed for working with Alaskan Native youth.

The cultural competence model is also applicable to education. When organizations hire culturally competent employees, the expected outcome is better service delivery to the clientele (Cross, et al., 1989). For today's educators "service delivery" now includes the establishment of community partnerships with parents. The U.S. Department of Education has set community partnerships as one of its principle target areas for educational reform (Educational Goals 2000). With the best of intentions, establishing authentic school-community partnerships can be difficult when teachers and parents come from different cultural backgrounds. As with other social and human services, barriers exist which result in under-utilization of services by certain groups. Where differences of racial/ethnic identity, social status, or educational background exist,

parents may not feel comfortable, or empowered to be involved in the school (Calabrese, 1990; Epstein, 1995).

Although profoundly impacted by cultural diversity, American education lags far behind in its drive to develop culturally competent teachers. Despite the government impetus to build school-parent partnerships, teachers receive little training to meet the challenge of involving families who are ethnically diverse. In a study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education to evaluate teacher training, New Skills for New Schools, Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, and Lopez (1997) concluded that American teachers are woefully ill prepared to work with families, especially in culturally diverse communities.

Programs to increase parent involvement are more effective when educators can communicate an understanding of, and an appreciation for, the values and norms of the community in which they teach (Vasquez, Nuttal, DeLeon, & Valle, 1990; Facundo., Nuttal, & Walton, 1995). When the cultures of the teacher and parent populations differ, it is important for educators to be sensitive to the uniqueness of their clientele (Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). This sensitivity must include an awareness of the barriers to school involvement that may exist for some parents (Ascher, 1988; Epstein, 1995).

Many of these barriers, and the competencies teachers need to overcome them, have been well researched. Siu (1996) identifies the barriers to partnerships with Chinese Americans. Santiago (1991) reviews issues of diversity with Hispanic families. Calabrese (1990), Dauber and Epstein (1993), review norms and barriers to family involvement for

urban African-American families. The Assembly of Alaska Native Educators (1998) has published a specific guidance, Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools. The document spells out the features of Native Alaskan culture that educators should know to teach students and develop parent partnerships.

Department of Defense Dependent's Schools (DoDDS) represents one of the nations largest school districts, educating 95,000 students in 18 countries around the world. Like most districts, DoDDS serves an ethnically diverse population, reflecting the pluralistic makeup of today's military (DoD Enrollment Categories, 1995). DoDDS teachers differ culturally from the community in which they work. Educators in DoDDS are civilians, the majority having no personal military service. The constituency is military; specifically, military families stationed overseas.

Can a military constituency be considered "culturally unique"? In a study sponsored by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (2000), American Military Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, data was collected from 12,000 military personnel stationed around the world. Results show that military personnel view themselves as having a unique culture, a culture beset by external pressures unknown in the civilian world. Military families have a unique lifestyle, including values, norms, stresses, and risk factors that may vary from the civilian population (Newman, 1997; CSIS 2000). The pressures caused by the drawdown of forces and the demands of increasingly common humanitarian peacekeeping missions have profoundly impacted the military family (Scherer, 1998). In the last decade the percentage of married personnel in the armed forces has increased to 56%. The rate of overseas deployments has increased by 300%. In

the conclusion of the CSIS study, the authors found, despite lowered morale, widespread agreement among servicemen on basic military values with a strong commitment to the military lifestyle.

In the introduction to the extensive study, *American Military Culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (CSIS, 2000), the authors explain why the military is a “culture.”

What is military culture, exactly? Its essence is how members of an organization do things in the organization. Military culture is an amalgam of values, customs, traditions, and their philosophical underpinnings that, over time, has created a shared institutional ethos. From military culture springs the common framework for those in uniform and common expectations regarding standards of behavior, discipline, teamwork, loyalty, selfless duty, and the customs that support those elements. (p. 4)

Cultural competence is a concept usually applied with minority cultural or ethnic groups. However, Mason (1995), in the introduction to his annotated bibliography, argues that the model should be applied beyond groups of color to non-ethnic cultural groups. “One benefit of considering the use of the cultural competence model is that it may result in greater professional and organizational sensitivity to cultural differences in the broadest sense” (p. 2). In context of the larger civilian population of the United States, the military is a minority with a unique culture (CSIS, 2000). Although it is not a marginal or oppressed society, it is a distinct group with unique customs, beliefs, and practices often different from those of the civilian mainstream.

The DoDDS system is concerned with issues of ethnic and racial diversity within its constituency, but the military as a cultural entity is surprisingly overlooked. If the cultural competence model is applied, employees of a civilian organization (such as a DoDDS school) should adapt to the norms and values of military culture.

### Statement of the Problem

The teachers and administrators of Department of Defense Dependents Schools are civilian Americans who provide educational services to the dependent families of American military personnel serving the Armed Forces community overseas. The educational services provided by DoDDS personnel are designed to support learning within our American culture. At the same time, the military community has defined itself as a distinct culture, different from the civilian mainstream (CSIS, 2000).

In the social and human services, organizations and agencies which employ culturally competent employees promote better service delivery and increased use of the services by its culturally different, “minority” clientele (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). In education, “service delivery” now includes the establishment of community partnerships with parents (Educational Goals 2000), the ultimate purpose of which is to provide culturally appropriate services to all students.

The cultural competence model of Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) would describe components of enhanced service delivery by DoDDS personnel to the military, a “minority” client, in terms of cultural awareness (knowledge, attitude, and skills). In other words, DoDDS teachers, administrators and staff, need to understand the dynamics of

difference between their world and that of their military service constituency. They need to have a positive attitude towards working across those differences and the communication skills to build educational partnerships.

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the cultural competencies needed for educators to teach children of the military. Using the model and theoretical framework of “cultural competence” as defined by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), perspectives of military parents were used to establish parameters and dimensions of competence (knowledge, attitude, and skills) for DoDDS instructional personnel.

Answers to the following questions were asked:

1. Specifically, what competencies do military families believe are needed to understand their culture?
2. Generally, what domains are identified within these competencies?
3. In what ways do these competencies support Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis’ (1992) model of cultural competence?
4. In what ways do they not?

### Theoretical Framework

Cultural competence is based on the belief that a better understanding of the way diverse cultures clash, or meld, with the predominant belief system can result in organizational change and better services to clients (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs,



1989). Changing demographics in the next century will require organizations to have culturally competent professionals. Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) conceptualize cultural competence as having three major components: 1) *knowledge*; a flexible understanding of the critical dynamics of diverse culture; 2) *attitude*; a positive attitude toward diverse cultures, and 3) *skills*; communication, consultation, and advocacy skills.

### Procedures

A qualitative approach was used to identify the cultural competencies needed by educators as defined by military families. The case study method was used to interpret information obtained through semi-structured interviews, collection of documents, and observations.

### Role of Researcher

My bias as a researcher in this study is that I believe military families do have unique lives, with many advantages and disadvantages different from those of civilian life. I believe this uniqueness deserves to be recognized, and in doing so, community partnerships between parents and teachers could be deeper and more effective.

### Sample Selection

Interviews were conducted with 10 military families stationed at either RAF Lakenheath or RAF Mildenhall with children who are attending a local DoDDS school. A purposive sample (Merriam, 1998) was selected to include parents from both the

officer and enlisted ranks, and to select parents with children in the elementary and secondary schools

### Data Sources

Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews (Merriam, 1998), collection of documents, and observations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, audio taped, and transcribed. Target interview questions addressed the key variables of cultural competence as identified in the Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) conceptual model.

Interviews. Semi structured interviews were conducted in homes or in the schools. The following served as focus questions in the interviews:

1. What do you think is unique about the military family?
2. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of being a military family?
3. What have been your experiences in DoDDS schools?
4. What do you think teachers need to understand about military culture to work best with families?
5. What would make it easier for military parents to be involved in the school?

Additional questions developed from interview data. Specific questions included inquiries about deployment, job stress, frequent moves, life in a foreign culture, and availability of leave.

Documents. Documents included notifications, minutes from public meetings, memos, newspaper articles, news broadcasts, AFN<sup>1</sup> bulletins which addressed the military as a culture, or the concerns of military families.

Observations. Observational data included descriptive observations (Spradley, 1980) of town hall meetings, School Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings, school-home partnership organizations, and other local public forums where issues of military family life and schools are discussed. The SAC is an advisory committee composed of parents, teachers, and the school principal. In DoDDS it is the closest thing to a traditional school board. At these meetings parent concerns are routinely discussed. The School-Home Partnership Committee is a school-based committee of parents and teachers who work to promote parent and community involvement in the schools.

### Data Analysis

Information obtained through semi-structured interviews, collection of documents, reviewed the emerging domains and to advised on the decisions made. Additionally, two military advisors were asked to comment on data, help interpret interview data when questions arose, and to examine the researcher's conclusions. These individuals were knowledgeable about military culture, interested in community partnership issues, and familiar with local schools.

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<sup>1</sup> American Armed Forces Network

## Research Criteria

To be considered trustworthy a qualitative study must meet the criteria of credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

Credibility. To facilitate credibility, correlating the perceptions of the respondents with those of the researcher, multiple methods of obtaining data were used, and a series of checks employed (Merriam, 1998). In addition to interview data, documents and observational data were collected. Member checks (Cresswell, 1994) were used to evaluate the interview data. The categories and domains were taken back to the interview participants to clarify, or redirect the conclusions. Data was also checked by a peer review. Colleagues were asked to comment on emerging domains and to advise on decisions made. Additionally, two military advisors were asked to comment on data, help interpret interview data when questions arise, and examine the researcher's conclusions. These individuals were knowledgeable about military culture, interested in community partnership issues, and familiar with local schools.

Transferability. The degree to which results can be applied to another setting or another population represents transferability (Erlandson, et al., 1993). Thick, rich description, purposive sampling, and detailed narrative of the methods used (Yin, 1989) should allow the reader to judge whether the study findings are applicable to another setting. In this study the sample is purposive, selected to represent many types of military

personnel in the community. Participants were selected from different ranks and occupational units within the military.

Confirmability The degree to which the results represent the purpose of the study and not the researcher's biases represents confirmability. Confirmability requires the researcher to examine personal bias and to relate conclusions to their sources by providing an audit trail (Erlandson et al., 1993). In this study an audit trail of audio tapes, transcriptions, notes, documents, and artifacts was kept for review.

### Significance of Study

The significance of this study was to define the norms, values, and concerns that military families would like civilian teachers to understand. To set up effective community partnership with a military culture, civilian teachers must communicate an understanding and appreciation for military life. An examination of the cultural competencies which could promote parent involvement may benefit the regional office in planning strategies to prepare teachers for the demands of community partnerships

### Summary

This qualitative study identified the cultural competencies needed for educators to better understand a military constituency. Cultural competence is defined as knowledge, attitudes, and skills which enable an individual or an agency to communicate respect for cultural differences and practices (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The study, using the model and theoretical framework of "cultural competence" as used by Sue,

Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), looked at the military population as a cultural group.

Military families were interviewed and asked to identify what educators should understand about life in the military and to identify the cultural competencies they believe educators should demonstrate.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The blindness in human beings . . . is the blindness with which we are all afflicted in regard to the feelings and creatures and people different from ourselves. William James, 1899 (cited in Carruth & Ehrlich, 1988, p. 431)

In the beginnings of the American Revolution, John Adams surveyed his fellow delegates at the Continental Congress and wrote grimly to his wife: “We have not the men fit for the times. We are deficient in genius, in education, in travel, in fortune—in everything,” (cited in Davis, 1990, p. 49). Gathered in Philadelphia for this pivotal planning session were men representing the spectrum of political thought, religious affiliation, and regional interests in the colonies. Although Adams would later change his mind as to the caliber of his colleagues, he worried that such diversity in the delegates would hinder the assembly from accomplishing its mission, “one plan of conduct,” the declaration of independence from England. Through a modern lens it is popular to view the Founding Fathers as homogeneous, rich, white, men. Or, as described by historian James McGregor Burns, “The well-bred, the well-fed, the well-read, and the well-wed”(cited in Davis, 1990, p. 85). In his time, however, John Adams felt that he existed in a multi-cultural society. Again he wrote:

Fifty . . . meeting together, all strangers, are not acquainted with each other's language, ideas, views, designs. They are therefore (suspicious) of each other— fearful, timid, skittish . . . Here is a diversity of religion, educations, manners, interest, such as it would seem impossible to unite in one plan of conduct . (cited in Wills, 1979, p. 34)

John Adams was a man in need of cultural competence.

### Cultural Competence

As a traveler who has once been from home is wiser than he who has never left his own doorstep, so a knowledge of one other culture should sharpen our ability to scrutinize more steadily, to appreciate more lovingly, our own. Margaret Meade, 1928 (cited in Simpson, 1991, p. 234)

A *culture* is defined as a system of beliefs, customs, and behaviors shared by a group of individuals (Imel, 1998). *Cultural competence* is increasing understanding and appreciation of cultural differences within and between groups by using knowledge, personal experience, and interpersonal skills (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). It is a term widely used across professional fields, appearing sometimes as *multi-cultural or trans-cultural* competence (Mason, 1995). The concept has been particularly adopted by social and human services (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). At its 1993 forum on homeless and runaway youth, the Family and Youth Services Bureau provides this more precise definition of cultural competence:



The ability of individuals to use academic, experiential, and interpersonal skills to increase their understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between groups. It encompasses the desire, willingness, and ability to improve systems by drawing on diverse values, traditions, and customs, and working closely with knowledgeable persons from the community to develop interventions and services that affirm and reflect the value of different cultures. (FYSB, 1993, p. 8)

Cultural competence is a conceptual model for individuals or agencies to improve some aspect of their service or mission to a culturally diverse clientele. It is a framework for action and organizational change in situations where the employees, or members of an organization, differ culturally from the targeted clientele (Skarr, 1995). Cultural competence differs from cultural sensitivity (exhibiting sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities) and cultural awareness (recognition of the nuances of one's own and other cultures) by its emphasis on a behavioral outcome (Mason, 1995).

Cultures are not static. They continually change in response to circumstances. Consequently, there is never a point at which learning, experience, and practice are no longer required (Mangan, 1995). Achieving cultural competence is a developmental process, requiring active learning and practice (Mason, 1995). Individuals become increasingly competent by staying abreast of current research and by exposing themselves to culturally enriching experiences.

Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) conceptualize five activities required for cultural competence: 1) self assessment of behavior and attitudes; 2) valuing diversity; 3) accessing cultural knowledge; 4) understanding the dynamics of difference; 5) adapting to diversity. Other authors (Carney& Kahn, 1984; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) suggest three general components of cultural competence, easily adaptable to a variety of fields: 1) knowledge; a flexible understanding of the critical dynamics of diverse culture; 2) attitude; a positive attitude toward diverse cultures, and 3) skills; communication, consultation, and advocacy skills. It is this three-component model which will be employed in this study.

### Foundations for Cultural Competence

The cultural competence model is born of changing thought in philosophy, psychology and sociology, driven by the reality of America's shifting demographics. The foundations of the cultural competence model are present in the multicultural movement, social constructionism, and the demographic shifts in the U.S. census (Gonzales, Biever, & Gardner, 1993).

### Multiculturalism

America is God's crucible, the great melting pot where all the races of Europe are melting and reforming. Israel Zangwell, 1908 (cited in Simpson, 1991, p. 234)

We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic; different people,  
different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.

Jimmy Carter, 1976 (cited in Simpson, 1991, p. 345).

A meeting of American metaphors, the “melting pot,” a long-endearred path to American harmony, is challenged by the “mosaic” of multiculturalism. Multiculturalists emphasize strength in diversity, arguing that America is made up of multiple cultures, each contributing, each of value. “Melting,” they argue, toward a homogeneous community risks losing much of the texture of American life (Gonzalez, Biever, & Gardner, 1993). America has always had a pluralistic personality (as perhaps John Adams would have agreed), providing Americans with the psychological advantage of multiple social identities, the additional “belongings” of hyphenations; African-American, Irish-American, Mexican-American (Novak, 1980). Through multiculturalism, proponents claim, the multiple perspectives of a pluralistic society can be appreciated.

Additionally, multiculturalism has profoundly impacted social and human services, spurring a new wave of social consciousness in the last decade (FYBSB, 1993). Since the 1960s, social programs have moved from the medical model, which focuses on the pathology and treatment of the individual, to an emphasis on the social and cultural contexts in which individuals live, and the multiple collaborative solutions which might be possible in the community (Pederson, 1990).

## Social Constructionism

In addition to multiculturalism, social constructionism contributes to the concept of cultural competence. Social constructionism is an alternative view of human behavior which contrasts with traditional, empirically based psychological theory (Ostrom, 1995). Social constructionists view social interaction as the primary means of understanding the world (Pederson, 1990). Traditional theorists emphasize the mental processing of the self-contained individual. Social constructionists, influenced greatly by the work of Vygotsky, see mental processing embedded in social relationships (Ostrom, 1995). The mental processing of the individual is conceptualized as “*internal conversation*,” and emotions are seen as patterns of interaction within “*relational scenarios*” (Ostrom, 1995).

By shifting the emphasis from internal dynamics to a focus on the multiple meanings of the individual’s social world, social constructionists have contributed greatly to practical applications in therapy and education. Practitioners are open to alternative forms of practice because they emphasize the “ meaning system of which the client is part” (Ostrom, 1995, p. 429). As psychological processes are seen as having social origins, they can differ markedly from one culture to another (Osbeck, 1991). In the applied fields, social constructionists and multiculturalists emphasize the need to understand the cultural values of the clientele (Pederson, 1991).

## Demographics

The need for cultural competence is founded in the increasing diversification of the American public. At the start of the new millennium, 30% of Americans will be

identified as a member of a racial or ethnic group (Office of Minority Affairs, 1995). Projecting current population trends based upon immigration patterns and differential birth rates between whites and racial minorities, current minorities will make up the numerical majority of the American population in the next 25 years (Sue, 1991). Current immigration rates are the highest America has seen, consisting mostly of visible racial and ethnic groups, less easily assimilated, or more determined to hold their cultural heritage, than their European counterparts. Asians top the immigration charts, making up the fastest growing group in America, increasing by 80% in the 1980's after changes in the immigration laws. Latinos, currently 55 million strong, will make up the largest group by 2025 (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992).

The demographic pendulum brings sociopolitical, economic realities with profound changes. All agencies, businesses, and organizations will have sizeable constituencies made up of diverse cultures whose interests cannot be ignored (Sanchez, 1999). To survive economically, organizations will need to hire employees who demonstrate an understanding of minority values and norms (Mason, 1995). Already the money generated from the minority market exceeds the gross national product of Canada. Racial and ethnic minorities will be the majority workforces contributing to social security and pension plans (Sue, et al, 1992). In short, the need to promote cultural competence in employees is not a new-age exercise in altruism and sensitivity but a matter of survival in a nation that is no longer mono-cultural or monolingual.

## Cultural Competence Applied

To correct the evils, great and small, which spring from want of sympathy and from positive enmity among strangers, as nations or as individuals, is one of the highest functions of civilization. Abraham Lincoln (cited in Peter, 1977, p. 389)

The applications of the cultural competence model vary considerably by context. It has been applied in business (Page & DePuga, 1992), government (Mason, 1995), social services (Orlandi, 1992), medicine (Jonsson, 1993), and education (Startrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997). In each of these fields or organizations, the use of the model is determined by the clientele served and the *mission* of the organization. For example, the behavioral outcome for a business might be increased sales to a particular ethnic group. The outcome for a medical outreach program might be to increase access by minority clients. In the social and human services, a common motivation has been the under-use of services by minority groups (Mason, 1995).

To illustrate the various applications of cultural competence, and to demonstrate the three-pronged *knowledge/attitude/skills* conceptual model used by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) are presented. Assume the identity as a new employee in each of the following scenarios. In each scenario you are working with a diverse culture with which you are unfamiliar. Considering the mission, or expected outcome, in each example, how could you demonstrate cultural competence?

### Scenario One

You are hired by a large computer company in the international sales division. Your mission is to sell company products and win contracts from the Japanese.

### Scenario Two

You are a newly graduated physician working to pay off your government loans. You have accepted a position at a rural medical clinic on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Your clientele are Oglala Sioux. The clinic wishes you to promote and expand services to the elderly population.

### Scenario Three

You are a new administrator in a San Francisco school district with a large Chinese-American constituency. Your district seeks to promote a service learning program in the high school. You are told that many of the parents in your constituency are "Type III" Chinese Americans. You are to develop strategies to enlist support for service learning from this community.

### Scenario Four

You are a third grade teacher working for Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) at RAF Lakenheath, England. Your students are children of active duty Air Force servicemen. Your principal places a strong emphasis on building partnerships

with parents and expects you to include parents in classroom activities. As a special effort you are charged with planning a mini career day for the third grades.

Although each of these scenarios is hypothetical, in reality, if confronted with these exact challenges, there would be a well-researched knowledge base accessible for each of the first three scenarios. For these situations, a businessman selling computers to the Japanese, a physician attending to the elderly on the Pinewood Reservation, an administrator pitching a new curriculum to a Chinese-American community, research findings are presented to illustrate the knowledge/attitude/skills which conceptualize cultural competence. To follow are specific examples of some of the many ways in which cultural competence could be demonstrated in these situations.

#### Scenario One: Selling Computers

To demonstrate cultural competence in the first scenario, as sales representative of a large computer company selling to the Japanese, you might do any of the following strategies based on the research of Nakajima (1992) and Koike (1992).

Knowledge. To prepare for your sales presentation, you study the cultural competencies needed to transact a positive business deal. Nakajima (1992) claims that success in business with the Japanese depends vitally on understanding the way Japanese people communicate. Koike (1992) asserts that even those reasonably knowledgeable in Japanese language and culture need to develop the particular competencies of *business culture* in Japan. For example, when negotiating, “cutting to the chase”, a straight-shooting western approach, will not play well with the Japanese. In this culture, the more



direct the language you use, the less polite you appear (Nakajima, 1992). Koike (1992) cautions that the Japanese can use “yes” and “no” in ways confusing to westerners. Nodding may indicate attentiveness, not necessarily approval. Etiquette in formal situations can be complicated. For instance, it is impolite to express a personal desire or preference without knowing the preferences of all others present.

Attitude. Due to your knowledge you have a positive attitude and patience with the Japanese decision-making style, appreciating that it is less individualistic, more consensual, and more time-consuming.

Skills. Your knowledge and attitude combine in these simple demonstrations of skill. As you know that expressing a personal preference is impolite in formal setting, you do not turn to colleagues and ask, “Can I get you something to drink?”(The polite Japanese response to this blunder would be, “Please don’t bother.”) So you begin negotiations by serving the same beverage, tea, to all. During your presentation your Japanese colleagues nod enthusiastically, but you know not to interpret this as approval for the sale. You are not flustered by the non-committal response and lack of feedback at the end of the presentation. You accept ambiguous statements without pushing for clarification, and you are prepared to be patient while the consensus building begins.

As in this scenario, many applications of the cultural competence model have been researched in the worlds of business and finance. In response to growing market demands, many universities emphasize the development of cultural competency over linguistic skill in their international language and business courses. At Eastern Michigan

University (Koike, 1992), international business students can take four separate courses specific to Japanese business culture. Nakajima (1992) at Oregon State University teaches communicative competence with Japanese by role playing business negotiation scenarios. Beyond the Japanese, Page and DePuga (1992) investigate cross-cultural business competencies in Hungarian, Spanish, Indonesian, and American business managers. Lopez (1996) discusses the competencies needed by businessmen working in former soviet economies.

### Scenario Two: Setting Up a Health Program

The second scenario illustrates the cultural competence model in the social and human services. While the first scenario looks at cultural competence applied in the interaction of two diverse world cultures, the second example applies the model to a cultural minority within a dominant culture. In America, with the rapid growth of racial/ethnic groups, cultural competence has come to mean the ability to work effectively with our nation's diverse minorities (Sue, 1991). For the remainder of this literature review the emphasis is on domestic rather than international applications. Following are examples, based on research, of how you might demonstrate cultural competence as a physician working with elderly clients on a reservation.

Knowledge You acquaint yourself with the grim statistics of Pinewood, a two million acre reservation, home to 38,000 Oglala Sioux, the most poverty-ridden location in the United States. It has 85% unemployment, 40% substandard housing, an infant mortality rate three times the national average, and the highest rate of alcoholism in the

country (Starr, 2000). As you are targeting the elderly population (life span 20 years short of the national average), also note that there is no public transportation for a population which is widely scattered in isolated clusters (Colorado Healthsite, 2000). This knowledge may aid you in the logistics of service delivery.

Although you are trained to conduct a modern medical practice, you acquaint yourself with traditional Sioux concepts of health and disorder and healing. In traditional healing, all life is spiritual, with no divisions of *physical* and *mental* health (Medicine, 1982). Traditional healers rarely treat in isolation outside of family or tribal support (Atteneave, 1982). Healers do not ask detailed personal questions or demand self-disclosure (Thomason, 1995). Additionally, healers are expected to deliver cures promptly, without protracted treatment regimes (Atteneave, 1982).

Attitude You recognize the limitations of a traditional office setting because you are acquainted with the expectations of those who value traditional healing. You are committed to finding solutions which fit the clientele. Thomason (1995) urges those working in the helping professions to be open-minded as to collaborating and consulting with indigenous healers, and to employ paraprofessionals who can identify natural support systems.

Skills A commitment to tailoring your practice to the clientele, and your knowledge of Oglala beliefs about illness and healing, guide you in planning the initial interview with clients. Thomason (1995) suggests that interpersonal skills used in the first patient interview are vital. He suggests paying more attention to building rapport through

informal social conversation than might be used with Anglo clients. Avoid a barrage of questions, tests, and paperwork (Sue, 1981). Researchers of cross-cultural counseling with American Indian clients recommend modeling self-disclosure and mirroring client behavior to foster two-way communication (Runion, & Gregory, 1984). Before asking personal questions about family, talk about your own family. Allow plenty of response time. Observe and follow in the initial interview. Mirror the client's eye contact, voice tone, and pace of speech (Thomasen, 1995).

As in this example, employees who can demonstrate an understanding of minority values and norms are especially important in the human services. The under-utilization of health and social services by American minority groups has driven a decade of research on cultural competence across a wide range of organizations (Mason, 1995). Jonsson-Devillers (1993), advising doctors and health workers in San Diego, provides a training program designed to foster cultural competence with Latino patients. She emphasizes appropriate interviewing, giving instructions, understanding beliefs toward illness and folk medicine, and vocabulary drills. Gary (1987) and Pearson (1991) cite examples of cultural competencies for mental health professionals who work with a minority clientele, encouraging the study of natural support systems, such as the African American church, or the use of tribal elders. Orlandi (1992) researched the competencies needed in substance abuse programs by white caseworkers working with African American youth. VanDenBerg and Minton (1987), Nelson-Barber (1991), Swisher and Deyhle (1992) investigated the competencies needed to work with Native American children. Chao

(1994) urges professionals working with Chinese American clients to learn about Chinese parenting styles and their views of parental control.

### Scenario Three: Selling a Curriculum

Scenario one addressed cultural competence in an international context in a business setting. Scenario two addressed the model in a domestic setting in the social/health services. Scenario three moves to an educational setting. How does the cultural competence model apply to schools? In this example, you are a new administrator in a San Francisco high school. The district is introducing a service learning component to the curriculum and you would like to enlist parent support. You learn that you have a large Chinese-American Community, with many parents who are “Type III.” Sau-Fong Siu (1996) in his review of education for Chinese American students describes Type III parents as immigrants with no personal experience in American schools. Type III parents completed schooling overseas and are unfamiliar with American educational practices. They are the parents least likely to volunteer in schools. To prepare for your first community meeting, any of the following strategies based on the research of Siu (1996), Yagi (1995), and Chen (1993), would demonstrate cultural competence.

Knowledge. You learn that Type III Chinese American parents are unfamiliar with the mores and operation of American schools and therefore tend to value traditional Chinese practices. Chinese educators emphasize proper behavior toward adults, academic achievement, grades, and class ranks over social development and extra-curricular

activities. Parents monitor homework vigilantly, often creating extra homework for their children.

Attitude. A basic understanding of the Chinese view of education, says Siu (1996), is that parents *revere* education but do not *trust* schools. Parents often feel that they must watch over the school to ensure that their children progress satisfactorily. This knowledge helps you maintain a positive attitude with a population who may appear suspicious of the school's effort. You understand that service learning may be seen as an unnecessary diversion from the primary "academic" mission of the school.

Skills. Your knowledge of Chinese culture prepares you for the opposition you are likely to encounter. You know that the most common school complaints of Type III parents concern: insufficient discipline, homework, mathematics instruction, and moral training. Therefore, you target these concerns in your presentation. Additionally, you emphasize the benefits of community service in the competition for college scholarships, explaining that many prestigious institutions are seeking well-rounded academic/citizenship profiles.

As in this example, the cultural competence model particularly applies to American schools. In the conceptual framework, organizations which hire employees who are culturally competent achieve better service delivery to minority clientele (Cross, et al., 1989). "*Service delivery*" is not a term typically used by educators. However, there can be little doubt that American schools are expected to deliver results. Bewildering arrays of utopian outcomes are bantered by politicians and promised to the electorate

regarding American education (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). In the trenches, most teachers would probably see their *service delivery* as teaching students to “learn”, producing students skilled in academics and citizenship. However, today, the service delivery in education includes school-home partnerships. A more holistic and ecological approach to student learning, recognizing the importance of family involvement in student achievement (Epstein, 1991), has added the establishment of community partnerships to the mission. The U.S. Department of Education has set community partnerships as one of its principle target areas for educational reform (Goals 2000, 1994).

How does American education fit into the cultural competence model? American schools are organizations, delivering human services, which routinely deal with cultural minorities in the clientele. American schools sit on the frontline of the demographic shift, as in California where the enrollment of white students is already below 50% (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). One in four students lives in a home where English is not spoken, and one in every six children is foreign born (Sue, et al., 1992). American schools are organizations with large minority constituencies, expected to produce outcomes. Schools are constantly encouraged/challenged/battered into producing “better” results according to society’s whims and ills (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Although any of the outcomes expected of American schools might appropriately be applied in the cultural competence model, in this review the outcome of focus will be goal eight, community partnerships: “ . . . every school will promote partnerships that will increase parent involvement and participation in promoting the social, emotional and academic growth of

children . . .the establishment of effective school-home community partnerships.”

(GOALS 2000, Educate America, 1994, p. 10).

The rationale for community partnerships has been well established. There is no shortage of research to support the importance of involving families in schools and the link between parent involvement and student achievement (Epstein, 1995 ). In A New Generation of Evidence, Henderson (1994) claims that parent involvement is more important than family income and social status in promoting student achievement. Achievement is better predicted by the extent to which families are able to: 1) encourage learning in the home, 2) express high, but realistic expectations of achievement, and 3) participate in the schools. Additional benefits to partnerships include improved teacher morale (Henderson, 1994) and higher teacher ratings from parents (Epstein, 1992). Most important from an economic perspective, parent involvement leads to increased support for schools and willingness to pay taxes for educational initiatives (Davies, 1988).

With the best of intentions, establishing community partnerships can be challenging when teachers and parents come from different cultural backgrounds. When the cultures of teachers and parents differ, it is important for educators to communicate an understanding of, and appreciation for, the values and norms of the community in which they teach (Facundo, Nuttal, & Walton, 1995). As with other social and human services, barriers exist which result in under-utilization of services by certain groups (Sanchez, 1999). Educators must be aware of the barriers to school involvement that may exist for some parents (Ascher, 1988; Epstein, 1995). Where there are differences of racial/ethnic identity, social status, or educational background, parents may not feel comfortable, or



empowered to be involved in the schools (Calabrese, 1990; Epstein, 1995). For the visible minorities many of the barriers to parent involvement have been well researched. Santiago (1991) reviews impediments to partnerships with Latino families. Siu (1996) reviews issues of diversity with Chinese Americans. Calabrese (1990), Dauber and Epstein (1993) review norms and barriers to family involvement for urban African American families. In Alaska, the Assembly of Native Educators (1998) produced a specific guideline for developing community partnerships between native parents and non-native teachers.

No organization needs culturally competent employees more than the American public school. Yet, despite the government impetus (Goals 2000) to build parent-school partnerships, American education lags far behind in its drive to develop culturally competent teachers. While many training programs have been implemented in the social services and in government and business agencies, educators receive little or no training to work with families who are ethnically diverse. Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, and Lopez (1997) evaluated teacher programs in American colleges and universities in an extensive study commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education. In an analysis of state teacher certification requirements in all 50 states, and a survey of 60 teacher education programs in 22 states, they concluded that American teachers are “*woefully ill-prepared*” to work with families, especially in culturally diverse communities. Many states did not mention working with parents or families, and those that did, typically referred to parent involvement in terms of teacher-parent conferences with no clear definition of “home-school” relations. Although the federal government promotes family participation in the

schools, Shartrand, et al. (1997) conclude that family involvement was not high priority in state training programs, lagging behind reform initiatives and school practice.

The cultural competence model clearly applies to education. In New Skills for New Schools, Shartrand, et al. (1997), in their recommendations for university teacher programs cite the three tenants of the model. In his introduction to the project, Secretary of Education, Richard Riley, writes, “School success in promoting family involvement greatly depends on teachers and principals who possess the *knowledge, attitudes, and skills* to work with families”(cited in Shartrand, Weiss, Krieder, & Lopez, 1997, p.1).

In this final scenario of the Cultural Competence test, the setting is an American school, in this case, a Department of Defense Dependent’s (DoDDS) school in an overseas location. The clientele are American Air Force personnel and their dependents.

#### Scenario Four: Setting Up a Career Day

You are a third grade teacher working in a DoDDS elementary school at RAF Lakenheath, England. Your principal places a strong emphasis on building partnerships with parents and you have been diligent in your efforts, writing newsletters, encouraging volunteers, and setting up events in your classroom to include parents. Today, in a special include-parents effort, you have planned a mini career day. You are frustrated and irritated with your parents because several of your scheduled presenters decline at the last minute. In addition there are several no-shows. To heighten your disappointment of a good-plan-gone-bad, your children seem unusually agitated. One child is crying. How would you demonstrate cultural competence?

This scenario is hypothetical, but based on real experiences at Lakenheath Elementary School, a DoDDS school in England. It is not presented as an application of the knowledge-attitude-skills model of cultural competence, but as an introduction to the purpose of this study, the application of the cultural competence model to a military population. In DoDDS schools, teachers are civilians. The constituency is families of active duty servicemen, in this case, Air Force families. To establish the rationale for applying this model to a population of Air Force families, the following questions need to be addressed: 1) Can the cultural competence model, usually used with visible minorities in America, be extended to other non-ethnic minorities?, 2) Do U.S. military personnel represent a culture, and does this culture differ in significant ways from civilian culture? 3) Will military families identify competencies that civilian teachers need to build community partnerships?

#### Using the Cultural Competence Model with Non-Ethnic Minorities

Typically, the cultural competence framework is applied to individuals and organizations working with visible cultural minorities: African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos. Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) and Mason (1995) argue that the model can legitimately be extended to non-ethnic minorities. They believe that culture can be defined broadly to include race, ethnicity, religion, sex, age, class, affectional orientation, and so forth. Mason (1995) discusses the advantages of applying the model beyond groups of color in the introduction to his annotated

bibliography on cultural competence: “One benefit of considering the use of the cultural competence model is that it may result in greater professional and organizational sensitivity to cultural differences in the broadest sense” (p. 2).

The Family and Youth Services Bureau sponsored a forum on runaway and homeless youth in June 1993, launching an organizational drive to enhance the cultural competence of the case workers in their youth programs. Although most of the presentations focused on groups of race and ethnicity, the FYSB, in their policy, recommended that the model be extended to include cultural differences beyond visible minorities. Cultural diversity should include the wide range of differences in the American population. The FYSB (1993) considers the following populations appropriate to be used: ethnic/racial backgrounds, gender culturalizations, socioeconomic/educational status, sexual orientation, physical capacity, age/generational, personality type, spirituality/religious beliefs, regional perspectives, and new immigrant populations.

#### The United States Military as a Culture

There’s black, white, Hispanic--and military . . . That’s a new ethnic group” Donald Fike, Sergeant Major (cited in Ricks, 1996, p. 8)

Definitions of culture abound, from Webster’s Dictionary (1991) “a form of civilization, particularly the arts, beliefs, and customs”(p. 235), to Geertz’s (1973) more esoteric anthropological explanation; “learned symbolic activities shared by individuals linked together by a shared set of meaning, a common way of perceiving and interpreting the world” (Skarr & Spagnola, 1995, p. 8). The essence of culture is “communication,”

according to Hall (1977). All cultural traits are learned through communication. Cultural systems change and adapt to circumstances, providing its members with rules for meeting biological needs, adjusting to life with other people, and achieving personal integration and self-realization (Kluckhohn, 1970).

In June of 2000 the Center for Strategic and International Studies published the results of an extensive study of the United States military. The study, American Military Culture in the Twenty-first Century, examines the major issues which impact military culture and the effective operation of the armed forces. Sources of information included 125 focus groups composed of a wide range of military experts from each of the armed forces and a survey of 12,000 active duty servicemen in 32 locations in the United States and overseas. The purpose of this two-year study was to provide recommendations, particularly to legislators and decision makers, regarding events and practices which impact military culture in the coming decades.

The CSIS (2000) study begins with this definition of military culture:

What is military culture, exactly? Its essence is how members of an organization do things in the organization. Military culture is an amalgam of values, customs, traditions, and their philosophical underpinnings that, over time, has created a shared institutional ethos. From military culture springs a common framework for those in uniform and common expectations regarding standards of behavior, discipline, teamwork, loyalty, selfless duty, and the customs that support those elements. (p. 4)

Although the military is composed of several branches, the services all exist within the same broad cultural framework. As the first rite of passage, all the armed forces use basic training or boot camp to initiate and indoctrinate new recruits into the culture. Each service is a strict meritocracy for advancement, controlled by centralized promotion boards. Members of the combat element dominate the hierarchy in each force. The traditions of each service are tied closely to the domain of combat (CSIS, 2000).

In addition to the shared ethos, each branch of the armed forces fiercely forges a separate cultural identity with traditions fashioned on domain and approach to combat. These unique identities as an airman, sailor, soldier, marine, or coastguardsman are believed to be essential to cohesion in combat. So strong are these service cultures that one of the recommendations of the CSIS study was: “The key task for the future is to improve interservice cooperation without damaging the service cultures that are so essential to cohesion and combat within their own domains”(p. 5).

Does American military culture differ significantly from civilian culture? The military by definition of its mission fosters values, traditions, and codes of conduct which differ from civilian life. The CSIS authors suggest:

There must be significant differences between the cultures. Our civil culture emphasizes liberty and individuality, military culture down-plays them and emphasizes values such as discipline and self-sacrifice that stem from the imperative of military effectiveness and success on the battlefield. (p. 1)

Janowitz, a military sociologist, believes a distinct military culture is important. “In a private enterprise society the military establishment could not hold its most creative talents without the binding force of service traditions, professional identifications, and honor” (Williams, 1999, p. 2).

It is clear from the results of the 12,000 man CSIS survey that military members see themselves as a unique culture. They believe that they encounter many stresses and conditions unknown in the civilian world. Results of the study showed that satisfaction with military life has suffered in the last decade due to the high operation tempo of humanitarian peacekeeping, force reductions, and reduced resources. A conclusion from the CSIS final report: “Simply put: The leadership of the armed forces has not yet adjusted to the reality that there are insufficient operating resources and personnel to match missions”(p. 7).

However, despite lowered morale attributed to increased demands, the CSIS authors point out that they found no evidence that servicemen were less committed to the ideals and values of military culture. In 125 focus-group discussions, there were no complaints alleging that the core standards of military duty were inappropriate or too strict. Of the 12,000 serviceman polled, the vast majority expressed pride in the standards of order, discipline, and conduct which distinguishes a military career (CSIS, 2000).

The armed forces have experienced major stresses due to changes in the last decade which have consequently impacted military families (Suro, 1997). The present all-volunteer force is a *family* military. At the end of World War II, only 22% of military servicemen were married. From 36% married servicemen in 1973, there has been a rise to

56% in 1999 (CSIS, 2000). This is even more pronounced in the Air Force (the service of focus in this study) with 66% married personnel. Some critics suggest that while the older, married recruits provide stability, there is too much emphasis on quality-of-life issues and not enough on combat readiness (Newman, 1997). In particular the 1990's have produced rapid organizational change with military duty requirements becoming more complex and challenging, now including peacekeeping, humanitarian missions, and drug busting (Scherer, 1998).

Perhaps the most profound impact on military families has been the increased stress caused by the dramatic upswing in deployment. Across the armed services the overseas deployment rate has risen by 300% in the last decade (CSIS, 2000; Scherer, 1998). The CSIS study of military culture cites the military's failure to prepare support for this rapid change as a cause of morale declines. In the Air Force deployment has increased by four times since the end of the Gulf War. When troops are not deployed, they are working longer hours at their home bases because of downsizing in the forces (Scherer, 1998).

In his essay, *Civilian-Military Relations in Post-Cold War America* (1999), John Williams claims that civilians have little understanding of people who choose professions in the military. He writes that Americans love the military, "the way they might love their Rottweiler: They are happy enough for the protection but do not want to become one themselves" (p. 2). Williams believes that civilian and military cultures are driven increasingly away from each other in this decade. In the last generation, before the all-volunteer forces, many politicians had military experience, either through direct service



or indirectly via family members. The number of elite civilians in decision making roles with personal exposure to the military has decreased. Williams believes that the American public does not dislike military people, but they do not understand them. Military people exist as outsiders to the cultural mainstream. In a real sense military servicemen, as the Sergeant Major, Donald Fike, quipped to a reporter, represent a cultural minority, "*a new ethnic group.*"

### Using the Cultural Competence Framework with the Military

"The schoolmaster is abroad! And I trust to him armed with his primer against the soldier in full military array." Jeremy Bentham, 1828 (cited in Andrews, 1993, p. 895)

The purpose of this study is to apply the framework of cultural competence to Department of Defense Dependent's Schools and its military constituency. Department of Defense Dependent's Schools (DoDDS) represents one of the nations largest school districts, educating 95,000 students in 18 countries around the world. Like most districts, DoDDS serves an ethnically diverse population, reflecting the pluralistic makeup of today's military (DOD Enrollment Categories, 1995). DoDDS teachers differ culturally from the community in which they work. Educators in DoDDS are civilians, the majority having no personal military service. The constituency is military; specifically, military families stationed overseas.

This qualitative study seeks to identify the cultural competencies needed for educators to better understand a military constituency. Cultural competence is defined as

knowledge, attitudes, and skills which enable an individual or an agency to communicate respect for cultural differences and practices (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The study, using the model and theoretical framework of “cultural competence” as used by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), looks at the military population as a cultural group. Military families will be interviewed and asked to identify what they think educators should understand about life in the military and to identify the cultural competencies they believe educators should demonstrate.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This qualitative study seeks to identify the cultural competencies needed for educators to better understand a military constituency. Cultural competence is defined as knowledge, attitudes, and skills which enable an individual or an agency to communicate respect for cultural differences and practices (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Using the framework of cultural competence, my study looks at the military population as a cultural group. A Department of Defense Dependents school exists in a community where educators and parents represent different cultural groups (civilian and military). This study examines the usefulness of the cultural competence model in determining the cultural features of military family life which are important for civilian teachers to understand. How (according to military families) should civilian teachers demonstrate cultural competence? Military families were interviewed and asked to identify what they thought educators should understand about life in the military. What cultural competencies should educators demonstrate? Information was obtained through semi-structured interviews, collection of documents, and observations of public meetings.

## Type of Design

A qualitative design was chosen for several reasons as most suitable for this study. A qualitative design takes place in a natural setting with the focus on the participant's perceptions of reality (Merriam, 1998). To investigate the aspects of cultural competence in a military population, I researched the perceptions of different families in their home environment, an Air Force base overseas. Qualitative studies are investigative in nature, aiming to describe, and derive meaning from social phenomena using inductive reasoning (Cresswell, 1994). In the present study the data that emerged was descriptive, an attempt to understand how the participants made sense of events. The focus was what participants thought civilian educators should know and understand about the military family. In qualitative research the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Merriam, 1998). As researcher, I conducted the interviews, observed public meetings where military/school issues were the forum, and collected documents for analysis.

The research strategy for this study was the explanatory case study method, prevalent in psychology, sociology, political science, and education (Yin, 1994). In the case study method, the researcher investigates a single system, group, or phenomenon which can be bounded in time and activity (Yin, 1989). In other words, the subject of investigation can be fenced with clear boundaries of what pertains and does not pertain to the study. This method involves a holistic approach and does not require a particular method of data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 1998). However, results are

typically a mix of description and analysis achieved through fieldwork, interviews, observations, and document analysis (Creswell, 1994). This was the format of my study.

### Researcher

I was born in the 1950s; the year Hillary first scaled Mt. Everest, the Chinese year of the Dragon. A dragon is a blessing to any household, a child of good fortune. This is how I view my life. Born lucky. No more than my fair share of adversity. Good family. Good friends. However, it is my life as it pertains to my research which is at issue here. In qualitative studies the researcher is the primary instrument for collecting data and analyzing results (Merriam, 1998). As a mediator of the experience the researcher must attempt to delineate the values, experiences, and biases which might color or shade the interpretation to follow (Creswell, 1994). Therefore, to the best of my self-knowledge, I have outlined those experiences which have shaped my views of the American military.

First, I have no direct military experience. I have never served in any of the armed forces. I grew up in a community set 75 miles from the nearest military installation. I rarely saw a man in uniform except for the occasional recruiter in high school. Until I joined the Department of Defense Dependent's Schools in 1982, my experience with the military was vicarious, a smattering of perceptions gained through family and friends.

I believe that many of our earliest experiences shape our later perceptions. My first awareness of the military came through my father, a WW II veteran like so many of his generation. In his senior year of high school he graduated early (at the end of football

season) to join the Navy. At age 19 he served as a radioman. He got out in 1946, married in 1949, waiting for a fortuitous dragon year to have the first of his six children.

In truth none of the above influenced me in childhood. My father was not a storyteller. “What-did-you-do-in-the-war?” questions were answered obliquely, or with jokes. “I was a sailorman, like Popeye,” he would say, poking at leftover vegetables on our plates. “In the navy, we always ate our spinach.” The real stories, or rather sketchy details, of my father’s military career, came through my mother. However, three years ago, on a stroll with my dad through the Imperial War Museum, we came across a TBM torpedo bomber, *The Avenger*, the aircraft on which he had served. A floodgate of stories opened. He ran around the plane, pointing out features, explaining the controls, showing us where he sat. I learned more in one afternoon than I had heard in life previous.

So really, I cannot say I developed many views about military life as a child. However, I did develop a muddled, diffused value that military service was a good thing, something that fathers did before they had families. Added to this was a distinct, sharp bias based on my father’s reactions to the Army-Navy football game: Navy good, Army bad.

Besides my father, I have been influenced by the experiences of two uncles, representing the polar extremes in a military career. My mother’s youngest brother was drafted, served overseas, made corporal, then separated at the end of his tour. It was, by his account, a positive experience, highlighted by a 30-minute stint as General Eisenhower’s driver. The general gave my uncle a pocketknife as a souvenir. It was

stolen three days later from his locker. Now in his mid seventies, my uncle still tells this story with a sense of tragic loss.

As for the other uncle, on my father's side, it was the military fast lane. Every family needs a hero. Without question it was Uncle Ernie, our biggest success. Uncle Ernie (AKA "Dutch") began as a pilot in the Korean War and retired as a Four-Star General in the Air Force. He served as General Haig's deputy commander in Europe. Throughout his career my aunt would dutifully send newspaper clippings, photos, and anecdotes, providing a glimpse of the military elite. It was also an intimate view of my aunt, a shy woman, caught squarely in the suffocatingly-restrictive OWC (Officer's Wives Club) culture of the 1960s and 70s. Over coffee my aunt would commiserate with my mother. My sisters and I would rifle through the party dresses in my aunt's closet. Our mother had no ball gowns. Aunt Wanda lived in a glamorous and mysterious world.

For a fleeting moment in my senior year of high school I entertained the notion of joining the military as a means of paying for college and graduate school. I imagined it would be Navy, like my dad, then Air Force, like my uncle. No Army. Even in these Vietnam years, the military at its lowest ebb of popularity, I viewed this as a positive course. However, in reality, I was frightened of entering a world that was so completely foreign to me. I knew I would not enter at the high end, live like my uncle and aunt. I had no understanding of what a typical experience would be, or personal sources of information.

My decision to join the Department of Defense Dependents Schools put me in direct contact with the military. My husband has taught high school history and

government and I have worked as a school psychologist in DoDDS schools in both Iceland and England since 1982. My two daughters have attended DoDDS schools exclusively. Their playmates and friends have been children from military families. My experiences have been mostly with Air Force and Navy families.

It is important in the qualitative paradigm for me, as the researcher, to identify the personal beliefs and assumptions which may shape the way I collect and interpret data. I believe that it is especially important for educators in this pluralistic society to understand the dynamics of the cultures they serve. I believe that military personnel have a culture that is distinct from civilian culture. It deserves to be recognized as such. In the most general sense, I believe that military service is an honorable and productive choice of work and lifestyle. Military members deserve to be recognized for the sacrifices they make. I believe that the military cultural identity is strong and may actually subsume many other identities and affiliations. I believe that a school system such as Department of Defense Dependent's Schools (DoDDS), which serves, almost exclusively, a military clientele, has an obligation to respond to the uniqueness, values, and needs of this particular culture.

#### Data Collection Procedures

Data in the form of observations and documents was collected throughout the duration of this study. Data collected from families in face-to-face interviews was collected between October 1, 2000 and March 30, 2001.



### Sample Selection (Boundaries of Study)

A purposive, criterion-based sample of American Air Force personnel was employed in this study. This form of non-probability sampling is the method of choice in most qualitative research, as statistical generalization to the larger population is not the goal (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative researchers seek to describe the events, interpret meaning, and connect occurrences. A purposive sample is a logical process of finding sources which can best illuminate the problem. The researcher is not looking for the *average* sample, but for the *best* sample, one which can provide the most information about the problem being investigated (Merriam, 1998). In a sense, a purposive sample requires experts, or sources who have special experiences and knowledge. Patton (1990) advises qualitative researchers to choose “information-rich” sources in a purposive sample.

The “experts” who served as informants in interviews were 10 military families stationed at either of two Air Force bases in Europe. The criteria for selection were: 1) the household must include an active-duty parent, 2) the informant must have children who have attended a DoDDS school for at least one year, and 3) the parents have been active in, or knowledgeable about, DoDDS schools. The sample was selected to include parents from both the officer and enlisted ranks, as well as parents with children in the elementary and secondary schools. Additionally, the informants represented active duty members from a variety of units and occupations on these Air Force bases. My intent, originally, was to ask the principal or school counselor at each of the local schools to identify families, active in school matters, who might be interested and available for

interviews. In actuality, the snowball method proved more productive in accessing informants. I began by interviewing a commander's wife who had presented on military family issues at a conference. Through her interest in my project, and her access to the military network, I made several contacts from different units and ranks. Many of these contacts recommended others. Patton (1990) recommends this networking method of sample selection as a good way of finding "information rich" informants.

### Setting

This study was conducted on two American Air Force bases in Europe. These bases are manned by approximately 8,000 U.S. military personnel and 2,000 civilian employees.

Base One. This is the larger of the two bases which functions to support an F-15 fighter wing. The mission of this base is "to provide responsive air combat power, support, and services to meet our Allies' and our nation's international objectives" (Base One website, 2001). The base exists to maintain the fighter wing, the F-15E Strike Eagle, the world's most capable air-to-ground fighter, and the F-15C Eagle, an air-to-air premier fighter. This combat capability places the Fighter Wing in the center of many of the recent and historical international conflicts.

In day to day life, Base One resembles a small town doused in drab colors. A base exchange, commissary, hospital, post office, movie theater, and Burger King provide a

“Little America” infrastructure. Jets, hangars, and runways are on the perimeter of the complex. The five schools which serve these base communities are located at Base One.<sup>2</sup>

Base Two. This base is located four miles from its sister base, Base One. It is a base with a mixed mission including aerial refueling, special operations, air mobility, reconnaissance and intelligence. Base Two also resembles a small town with most of the same support facilities as on Base One on a scaled down version, minus a hospital. It is historically an older base than Base One, with vintage brick buildings, and the look of a college campus. For the youth in this community the advantage to Base Two is that it has the only Taco Bell to be found outside of host country’s capitol city. The Schools. There are five schools; two elementary, one intermediate, one middle school, and one high school which serve the 3,150 children of military and civilian personnel from these two bases. The Combat Support Squadron at Base One provides the logistical support for the schools. The schools are run by the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS). Historically, the military has provided schools for the children of occupying forces in Europe since 1946. Initially each branch of the service established its own school system, later transferring to a civilian management. Two parallel systems emerged, Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) serving military dependents in the United States, and Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) serving military dependents overseas (DODEA

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<sup>2</sup> Of historical interest . . . Glenn Miller and Joseph Kennedy Jr. left from this base on their ill-fated flights.

website, 2000). The two systems were subsumed under one umbrella in 1994, the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA).

### Actors

The actors for the interviews were active duty military personnel and their spouses stationed at either of the two American Air Force bases. The active duty personnel represented a range of units from both bases, including the 48<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, medical support, chaplain's office, and special operations. All interviewees had children who attended DoDDS schools in the Base One Complex. Most families interviewed had extended experience (more than four years) with DoDDS. Several families participating had served more than one overseas assignment and were acquainted with DoDDS schools in other settings.

The actors in the participant observations were the members of the newly formed district school board (which represents all five of the schools) at its public meetings. The members are men and women elected by the parents of the school populace as representatives on the first DoDDS-Military school board. Members are active duty military personnel or spouses, a DoDDS district representative, and the district superintendent or the assistant superintendent. Additionally, members of School Advisory Council (SAC) were observed at public meetings in one of the schools.

## Events

The participants in the interviews were interviewed as families, husband and wife serving as informants together, except in three cases, two where the spouse was deployed, and one involving a single parent family. Informants were asked to identify the unique features, needs, and special problems of military culture. They were asked to identify the important things teachers should understand about military families. What competencies were needed to demonstrate this understanding?

Actors on the school board and on the School Advisory Council serve in an official capacity to connect the military community and the civilian school system. The purpose of these observations was to answer the following questions: Were issues and problems discussed which appeared uniquely related to military culture? Did board members or public participants identify expectations, or competencies, of civilian teachers related to military concerns? Were these issues similar to those identified in the interviews?

## Types of Data

Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with military families, observations of public school-board meetings and advisory committees, and by collection of documents.

Interviews. Face to face interviews were conducted between October 2, 2000 and March 30, 2001. Interviews were semi-structured in format, with five focus questions

establishing broad parameters (Appendix A). In most instances these questions were presented to the participants in advance of the interview. Interviews were conducted in family homes, or in a few cases, at the work place, or local school. Interviews were audio taped and later transcribed.

Observations. At public school board meetings and school advisory meetings observations were conducted between January 22 (the first public meeting of the board) and March 30, 2001. I functioned as a participant observer. Spradley (1980) explains that the two purposes of participant observation are: 1) to engage in activities natural to the situation, and 2) to observe people, activities, and physical aspects of the setting. At these public meetings, I was able to ask questions, and request clarifications in my natural role as a parent and community member. As an observer, I focused on school board activities as they related to the cultural competence model. Data was collected through field notes which cataloged events and impressions. These notes included records of topics discussed, agenda items, and questions from the community. In other words, I focused on events which appeared unique to a military population, rather than events which might be routinely expected at any community meeting regarding public schools.

Documents. To triangulate data, documents were collected which addressed the culture of the military as it pertained to family and school. These documents included agendas and minutes, field notes from school board meetings, articles from local newspaper (Stars and Stripes, and local base newsletters), district memos, and Air Force publications disseminated to the public. Documents provide an unobtrusive method of

data collection, insight into the terms and words of the informants, and written evidence to help verify other data sources (Merriam, 1998).

### Data Analysis Procedures

The analysis of qualitative data is an eclectic process (Creswell, 1994), and although there is no definite prescribed procedure, Yin (1994) warns that it is foolish to embark on research without a general analytic strategy in mind. A general strategy provides the focus and the priorities of what is to be analyzed. Yin recommends a general strategy which relies on the research and theoretical propositions that led to the case study. In this study the conceptual model of cultural competence espoused by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) provided the lens for coding and evaluating data.

Merriam (1998) reminds that data collection and analysis are simultaneous processes in qualitative research, involving the basic processes of data reduction and conclusion drawing. The emphasis is to search the data (or reduce the data) for patterns and themes. The researcher then analyzes the data for relationships and interpretations (Coffey, 1996). In the present study, data was reviewed as it was collected and coded. Throughout the study the data was reviewed for re-coding. The purpose of continual review is to identify patterns, themes, and categories which help to explain the perspective of the participant (Creswell, 1994). To provide for continual review, I met with two colleagues, fellow doctoral students, on a bi-weekly schedule throughout my study.

In this study, category construction was guided by the research on cultural competence. Research indicates that to be culturally competent one must demonstrate relevant knowledge of another cultural, a positive awareness and attitude, and communication skills. These three elements of the conceptual model, knowledge, attitudes, skills, provided major domains related directly to research on a wide range of cultural minorities. Looking at the military population as a cultural minority group, pattern analysis was used for category construction within these domains. For example, as relevant “knowledge” of military culture many themes and categories emerged. As interview data compiled, a general category of “deployment issues” evolved into many subcategories: deployment and type of job, deployment and impact on families, deployment and single parent/dual career families.

### Research Criteria

The purpose of all research is to produce knowledge which can be trusted. In education and other social sciences where research is applied in the field, it is especially important for the consumer to have confidence in the quality of research (Creswell, 1994). Although quantitative and qualitative research paradigms differ, both involve quality control, procedures to verify the collection of data, and its interpretation (Merriam, 1998). Are the conclusions of the study based on data? Is the design properly constructed and is the data analyzed logically? Creswell (1994) explains that the qualitative researcher establishes confidence in the study by verifying the following: the accuracy of information and its match to reality (internal validity/trustworthiness); the



limits of generalizability (external validity); and the parameters of replicating the study (reliability).

### Internal Validity

Internal validity rests on the assumption that what is observed and measured matches reality. However, in the qualitative paradigm *reality* is seen as a multidimensional, ever changing phenomenon. Theoretically, reality is never the same at any two points in time and cannot be *matched* (Merriam, 1998). However, Yin (1994) explains that a consumer must be able to judge the quality of research. A qualitative design must represent a “logical set of statements” (p. 32). In case study research, internal validity can be interpreted as a logical, consistent method of making inferences. Much of the data used in case studies comes from interviews and documents, rather than direct observations. These require the researcher to make inferences (Merriam, 1998). The focus of qualitative research is to understand and represent the participant’s perception of reality. Do my methods promote logical inferences which converge in a clear direction? Do I present the perceptions and experiences of reality of the participants in my study?

Merriam (1998) and Creswell (1994) suggest six basic strategies for enhancing internal validity in qualitative designs. In this study I used the following strategies: triangulation of data, member checks, peer examination, long-term observations, and an examination of researcher bias.

Triangulation. Triangulation allows the researcher to search for converging themes among varying methods or sources of information (Creswell, 1994). The purpose of triangulation, Merriam (1998) reminds researchers, is to promote a holistic view of the phenomena, as well as to promote quality assurance. In this study multiple sources of information, interview data collected from military families, observations of public meetings where school-community issues are discussed, and documents relating to school-military issues were collected and analyzed.

Member Checks. Member Check is a procedure for “checking” back with the participants regarding the accuracy of findings and conclusions. As the researcher is attempting to understand the “reality” of the participant, it is important to do perception checks. I found this a particularly important requirement in this study. Participants frequently used a foreign language, a *military-speak*, peppered with acronyms and slang unfamiliar to civilians. Member checks were conducted on an informal, as needed, basis. In most cases participants could be easily contacted by phone or e-mail to clear up confusion. Some participants deployed shortly after interviews and were unavailable for member checks. Adding to confusion of terms, a British typist was employed to transcribe interview tapes. It was apparent that she had difficulty translating American accents, particularly southern accents. For example, master *sergeant* appears as master *surgeon* in the first transcription.

Additionally, a more formal member check procedure was used. Two participant families agreed to read and review the data analysis and recommendation portions of the study. These families were asked to evaluate and comment on the accuracy of my

perceptions. A third family, a retired Lt. Colonel and his wife, were not interviewed, but agreed to help as “military advisors.” Colonel K and his wife have more than 20 years of Air Force experience, including two overseas assignments. He and his wife reviewed several of the chapter to interpret and advise on themes. It was especially helpful to access their expertise of military matters throughout the study.

Peer Examination. Peer Examination allows the researcher to check findings and conclusions with informed colleagues. This process has been helpful, from both a professional and a personal standpoint. Two colleagues, fellow doctoral students at Oklahoma State University, have provided feedback and support at bi-weekly meetings throughout the study. These peers were familiar with the goals of my research, having advised me since the conception of the study, and actively participated in reviewing data for emerging themes. In peer review, several of the initial interview transcripts were double coded, each of us searching for codes and themes separately (Boyatzis, 1998). This process particularly boosted confidence in converging data into themes. Near the completion of the study, a third colleague, an OSU doctoral student, was asked to review and comment on the data analysis and recommendation sections of the study.

Long Term Observations. Repeated observations were made over a six month period of time to enhance the validity of findings (Creswell, 1994). Public meetings where school-community issues are routinely discussed, including school board meetings, school advisory councils, and local school leadership meetings were observed between October 2000 and March 2001.

Researcher Bias. As the researcher is the primary source of data collection and interpretation it is important to make biases clear. I have detailed those biases in the section of this chapter titled “The Researcher.”

### External Validity

External validity refers to the extent that results of my study can be applied to another setting. Qualitative designs are not intended to generalize in the traditional, or statistical, sense, but rely on naturalistic generalizations. A thorough knowledge of a particular case allows the reader to recognize similarities in other contexts (Merriam, 1998). It is the reader who judges when findings can be generalized. Strategies which enhance external validity include the use of thick rich description, and the use of a detailed audit trail of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 1994). The results of this study are presented in a narrative using thick, rich description. In-depth description of my results should guide the reader in deciding what may be applicable or common to other situations. An audit trail of data collection and analysis was maintained to provide an accurate and detailed record of the methods and the decisions made throughout the study. All phases of the study have been scrutinized by my university advisor, an experienced qualitative researcher.

### Reliability/Dependability

Reliability refers to the degree to which a study can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). In the traditional use of the term, a reliable study is based on the assumption of a

static reality; careful replication of the procedures used in a study should yield similar results in a subsequent study. In qualitative paradigms, where reality is assumed to be ever changing, this notion of reliability is re-interpreted. Boyatzis (1998) views reliability as “consistency of observation, labeling, and interpretation” (p. 144). Despite the qualitative assumption that reality cannot be re-created, there are occasions when the reader might need to replicate the study in order to extend the research, or apply it to another setting (Merriam, 1998). To do so the reader requires a blueprint of the study, procedures and methods which are clearly specified.

To enhance reliability, researcher bias, sample selection, data collection, and data analysis were presented in this chapter. An audit trail of documents, protocols, artifacts, and notes was maintained. Additionally, triangulation of data supports reliability as well as the validity of the study (Merriam, 1998).

### Ethical Considerations

All researchers have an ethical obligation to protect the rights and needs of the participants. Ethical considerations must be applied to all phases of qualitative research, from data collection to the dissemination of information (Merriam, 1998). The following safeguards were applied in this study:

1. Participants in interviews were given a written overview of the research to be conducted, including information on how the information would be used. The information was presented several days in advance of interview appointments (Appendix B).

2. Written consent was obtained from interviewees (Appendix C).
3. At observations of public meetings, one of two methods was used to inform participants. Depending on the size and nature of the meeting, either a verbal announcement was made as to the nature and intent of the observation, or a written summary, briefly stating the nature of the study, was e-mailed to the members of the school board before a meeting (Appendix D).
4. The specifications and procedures of this study were submitted to, and approved by, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Oklahoma State University (Appendix E).
5. Verbatim transcripts of interviews and all reports are available to the participants for review.
6. All audiotapes, verbatim transcripts, and field notes are secured in a locked cabinet for a minimum of two years, after which they will be destroyed.
7. Only my adviser will access the names of the families who participated in this study.

### Summary

This qualitative case study seeks to identify the cultural competencies needed for educators to better understand a military constituency. Cultural competence is defined as knowledge, attitudes, and skills which enable an individual or an agency to communicate

respect for cultural differences and practices (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). To investigate cultural competence as it might pertain to a military population, I researched the perceptions of families in a natural environment, an Air Force base overseas. As the researcher is the filter of data in a qualitative paradigm, I identified the personal beliefs and assumptions which may have shaped the way I collected and interpreted data. I believe that it is important for educators to understand the dynamics of the cultures they serve. I believe that military personnel have a culture that is distinct from civilian culture. A purposive, criterion-based sample of American Air Force personnel, parents of children attending DoDDS schools, was employed in this study. The setting was two overseas American Air Force bases in the United Kingdom. Data collected was obtained through semi-structured interviews with military families, observations of public school-board meetings and advisory committees, and by collection of documents. In this study the conceptual model of cultural competence provided the lens for coding and evaluating data. To enhance the study's internal validity the following strategies were used: triangulation of data, member checks, peer examination, long-term observations, and an examination of researcher bias. Strategies to promote external validity included the use of thick rich description, and a detailed audit trail of data collection and analysis. To support reliability, an audit trail of documents, protocols, artifacts, and notes was maintained. Ethical standards were considered in all phases of this study, from sample selection to the dissemination of information, in accordance with the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board of Oklahoma State University.

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### A Fog Delay

It was a dark and stormy night . . . but the morning was still and densely foggy. Such mornings are expected in an East Anglian winter, but the ice layering the roads and trees is uncommon. Usually Ian rode his bike to school. Today, warned his mother, the sidewalk was too icy and the visibility too poor. They would walk. Ordinarily he might argue. He could see fine. But, no bother, the day was already special. The weather was weird, and school was delayed by two hours, a fog delay.

Ian's elementary school is almost evenly divided between "walkers" and "busers." Walkers live in the much-coveted base housing. Busers live scattered across three eastern counties, villages networked by a spider web of country roads, barely suited for buses, dangerous in fog. When fog settles low and deep, all school buses run two hours late in this American Air Force community. It is a special day, even for walkers, who technically, have no impediment to starting on time.

Ian would love to be a buser. Two years in school and he has never ridden a bus, except on occasional field trip. Like most families newly assigned to England, Ian's family lived in a local village for two years, patiently moving up the waiting list for base



housing. His sisters had been busers, but Ian was too small for school then. Not fair.

“Maybe,” says Ian’s mother; “there are busers who wish they could ride a bike to school.”

Ian is curious about fog. What makes it? His mother can’t remember, but she can recite a poem about fog. “What cat feet?” Ian is seven and literal. However, he does see poetry, noticing the iced hedges along the sidewalk and the hundreds of spider webs gilded silver-white. It’s cool to think how many spiders are about, hiding when the day is warm.

Nearly to school now, a block to go. The fog shows the first signs of thinning. It happens quickly once it starts, almost slight-of-hand. Turning the corner Ian can make out the gate guards across the road checking cars onto the base. The cars seem backed up. “Is it still Alpha<sup>3</sup>?” he asks. He knows that Baghdad<sup>4</sup> was bombed a few days before. Like many of his classmates with military parents, Ian has a rudimentary understanding of “the news.” He prefers the cartoon channel, but he knows about CNN.

As Ian and his mother reach the school. Ian darts ahead the last few yards and into the building. The restraint of walking has finally got to him. He waits for his mother, who is delayed at the door for a security check. In the foyer he says goodbye. Ian is glad enough for his mother’s company on the way to school, but often discourages her from walking him to his classroom. A manhood thing. He gives her a perfunctory kiss, at the same time reaching out and grabbing the coat sleeve of a passing friend. He and Stephen hustle away in that Olympic-style, barely pedestrian, walk that appeases most grownups.

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<sup>3</sup> The lowest security alert status, meaning systems are normal.

<sup>4</sup> On February 16, 2001, Two dozen U.S. and British aircraft bombed sites around Baghdad in the first military action of the Bush administration (Washington Post).

They hurry because today is a very special day in Mrs. Gowan's room. The package from Tuzla has arrived.

The package from Tuzla wasn't the only one that had come. There had been another, and some letters. Jawan's dad had sent the last package, from Kuwait. It was Mrs. Gowan's idea to send packages to the parents who were deployed, a Christmas project for her first graders. There had been only three dads gone then, two in Bosnia and one in Kuwait. The children had written cards, letters, made cookies, taken photos, and stuffed care packages with assorted candies and decorations. There were supplies for the deployed dads and their tent mates. Packages were accompanied by a list of questions, "Have you seen any camels?" and instructions to write back.

Mrs. Gowan makes a big deal of the letters from what she calls the "TDY<sup>5</sup> Dads." Like many early childhood teachers, she does a great buildup. "I wonder what Jawan's dad has to tell us about Tuzla? Do you think he liked our Christmas package?" Ian can tell that Jawan is eating up the attention. Today he is special. It's his dad's letter that they are sharing. Jawan's dad talks about what he does to help the people in Tuzla. He describes what he eats in the mess hall, and then he describes the animals he has seen (in response to questions from the class). No camels in Tuzla, but some goats, and lots of skinny cats and dogs.

If Ian were aware of the concept of irony, he might recognize it in this situation. His father works in intelligence and has been deployed over a third of Ian's life, probably more of a TDY Dad than any father in the class. Yet Ian's dad won't be spotlighted. His

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<sup>5</sup> Temporary duty. Special assignment away from permanent duty station.

missions are classified. He isn't able to discuss where he goes or what he does. He can't send letters or packages from an unidentified place. What fun would that be? Still, Ian is a good sport. Jawan proudly walks around the room displaying a photo of his dad and his tentmates, all smiling for the camera. Ian takes a good long look.

Today is a good day. The fog has lifted. It's outdoor recess, even with the ice.

#### Interview with Ian

Ian is the youngest child in the first of the ten families I interviewed for this study. His parents allowed me to have a brief separate interview. Like Ian, many of the children in this district have parents who work in special operations which routinely run classified missions. I wondered what a bright seven-year-old understands about a secret military job.

Keegan - What can you tell me about what your dad does?

Ian - Well he works in the 48<sup>th</sup> Air Force squadron and sometimes he goes down to Saudi Arabia. They need to figure out, I can't pronounce his name, cuz there's this bad guy. He got heat stroke. It was on the news. They try to figure out how to stop him from murdering anybody else, but they keep sending people down there to figure it out. Cuz it doesn't seem to work with those people.

Keegan - So your dad goes all the way down there? Does your dad go other places?

Ian - Yes.

Keegan - Do you know what your dad does exactly? Does he fly in planes?

Ian - He used to fly in planes, but now he watches the news and stuff.

Keegan - He watches the news. That's part of his job?

Ian - Yeah. He has to tell the commander what's going on.

Keegan - I hear that your dad is a linguist. What does that mean?

Ian - Well, it's a job he has. It's one of the higher ranking jobs, not the lower ranking jobs. There's higher ranks and low ranks and some people with high ranks want low rank jobs so they don't have to work so hard.

Keegan - What does a linguist do exactly?

Ian - I don't know.

Keegan - There's a lot about your dad's job that he can't tell you. Is that right?

Ian - Yeah.

Keegan - Why is that?

Ian - Because some people can't tell about their jobs cuz it can do stuff, like it can spread and it could get in the hands of people who could tell stuff.

Keegan - Your dad works for intelligence doesn't he? Special operations? Do you know what that means?

Ian - It's that he does real high works and things that he can't tell other people about. So that's why he doesn't tell me what he does. I don't know

what he does but I've been to his work . . . it isn't normally where you would be. It doesn't have windows.

### Ten Families

Ten families, nineteen individuals, participated in interviews for this study. The families were selected, snowball fashion, as individuals who would be experts in military life overseas, and knowledgeable about Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS).

#### Family One: Kris and Debbie

I was glad that Debbie asked to interview in their home. I am intrigued by base housing, particularly by the innovations to make up for so little space. There are only a few floor plans, all boxy and unimaginative by American standards. I guess this three bedroom semi-detached has about 1000 square feet. I sit in a room and think, "What would I do with this space?" Debbie has arranged the small livingroom simply with just enough furniture to sit and converse comfortably. I notice the absence of knick-knacks and collectibles, no Lladros or Hummels, ubiquitous in military homes. Most unique, for an American home and family of five, there is no media altar, only a tiny 12-inch television set at an awkward viewing angle.

Debbie and Kris have been a military family for 22 years. He is a master sergeant who currently works in intelligence. Kris is an Arabic linguist and is frequently TDY. In fact, he seemed to be the most frequently deployed of any active duty personnel in this

sample. Most of his work is classified and cannot be discussed with his family. Kris is one of four adults in this sample who also grew up in a military home. He joined the Air Force three years after his father retired.

Kris and Debbie have three children, a first grader, an eighth grader, and a twelfth grader, in three of the district's schools. They have had two consecutive European assignments and therefore have a cumulative ten years of experience with DoDDS schools. Debbie does not work outside the home, partly due to Kris's deployment schedule. She has been active in support of the schools and currently sits as a committee member on the School Advisory Committee for one of the elementary schools.

We started the interview with technological difficulties. Electrical outlets are rarely conveniently located in these homes. Debbie made coffee while Kris searched for ways to power the tape recorder. In the end we chose batteries. It was a lesson for me. For all subsequent interviews I carried batteries and an extension cord.

Debbie and Kris are both friendly and outgoing; one of those couples who look like they grew up in the same family, matching each other's sandy coloring. The three children were banished upstairs, remarkably quiet. Only once did Ian, the seven-year-old, venture in the room, tiptoeing across the floor, using a stage whisper to talk to his mother. Debbie, who is usually talkative, seemed a little nervous to be tape-recorded. Kris took the lead in answering most of the questions, Debbie adding details and post scripts. She told me later that she hoped Kris had not given opinions that were "too strong."

This was a great family for my first interview. The atmosphere was warm and relaxed. The coffee was good, and they took my tape-recorder fumbling in stride.

### Family Two: Brad and Wanda

I interviewed Wanda in her home on a Sunday afternoon. Her husband, Brad, a Lt. Colonel and a squadron commander in Special Operations, was preparing for a mission and unable to attend. Brad and Wanda have two daughters, one in high school, and one in the middle school. They have been a military family for 20 years and have had four years of experience with DoDDS schools.

I met Wanda at a teacher inservice prepared by the local military command. She and Jeff (my 8<sup>th</sup> interviewed family) were participants in a panel discussion on stress and military families. When I approached her about interviewing, she was very enthusiastic. "I'm just glad to know you take this seriously."

Wanda is well-organized. I could tell that by her home. The rooms are simple, but decorated, the furniture arranged for effect and comfort. We sat in the livingroom, my tape recorder on the coffee table, along with her notes. Notes, the first indication she was serious about this interview. She explained that she liked to organize her thoughts. Since her husband and daughters could not attend, she had solicited comments from them in advance. The more Wanda talked about her multiple roles as a squadron commander's wife, the more I understood this need for organization.

Wanda was perhaps one of my most informative interviewees. In appearance she is, what I imagine, the stereotypic officer wife: pretty, petite, blond, with a preppy look in casual dress. She is also passionate and opinionated. It is clear that she is committed to the duties of commander's wife, and operates on a schedule nearly as demanding as her husband's. Although Wanda is not active duty herself, she considers herself an important

part of her husband's career. It seems like a clerical relationship, she with the unpaid duties of a minister's wife. The analogy holds, for Wanda's mission in supporting the families of her husband's squadron is distinctly pastoral. Certainly, she is an unofficial head mother or social worker. It was disconcerting to hear a woman, only in her early forties, speak as if she was an old grandmother. However, part of the youth-oriented military culture is accepting that you advance to the older generation more quickly than in the civilian world.

At the conclusion of our interview, which lasted nearly two hours, Wanda volunteered information which would help me find other families to interview.

#### Family Three: Dave and Angie

I have known Angie for several years. She is one of my favorite teachers in the elementary schools, positive and down-to-earth. Angie grew up in an Air Force family and has attended the same DoDDS schools in which she now works. Her husband, Dave, is a master sergeant who works in a maintenance squadron, servicing aircraft. He has 16 years in the military. Angie and Dave are a blended family with two children who have graduated from DoDDS schools, a son currently in high school, and a daughter in third grade. As a family they have had eight years experience with DoDDS.

Angie asked to be interviewed in her classroom. We sat in second grade desks, Dave, a tall man, positioning sidesaddle for legroom. I had only met Dave on a few occasions. He seemed quiet and less outgoing than Angie. At the beginning of the



interview I thought I might not get much out of him. In fact, Dave warmed quickly to the topic, and perhaps surprised us both by taking the lead.

The interview was relaxed once started, despite the physical discomfort of furniture designed for seven-year-olds. We laughed at the numerous interruptions, all caught on tape, including the amazingly oblivious intrusion of a cleaning woman, who propped her vacuum cleaner next to the tape recorder and turned it on.

#### Family Four: Mark and Shelly, Dual Career

Mark and Shelly are a dual career couple. Mark is a captain, a protestant chaplain. His wife Shelly is an active duty hospital nurse and also a captain. They are relative newcomers to the military with seven years experience. Mark served in the reserves for several years before going active duty, which included a remote tour in Korea. This is the family's first assignment overseas together. Mark and Shelly have four children, a son recently graduated, and three daughters in the sixth, eighth, and eleventh grades.

Mark asked that we interview in the chapel, a convenient walk from the hospital, where Shelly could meet us after her shift. I had scheduled this interview a month in advance because it was difficult to find a time when their schedules could intersect (a problem they discuss at length in their interview). We met in a chapel conference room. Shelly joined us in her BDU's<sup>6</sup>, looking tired, as if she had rushed over to be on time.

These are nice people. There is no reserve or affectation, the type of people who make you feel at ease. Having lived 16 years in Europe, I have come to appreciate the

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<sup>6</sup> Battle dress uniform, everyday camouflage uniform.

sincerity of American hospitality. Americans are uniquely friendly, without pretense, or suspicion. Mark and Shelly exude this. I found myself thinking, “How long have I really known these people?”

I found the interview with Mark and Shelly to be one of the most interesting. The situation of a dual-career military couple is truly complex. Both were articulate. It was interesting that the transcription of Mark’s conversation reads like the written word. It is a rare quality to speak spontaneously with this clarity. It made me wonder if he writes down his sermons.

#### Family Five: John and Sherry

Sherry is someone I instantly liked. She has an elfish grin, a window to a great sense of humor. I had seen her about the elementary school, but until these interviews I had not known her name. Sherry and her husband, John, were recommended by Angie, who had taught one of their five children. With children in the first, third, sixth, and seventh grades, plus one at home; they have had multiple experiences with DoDDS schools spanning ten years and two overseas assignments. In fact, Sherry, confided that she had been a teacher in DoDDS herself for one year in the Philippines, before meeting and marrying John. “You were a DoDDS Dolly<sup>7</sup>?” I joked. “Only for a year, but I got out and married a fighter pilot. I was lucky.” We laughed, sharing that Dolly days were well past us.

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<sup>7</sup> An affectionate slang term for single female teachers who frequent the officer’s club.

Sherry was interviewed in my school office during lunch. She was volunteering in her daughter's classroom and agreed to drop by before going home. John was unable to attend at the last minute. He is a fighter pilot, a Lt. Colonel, and the wing safety officer. John has 20 years of military experience. The family is due to PCS<sup>8</sup> at the end of the school year. Shortly after this interview, John was deployed to Saudi Arabia for 90 days, leaving Sherry to arrange the move and find housing at their next assignment. Running into Sherry weeks later, discovering that our children had a mutual piano teacher, she greeted me with, "Ok, now I can really tell you about stress in the military."

#### Family Six: Eb and Dana

Eb and Dana also chose to be interviewed in my office. Eb is a Lt. Colonel and an F-15 pilot with 18 years in the Air Force. Dana is a homemaker and an active parent volunteer in the elementary school. They have two children, a son in the ninth grade, and a daughter in the third grade. Their children have been in DoDDS schools for three years.

My first thought as we began the interview was that I need to get some grown up furniture for my office. The three of us sat around my student-size table. Dana and I could just manage in the chairs. Eb, who probably tops six feet, looked uncomfortable. At first I thought that Eb might be difficult to interview. He seemed rather flat in affect, smiling little. But I was wrong. Eb was the dominant talker and a good interview. Dana appeared content to take a backseat.

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<sup>8</sup> Permanent change of station. A term for moving to next assignment.

### Family Seven: Keri and Kerry

Interviewing Kerry was a bit like interviewing Sergeant Friday from Dragnet. He liked to give “just the facts” and seemed uncomfortable when asked for his opinions. Kerry is a master sergeant working in security with 19 years in the Air Force, and a military brat himself. At one point I wondered what his wife, Keri, had to promise to get him to do this. I had set up the interview through her. Keri seemed to function as the spokesperson for both, usually initiating the response. When questioned he would usually wait for her to start, or look to her mid-sentence as if to say, “Now you finish this up for me.” I wondered if it was more a question of turf. He deferred to her on all questions related to school, as this was her field. However, as with most of the interviews, although never loquacious, Kerry loosened up quite a bit.

Kerry and Keri, the couple with matching names, have two teenage children who have spent many years in DoDDS schools in two overseas assignments. Keri is a special education teacher currently working for DoDDS. She is also a “Key Spouse,” a helper and support contact for younger wives in her husband’s squadron. This particular role is discussed further under support networks in Chapter V.

A month after this interview Kerry was deployed for 90 days to Macedonia. The family had 24-hour notice to make arrangements.

### Family Eight: Jeff. Single Parent

Jeff said he would meet me in my office at 3:30. Arriving precisely on time, he breezed in wearing his flight suit, and carrying six pages of tightly scribbled notes. As he

fanned out his papers on the table before him, I joked that it was an interview and not a homework assignment. "I just didn't want to forget anything." Within minutes I could tell that Jeff is a high-energy kind of guy. He talks quickly and fidgets. Jeff is personable and funny, but intense. As I check the tape recorder he reminds me that according to the UCMJ<sup>9</sup> he will be unable to discuss some things, particularly anything disparaging to the American government.

Jeff was recommended by Wanda who had participated with him in a panel discussion on military family issues. He is a master sergeant, a survival instructor, one of only 250 in the Air Force who specialize in survival evasion, assistance and escape. He is divorced and has custody of his 10-year-old son who is in the fourth grade. Jeff has been a spokesperson on base for single-parent issues. He is an active supporter of the schools and currently sits as an alternate on the newly formed district school board.

#### Family Nine: Richard and Rhonda

Rhonda invited me to be interviewed in their home. I know the house well, having dropped off my 14-year-old daughter here for numerous slumber parties. We have daughters in the same class at school. However, this was the first time I had really sat in their house, and in my informal survey of base house interior decorating, I mentally award Richard and Rhonda a prize. In this tiny diningroom/livingroom space they have positioned a baby grand piano. Amazingly, the room does not look overcrowded. I tell Rhonda she should write a book on interior design for military. Then I wonder how easy

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<sup>9</sup> Uniformed Code of Military justice.

it has been to ship a grand piano through their six moves, including three assignments overseas.

Richard has been in the Air Force for 20 years and is currently a master sergeant, a munitions systems specialist. Rhonda works in one of the district elementary schools as a teacher aide. They have two daughters, one a senior in high school, and the other in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Of the 20 years as a military family, 13 years have been assignments overseas. Both daughters have attended DoDDS schools for the past ten years.

#### Family Ten: Geoff and Wendy

Geoff and Wendy were also interviewed in their home. No grand piano here, the furniture is arranged for function, the décor is simple. There are collectibles, porcelain cottages centralized in a glass display cabinet (these cabinets are a big item in the base furniture store). Everything appears neat and organized. I am learning to recognize the homes of career military people. Keep things simple. Minimize the furniture. Pack up every three years.

Geoff has 15 years of active duty and is a specialist in electronics, now working as a manpower analyst for the Special Operations Group. Growing up in a military family, Geoff attended 14 schools before he graduated from high school. Wendy works at the base commissary. They have two daughters in high school who have attended DoDDS schools for a total of five years, in two different assignments. Geoff and Wendy have been active in support of the high school sports program.

## Parameters of Competence: The Findings

The domains and themes found in research with other cultural groups were used to organize and present the findings of this study. For clarity of presentation the data appears in the following groupings: government issue (duty versus job), moving, deployment, stresses caused by demanding schedules, stresses of living in a foreign culture, issues surrounding the availability of leave, and support networks for military families. These represent the general topics which were discussed commonly by participants in the interviews.

I begin facetiously. Before presenting the actual groups of findings, I present a fictitious domain, “military speak,” merely to demonstrate that military people use a great deal of insider language unknown to civilians. In research with many cultural groups, issues of language appear as a domain of knowledge. This was not the case in my study. In the military, American English is the common language. However, to be a civilian teacher in a military culture requires some understanding of their mixture of acronyms, idioms, and slang.

### Language Barriers: Military Speak

Consider the following conversation at a parent meeting regarding a special education student.

Teacher - Sergeant, we're going to miss Tanya. We didn't realize you were so short.

Sergeant - Yeah, we PCS next week. The Flintstones go back tomorrow, then TLF.

Teacher - Did you turn in the IEP to EFMP?

Sergeant - Yep, we're cleared for Cannon.

A glossary of military speak for terms commonly used by participants, or referenced in quotes and dialogues appears below:

AEF - Aerospace Expeditionary Force

BDUs - Battle Dress Uniform

Cannon - Cannon Air Force Base in New Mexico.

EFMP - Exceptional Family Member Program. Military program to aid families with special needs children to find appropriate assignments.

Flintstones - Local slang for boxy military furniture loaned to families after household goods are shipped, or before received.

Opstempo - Operations tempo

PCS - Permanent Change of Station. Moving to next assignment.

Short - Slang term for nearing end of assignment.

TDY - Temporary Duty

TLF - Temporary Living Facilities

UCMJ - Uniform Code of Military Justice

USAFE - United States Air Force Europe

To begin seriously examining the domains of knowledge presented in this study, a principle theme of "government-issue" is a good place to start. The sponsor, or active-



duty member of the family, is government property, with fewer rights of citizenship than a civilian.

### Government Issue: Duty Versus Job

This is the GI Jive, man alive!

It starts with a bugler blowin' reveille over you head

When you arrive.

Jack, that's the GI Jive.

Root-te-toot-toot. Jump in your suit.

Make a salute! Zoot! (Johnny Mercer with Paul Weston and his Orchestra,

Capitol Records, 1943)

Participants in the interviews stated that it was especially important for civilians to understand that military duty is more than a "job." Families do not come first in the military. Over 40 statements relating to government ownership, or military duty over family, were collected. The following statements provide a representative sample:

Jeff - A lot of people don't understand about the military, that we actually waive constitutional rights of the United States. We have above and beyond regular civil laws. We have the UCMJ, Uniform Code of Military Justice. For example, we can't call in sick. If you call in sick, you go to jail. To call in sick you have to see a doctor. He has to call your commander.

Wanda - We don't go in and punch a clock and leave when it's done... We get calls during the night. Our lives can be interrupted.

Kerry - They [the school] will say they need you to do this or that with your son, and you are either sound asleep or unavailable. The school didn't understand that I couldn't come at the drop of a hat.

Mark - One of the changes from civilian life...people like Shelly [his wife, an active duty hospital nurse] who work shifts, long days, get called in on time off, all the time, for mandatory briefings. There is no income adjustment, no overtime. They don't pay extra.

Jeff - I don't think teachers understand that we have the UCMJ, that we can't just leave work because Johnny is sick. The military guy is between a rock and a hard place. He gets a call, child is sick, can't be at school any more. Ok, I'm in the middle of doing a bunch of briefings. I can't just walk out. I understand the schools position. It isn't their problem either, but I can't walk out. If I walk out I get in trouble, and if I don't walk out I'm in trouble for not taking care of my dependent. I'm screwed either way. So I think they need to understand that it isn't a 9- to-5 civilian job.

One of the consequences of being owned by the government is accepting a lifestyle which requires families to uproot and move frequently. The Department of defense moves 700,000 service members and their families around the world every year (Williams, 2000). Issues around moving were presented by every family interviewed.

### Moving: The PCS

An Air Force brat has many homes  
As 'cross the globe the family roams.  
It must be done with minimal tears and moans,  
Because an Air Force brat has many homes.

Rhea Knight Grade 10<sup>10</sup>

In the United States Air Force the average family moves every three to four year. For dependent children with a school career of 12 years this usually means four to five schools. Although the American population as a whole is increasingly mobile, and relocation is common in many lifestyles, the option to move is ultimately voluntary. To remain in Mayberry is not an option for career military. "Moving" is a given for military families. The acceptance of this nomadic lifestyle is a prominent feature of this culture

Jeff - A Military person has to move about every three years, so you can imagine the stress that has on the family, going from the known to the unknown. You get a new house. You know the stress of moving, the boxes, getting it all together. Is it going to make it there? We are not moving across the city. We are moving 5-6000 mile away.

Moving, and the ramifications of frequently uprooting a family, appeared across interviews, observations, and document analysis. Data related to moving is grouped into several sub-themes. It appeared as a concern in each of the 12 family interviews with

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<sup>10</sup> Poem written by a high school student and presented here with her permission.

remarkable consistency. Moving was identified as a “unique” feature of military culture, as both an “disadvantage” and an “advantage” of the lifestyle, and as a major source of stress.

In observations of school board meetings and of school advisory meetings, the impact of moving came up several times. For example, the school board is investigating the possibility of hiring special drug and alcohol counselors for the secondary schools. This was presented as a special need for military children because they are believed to experience additional stresses. The specific stress was attributed to the impact of moving and deployments.

#### Moving as a Unique Feature of Military Life

Frequent moves were described by all interviewed families as one of the unique features of military culture. With the statistics asserting the increasing mobility of the American culture, a nomadic existence is not exclusive to military families. Many American school children attend several schools throughout their educational careers. However, interviewees point out that frequent moving is unique to military culture because it is required of everyone and is not optional. Military families do not choose their assignments. They have limited power to determine where and when they go. As Rhonda explains: “Well, we don’t willy nilly decide. The Air Force doesn’t call and say ‘Hey, would it be great for you to be moving in April?’”

### Moving as a Disadvantage and Stressor

Moving was cited as a major disadvantage of the military lifestyle. Data is presented in three major subgroups: impact on children and schooling, loss of family network and support, and loss of friendships.

Negative Impact of Moving on Children. The negative impact upon children was cited by all of the families interviewed. Sherry, Eb, Geoff, and Wendy suggest that frequent moves are hardest on older children.

Eb - I think it becomes more of a disadvantage as your children get older. The traveling experience in general...we hope will be beneficial to them later on. But the changing school thing? A kid with friends is a difficult thing. It's one of those things you are not going to realize how lucky you are until you are older, at least I hope that's going to happen to them.

Sherry - The little guys are easy. They go wherever I go. Predominantly it is Katy. She is growing up and doesn't want to leave people. I think it is more difficult for Katy.

Geoff - Like I said, my dad retired when I was seventeen, and we moved between my junior and senior year. So I started senior year in a new school in a new state, and that's hard. I think it's all right to move around, but when they get to high school it is important they can spend 3-4 years at one school.

Several, as in the quotes below, emphasized that the impact of being uprooted effects some children more than others. All of the families interviewed had two or more children. Mark, Eb, and Wendy noted that some children, depending on age and temperament, were more sensitive to moves.

Mark - I will have to say, having four kids, four different temperaments, it's harder on some kids than others. I look at our kids, and for a couple of them this is no big deal. It's great. For some others this is really hard, not a good lifestyle for them. It is a sacrifice that you are making for your kids. You can't dictate their temperament. You can't make it work.

Eb - We have noticed the difference in our son with each successive move has been fine. He has always adapted well. But each move has been a little tougher on him.

Wendy - That's what we wanted for the girls. If they could go from ninth to twelfth, they'd be established, the teachers would know them . . . But Daphne . . . it was a little harder on her. It took her longer. On Monday she came home and cried. We said, "There are 800 kids in that school. Can't you find a friend?" Thursday, I made them ride the bus. When she drove up on the bus I could see this smile. She said, "I've got some friends! I made a friend!"

Loss of Family Support. Another disadvantage of the life style attributed to the impact of frequent moves was the lack of family support and continuity of an American community.

Mark - It is giving up those personal rights that most civilians don't think twice about. Flowing from there are the major things, probably being assigned a long way from family support,...and moving so often you don't have that much time in one place.

Jeff - You are moving away from family, support groups, for some people their parents. They don't have them just to call anymore.

Keri - Younger people now are more like we need to be home with mom and dad. Maybe it's the first time they've left home. It is hard the first time you go. It's very difficult.

Loss of Friendships. Loss of friendships was another theme related to moving which was labeled as a disadvantage and cause of stress. The impact of leaving old friends and the stress of finding new ones was mentioned in nine of the ten family interviews. In fact, the impact of moving as it pertained to leaving friends was mentioned far more than the stress of leaving family support. Here adults acknowledge the impact of moving on their own lives as well as the social impact upon their children.

Wanda - There is the making new friends again, leaving the friends that you have, the psychology of going to a new place, making friends, fully knowing that you are going to leave them. I hear this a lot from the wives. It is hard. You can have friends, but you can't have a best friend, as you know you are leaving. Their best friends grow old together. They are playing bridge in the retirement home. You don't get that in the military. That causes stress.

Kris - [regarding his wife] I used to notice something about her. When we got to a new place it would take her six months to a year before she settled in. By the time we got to the point of leaving, she didn't want to leave, and would cry about leaving. It always took a while. So there is a threshold you have to go past before you are comfortable.

Debbie - I think I got used to it. It was hard in the beginning. ... We did feel it, but we just may be numbed by it. It has happened so much to us now.

Interestingly, although moving was cited as a disadvantage to military family life, it was also identified in each of the ten interviews as an advantage or benefit of the lifestyle.

### Moving as an Advantage

The ten families were remarkably consistent in their explanations regarding the advantages of frequent moves. Each family remarked on both of the following themes: opportunities of travel, and positive character development in children.

Opportunities and Benefits of Travel. The families interviewed frequently stated that moving in the military provided wonderful opportunities to travel and to see the world. Below are some representative quotes:

Kris - [advantages of military life?] I think travel, to see the world. We have spent 15 years living in Europe and we've taken advantage of that.



Angie - We did French class and might have had a French meal, but our kids go to Paris. Their passports are chock full. They get a lot more opportunities to travel, and they take advantage of it.

Geoff - I think as a military family you have more opportunity to see different things. If we were civilians we wouldn't have come here, except on vacation, but it would have been a slim chance.

Jeff - It is a pretty neat adventure to be able to see a foreign country like England, Germany, Japan, all the different countries we have bases in. I have a ten-year-old son...when he gets back to the United States and they are teaching history, he can raise his hand. "I've been there, done that!"

Mark - [advantage?] One is the reward that we are enjoying here, to live in another country, the chance to go and see the sights of Europe or Asia, or wherever you might be stationed.

Keri - I think one of the great opportunities of being a military family is the travel. Our kids have been to Europe. They've been in different areas of the United States, places we would never have gone if it weren't for the military. Our children love to travel.

Moving, Travel and Character Development in Children. Interviewees believed that moving and the opportunities of travel promote positive characteristics in children. Dave, Keri, and Mark state that military children are in general more "worldly" than their civilian counterparts.

Dave - You can tell the difference, not necessarily in everybody, but most you can tell the difference. They [military children] have seen more of the world. You open a book and it's like "I've been there!" I think our kids see more global. They see more culture. You have a bigger view of the world. You see that people do not live like you do. People speak different languages. They have different cultures. They wear different clothes.

Keri - When we went back to a small town, the kids were amazed. They were amazed that people could live in one place for so long, their whole lives, and never experience any other cultures. They were appalled, in a way, because of the narrow mindedness.

Mark - It does impact your kids in a positive way. We put Paige on the shuttle. She got to the airport, navigated the airport, got to Dallas, made the connection. She got to Portland and then did the whole thing in reverse, never really having flown alone. I wouldn't have tried that at sixteen.

Many of those interviewed stated that military children are more adaptable, more aware of the world, more accepting of differences in people and lifestyles, and more independent than civilian children.

Geoff - The thing about military kids is that they are a lot more willing to accept people into their group.

Wendy - I think it [moving] has been good for them. It has prepared them more. They change. They know how to go in, meet new people, give and take more, I think.

Sherry - The kids are used to people showing up. It's not like these kids have gone to school together since second grade, known each other. Then you show up in ninth grade and you are an outsider...that is a positive, that helps kids adapt a bit. They learn flexibility. You have to be flexible, as you have no choice. You have to go to your next class, have to try to meet new people, and I think it makes them better as they grow older.

Angie - I think the experience for kids, part of the frequent moves, coming to new areas, is that they are mixing with a tremendous variety of people in the military and the flexibility that builds into kids.

Mark - I think it might be like any investment. If you look in the long term there is a real positive about frequent moves. Nobody sees that in the short term. What they see is tearing yourself away from your friends every two years, always having to be the new kid, always starting over. The positive is that you also have a very real view of life.

Wanda - I think my girls have learned great character. They know they have roots in what they believe, what they think, because it is questioned. Every time you move you have to prove who you are.

Jeff - They [kids] do learn what I would call self-advocacy . . . because they learn adaptation principles . . . They may not like it. They have to

deal with it and make the best of it. In the long run they are better prepared for life. They have traveled. They've adjusted. They've adapted.

Dave - I'm really proud of the kids that they don't see the color barriers.

They see kids. If they want to be friends with someone, they are friends with them, The only determining factor is similar interests.

Additionally, three of the families had older children in college. Each of these families reported that the military lifestyle, particularly the moving and opportunities for travel, was an advantage to leaving home and going to college.

Rhonda - When Steph goes off to college, I'm not worried. She has had so much exposure to so many different things. She is more adaptable, I think, than somebody who has lived in one place all of her life, much more accepting.

Dave - The kids when they go to college, they accept people easier. They have been put in that situation in the military.

Jeff - The military child is probably less effected, less traumatized when they graduate to go to college and that type of thing, because they've been out there. Civilian Johnny getting out of high school and going to college out of state, or out of city, that's a lot of adjusting. Not to a military kid, it's just another thing.

Mark - The starting over, the having to prove yourself every time, is what you do at college, it is almost preparatory. You do it when you go to college and it is not so bad. It is actually good.

## Deployment

What is it that families wish civilian educators to understand about deployment in the military? In the interviews more information was collected regarding deployment than any other theme. More than 60 quotations dealing with aspects of deployment were obtained. The impact of deployment was not seen as any kind of advantage to family or to military life in general. Although it is often discussed in terms of duty, and with carry-on spirit, all of the interviewees labeled deployment as a stressor and disadvantage of the lifestyle.

Within the broad area of deployment the data is presented in several sub groupings: The Big Picture (High Frequency), Deployment and Type of Job, Deployment and Impact on Families, and Deployment and Single Parent/Dual Career Families.

### The Big Picture: High Frequency

In the last 15 years military deployment has increased by 300% (CSIS, 2000). Each of the families interviewed, with one exception, reported extensive experience with deployment. The one exception, Geoff, who works as a manpower analyst, has experienced little more than a month away from his family in a 15-year career. Geoff points out, however, that he is highly unusual in this regard, and does not represent the people in his shop. The following experiences are more typical:

Sherry - He [her husband, John] went to the Kosovo crisis. He was down there for four months. He has been deployed on and off our whole time

here. He was gone for the longest time ever to the Greek Islands, eight months.

Rhonda - There are times when somebody will say my husband is TDY, and I don't think it's a big deal, because I realize this is day 200 out of 270 that my own husband will be gone.

Eb - There was a deployment to Turkey right after we got here. We got here in August. There was a 90-day deployment where half the squadron was gone. They got back in January. Then some of them, less than one month later, had gone for six months to Kosovo.

Jeff - I would say the standard for a three year tour here at [Base One], talking from an air crew perspective, you get at least one 45 to 90 day deployment a year, on average . . . with special ops [special operations] group over at [Base Two]; some of these guys are deployed in excess of 200 days per year. They are gone!

In these interviews Kris appeared to be the award winner as the parent most chronically deployed, and Keri, a 20-year military spouse, reflects on the system wide changes in military life in the last decade

Kris - I deployed for the last eight to nine years, every year at least six months.

Keri - What was strange for us was that we went through the first year until the 17<sup>th</sup> year with rare times apart. It was just training classes, and

then all of a sudden he went to Cuba, and then to Korea. We got here and within six months he was gone to Bosnia.

Four weeks after this interview Keri's husband, Kerry, was one of the first to leave for Macedonia. He had 24-hour notice for this three-month deployment.

#### Deployment and the Type of Job: Frequency,

#### Secrecy, Short Notice

In an attempt to manage the demands of the increasing tempo of operations for its servicemen, the Air Force has reorganized into 15 expeditionary forces, AEFs, or Aerospace Expeditionary Forces. Ten AEFs are for combat support. Five are organized for airlift. The AEFs were created as a management tool to help share the burden of deployment across active duty and reserve and to make 90-day deployments more predictable. In theory it will increase the number of individuals deployed system wide, and create a more orderly, shortened, and predictable deployment.

The AEF program is only in its second year. A common reaction by the active duty interviewees in this sample, the majority of whom have had considerable *unpredictable* deployment, was cautious optimism. The interviewees agreed that some jobs remain more deployable than others, with or without the AEF program. It is important to understand where the active duty sponsor is employed. Certain jobs will be mission crucial. Many individuals employed in special operations, for example, have intense deployment schedules and classified missions. The medical group is also excessively deployed.

Shelly - It [deployment] depends on what you do. If you work with F-15 fighter jets, it's a good probability it will happen.

Jeff - The hospital people are heavily deployed. You have some people in the support agencies that aren't deployed so much. That's what really makes it busy around here. You have all these people deployed at any one time, and the job back here still has to go on.

Mark - We are both [husband and wife] in primary deployment status. In our case, being both military, they made it clear that the needs of the Air Force would come before their honoring our request to be together.

Wanda - Generally speaking, certain jobs don't deploy. Certainly if you are in the communications squadron back in the States you may not deploy much. If you are in the com squadron here you have to go. It's not always just the flyers. There are a whole lot of job descriptions that you wouldn't believe have to go.

Several of the interviewees, Kris, Eb, Richard, Kerry, and Dave, mentioned the Air Expeditionary Force scheme specifically. Below they explain their thoughts on how the reorganization will impact working servicemen and women.

Kris - There are low density jobs in the Air Force, meaning a fairly rare job who are not a part of an expedition, but you still have to do deployments periodically, all of the time. It will have no effect at all.

Eb - The AEF deployment is getting all kinds of publicity. You would have to be deaf, dumb, and blind to not know that this is going to happen,



which is good. but I want to stress we have people going all of the time, from this shop, that shop, that get zero publicity. Nobody knows about it.

Richard - Our personnel move around too quick...there would be too much fluctuation of personnel to make it worth while. At least, from what I have seen so far.

Kerry - It's [AEF program] getting better...it is almost a scheduled process whereby every 15 months you are scheduled.

Dave - Even though they went to the AEF, all that means is that you are scheduled for something, but you still have a lot of in between. You don't ever know, the world is always up and down. The kids don't know if you'll be there for Christmas this year for sure or not.

Interviewees commented that it was also important to know *where* a person worked in the Air Force, to understand that many parents work under restrictions of secrecy. As many missions are classified, personnel are unable to confide in their families and feel that this results in the added burden of uncertainty in their children.

Jeff - A lot of the time we can't tell our family, our wives, where we are going. It is classified. We can't tell them what we are going to do when we get there . . . You can't tell your family where you are at, that frustrates your children. Hey, Johnny, I'm going to be ok. I can't tell you where I'm going, or when I'm coming back, or what I'm going to do. But it's going to be all right.

Wanda - We've got real smart over the years. We can look at the news and think "Cold gear? Cold climate. What's going on?" Hot gear? Hot climate." There is a lot even to this day that can't be talked about . . . As family members it makes a difference. You know that dad is in DC on TDY, or dad has gone to Germany to shoot some approaches. Versus my daughters can come home from school and dad has left, or wake up and dad has left.

Despite the AEF's purpose in making deployment more predictable, the interviewees stressed that it was important for civilians to understand that, for certain kinds of jobs in the Air Force, rapid deployment, with very short notice is the norm.

Wanda - We are a different mission, not to diminish anything the fighter wing does. They have their role, but our role is very unique. At many times it is intense, when you see what is on the news . . . they [special operations] are sitting on alert. They are tethered shortly to base . . . they have to be able to respond in 30-40 minutes.

Jeff - Sometimes I get only five hours notice before I have to deploy some place for 30 days. Then to get my boy up in the middle of the night to pack his stuff, my stuff, get to the plane on time.

Eb - Sometimes you don't get any warning, and sometimes a lot of warning. When the Kosovo thing kicked off...we were slowly trickling people down there. Then all of a sudden in January . . . the main body of the team got a week's notice . . . It really depends on what the tasking is.

### Deployment and Impact on Children

The opstempo (speed of operations) of today's Air Force has major impact upon families in this community. The military parents in this sample specified the impact of deployment on family life, and particularly upon their children in school. All ten families indicated that having a member deployed made things more difficult for spouses, and placed extra stress on children no matter how expert spouses were at managing separation. In children the stress can manifest in behavioral changes. Sherry, Eb, Kris, Jeff, and Wendy all give examples of the changes they have observed in children when parents are deployed.

Sherry - The little kids, even as hard as they try, the day your dad leaves you for a long time, it is going to be a yucky day, no matter how hard you try for it not to be. Your dad is leaving. What a drag. That's no fun, and you know it's a long time that he's going to be gone. I think teachers need to be knowledgeable.

Eb - Things don't operate the same inside the family unit when a major part of that family is gone. I'm sure teachers have to see changes in behavior when a parent is deployed...If the teachers are aware of the fact, if they see some changes in a child, a change whatever that is, to me in my mind, that would be the first thing I would think of. Has your father or mother deployed recently? To me it's making teachers aware that this deployment exists out there. People are gone a lot, and if they see changes in children, that might be the reason.

Kris - It is nice to have a teacher realize that if a kid is disheveled or cranky, it may be, and probably is a result of a problem with the family member being gone.

Jeff - They are going down with a gun, chemicals, all that kind of stuff. Don't think kids don't notice that. Mom or dad can say it's going to be ok . . . but they see you packing all that stuff. They watch TV. They watch the war that their mom or dad is in. CNN shows the anti aircraft, anti aircraft missiles and all that stuff, tanks, equipment. The kids are looking at that and thinking my mum and dad are in there some place.

Wendy - The one thing heard of, with the younger kids, is if one of the parents go TDY our friend's boy played up because his dad was gone. It takes a little while to get used to that situation. They miss their dad or mom.

Impact on Spouses. The spouses interviewed in this study, Debbie, Wanda, Angie, Sherry, Shelly, Dana, Keri, Rhonda, each reflected on the impact that deployment has had upon their own lives. Of the nine women interviewed, only Wendy has had relatively little experience with sustained separation from her spouse, but she was aware of the impact on friends and workmates. Several of the women, particularly those with young children, or those whose husbands work the frenetic deployment schedule of the special operations group, reported that deployment, and the periodic prospect of managing work as a single parent, prevented them from seeking employment. Wanda, Shelly, Sherry, Angie, Keri, and Dana have professional qualifications.

A common thread appeared in the reflections of these experienced deployment widows, Wanda, Dana, Sherry, and Keri, "Make the best of it." Keep your routine going at all costs. Always put up the Christmas tree. Make the turkey anyway.

Wanda - This is the hardest thing for young families to realize. You have to press on. You have to eat the roast dinner whether daddy is there or not . . . We have to prepare for those disappointments. You can't stop just because that member is not there. You can't stop living, put everything on hold.

Dana - I just try to keep things normal, things the way that they were, the best that we can. What I miss the most is dinnertime when he is gone. Other than that, we do our regular routine and I think that helps with the kids.

Sherry - I am the type of person who says we have no choice, this is what we have to do, so we will make the best of it. You can't stop life for the time that he is gone. If we did that there would be no living at all. So I try very hard to keep them going and not to change what we are doing. We still have to have Christmas, and the kids have to persevere and make the turkey.

Keri - You have to be the one that can pick up and go. He wasn't there for our son's graduation. That was very difficult. He wasn't there for Christmas. You have to be able to toughen up and say I am capable of doing this, and I can do this. It has made me a stronger person.

### Single Parent/Dual Career Families

Perhaps the two groups most impacted by deployment are active duty single parents and dual-career military families. Jeff is a single father who has spoken at two briefings on single parent issues. All educators, in Jeff's opinion, should be aware of the special circumstances surrounding the deployment of single individuals with children in school. These are the children most likely to be impacted by deployment. Each serviceman is expected to have a contingency plan for the care of dependent children. As Jeff explains, this is not easy. He basically depends on a network of friends to find a temporary home and family for his son.

Jeff - Being a single parent, the hardest things is when I go TDY, or deploy, so does my son. I don't think school teachers realize that he deploys too. He's off to another family. He isn't sleeping in his bedroom. He's sleeping in somebody else's house. There is a new set of rules and he is an outsider. That is not his mom or dad, his brother or sister. He is a guest. Obviously they treat him well, make him feel at home, but it is not his home . . . So that's the thing. My child deploys when I do. He may not be going to a combat zone, but he's going some place he is not accustomed to.

Mark and Shelly represent another special circumstance, the dual career family. Both have demanding schedules in the best of circumstances. Mark has had one year-long remote assignment to Korea. Shelly is already familiar with the demands of single

parenting their four children. In the event that they should be deployed at the same time special attention to contingency planning is given.

Mark - They require you to have a dependent care plan if you are a single parent. It has to be updated regularly and on file. It says that if you are deployed and your spouse is deployed also, you have to have somebody in the local area available as a short term care provider to take care of your kids. You also have to have a long-term care provider designated, and they have to sign this official form. In our case we have friends in the local area that would do the immediate, if we literally had to be gone within 24 hours. They would come and get our kids packed up and put them on the plane to the States to be with my brother and his family. They are the long-term care providers. So it touches a lot of people.

All ten families interviewed cited frequent moves and frequent deployments as major sources of stress. However, several other sources of stress were identified in the interviews which participants felt should be recognized by educators. Each of these themes was reported by at least four or more of the participant families; stresses associated with demanding schedules, and the stresses of arrival and establishing a new home in a foreign country.

### Demanding Schedules

The increasing opstempo is seen as having a direct and immediate impact on the quality of life on these European bases. Frequent references were made throughout the

interviews to the “high stress” of these overseas assignments. Eb discusses how the changes in the Air Force have impacted work schedules:

Eb - The Air Force is not the same today as it was 10 to 15 years ago. We are a much more reactionary force, short notice deployments, extended deployments, things like that which impact families more and more.

Below, Dave, Shelly, Sherry, and Jeff reflect on the demands and inflexibility of their schedules:

Dave - There is a lot of things that sit in the back of your mind, and they are a stress, every single day, all of the time. You are always getting called into work, or having to work over the weekend, making plans and having them cancelled. Sometimes I think they [educators] don't realize what the life of a military person is. They are just in charge of their own schedules.

Shelly - In shift work we can't leave. I can't go to a school conference during my 12-hour shift. We work from 7:00 in the morning to 7:00 at night. This week I will end up working 60 hours.

Sherry - I think they [educators] need to know not everything is set in schedule. Your children could come home, you think you have a regular night, doing homework, eating dinner . . . but then someone calls and says there has been a crash on the runway.<sup>11</sup> I have to leave Katy in charge of the kids and go hunting for John. As it turned out it was a severe injury, so

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<sup>11</sup> Four weeks after Sherry's interview there was a crash of two F-15's killing two pilots.



that requires a lot of preparation from John and I. And they [educators] have to be flexible with us.

Jeff - The big thing for me is making sure that teachers are aware of our heavy schedule. I'm not talking 10-12 hour workdays.

### Impact of Demanding Schedules on Children

Those families who indicated they had highly stressed jobs with inflexible schedules were able to identify and give example of the impact of stress on their children.

Wanda - We don't always get the sleep we want, the clothes washed when we want to. We had a death in the squadron. I don't know if you can imagine what had to be done with an overseas death. I didn't. I learned a lot; my kids were running on empty by the time it was all done.

Angie - I think sometimes they [educators] don't realize the stress that the families have on them, so they can be quite demanding and almost confrontational sometimes to the parents as to why something hasn't come in on time.

Shelly - Last year I felt like a really bad parent. We were inundated weekly. We had kids in three schools and we would get four-page notes from some class . . . The fact is I just walked in the door at 8 PM. Mark had an emergency counseling case, then there was this thing we were supposed to do. May be it is just understanding that sometimes the most

caring parents get really overwhelmed by the expectations of the day. It's very embarrassing why we didn't sign that form.

### Living in a Foreign Country

Educators in Department of Defense Dependents Schools work exclusively with families who are living overseas. The stresses of moving are compounded by the difficulties of adapting to life in a foreign setting. Finding a house and getting settled for work and for school are challenging even to seasoned families. Mark, Debbie, and Wendy comment on the difficulties of finding housing.

Mark - I think this is one of the hardest things against our first assignment overseas. People live in scattered variety of places. There are something like 40 villages . . . for kids their friends live a 45-minute drive away. It is a challenge to have activities that are meaningful for kids and have them connect.

Debbie - It seems to me they do it backwards here. The new families coming in need that security. Then they have to learn how to be here. It's just the opposite; it's like you're rewarded.

Wendy - House hunting is very hard. Coming over here, it is first come first serve on those houses. The first person that looks at it takes it. If you have to wait a day to book a taxi, then that house is gone.

Keri and Jeff discuss other stresses on newly arrived military families as they try to familiarize themselves with the new base, new jobs, new schools, and the culture of a foreign country.

Keri - The first time we came to Europe they said the shipping companies were on strike and our stuff was in the middle of the ocean somewhere.

That wasn't a good start. Then I think when your car breaks down; you have to find new places to work on your car and things. The things people in the States wouldn't have to think about.

Jeff - They are living in a hotel room until their stuff comes. That is tough. The school is pushing them to get their kids in right away, and hotel room, boxed meals, eating at Burger King . . . They don't have a car either. The car hasn't got here yet. They are walking everywhere on base with the whole family.

As well as investigating the stresses that different groups encounter, researchers apply the cultural competence model to sources of conflict between a minority culture and the mainstream. Military leave, particularly its availability on demand, is discussed in the following section as a "sore spot."

#### Availability of Leave

A distinctive issue which the majority of families cited as a source of stress and often caused friction with the schools, was taking accrued leave, particularly pulling out children during the school year for family vacations. Interviewees believed that educators

need to understand how the military leave system works in order to be more sympathetic. Military leave is accrued two days per month, beginning October 1 through September 30 of the following year. There are restrictions on the number of days you can carry into the next year. If you don't use it, you lose it. Therefore, as these families explain in their own words, taking family vacations during the summer or at other sanctioned school holidays, is not always an easy option.

Kris - Moving and normal things like a lot of civilian things, you take your vacations at certain times of year. The kids get out of school; it's vacation time. That isn't necessarily true for a military family. In the military if dad is gone on a 90-day deployment which runs from June to September, when is he supposed to take leave? He has to take leave when the kids are in school. There's dysfunction there because of the nature of the military which is completely different from a civilian community.

Geoff - It depends on a person's job and what is going on at the time. Some of the maintenance folks you can't schedule that ahead of time. Some have to book two or three months in advance. They know there is a school break at that time. But if all want the school break at the same time, it's whoever asked for it first.

Mark - In the summer the best you can hope for is two weeks, and that's if you were first on the list, or somebody else didn't have a military TDY. You are never guaranteed.

Sherry - Last year that was a problem because the squadron commander wanted to take leave during spring break. We wanted to take leave during spring break, but both people can't be gone at the same time. I didn't want to but later we took the kids out of school for a week. We went to Egypt. I took the kids to be with him as he had been working a tremendous amount of time.

Dave - Over 12 months you should be able to fit some leave in, but if something flares up in the world, all these are off. You used to have to put your name down a year in advance, just to make sure you get it.

Debbie - When he comes home, if we need to spend family time together, it would be nice if the teacher, when you said I'm going to take a few days, or pull my child out on short notice, if they didn't give you the look or the feeling like "how dare you!" that's a bad thing. School is important. They look at you like it is a taboo thing, you shouldn't do this. You should do that during the summer. For families that don't have a husband gone half a year, that's fair enough. It's not always spoken, some of it is unspoken. It is the feeling that you are not doing the right thing.

In the interviews many sources of stress attributed to the military lifestyle were identified and have been presented in this chapter. To conclude, a final grouping of comments was related to the way military families cope with these stresses.

## Support Networks

Many researchers investigating cultural competence have focused on the natural support systems that exist in a particular group. In the helping professions, and in education understanding the ways a culture copes with the stresses of life can result in effective collaboration. Many comments were made which referred to the helper roles that these participants play in the local base community, particularly in their work places.

Wanda - I have a committee that does baby meals, meals for illnesses. We visit women in the hospital. We help you find a house. It's your network.

We are your family. Where do you find that in corporate society?

Dave - They [the squadrons] know who is TDY all the time and give them a call once a week. Somebody is always checking on them [the member's family]. It takes the place of having a family in a hometown.

Sherry - My job was to make sure that everyone in the squadron, officer wise, knew what was happening. It was a lot of telephone time.

Jeff - I do get support from friends that I have in the military. Oh yes, 100!

Richard - When somebody is deployed I call [the family] once a week. I have a log I put it in to see how they are doing.

Keri - We are volunteers and we deal with the spouses when the husbands are deployed or TDY. We contact the wives and make sure everything is ok and that they don't have any needs. The wives can go to us to vent or to get answers. We can point out the agencies they need to go to or get them the help they need.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate the cultural competencies civilian teachers need to better understand a military clientele. In this study 19 individuals, ten families, participated in interviews. The families were selected, snowball fashion, as individuals who would be experts in military life overseas, and knowledgeable about DoDDS schools. When asked what civilian teachers needed to know and understand about a military community, respondents were able to identify several major topics. The findings were presented in several broad groupings which represent the themes which were discussed commonly by participants in the interviews: government issue (duty versus job), moving, deployment, stresses caused by demanding schedules, stresses of living in a foreign culture, issues surrounding the availability of leave, and support networks for military families.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA ANALYSIS

When asked by civilians if it was really all that different to grow up in the military, we children of the Fortress sometimes draw a blank. In our gut we know it was different. Very different. But how to explain? It's possible, of course, to point out that it's all the difference between living under an authoritarian regime and living in a democracy, but that doesn't go far enough. It might supply a bird's eye view of structure and form, but it leaves out the heart, the flavor, the drama. (Mary Edwards Wertsch 1991, p. 1)

In her book, Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood Inside the Fortress (1991), Mary Edwards Wertsch opens her first chapter illustrating, what formal research (CSIS, 2000) shows, that members of the U.S. military firmly believe they represent a unique culture.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to look at the uniqueness of an overseas Air Force community, and to identify the cultural competencies needed for educators assigned to teach the children of the military. With the conceptual framework of cultural competence as used by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992), the perspectives of military



parents living on two Air Force bases in Europe were used to establish parameters and dimensions of competence (knowledge, attitude, and skills) for DoDDS educators. Nineteen individuals, composing ten families, were interviewed and asked to identify what they believed was important for civilian educators to understand about family life in the military. Observations of public school-community meetings, and a document analysis of community publications were made to corroborate the applicability of the domains identified in interviews.

The research questions which have framed this study are:

1. What competencies do military families believe are needed to understand their culture?
2. What domains are identified within these competencies?
3. In what ways do these competencies support the Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) model of cultural competence?
4. In what ways do they not?

#### Cultural Competence: The Global Model

Cultural competence has been investigated in a wide variety of organizations and applied to many of our nation's minority cultural or ethnic groups. The conceptual framework for cultural competence is based on three broad areas of competency; 1) *knowledge* (a flexible understanding of the critical dynamics of a diverse culture; 2) *attitude* (a positive attitude feeling toward a diverse culture); and 3) *communication skill* (consultation, and advocacy skill). This three-component model can be broadly

employed with virtually any organization or cultural group. In the introduction to his annotated bibliography on cultural competence, Mason (1995) argues that the model should be applied beyond visible minorities and ethnic groups, to promote sensitivity to cultural differences in the broadest sense.

Does the Global Model of cultural competence work with a military population?

Yes, it does. However, this is an easy score. The three broad components of the conceptual model probably can be applied in some way to any cultural group. In fact the model has been researched in a wide variety of cultures, from Japanese business culture (Kioke, 1992; Nakajima, 1992), to the Oglala Sioux in South Dakota (Thomasen, 1995). However, the specifics of the knowledge base, what should be understood about a culture, and how that knowledge should be reflected in communication skills, may differ from group to group (Mason, 1995).

#### The Competencies: Knowledge

Military personnel strongly believe they have a unique culture beset by external pressures unknown in the civilian world (CSIS, 2000). Participants in the present study reflected this belief unanimously. In some fashion, each person interviewed expressed the belief that it is important for civilian teachers to understand the culture, particularly the stresses and hardships of life in the military. No one interviewed was hesitant to identify facts and features of military family life that they believed should be understood by civilians.

When asked, “What is distinctive about your way of life? What do you think educators should know about you?” The military families in this study expressed a strong cultural identity. They tell a story which echoes the findings of an extensive study of 12,500 military personnel by the Center for Strategic International Studies (2000). Although the armed forces are beleaguered by declining morale, and retention and/or recruitment problems, the commitment across services and ranks remains high to basic common values, ethics, and standards which define military culture. In its principle recommendations to congress the authors reassert the distinctiveness of military culture and the necessity of promoting communication with the civilian world.

With fewer and fewer of the nation’s families now touched by military service-and fewer still the sons and daughters of American elites now serving in uniform-civilian and military leaders must assume a greater responsibility in telling the military’s story. Americans need to understand the rationale for the distinct standards and values that are the foundation of U.S. military culture. Leaders must also create opportunities to convey to both the public and opinion leaders the extraordinary contemporary demands being placed on military personnel and their families. (p. 78)

The common themes which emerged from these separate interviews appear as domains of knowledge, and are explored in the next section. The wealth and consistency of the information obtained from the interviews confirms that participants strongly believed that civilian educators should understand how military families function. Jeff and Rhonda reveal their expectations below:

Jeff - The very first time I was asked [to present on military life at a teacher conference], I said, "What are we doing here? What is this panel?"

Walking into the room was the first time I ever knew that DoDDS teachers had no concept about the military. Nothing. I thought that was absolutely . . . like you gotta be kidding me!

Rhonda - People assume DoDDS teachers, because they work in a military community and are in contact with military people, understand the system.

### The Domains of Knowledge

What is it that participants think is important for educators to know about military families? What domains, themes, and issues emerge from the aggregate of interview, observation, and document data?

To start, what is important about to know about any one culture? Cultural competence is based on the belief that a better understanding of the way diverse cultures clash or meld with the predominant belief systems will result in better services to clients (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). Although there is no single multicultural strategy to research a particular group, the features which make a culture unique, and the features which cause stress and conflict with the predominant culture are most often studied. Mason (1995) in his review of research on cultural competence asserts that the focus of investigation should be any conflict between cultures, such as issues of trust, language, income, or education.

Across research studies in educational settings, many domains have been identified. Epstein (1995) presents social status, educational background, and racial identity as the primary issues. Orlandi (1992) and Thomason (1995) emphasize the importance of understanding stresses and support networks. Nakajima (1992) and Koike (1992) stress language and communication style. Chao (1994) and Siu (1995) concentrate on parenting styles and beliefs about education.

The domains and themes found in research with other cultural groups were used as a framework to analyze the data with this sample of military families. The domains presented in the previous chapter, and analyzed here, are titled as *Government Issue* (duty versus job), *Moving, Deployment, Demanding Schedules, Stresses Associated with Living in a Foreign Country, Availability of Leave, and Support Networks*. These domains represent the information that was commonly presented by participants as important knowledge for civilian educators. Keri identifies four of these domains in a single quote.

Keri - I think they [teachers] need to know...that the parents are owned by the government. Therefore, their job has to come first. They need to realize and be sympathetic to the fact that dad might be deployed, and mom might be under a lot of stress, and the fact that these kids are moving around, they might not be in the same place as other kids.

The Domains: Government Issue. This is probably the umbrella theme for all knowledge of military culture. The sponsor, or active-duty member of the family, is government property, with fewer rights of citizenship than a civilian. Participants in the interviews believed that it was especially important for civilians to understand that

military duty is more than a “job.” It is all encompassing, and strictly circumscribed by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The military mission is paramount in all circumstances. Although the military has put more emphasis on quality-of-life for its families (Rhem, 2000), mission readiness, not family life, is the priority. Here Jeff explains the military view of family life.

If the military wanted you to have kids they would have issued them to you, ok. They have a good talk when it comes down to children and families, but they want you to get on the plane and go. The military says they empathize, but quite frankly, it’s your problem.

The Domains: Moving: (The PCS). Moving, or the PCS (permanent change of station) impacts 700,000 service members and their families every year (Williams, 2001) and is an inherent part of the military lifestyle. Moving, and the ramifications of frequently uprooting a family, appeared as a domain across interviews, observations, and document analysis. Moving was identified as a “unique” feature of military culture, as both an “disadvantage” and an “advantage” of the lifestyle, and as a major source of stress. Below, Shelly switches back and forth between advantages and disadvantages almost in the same breath.

We’ve noticed that each move has been good for one or more of our kids. It’s like just at the right time something that happened for them that was needed. The bad news is they have to pull out from all their friends. But the good news is, if the situation wasn’t that great you have a way out of it. You are not stuck there forever, trapped in that bad situation.

What did families want educators to know about this aspect of their lifestyle? The themes are summarized below:

1. Military members have limited choice in regards to their moves. They are ordered to move. Moves are marginally negotiable.
2. The average military family moves every two to four years.
3. Frequent moves can impact dependent children negatively through loss of family and support networks, loss of friendships, and numerous school changes.
4. Moves impact some children within a family more than others. Older children are more impacted than younger.
5. Adults also report that they have been impacted by the loss of old friends and the stress of finding new ones.
6. Moving also has advantages. The travel opportunities of the lifestyle are regarded as a major benefit by each of the ten families interviewed.
7. Families also expressed strong belief that the nomadic lifestyle of the military family promotes character, specifically tolerance and adaptability, in their children.

The Domains: Deployment. In the last 15 years there have been major changes in the American military. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall the rate of overseas deployments has increased by 300 percent (CSIS, 2000). The array of peacekeeping missions has placed servicemen in stressful conflicts around the world: Kosovo, Iraq, Bosnia, Somalia, and most recently, Macedonia.

It is small wonder that deployment has major impact on military families. The rise in operations tempo appears as a major quality of life issue in the Air Force (Rhem, 2000; CSIS, 2000). Results of a quality of life survey completed by 39% of active duty Air Force personnel demonstrated a continuing rise in operations tempo since 1995 (AFN, 1998). Servicemen were asked to specify the number of duty days spent away from home in the previous twelve months. They were also asked about the length of their workweek. Enlisted people reported an average of 60 days of TDY, and officers reported 50 days (with the exception of pilots who averaged 83 days). The average duty week was reported as 49 hours for enlisted, and 55 hours for officers (AFN, 1998).

The results from the above survey represent an Air Force average. Statistics for overseas assignments were not presented separately. Locally, at the bases represented in this study, these figures might be viewed with envy. One pilot's wife reported that her husband had been gone 251 days in 1999. There have been several expeditionary forces (AEF's) since the beginning of 2001 to Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia. According to the March 2, 2001 local base newsletter, the next deployment 90-day rotation will involve 200 personnel, followed shortly by 600 airmen. The wing commander, in his weekly newspaper column and post-holiday address, attempts to put a spin on upcoming deployments by emphasizing the "*multiple opportunities*," one of which seems to be a promise of longer work hours for those left behind.

We have a lot on our plate in the coming months, We are currently supporting several deployments including the Air Expeditionary Force serving in Kuwait. At the same time we are starting preparations for



AEF 4 in March. So this year expect us to provide multiple opportunities for everyone on the wing to work on their wartime tasks. Training should become more important as we approach our time to serve “downrange” . . . The next few months will see our base tested in new and unique ways as we deploy a large contingent of Liberty Warriors on AEF 4. Those left at home will pick up additional duties in order to keep all of our operations and support running on all cylinders. Expect a lot of long days. (Jet 48, Jan.5, 2001, p 3).

What is it that the families wish civilian educators to understand about the impact of deployment? The themes and sub themes identified were:

1. High frequency: The Military has undergone profound changes in the past decade. Demands for deployment have increased drastically.
2. Deployment and type of job: It is important to know what kind of job the military sponsor performs. The type of job impacts the frequency and the conditions of deployment, such as short-notice and the secrecy surrounding the mission.
3. Deployment and impact on families: Having a member deployed makes things more difficult for spouses, and places extra stress on children no matter how expert spouses are at managing separation. In children the stress can manifest in behavioral changes.
4. Deployment and single parent/dual career families: The two groups most likely to be negatively impacted by deployment are active duty single

parents and dual-career military families. Educators should be aware of the special circumstances surrounding the deployment of single individuals with children in school. These are the children most likely to have their routines and living circumstances turned upside down. These families may be depending on a network of friends for support or to find temporary homes.

Outside of issues related to frequent moves and deployment, two other domains of stress were identified which participants felt should be recognized by educators; stresses associated with demanding schedules, and the stresses of arrival and establishing a new home in a foreign country.

The Domains: Demanding Schedules. The increasing tempo of operations is seen as having a direct and immediate impact on the quality of life on these European bases. Frequent references were made throughout the interviews to the “high stress” of these overseas assignments, views corroborated in observations of public meetings and by document analysis. Below Mark gives his take on the escalating stresses.

We are deploying everywhere in the world and it is working the remaining people to the bone. I think that is a cause of a lot of the stress. People are pushed to the limit. It is no surprise particularly those that have saleable skills in the civilian sector, in a strong economy, are getting out. Why should they want to keep putting up with this?

What families thought educators should know about their schedules:

1. Military members are not in charge of their schedules. Schedules for certain military jobs can be very inflexible.
2. Schedules are unpredictable and mission dependent. There is no concept of “overtime.”
3. Deployment stretches the work schedules of those left behind, meaning longer hours, and more inflexible schedules.
4. Military members can be called to work at any time. Making plans and having them canceled is a familiar scenario to most families.

The Domains: Living in a Foreign Country. Commonly cited by families were the stresses associated with setting up, finding a house, and getting established in a new country. The availability of base housing is a key issue. At these bases housing is limited and waiting lists of up to a year are common. Except for those with rank and command responsibilities, new arrivals find housing in local communities within a 25-mile radius of the bases. Parents interviewed felt that educators should understand the following stresses on families living overseas, especially the newly arrived. Sherry explains:

Many of the younger people who come overseas are really afraid. It is very difficult adapting to a different country for some. There are a group of people who never leave base. They can't afford it, or they're afraid. They are unsure. I think that is very difficult.

What should educators know about the stresses of adapting to an overseas environment?

1. The limited availability of housing is a key stressor. The waiting list for base housing means that the least experienced families must locate housing when they arrive in country. House hunting is difficult and competitive, particularly for those families with no previous overseas experience.
2. People who find housing off base live scattered across more than forty villages. Older children can feel especially isolated from friends at school.
3. Negotiating routine maintenance in a foreign country, such as fixing your car or getting phone service, adds stress for newly arrived families.
4. Newly arrived families typically live in hotels or temporary lodging before their belongings and car arrive. This is a particularly stressful time for families. Parents are starting new jobs while trying to find accommodation and enroll their children in school.

The Domains: Availability of Leave. A distinctive issue which the majority of families cited as a source of stress that caused friction with the schools, was taking accrued leave, particularly pulling out children during the school year, for family vacations. Interviewees believed that educators need to understand how the military leave system works in order to be more sympathetic. Rhonda explains that military people must take leave when they can get. Her thoughts are juxtaposed to those of a British Colonel who advised his troops more than 200 years ago. Obviously some things about military life do not change.

Sometimes you just have to take your leave when you can get it. Taking leave isn't the problem, but it's taking it when you want to take it. It's like with moving. It has to fit into the military mission. They don't call and say "Will this be good for you?"

"Always ask for leave at all times and in all places. In time you will acquire a right to it" (Francis Grose, 1782, p. 296).

Things educators should understand about military leave:

1. Military leave is accrued two and a half days per month between October 1 through September 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. There are restrictions on the number of days you can carry into the next year. Use or lose.
2. Military leave must be scheduled in advance and availability is determined according to the status of the mission.
3. Competition for leave during the summer and other school breaks is high. Families cannot always get leave during official school vacation time.
4. Certain jobs, such as those in special operations, require frequent deployments and TDY's. Families must take leave whenever they can get it.
5. Military families cannot plan vacations like civilian families. If a mission comes up. All plans are off.

The Domains: Support Networks. Researchers of cultural competence often emphasize the importance of understanding, and sometimes connecting with, the natural support networks that exist within a minority culture. Like other cultural groups the

military has a tradition of “taking care of its own.” Participants in interviews, although mildly cynical of the formal military family support systems, were able to give many examples of the informal support that families give to each other. The following represent some the salient themes discussed connected with informal support networks:

1. The cohesion, camaraderie, and esprit de corps which define the key cultural elements of the military apply to families of the military. Formal support systems exist, but there is a “the Air Force takes care of its own” philosophy.
2. Key spouses (enlisted) and squadron commander’s spouses often play important roles in educating and supporting younger families.
3. Higher-ranking officers and non commissioned officers, particularly the First Shirts, have distinctive care-taking roles which cross formal and informal support roles.
4. Higher ranking officer and enlisted ranks (often along with their spouses) function in ways similar to community elders identified in other cultures.

Eb and Wanda give a good summation of the role of informal support networks.

Eb - One thing the Air Force has going for it, and we’ve seen it time and time again, is that when something happens, we are a big family. We take care of each other. When someone dies, gets sick, an emergency, we have a very good apparatus in place that functions well to help people in those situations, which I don’t think you have anywhere else . . . There are some

definite positives to being in the Air Force and I am still here 18 years later.

Wanda - I don't want to be a grandmother. I am only 40 something, but the Air Force is a young force. You look in the mirror and say "Gosh, I'm the grown up now." I am a surrogate mother, grandmother, aunt.

### The Competencies: Attitude

A second component of the cultural competence model is attitude, a positive feeling, or an appreciation for the culture served. Did the participants expect a positive attitude from civilian teachers? This question was not asked directly, but as participants gave their views across a variety of issues, it was clear that families did expect educators to appreciate and view military culture positively. They also indicated disappointment when some teachers did not. Wanda and Kris reflect on their expectations of teachers:

Wanda - I know what you do as teachers is important . . . I just wish there was mutual respect...I do have a college degree, but not in education, so I don't know your language. You don't know about deployment, recon, and COM squad stuff, but that doesn't mean one or the other is stupid or ignorant.

Kris - My argument is that if this is the population you work with then you really need to understand them as well as you can and be positive.

The participants in the interview support the cultural competence model in their expectation that military culture should be viewed positively by outsiders Overall, the

participants did not report that they felt dislike, or disrespect from civilians<sup>12</sup> generally, or from DoDDS educators specifically. Those who did mention dissatisfaction with teacher attitude, referred to a specific instance with a particular educator, and were careful not to generalize. Most of the parents interviewed were strong supporters of DoDDS schools. In all, parents did not perceive an overt anti-military sentiment from educators. They seemed more concerned with a lack of understanding about military life, which could inadvertently lead to insensitivity.

The parents interviewed were not dissatisfied with the attitude of DoDDS teachers in a global sense, but they were able to identify specific instances where they expected teachers to demonstrate an attitude of acceptance and understanding. They believe that teachers should be aware of what is going on in the base community, and that they should understand that military schedules can be demanding, inflexible, and beyond individual control. When the base is on high alert, in the midst of an extensive exercise, or when a mass deployment is pending, the stress level for families is high. Teachers should not choose these times to be confrontational, or to “hassle,” about lack of parent involvement. Shelly and Wanda give their views below:

Shelly - Some of the homework that comes home, I think the expectation is that we will sit down and really facilitate that. That is in my heart to do, but it can't always happen, because our schedules. If Mark has an evening commitment and I leave for work at 7:00 PM, we aren't there much to

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<sup>12</sup> In the CSIS (2000) survey, 35% of the respondents indicated that they did not feel respected by the civilian community.



help . . . Sometimes parents can't jump in there even though we try as much as we can.

Wanda - I understand that you all need, for the younger children, to get papers signed. Some mothers have called and said "I can't believe that the teacher got so upset." So I just wish they'd see a little of the big picture.

Before leaving attitude, one belief worth noting, although not pervasive across the interviews, was that DoDDS educators (who pride themselves on treating the children of officer and enlisted ranks with equal consideration) communicate lower expectations of the parents in enlisted ranks. None of the officers expressed any concerns about their treatment at parent conferences or other encounters with teachers. Two of the master sergeants, and three spouses of enlisted, believed they had been "talked down to" by one or more DoDDS teachers. They expressed the view that DoDDS educators expect officers to be educated, and the enlisted ranks, and their spouses, to be less so. Rhonda gives a good example in her description of an encounter with a high school teacher, who assumes, because she is articulate, that she must be an officer's wife.

Rhonda - She [teacher] and I were talking about Stephanie going off to college and she said that Stephanie won't qualify for a scholarship. I said, "Why? She is second in her class, how can she not qualify for a scholarship?" She said, "Because you work at the elementary school and your husband is an officer." I told her that I was a teacher's aide and that my husband is enlisted. She said, "Really, but you are so articulate!" I didn't know what to say. It was a compliment to say I was articulate, but I

didn't realize that kids get pigeonholed into your parents are educated, and your parents aren't.

It might be an important prejudice for DoDDS teachers to examine. The dichotomy of officer and enlisted in terms of educational background does not necessarily hold when looking at *career* military. Officers come in with college degrees, enlisted are encouraged to further their education while in service. In today's Air Force it is not unusual for enlisted ranks (career military) to have college degrees. In the top enlisted ranks, master sergeants in particular are likely to be "educated."

Rhonda - By the time they [high school] get these students their parents have been in the military quite a while, many of them have a degree.

There is plenty of testimony to the quality of Air Force non commissioned officers, the NCOs. The Air Force has historically be dominated by fighter pilot culture (CSIS, 2000), but the enlisted, "First Shirts"<sup>13</sup> are credited as being the people "who make the Air Force run."

Mark - It's NCO's who are really the backbone of the military. They make it run. They are the ones who make the military operate, and they are getting tired. They are trying to raise families and to have a semi-normal life, but they are getting deployed and paid so little. They are giving them bonuses to stay in.

As a school representative on the Family Advocacy Case Review Board, I have been continually impressed by the professionalism of First Shirts from the various

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<sup>13</sup> Non commissioned officers, enlisted heads of squadrons.

squadrons. The First Shirts, who seem to function as social workers as well as doing their professional jobs, attend the review board to answer for the miscreants, or the dysfunctional, in their charge. They are nearly always articulate, well informed, and sensitive to the needs of spouses and dependents. The fact that this surprised me speaks to the very prejudice identified in my interviews.

### The Competencies: Skills

The third general domain in the cultural competence model is *skills for communication*. In their extensive investigation of teacher programs in America, Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, and Lopez (1997) concluded that teachers were “*woefully ill-prepared*” in interpersonal skills to communicate with families from culturally diverse communities.

Researchers of the more visible racial/ethnic minorities are often able to identify specific communication skills which can enhance cross-cultural encounters. For example, researchers of cross-cultural counseling with American Indians recommend modeling self-disclosure and mirroring the client’s eye contact, voice tone, and pace of speech, to foster two-way communication (Thomassen, 1995).

Are there skills that educators should demonstrate with a military clientele? In the data collected in this study there were no specific communication skills identified in interviews, observations, or data analysis which would seem in any way unique to the military population. However, the parents interviewed believed that DoDDS educators should demonstrate sensitivity in their communication with military families. The

families interviewed did expect some demonstration of sensitivity to the special circumstances with which military dependents must cope. Dana gives a specific example of her belief that DoDDS teachers can demonstrate communication skills which make a difference to military children.

Dana - I was touched by a little girl who left just before Thanksgiving. The teacher was off on training and wasn't able to say goodbye to her. It was hard on a lot of students. My daughter came home crying, in tears. I think if the teacher had been in the classroom it might have gone differently. She could have talked to them a bit, about what the little girl had to look forward to, and how they could deal with her leaving.

Basically, interpersonal skill can be interpreted as translating knowledge of the community into demonstrations of sensitivity to the stresses of military life. Skilled teachers, therefore, are able to recognize and comfort children who are missing their parents because of deployment, who are adjusting to another move, or who may be experiencing the trickle down stresses of a heightened alert status.<sup>14</sup> *Skills* with military children can be demonstrated in a pat on the back, an extra hug, or a sympathetic ear.

Debbie: I think when the base deploys a lot the teacher needs to be sensitive to the fact the child might be a little more emotional, may have a bad day, may need that little extra bit of attention, that pat on the back, or job well done. The child's routine is turned over and he has no control over that, or of when he can talk to dad.

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<sup>14</sup> Alert status requires heightened security which usually means longer working hours for personnel.

A review of documents, including newspaper articles (Stars and Stripes), local Air Force newsletters and bulletins, and DoDDS memoranda to local schools, substantiate that developing an understanding of military culture by civilian teachers is a major parental concern. In October 1998, General Greg Martin, the Commander, United States Air Forces Europe, signed the USAFE Strategic Plan on dependent education. The summary of this document clearly implies that the military expects civilian educators to be competent in military culture and responsive to the special needs of military dependent children.

The USAFE Strategic Plan on Dependent Education is an ambitious plan that establishes seven goals to ensure a world class educational system that inspires and prepare all students for success while capitalizing on the uniqueness of a European assignment. The plan addresses parental frustration and the perception that they have little to say in their children's education. It requires monitoring of existing avenues of parental involvement and working with DoDDS to ensure an effective response to voiced concerns. (p. 8)

### Summary

The data in this chapter was analyzed to address two research questions which frame the study. What competencies do military families believe are needed to understand their culture? What domains are identified within these competencies? The conceptual model of cultural competence (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992) is built on

three broad domains of competence: 1) knowledge of the culture; 2) a positive attitude toward the culture; and 3) skills, the ability to communicate effectively with members of the culture. Results obtained from interviews, observations, and document analysis suggest that this broad framework is easily applied to this military community. Members see themselves as being culturally distinct from civilians. They believe they have unique stresses and circumstances which impact their children. Military parents expect civilian teachers to be knowledgeable of these differences, and to display sensitivity to military dependents.

When asked what civilian teachers needed to know and understand about a military community, respondents in interviews were able to identify several major domains, each broken into multiple sub-domains. Major domains were: 1) Jobs versus duty, the meaning of government ownership; 2) Impact of frequent moves; 3) Impact of deployment; 4) Demanding schedules, 5) Stresses associated with living in a foreign country, 6) Issues related to the availability of military leave, and 7) Support networks. The applicability of these broad domains was substantiated in observations of school board and school advisory meetings, and in dozens of documents dedicated to these themes in community publications.

## CHAPTER VI

### DISCUSSION

It's like being of a different ethnic background, but you don't really look different from anyone else. You fit in, but you you're not like everyone else. That's part of the desire to want to reconnect again.<sup>15</sup>

Cultural competence is founded in the belief that a better understanding of the way diverse cultures clash or meld with the predominant belief system results in organizational change and better services to clients (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs 1989). Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992) promote a model using three major components: 1) *knowledge*, a flexible understanding of the critical dynamics of diverse culture; 2) *attitude*, a positive orientation toward diverse cultures; and 3) *skills*, communication, consultation, and advocacy skills. Cultural competence is viewed as a learned achievement requiring knowledge, practice, and commitment.

America's changing demographics drive the research on cultural competence. At the start of the new millennium, 30% of Americans will be identified as a member of a racial/ethnic minority group (Office of Ethnic Minority Affairs, 1995). Therefore, organizations serving a diverse clientele will need employees who demonstrate an

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<sup>15</sup> *Quote from a chatline website for military brats. Taken from Susan Campbell's article Brat Patrol, (1999, March 20), Hartford Courant, p.F1.*

understanding of minority values and norms. This is particularly true in education. When educators can communicate an understanding of the values and norms of the community in which they teach (Vasquez, Nuttal, DeLeon, & Valle, 1990), programs to increase parent involvement in schools are more effective. In situations where parents and educators come from different cultural groups, educators must be sensitive to the uniqueness of their clientele (Shartrand, Weiss, & Lopez, 1997)

The military community defines itself as a culture, distinct from civilian culture (CSIS, 2000). Military families stationed overseas are served by civilian educators working for the Department of Defense Dependents Schools. These civilian educators are hired from all regions of the United States and represent mainstream American education. Can the framework and model of cultural competence be applied usefully with the military as a “minority” client? The purpose of this study was to use the perspectives of military parents to establish the parameters and dimensions of competence (knowledge, attitude, and skills) for DoDDS educators.

A qualitative case study was used to identify the cultural competencies needed to understand a military constituency. To investigate cultural competence as it might pertain to a military population, I researched the perceptions of families in a natural environment, two overseas Air Force bases in Europe. A purposive, criterion-based sample of military personnel, parents of children attending DoDDS schools, was employed in this study. Data collected was obtained through semi-structured interviews with 19 individuals comprising ten military families, along with observations of public school-board meetings and advisory committees, and by analysis of community documents.



In this study the conceptual model of cultural competence, and the research behind it, provided the lens for coding and evaluating data. To enhance the study's internal validity, triangulation of data, member checks, peer examination, long-term observations, and an examination of researcher bias were used. Strategies to promote external validity included the use of thick rich description, and a detailed audit trail of data collection and analysis. To support reliability, an audit trail of documents, protocols, artifacts, and notes was maintained.

### Conclusions

In addition to the identification of parameters and dimensions of competence for DODDS educators, the purpose of this study was to investigate the applicability of the cultural competence model used with civilian educators serving a military population. Does the information obtained in this study support the use of the model? Do the domains of knowledge presented and analyzed in the previous chapters appear similar to the findings of studies with other cultural groups?

In conclusion, the answer to both questions seems to be both yes and no. In important ways the domains identified by military families mirror the themes presented in the research on other cultural groups, but in particular ways they do not.

### Findings Which Support the Model of Cultural Competence

In this study the themes identified by the military population were like those of other cultural groups in that participants specified: 1) unique features that distinguish

their culture from that of the mainstream; 2) particular stresses and disadvantages of the lifestyle; 3) points of conflict and friction with mainstream culture; 4) a particular natural support network; and 5) barriers to school involvement.

### A Unique Culture

It is no surprise that any group identifying as a “culture” is able to expound on their differences from the mainstream. In a decade where much of the world, with ethnic cleansing as the dark side, is fracturing into the lowest common denominator in cultural identity, cultural self-awareness seems at an all time high. Americans, Novak (1980) points out, take pride and comfort in the additional “belongings” and social identities of their hyphenations; African-American, Irish-American (American Air Force?). Perhaps we all have the desire to be a part of, yet different from the mainstream.

In any case, in cross-culture research, to learn about the values, beliefs, and practices of any particular group you need to access members of that community (Randall-David, 1989). What is important to know about you? The Native Alaskans (1998) have been proactive in this regard, publishing Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, a what-to-know manual for non-native educators. Here families are answering the same question. What do civilians need to know about military families?

In this study participants stressed that military life is distinct from civilian life in several ways. The domains identified in interviews suggest the important differences are government-ownership, frequent moves, and deployment. Deployment and frequent relocation are unique conditions of military culture, but the umbrella theme, which

ultimately distinguishes the culture and defines all of its parameters, is that of government ownership. The military work and play by a different set of rules; “duty” versus “job.” Individual freedoms are sacrificed for the sake of discipline and order, with rules of conduct strictly defined by the Uniform Code of Military Justice. The military exists to fight. The imperative for all military members is the readiness for war. This is the principle that makes military culture unique and distinct from civilian culture

The belief in *core values* helps define military culture. The authors of the CSIS study point out that the core values, duty, honor, country<sup>16</sup> are not rhetorical, but the beliefs that underpin the culture. Across the armed forces the belief in these values remains exceptionally strong. In the CSIS (2000) investigation, surveying 12,500 active duty members, not one complaint regarding fundamental military values and standards was registered. In this small sample of career military families this same commitment to the core values is evident. Jeff and Ian convey their pride in their associations with the military:

Jeff - We protect Americans, serve Americans and we make a lot of sacrifices for our country. We pay the price for freedom through our constant relocations, our TDYs, and our deployments . . . It is the sacrifices of the military people throughout the ages that have allowed Americans to have freedom. We understand that, we protect it . . .

Children in the military know about the flag. They see their mom and dad putting on the uniform everyday. They have to relocate every three years.

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<sup>16</sup> The words vary according to the branch of service; The Air Force uses integrity, service before self, and excellence.

The whole family has to serve its country. There is honor and pride.

Children see their parents who are military members wearing a uniform, shining their boots, that kind of thing, saluting. Maybe through osmosis you will give a sense of respect for rank, flag, higher things, higher principles.

Ian - My dad has a very important job.

There is an interesting postscript on the role of military core values. Faced with recruitment problems due to the booming economy, the Department of Defense (DOD) is changing the way it advertises for recruits. Instead of emphasizing the benefits of military service (job training, GI Bill, etc.) the services are promoting the “intangibles” (i.e. the core values) of a military career. This emulates the Marines, the only branch of the service which has continually met its recruitment goals (Rhem, 2000). Their slick, emotive television ads, a sword-wielding knight morphed into a Marine in dress uniform, hits the military ethos dead center. The armed forces cannot compete with the economic attractions of the civilian sector. The right incentive to joining the military is a sense of mission, purpose, and value to country (the core values).<sup>17</sup>

### Stresses and Disadvantages of the Culture

Many researchers emphasize the importance of understanding the particular stresses that a minority culture may encounter. For example, to work on the Pinewood Reservation it would be important to understand that members of the Oglala Sioux live

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<sup>17</sup> The highest retention rate in the armed forces is those soldiers who have served in Kosovo and Bosnia despite long deployments and difficult conditions. This is attributed to a feeling of purpose and mission.

with the pressures of intense poverty and substandard housing. In this military sample the families identified several domains associated with stresses particular to their culture. Frequent moves and deployment were the most frequently cited sources of stress. A document analysis shows that either of these two themes is presented almost weekly in local base publications. Other themes of stress centered on the impact of demanding schedules and the pressures of adapting to life in a foreign setting.

Considering that the operative word for both the physiological and psychological definition of stress is *change*, it is no wonder that stress appears as a strong theme in military life. The results of this study reflect the belief that is held by the armed forces in general, from the top down. In the 1990s the US military encountered extensive, rapid changes involving the emphasis on peacekeeping missions around the world. Deployment increased 300% over the previous decade and DOD experienced massive internal reorganization (Bowen & Martin, 2000). Results of surveys (AFN, 1998; CSIS, 2000) show that servicemen believe that a military career is much more difficult and demanding than it was ten years ago. In my interviews, the families, most with military experience spanning two decades, sharply support the studies of the broad research on military life, and confirm that these stresses are an important knowledge domain which defines their experience.

Today the smallest force in four decades, with 56 percent married, is overworked, underpaid, and under-resourced at the cutting edge.

Readiness and morale have slipped; recruiting and retention are problematic; and careers in the military have become less satisfying . . .

There is little doubt in the minds of the participants that conditions within the armed forces are far less favorable than they were a decade ago. (CSIS Report, p. XVI)

### Conflict with Mainstream Culture

Mason (1995) points out that research on minority cultures should examine points of friction with the dominant culture. In this study, none of the participants expressed feelings of maltreatment or of a lack of respect from the civilian world in a general sense, but they were able to identify specific areas of conflict with civilian teachers. The conflict can be easily seen in the domain “availability of leave.” The culture of traditional American education is particularly strong and enduring (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). DoDDS educators, although hired from all parts of the United States, represent this tradition, which include beliefs such as; children should not be taken out of school for long vacations during school time, parents should be involved and responsible for their helping with homework, and parents should come to school when asked. The parents interviewed stressed that, although these ideals are reasonable and optimal for children, life in the military does not revolve around the family. Deployment, demanding schedules, and the practicality of getting leave when you want it are issues and impediments which educators need to understand.

## Support Networks

Military families have a distinct natural support network, and in this way mirror the research conducted with many other cultural groups. Researchers of cultural competence emphasize the importance of understanding, and sometimes connecting with, the natural support networks that exist within a minority culture. For example, Gary (1987) challenges the social services and other helping professions to tap into the support network supplied by Black Churches in African American communities. In Native American communities, elders are often cited as important sources of support.

Participants in interviews, although mildly cynical of the formal military family support systems, were able to give many examples of the informal support that families give to each other. Many mentioned specific support roles they fulfilled in the community. The word “family” was often used. In fact, members of the higher officer and enlisted ranks seem to function in terms of guidance and pastoral care in many of the same ways as “elders” in studies of ethnic minorities, such as Native Americans. Eb gives a good summation:

One thing the Air Force has going for it, and we've seen it time and time again, is that when something happens, we are a big family. We take care of each other. When someone dies, gets sick, an emergency, we have a very good apparatus in place that functions well to help people in those situations, which I don't think you have anywhere else... There are some definite positives to being in the Air Force and I am still here 18 years later.

### Barriers to Involvement in Schools

A common application of the cultural competence model in education settings has been to research the barriers to school involvement that exist for certain minority groups. Ascher (1988), Calabrese, (1990), and Epstein (1995) among many others have provided this focus. As in their findings with other cultural groups, the participants in this study identified impediments to school involvement attributed to their membership in military culture. Interviewees cited the principle of government ownership, as reflected in demanding and inflexible work schedules as a major complication and hindrance to consistent school participation. Families emphasized the paramount importance of mission readiness and its impact on the ability to attend school activities or to support school activities at home.

### Findings Which Do Not Support the Cultural Competence Model

In many ways the domains of knowledge identified in this study are similar to findings of researchers of other cultural groups and these likenesses support the applicability of the cultural competence model. However, viewing the military population through this lens also reveals some differences that may extend the application of the model. In the following ways military culture stands out from other groups: 1) No particular unified beliefs about education were identified; 2) Participants did not identify feelings of oppression or maltreatment from civilian mainstream culture; and 3) Barriers



to school involvement were extrinsic and not related to perceived imbalances in education or social status.

### Beliefs about Education

Many cultural groups, such as immigrant populations, have strong beliefs regarding how their children should be educated. For instance, Sau-Fong Siu (1996) points out the need to understand the Chinese-American view of education and their traditional views on parental control. They tend to value strong math programs, discipline, and homework. In this study, however, there was no indication in interviews, observations, or document analysis, that military families had any kind of unified belief about how, or what, DoDDS educators should teach. This is not particularly surprising given that both military members and DoDDS educators come from all parts of the country and represent a nationwide spectrum of educational backgrounds.

### Feelings of Oppression

There can be little argument that many of our nation's visible minorities been disenfranchised and suffered outright oppression. Many researchers have investigated the culture clash between mainstream and minority cultures. The data collected in this overseas setting did indicate that the military members felt they were misunderstood by many Americans, but did not indicate that they saw themselves as any kind of an oppressed minority.

On a national scale, in the large scale sampling of military personnel (CSIS, 2000), when asked, “Are you respected by civilians?” 35% of the 12,500 people surveyed, said “no.” This may not be “oppression,” but it would indicate that a large number of military personnel have experienced some negativity from civilians.

### Barriers to Involvement

Perhaps the most common application of the cultural competence model in education is to investigate the impediments for some minority cultures to be involved in mainstream American education. The impediment most frequently discussed is the discomfort some minority parents feel when they perceive differences in language, social status, or education between educators and themselves. None of the military families indicated a reluctance to participate in schools based on issues of discomfort. Although some of the enlisted interviewees believed they had been occasionally “talked down to,” these isolated incidents did not color their predominantly positive view of DoDDS schools.

Barriers to school involvement were not identified as perceived inequalities between parents and teachers, but as extrinsic factors involving the parameters of military jobs. All activities in the military are mission dependent. Military members are not in control of their schedules. Sudden deployments, base exercises, conditions of alert, can thwart even best laid plans. As Dave explains:

You are always getting called into work, or having to work over the weekend, making plans and having them canceled . . . Sometimes I think

they [educators] don't realize what the life of a military person is. They are just in charge of their own schedules.

### Implications for Theory

The conceptual model of cultural competence is born of larger theories of social constructionism and multiculturalism. Emphasis is placed on understanding the social system to which an individual belongs. Multiculturalists argue that the strength and texture of American comes from the diversity of its cultures. Proponents of cultural competence argue that individuals and organizations should attempt to understand and appreciate the social world of their clients or constituencies. Mason (1995) argues that the concept of cultural competence can be applied to any distinctive cultural group, not just the visible minorities.

This study contributes to the theory by extending the model to a military population, stationed overseas. In the DoDDS system educators are exclusively civilian. The clientele are military families. This represents a cultural schism of military and civilian cultures, with the schools at the center.

I believe that the results of this study appropriately extend and support the model by including a population which might not ordinarily be viewed as a "minority culture." Yet military members have a strong cultural identity, one that distinguishes them from civilian Americans. They perceive themselves as individuals and families who make sacrifices to serve their country, who endure hardships and stresses that civilians do not face, and who deserve to be understood and appreciated. They were able to identify a

knowledge base for outsiders, including barriers to their involvement in schools. They expected civilian educators to view the military positively; and they expected them to be sensitive to the circumstances of their dependents.

### Implications for Research

I believe there are many avenues for further research which could be generated from this line of inquiry, some suggested by the findings, others resulting from possible limitations of this study. For example, when examining military culture, it may be important to recognize that dependent children (the brats) are different from their parents and may constitute a subculture in their own right. Mary Edwards Wertsch (1991) in her interviews with over 80 adults makes a strong case for the culture of "military brats." The real sense of "rootlessness" is manifested in the children who grow up in this culture, not their parents. She writes:

All the time that I was growing up, I felt that my parents were in a sense more "real" than I: They came from towns in Georgia and Ohio that were rich in history, where they had friends from childhood. Their language was laced with regional idiom. They grew up knowing, really knowing, their grandparents, cousins, aunts, and uncles. They had friends from childhood who recognized in them the children they had once been, with whom they could share the sacrament of memory. (p xi)

My data, with the exception of Ian's interview, is taken from an adult perspective.

Mary Wertsch interviewed adults reflecting on their childhood in military families. I

believe it would be interesting to employ this model with a sample of children who are presently attending DoDDS schools. How would military brats define their experience? What would they think civilian teachers should know about their life styles as part of, what Mary Wertsch describes as, “an invisible, unorganized tribe, a federation of brothers and sisters bound by uniformed fathers?”

Arguably, each branch of the armed forces has a specific cultural identity (CSIS, 2000). Would the domains of cultural knowledge identified by this sample of career Air Force families in Europe generalize to Marine families on Okinawa? Although it might be worth investigating, my feeling is that, given how closely this small sample reflected views found in large scale studies of military culture, the broad interpretation of domains used in this study, such as the impact of frequent moves and deployments, would probably be found elsewhere.

Rather than focus on the branch of the military, the emphasis could be turned to the civilian DoDDS educators. If the military is a culture and DoDDS employees are assigned to work in this culture, do they understand it? Do the educators understand how the military works? Or more to the point, do civilian educators understand what military families believe is important to know, and do they communicate this knowledge in meaningful ways?

Finally, my interview data was generated from ten families who appear well adjusted to military life. By choosing individuals who could serve as experts in both military life and have familiarity with the DoDDS school system, I acquired a sample of officer and enlisted participants who are committed to military careers. Most if not all of

this sample, plan to complete at least a twenty-year commitment. It was evident from the interviews that these families are reconciled to the hardships of the lifestyle. They have strategies for moving and deployment. They take advantage of travel opportunities. They see positive benefits for their children. They accept the good with the bad. There were no “whiners” in the sample.

DoDDS serves a wide variety of military families. There are young, inexperienced families (particularly at the elementary schools). There are disgruntled, unhappy families, who do not adapt well to the stress of military life, particularly when compounded with the stresses of living overseas. This group deserves attention as well and would likely identify more specific sources of stress and barriers to school involvement than found with my sample. However, the fact that this sample of successful families who are well adjusted to military life and essentially positive about DoDDS schools could easily identify examples of insensitivity and ignorance in civilian educators more convincingly supports the applicability of the cultural competence framework.

### Implications for Practice

I believe the findings of this study support the applicability of the cultural competence model for DoDDS educators and their clientele of military families. The military is a distinct cultural group with a strong identity. DoDDS has the unique situation of serving an almost exclusively military population with civilian employees. Like most American school systems, DoDDS emphasizes multi-cultural themes in curriculum and practice. Certainly this is appropriate. What is less emphasized is the

military itself as a culture. It is a bit like missing the forest for the trees. As an example, one of the local elementary schools celebrates Black History Month, Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo, and other cultural events. The same school gave no acknowledgment, outside a hastily conceived bulletin board, of the official Week of the Military Child. As Rhonda pointed out “Nowhere in the school is there any mention that this is the week of the military child.”

I believe there are some very concrete and practical recommendations for practice, which can be gleaned from the findings of this study. Some of the following recommendations come directly from parents. They were asked “what can the schools do to make things easier for you?” Unfortunately, I cannot maintain their anonymity and credit them at the same time.

1. Educators should see themselves as members of the military community and take part in it. It is easy in some European communities for DoDDS educators to divorce themselves from the base community.
2. DoDDS should educate its employees in military culture. It is not enough to tour the flightline and peek at the cockpit of an F-15. The emphasis should be on the culture as it impacts families.
3. Educators should make a concerted effort to understand where parents work; maintenance, security, intelligence, medical group, pilot? Many jobs have demanding, inflexible schedules, and high deployment.
4. Educators should keep themselves aware of the major happenings on base, such as impending deployments and exercise and in the military at large

through the news, newspapers such as the Stars and Stripes, or through local base newsletters.

5. Educators should acquaint themselves with the new Aerospace Expeditionary Force (AEF) program. This helps prepare for the impact of large-scale deployments.
6. Communication with schools is essential. Scheduling can be a nightmare for some military families. The use of email was cited as being especially helpful in keeping busy families abreast of homework and upcoming activities.

Dave - Not everybody can get to the phone, but all the service people have a computer at their desk. It's [email] nice, as I don't know half the names of the high school teachers, but when I get email, its easier to communicate.

7. Educators should give appropriate attention to the children who are experiencing stress because of moves or deployment. This could involve training for classroom teachers or special programs for students of deployed parents.
8. Educators should take advantage of the resources available in the military community. Given the range of jobs represented in these base communities, there are experts in nearly every topic covered in the DoDDS curriculum guide. However, these resources are often unknown to educators, partly because military nomenclature is not understood. A



community-school effort to translate the base directories into civilian language might help.

9. Educators should not be judgmental about families that take leave during the school year. Military leave is not like civilian vacation time. It is often difficult to get extended leave during summer months.
10. Celebrate the Week of the Military Child. Encourage children to take pride in their primary cultural identity as *military brats*.

### Final Thoughts

I believe that completing a dissertation should result in some kind of personal growth. In an academic sense I am now, among DoDDS educators at least, a minor authority on cultural competence as applied to military families. I have learned a great deal, particularly from the families who were so generous with their time in interviews. Yet I feel that I have barely scratched the surface of the topic, or in terms of my framework, I have only entry level cultural competence. As I have worked in DoDDS with Air Force and Navy families for the past 15 years, I cannot be particularly proud of such long-over due achievement. However, I know I am not the most or the least ignorant of my colleagues in knowledge of the military culture. I would speculate that most DoDDS educators do not consider children raised in military families as being significantly different from children raised in civilian families.

If I could communicate one lesson to my colleagues, or to anyone who works as an educator with military families, it would be to understand the core dissonance at the

heart of the military family. Parents cherish their children and want to build strong families. However, military parents have voluntarily accepted a career and lifestyle that, by the very definition of duty, cannot be family oriented. Most psychologists, going back to Festinger in 1957, believe that when people hold two psychologically sound, but inconsistent beliefs, they experience cognitive dissonance, a tension which drives them to achieve balance by reconciling their thoughts and experiences.

This need for cognitive balance is probably common to most working parents. We balance our beliefs about work with our beliefs about parenting. It may be unacceptable to a working mother, for example, to believe that her children could be disadvantaged by her absence. By this theory, parents who choose demanding careers are more likely to have strong beliefs in the potential benefits of working, such as the financial advantages, the intellectual stimulation of a preschool program, or by (what seems so blatantly dissonance-inspired) compensatory “quality” time.

This must be a truly heightened phenomenon for military families. They hold traditional values of family, but accept a lifestyle which ensures that their children will be uprooted multiple times, experience long periods of parent absence, and spend many birthdays, holidays, and graduations without mom or dad.

I was struck by the power of this dissonance in the interviews. All the participants gave examples of the stresses in family life, some particularly poignant, like Wendy’s simple tale of waiting for the bus, looking nervously for her daughter to come home from yet another first day of school, hoping to see a smile. Yet each of the adults interviewed, sometimes in the next breath, moved quickly from heartaches to silver linings. Our

children make sacrifices, face some hardships. Moving is not always easy for them. But . . . through these experiences our children develop character. They are more adaptable, more worldly, more accepting than children raised in the civilian world. Personally, I have no difficulty believing that this is true. However, I think there is a strong need to believe, and this ability to capitalize on the positives of military family life supplies strength and spirit to the culture. Mary Wertsch believes in the character of military people and ends her book, Military Brats, in this way:

I like who we are. Military brats are brave, capable, idealistic. We are seasoned by tribulation, honed by our sense of commitment. I am proud to be a military brat, and despite the high price exacted by the Fortress, I would have it no other way. (p. 426)

Military culture is not different because its members wear uniforms and salute each other. Choosing a military vocation involves personal commitment and sacrifice, but also requires sacrifice from the families in tow. This is what Jeff means when he says, "When I am deployed, my son is deployed." Military families accept, adapt, and make the best of this nomadic and stress-filled lifestyle. I believe this is something to admire about their culture. Military culture should be understood, and honored, by the civilian educators who teach its children.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

My procedure:

1. I will introduce myself.
2. I will explain my research and ask if the interviewees have questions.
3. I will explain the consent form and obtain a signature.

The following focus questions will be asked:

1. What do you think is unique about the military family?
2. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of being a military family?
3. What have been your experiences in DoDDS schools?
4. What do you think teachers need to understand about military culture to work best with families?
5. What would make it easier for military parents to be involved in the school?

Additional target questions are likely to develop from interview data. Specific questions may include inquiries about deployment, job stress, frequent moves, life in a foreign culture, and availability of leave.

APPENDIX B

OVERVIEW



September, 2000

Dear Participant:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The purpose of my study is to identify what civilian educators should understand about life in the military in order to demonstrate cultural competence. Cultural competence is the ability to communicate sensitively to a culture different from one's own.

Several families from both the enlisted and officer ranks who have children attending a DoDDS school will be interviewed. The interviews will be audio taped and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts will be analyzed for major themes as they emerge. Confidentiality will be maintained. Names of participants in this study will not be identified. Only my dissertation advisor will have access to tapes and transcriptions. All data will be kept in a locked file and destroyed after two years.

Please read the attached Research Consent Form. I will contact you in the near future for an interview and will be happy to answer any questions that arise before, or at, our meeting.

Sincerely,

Danette Keegan  
(01638) 750095

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

## A. AUTHORIZATION

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby authorize or direct Danette Keegan, or associates or assistants of her choosing, to perform the following procedure.

## B. DESCRIPTION

Project Title: Cultural Competence, Educators, and Military Families: Understanding the Military in a DoDDS School

The purpose of this qualitative study is to identify the cultural competencies needed for educators to better understand a military constituency. Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) typically exist in communities where educators and the parents have different lifestyles (civilian and military). This study investigates what knowledge, attitudes, and skills educators should demonstrate to work effectively with a military clientele.

The procedure to be followed involves a semi-structured interview regarding the important features of military family life which might be helpful for civilian educators to understand. Interviews will be taped and later transcribed. Interviews are expected to last about one hour. However, each person interviewed may determine his/her length of participation.

By agreeing to participate in this study, I understand:

- 1) the interview will be tape recorded and transcribed verbatim;
- 2) all data collected during the study will remain confidential
- 3) access will be limited to the researcher and the dissertation advisor;
- 4) a follow-up interview may be requested to clarify information;
- 5) there is no foreseeable risk involved in this research study;
- 6) this study may help identify the norms and values of military culture which would help civilian teachers work better with military families.

## C. VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

I understand that participation is voluntary and that I will not be penalized if I choose not to participate. I also understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and end my participation in this project at any time without penalty after I notify the project director.

## D. CONSENT

For further information about the research and/or your rights, please feel free to contact:

Dr. Adrienne Hyle, [aeh@okstate.edu](mailto:aeh@okstate.edu), Principal Investigator, 314 Willard Hall, Oklahoma State university, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078. Phone 405-744-9893

Danette Keegan, [Keegans@gobalnet.co.uk](mailto:Keegans@gobalnet.co.uk), PSC 41, Box 5377, APO AE 09464, Phone: 01638-750095.

Sharon Bacher, [sbacher@okstate.edu](mailto:sbacher@okstate.edu), IRB Executive Secretary, Oklahoma State University, 203 Whitehurst, Stillwater, OK 74078. Phone: 405-744-5700.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been given to me.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ (a.m./p.m.)

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

I certify that I have personally explained all elements of this form to the subject or his/her representative before requesting the subject or his/her representative to sign it.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator

APPENDIX D

NOTICE TO SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Dear School Board Members,

I am doing research through Oklahoma State University. I am ethically required to inform you that I am doing an observation of school board meetings as part of my doctoral study. I am taking notes on the kinds of topics discussed and am particularly interested in those issues which seem unique to families in the military. These observations should not be intrusive. I am not audio or video taping. I would be glad to offer any further explanation or information that you might need. I can be reached at LK 6355.

Thank you,

Danette Keegan  
School psychologist  
DoDDS LK 6355

APPENDIX E

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

APPROVAL FORM

Oklahoma State University  
Institutional Review Board

Protocol Expires: 8/16/01

Date: Thursday, August 17, 2000

IRB Application No ED012

Proposal Title: CULTURAL COMPETENCE, EDUCATORS, AND MILITARY FAMILIES

Principal  
Investigator(s):

Danette Keegan  
314 Willard  
Stillwater, OK 74078


Adrienne Hyle  
314 Willard Hall  
Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and  
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

---

Signature:



Carol Olson, Director of University Research Compliance

Thursday, August 17, 2000

Date

Approvals are valid for one calendar year, after which time a request for continuation must be submitted. Any modifications to the research project approved by the IRB must be submitted for approval with the advisor's signature. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a project is complete. Approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. Expedited and exempt projects may be reviewed by the full Institutional Review Board.



∇  
VITA

Danette Pflieger Keegan

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: CULTURAL COMPETENCE, EDUCATORS AND MILITARY FAMILIES:  
UNDERSTANDING THE MILITARY IN A DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
DEPENDENTS SCHOOL

Major Field: Educational Administration

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in San Diego, California on April 25, 1952, the eldest child of Bud and Charlene Pflieger. Married to Mike Keegan since 1983 with two teenage daughters.

Education: Graduated from El Dorado High School, Placerville, California in June 1970; received Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology from Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington in June 1974; received a Master of Education degree with a major in School Psychology at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington in August 1978. Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree with a major in Educational Administration in August 2001.

Experience: Raised in rural northern California, eldest of six children; employed as a waitress, chambermaid, store clerk, librarian aide, nurse's aide during summers and while in college. Employed in Educational Service District in Yakima, Washington as School Psychologist in 1976 to 1978; employed by Consortium of Yakima Valley Schools in Washington from 1978 to 1982. Employed by Department of Defense Schools (DoDDS) from 1982 to present, in Iceland from 1982 to 1985, and in the United Kingdom from 1985 to present

Professional Memberships: National Association of School Psychologists.