

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF
WIVES OF MALE REGIONAL AIRLINE PILOTS

A DISSERTATION

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KALVANETTA MCPHERSON, B.S., M.S.

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DEDICATION

To God be the Glory for ALL the things he has done! I would not have completed this journey without my Heavenly Father, all praise belongs to him. I Corinthians 13:4-7 describes God's love and the love we are to show to others. I am thankful for the love of my husband, Anthony. Thank you for being patient, kind, humble, selfless, and honest. Thank you for protecting, trusting, hoping and preserving with me through this journey. You have been by my side since the beginning when this was just a dream, but you always encouraged me to pursue my dream and to never give up. To my children, Elijah, Micah, Noah and Trinity, thank you for believing in me. I hope that I make you all proud!

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ABSTRACT

KALVANETTA MCPHERSON

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE: A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF WIVES OF MALE REGIONAL AIRLINE PILOTS

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Regional airline pilots often work days away from home. For regional airline pilots who are married with children, working away from home can place the responsibilities of the home and family in the care of the pilot's spouse. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the lived experiences of the wives of regional airline pilots. A phenomenological approach was used in order to allow each participant to share her story. This study was framed using the family systems theory.

Ten wives of regional airline pilots with at least one dependent child living in the home were recruited through a social networking platform. Each participant completed an online questionnaire that included demographic information as well two reflective questions. Participants also participated in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analyzed and coded in order to develop three major themes: (a) flexibility in daily living, (b) unpredictable family relationships, and (c) benefits.

The study revealed that each individual in the family impacts the family system as well as each subsystem. When the pilot is working away from home, the pilot's wife can feel

overwhelmed, lonely, or even resentful, while at the same time she is experiencing life without him and exercising her independence. In order to maintain the boundaries within each subsystem, communication is key. When the pilot returns home, the family begins the process of self-stabilization, which includes being flexible with their routine and special events in order to include the pilot, as well as appreciating the time together as a family. The implications and limitations of this study were included as well as recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Employees in the United States aviation industry support our current 24-hour economy by providing reliable air travel virtually anywhere in the world, any time of day, and any day of the week. However, the availability of air transportation is often at the expense of the employees who are routinely away from their home and families typically for 3 to 5 days at a time (Simons & Valk, 2009). While there is considerable diversity amongst flight crews, namely flight attendants, which include both males and females, commercial pilots continue to be overrepresented by males due to lack of role models, acceptance and mentors for aspiring female pilots (Germain, Herzog, & Hamilton, 2012). According to the Federal Aviation Administration's 2019 report, 93% of commercial pilots are men (2020). Therefore, commercial pilots who are married with children are generally men who routinely work away from home, which may impact family routines and roles (Dimberg et al., 2002).

Wives of male pilots face the daily challenge of orchestrating their lives and schedules around their husband's work schedule (Cooper, 1985). Pilot wives may be expected to nurture their husbands when they return home, at a time when she needs respite (Raschmann, Patterson, & Schofield, 1989). Roehling and Bultman (2002) suggested that work-related travel can create an imbalance in roles in the home. The traveling parent is relieved of their roles at home, while the person remaining at home must compensate for the traveling parent's

absence. This may create an overload for the parent who is not traveling. These combined factors may impact marital satisfaction if both partners are physically and emotionally drained.

The wife of a pilot with children can often feel like a single parent as she is left alone to care for the children on a regular basis (Cooper, 1985). The husband may miss out on daily activities such as assisting children with their homework as well as special occasions such as birthdays and holidays. These social activities help to bind a family together (Presser, 2000). The husband's absence for these activities can contribute to domestic role overload for the wife and difficulty involving the husband in the things he missed while working (Rigg & Cosgrove, 1994). Persistent domestic role overload may bring about resentment in some marriages.

When one parent is away from the family due to work, the absence may have an impact on the children in the home. The children in the home may become accustomed to their routine while the traveling parent is away, they may not feel a "need" for the parent upon their reentry (van der Klis & Karsten, 2009). The traveling parent may feel as if he or she is missing out on the child's growth and development. However, with the advances of technology, many families have found ways to stay connected such as issuing the children a cell phone and communicating via video chat on the phone, webcam on the computer or through email (Nicholas & McDowall, 2012).

Theoretical Framework

Intermittent Husband Syndrome

Boss (1975) was one of the first researchers to publish studies on the physical absence of fathers, while their psychological presence remained. This theory is known as ambiguous loss, which can take the form of ambiguous absence, in which an individual is physically absent, but psychologically present with the family, or ambiguous presence, in which an individual is physically present, but psychologically absent from the family (Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008). Boss's work began by working with wives of servicemen who were missing in action. Over time, Boss began to expand her work from fathers missing in action due to war, to fathers who were routinely absent from family life due to work demands that required them to be away from the family outside of the eight to five work shift. Boss, McCubbin, and Lester (1979) focused on the corporate executive's wife and became the catalyst for research in other occupations in which the father is taken away from the family for a period of time on a routine basis due to his occupation. This concept became known as the intermittent husband syndrome.

The intermittent husband syndrome has been applied to military personnel, offshore oil workers, firefighters, and long-haul airline pilots (Boss, 1980; Faber et al., 2008; Forsyth & Gauthier, 1991; Forsyth & Grambling, 1987; Morrice, Taylor, Clark & McCann, 1985; Regehr, Dimitropoulos, Bright, George, & Henderson, 2005; Rigg & Cosgrove, 1994). Male regional airline pilots with wives and children add to the growing number of occupations in which the intermittent husband syndrome is present.

The reunion and reintegration of the pilot on a regular basis can cause a disruption in the family routine and unmet expectations for both husband and wife (Bustuttil & Bustuttil, 2001). Bustuttil and Bustuttil (2001) outlined the reintegration process as defined by Reuben Hill in his 1949 book *Families under Stress*. The process is as follows:

1. The opening the family ranks to include the father.
2. Realigning power and authority.
3. Reworking the division of labor and responsibility.
4. Sharing the home and family activities with the father.
5. Renewing the husband-wife intimacies and confidences.
6. Assuming father-child ties.
7. Bringing a balance between husband-wife, mother-child and father-child relationships (p. 220).

This process of reintegration on a regular basis may add an additional layer of stress to the marriage and family functioning (Dimberg et al., 2002).

Family Systems Theory

A family consists of many units. Each unit depends upon the other units for proper functioning (Cox & Paley, 1997). In other words, family members create a system in which “family functioning, family communication and transactional patterns, family conflict, separateness and connectedness among members, cohesion, integration, adaptation to change” (Whitchurch & Constantine, 2009, p. 330) must thrive. The family systems theory can be used to analyze the impact of a father’s routine travel on the family’s well-being.

Families consist of subsystems such as the marital relationship, sibling relationship, and the parent-child relationship (Whitchurch & Constantine, 2009). Family systems theory examines each subsystem individually, as well as in a hierarchy in terms of how each subsystem relates to other subsystems, and to the family unit as a whole (Cox & Paley, 1997). The family systems theory also uses subsystems to determine how power is delegated in through the hierarchies (Whitchurch & Constantine, 2009). The application of this theory allowed the researcher to explore the impact of a father's travel on each subsystem both separately, and collectively, as family systems theory takes a systemic approach to families (Cox & Paley, 1997). A father's intermittent absence, due to travel, may affect the hierarchy within the family, as the boundaries and rules within each subsystem shift frequently (Nicholas & McDowall, 2012).

Statement of Problem

The challenges of being married to a pilot include parenting alone on a routine basis, managing domestic roles and responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning, and laundry, as well as missing her husband's physical presence. While commercial airline pilots have been studied to a great extent in terms of pilot fatigue and training, little is known about the impact of a commercial pilot's routine work schedule away from home, particularly from his wife's perspective. This study focused on the wives of regional airline pilots with at least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home. This study examined how a regional airline pilot's work schedule may impact his marriage and family relationships.

Statement of Purpose

Wives of regional airline pilots face many challenges in their daily lives as they work their life and family schedule around that of their husband's. The researcher employed a phenomenological approach using interviews and a demographic questionnaire in order to explore the lived experiences of wives of pilots. This study was framed using the family systems theory as a theoretical framework. The wives will describe how their families cope with the intermittent absence and reunification of the male pilot in the family system. This study adds to the literature in family systems theory by focusing on an understudied population, the female wives of male regional airline pilots.

Research Questions

This research was guided by two research questions:

1. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience their daily lives when their husbands' schedules keep them physically away from the family system?
2. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience changes in the family system when their husbands physically return to the family system?

Definitions

1. *Captain or Pilot in Command (PIC)* - "the person who has final authority and responsibility for the operation and safety of the flight" (U.S. Department of Transportation, 2014, p. 8).
2. *Commuting parent* – "the spouse who leaves the family home for work...combines long-distance parenting during workdays with membership of the part-time nuclear family" (Van der Klis & Karsten, 2009, p. 341).

3. *Domestic work* – “all the tasks related to cleaning the home, doing the laundry, preparing meals, gardening, fixing things, administrative tasks, shopping and childcare” (Dominguez-Folgueras, 2015, p. 51).
4. *First Officer (FO), also known as co-pilot* - a commercial pilot who holds an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate, 1,500 total hours as a pilot, and aircraft-specific type rating (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2019).
5. *Home-based parent* – “the spouse who lives in the family home...becomes a part-time single parent” (Van der Klis & Karsten, 2009, p. 341).
6. *Intermittent absence* – recurring parting and reuniting (Rigg & Cosgrove, 1994).
7. *Long-haul airline pilots* – pilots flying flights longer than 8 hours in length (Roach, Sargent, Darwent, & Dawson, 2012).
8. *Major or mainline airlines* - “predominantly operate scheduled service in jet aircraft with more than 90 seats and often provide intercontinental service” (National Research Council, 2011, p.2).
9. *Regional Airlines* - “predominantly operate scheduled service in aircraft, both jet and turboprop, with 90 or fewer seats” (National Research Council, 2011, p. 2).
10. *Short-haul airline pilots* – pilots flying flights shorter than 8 hours in length (Roach et al., 2012).

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study the following assumptions were made:

1. Participants represented the target population and meet qualification criteria prior to participating in the study.
2. The researcher bracketed experiences as a wife of a pilot and mother and assume the role of researcher in this study.

Delimitations

In order to discover more about an understudied population, this study was delimited to participants who are married in a heterosexual relationship for at least 1 year and have at least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home. In addition, the male partner must have been employed as a full-time regional commercial airline pilot for at least one year.

Personal Biography

The researcher is a wife and a mother to four young children. She and her husband met while attending a major university for their undergraduate degrees. Shortly after they began dating, the researcher's then boyfriend revealed his dream to become an airplane pilot. The researcher completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees while getting married in the process. Upon completing her graduate degree, the researcher and her husband relocated to a small town with an established professional pilot training program at a local community college in order to pursue her husband's dream of training to become an airplane pilot.

After 3 years of training, the researcher's husband completed his degree as a professional commercial pilot. At the time of completion, the economy was on a downturn, and

he was unable to find employment as a pilot. However, 2 years after graduation, the researcher's husband was able to obtain full-time employment as a pipeline pilot for oil and gas companies. After a few attempts at obtaining employment with a regional airline, the researcher's husband continues his work as a pipeline pilot.

The researcher is interested in this topic due to the travel commitment associated with the professional pilot profession. The researcher would like to understand what it means to be a pilot's wife by seeking out the experiences of those who live it every day.

Role as a Researcher

Bracketing is the researcher's attempt to put aside any prior knowledge, beliefs, values or experiences about the research topic (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013). This researcher bracketed her experiences as the wife of a pilot, by constructing open-ended questions, maintaining curiosity, and practicing reflexivity after the conclusion of each interview. The researcher studied the context of the participants' lives by examining their reflective responses regarding their experiences while their husbands are away from home and while their husbands are present in the home.

Summary

Commercial aviation is a male-dominated industry which requires pilots to work routes that keep them away from home 3 to 5 days at a time. For pilots who are married with children, there is a need to adapt and adjust to the psychological demands of working away from home and reuniting with the family. The wives of commercial airline pilots must also adjust to their husband's lifestyle which may involve caring for children and managing household

responsibilities alone on a regular basis. The family systems theory examines families as an interconnected group in which the actions of one individual can impact the entire system. This study will examine how wives of regional airline pilots manage their daily lives considering their husband's work schedule.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The population for this study was the wives of male regional airline pilots. Wives of regional airline pilots are often left to care for the household and children while their husbands work away from home. This process of separation and reunification may have an impact on marital satisfaction specifically related to domestic responsibility, role adjustment, role negotiation, and the decision-making process. This study examines the pilot's wife's perspective of the impact of her husband's intermittent work schedule on their marriage and family life.

Airline pilots have not been examined extensively in the literature; therefore, the review of literature begins with a description of the career of a commercial pilot, followed by the limited studies conducted with the wives of airline pilots. The literature review then examines a variety of male dominated careers in which the wives experience the intermittent husband syndrome. These careers include firefighters, military reservists, business travelers, and commuter families. This literature review examines the marital satisfaction, parenting adjustment and stress amongst wives with husbands or partners in these industries.

Commercial Airline Pilots

As with any career, the personal life of a commercial pilot is also affected by their work life. The career of a pilot can be described using an ecological description, which includes abiding by the stringent rules and regulations of their profession, the unpredictability of weather, equipment, or emergencies. Airline pilots are expected to navigate mechanical problems, depart and arrive on time, and maintain the comfort and safety of the passengers

(Fraher, 2004; Karlins, Koh, & McCully, 1989). In an international study on airline pilot's mental health, Wu et al. (2016) found that 74% of pilots surveyed ($n = 1809$) reported trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or sleeping too much on several or most days over a 2-week period. In the same study, 75% of pilots reported feeling tired or having little energy. These numbers reflect the mental strain on the job of a pilot while working.

In addition to the pilot's career, a pilot must also maintain their personal life in which one may be responsible for the care of a family (Karlins et al., 1989; Lee, 1999). Cooper and Sloan (1985) found that various life events can also have an impact on the pilot. Examples of life event loss include marital separation and divorce, while life event gains include getting married, becoming engaged, or a new addition to the family. However, Karlins et al. (1989) suggested that many pilots are hesitant to share the details of their personal lives with management or doctors because of the perception that they are unable to do their job effectively if burdened by personal stress.

Nicholas and McDowall (2012) conducted a study of frequent business travelers, those who work away from home on a regular basis due to business related trips. They identified major themes that business travelers adopt due to their frequent time away from home. These themes can be applied to airline pilots due to the itinerant nature of the aviation field. The first theme is acceptance of their lifestyle as a choice. Pilots who enter the aviation industry are generally aware that they may not receive their first location choice when selecting a crew domicile, or airport where the pilot begins his trips. This is likely due to the scheduling policies of many airlines in which schedules are awarded based on seniority and newly hired pilots are

often the last ones to bid for a schedule (National Research Council, 2011). Therefore, most new pilots are aware of the fact that they will spend a considerable amount of time away from their home unless they relocate their family, or they are fortunate enough to secure a position in close proximity to their home.

The second theme is the process of negotiation, which involves the traveler, or the pilot, negotiating his working conditions with his family as well as his employer. While the aviation industry lends itself to employee to employer negotiation through the bidding process, pilots who have more time with the company will likely receive their desired schedules (Fraher, 2004). Typically, a monthly schedule consists of multiple assignments of trips (sometimes called pairings), each of which may consist of several flights over a period lasting 1, 2, or up to more than 6 days. Each of these trips begins and ends at the pilot's domicile (there also may be one or more overnights elsewhere) and thus comprises the basic duty assignment to and from which the pilot commutes (National Research Council, 2011).

In 2011, the National Research Council conducted a study on the effects of commuting for 7,553 regional airline pilots. Unlike other industries in which a person may rely on ground transportation to get to and from work, the commute of some airline pilots can be quite different. A pilot's commute may not occur daily, and it may keep the pilot away from home for several days. Pilots may also commute by air, residing in one city and flying to their domicile or base for employment. According to the National Research Council (2011) report, approximately 22% of regional airline pilots in the study commute over 150 miles from their residence to their domicile. Some of the reasons cited for commuting in aviation included the high cost of living in

the domicile city, family stability in the city of residence, and unpredictability regarding domicile changes (Bennett, 2006). In addition, regional airline pilots are often paid a low starting salary during their first year of employment, ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000 with bonuses and retention incentives included (Lute & Lovelace, 2016), which may impact a pilot's ability to relocate. In a study on airline pilot fatigue, Powell, Spencer, Holland, Broadbent, and Petrie (2007) found that fatigue was higher for those who stayed in a hotel the night before their shift, over those who departed from the city of their domicile. An airline pilot who commutes may spend additional time away from their home as commuting often takes place during the pilot's off duty periods.

Wives of Commercial Airline Pilots

Sloan and Cooper (1986) studied both commercial aviators and their spouses to find out the sources of stress and coping. In their study, Sloan and Cooper found that pilots as a group tended to suppress their stress and how they deal with it. In their study of 442 male pilots in the United Kingdom, 87% of whom were married, the number one coping strategy for pilots was a stable relationship and home, which accounted for 47% of the variance. Included in this factor were descriptors such as: a stable relationship with their wife; a smooth home life; a wife who is efficient in looking after things; and a wife who modifies her behavior and demands around her husbands. In addition to the first factor, Sloan and Cooper also found that the wife's involvement was a fourth factor accounting for 8.4% of the variance in how the pilot copes. The wife's involvement included statements such as a wife who involves herself and is interested in her husband's career; a home life geared to flying, prior knowledge of flying; and a wife who

has known her husband throughout his flight career. So, for the pilot having a supportive wife who maintains a stable home is a key factor to help him cope with stress.

For wives of commercial pilots, the sources of stress are generally caused by her husband's career. Cooper and Sloan (1985) surveyed 282 wives of civil aviation pilots in the UK; they followed up their survey with 20 in-depth interviews to determine the main sources of stress for wives of pilots. The number one stressor with 56.6% of the variance was categorized as domestic role overload. Responses in this category include increased domestic workload; feeling like a single parent; feeling isolated as a family unit and feeling rejected when her husband is tired once he returns into the family system. The second source of stress (accounting for 9.3% of the variance) was fear of her husband losing his job, followed by the third source, (9.2% of the variance) was the need to establish trust in the marriage and the fear of promiscuity. The fourth source of stress (7.3% of variance) was the wife's distance from her husband's career. This includes lack of involvement in her husband's work life, but also feeling as if her contribution to her husband's success is not properly recognized. Finally, the fifth source of stress was the impact of her husband's career on her social life (6.6% of variance). One of the statements reflected in this category is that people often view the pilot life as glamorous. In fact, it generally is not.

Similar sentiments regarding the sources of stress for the wives of pilots were identified in Rigg and Cosgrove's (1994) study in which they compared ground crew wives to aircrew wives in Hong Kong. Some of the comments that were expressed in the study were related to the adjustment that must take place in the family due to the husband's intermittent absence.

One wife found it difficult to function when her husband was present, and preferred to be alone, while another stated that it was difficult to maintain a routine because of her husband's schedule. Wives of aircrew members also expressed a concern for extramarital affairs due to their husband's time away from home.

While there is a significant lack of scholarly research concerning pilot wives, there are plenty of blog and internet posts which express the ups and downs of the pilot life. One such blog writer refers to herself as The Flight Wife. In a blog post dedicated to friends of pilot wives, she shares what is like to be married to a pilot. The Flight Wife (2016) stated that pilot wives are alone a lot and their lives revolve around their husband's schedule, which makes it difficult to plan things in advance. She also echoes Cooper and Sloan's (1985) finding by stating that not all pilots earn a substantial salary, and therefore, the pilot life is not necessarily glamorous; in fact, she states you will find many pilot wives using coupons and living on a budget.

The research on pilots and their spouses is clear. The career of a pilot can be stressful, and for the pilot, a spouse who is supportive and understanding can help the pilot to cope with his stress. However, for the wives of pilots, their support often turns into stress as they are responsible for maintaining their domestic life and supporting their husband, while also being concerned with his safety and trust.

Working Away from Home: Related Occupations

Firefighters

Firefighting by nature can be a stressful career as firefighters face unpredictable and often dangerous situations (Regehr et al., 2005). According to Shreffler, Meadows, and Davis

(2011), firefighting can be a stressful career as firefighters must deal with long hours, rotating shifts, and life-threatening situations. In spite of these working conditions, thousands of Americans pledge their service to their communities by working as career firefighters. Similar to the aviation industry, firefighting continues to be a male-dominated industry. As of 2019, only 3.3% of all firefighters in the US were women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019); therefore, most of the research has been conducted concerning men and their families.

Firefighters must work in shifts of either 12-hour days for 4 to 5 days, followed by 4 nights off, or 24-hour shifts (Regehr et al., 2005). During these shifts, the firefighters live in the firehouse with their coworkers (Shreffler et al., 2011), therefore firefighters also tend to exhibit the intermittent husband syndrome. In a qualitative study, Regehr et al. (2005) interviewed 14 wives of firefighters to gain an understanding of how the firefighter's career impacted their lives. Four themes emerged from the study which included: (a) the pride and glory of their husbands being in the profession, (b) feeling like single parents due to shift work, (c) feelings of isolation while husbands are supported by their network of firefighters, and (d) responding to stress and trauma.

Firefighters are community helpers and heroes. However, for some of the wives of firefighters, the attention and accolades given to their husbands often left them feeling like their own needs were less important. Firefighters often work over 60 hours per week (Shreffler et al., 2011), which is a considerable amount of time away from home. This time away from home requires the wives to adjust such as changing career plans and rearing children alone on a regular basis (Regehr et al., 2005). For firefighters, the time away from home and in the

firehouse helps to create a second family, and a high social support system (Shreffler et al., 2011). However, this support is not the same for the wives of firefighters, many of whom do not feel connected to the fire department (Regehr et al., 2005).

Firefighting can at times pose a risk of injury or death. In one study, firefighters reported feeling a low level of stress (Shreffler et al., 2011). The wives of firefighters in a separate study reported not worrying about their husbands' safety (Regehr et al., 2005). However, as a result of a difficult call or a trauma, wives of firefighters are often dealt one of two responses from their husbands, (a) their husband will withhold the information about the trauma, or (b) their husband will provide few details but remain emotionally detached as he tries to recover from the event (Regehr et al., 2005). In either case, the wife is often left to fill in the pieces either through the media, or months down the line in social conversation. Besides that, she must also provide emotional support to her husband by giving him space and not place many demands on him after a difficult day (Regehr et al., 2005).

Wives of firefighters play an active role in supporting their husbands' careers. They maintain the household during shift work and provide emotional support after trauma. However, this support often comes at a price, as wives of firefighters may feel lonely or resentful at times (Regehr et al., 2005). Although many wives of firefighters learn to cope with these issues as their husband's career progresses, those in early marriage often have a difficult time adjusting to the role of firefighter wife (Regehr et al., 2005).

Military Personnel

Military personnel from all branches can be called upon at any time to serve our country, either domestically or internationally. While most military personnel can expect to be deployed at some point in their career (Faber et al., 2008), military reservists are less likely to be called to deploy and face a unique set of circumstances. Military reservists are a unique branch of the military in which soldiers maintain a civilian life, often employed in civilian duty, while also a member of the military, in which they receive military training one weekend per month (Faber et al., 2008). Because of their dual roles as a civilian and a member of the military, reservists and their families are not as prepared for deployment when called upon for active duty (Faber et al., 2008) and they generally have less military experience and less exposure to combat (Lapp et al., 2010). Upon deploying, the soldier leaves family and friends behind to serve the country. As of 2010, 18% of military reservists, both officers and enlisted, were identified as women (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). While women may also be called upon to deploy, the majority of military reservists are men.

Military deployments are often a time of worrying for the spouses who are left behind (Aducci, Baptist, George, Barros, & Goff, 2011; Faber et al., 2008; Lapp et al., 2010). A primary concern for military wives is the safety of their husbands due to the unknown of their spouses' work environment (Faber et al., 2008; Lapp et al., 2010). Lapp et al. (2010) also uncovered another common theme of military spouses, which is waiting. Spouses of deployed service members are often limited in their communication with their spouse, and they must wait until

their spouse contacts them. This sense of worrying can exacerbate the time apart for military couples during deployment.

During deployment, military wives are forced to assume new roles and responsibilities, which often results in boundary ambiguity as the wives may try to include their absent spouse in the daily decision making (Faber et al., 2008). Wives must pull “double duty” (Lapp et al., 2010) in some cases such as caring for children and household tasks, and in other cases they may experience “going at it alone” such as what to do if there is a mouse in the house (Lapp et al., 2010). However, deployment also gives many military wives a chance to rediscover who they are apart from their spouse and tap into a reserved inherent strength (Aducci et al., 2011; Strong & Lee, 2017). For some wives, this may come in the form of taking a class or learning a new hobby, or simply spending time with family and friends that may have become distant.

The military deployment is a three-step process (Lapp et al., 2010), which may not be as routine for military reservists as it is for active military personnel. The first step is the pre-deployment preparation; the second step is continuing life at home during deployment, and the final step involves the reunion process post-deployment. Each step in the deployment process is met with challenges for both the deployed and the home-based spouse.

For military personnel serving in combat areas, the reunion process with the family may require some psychological adjustments. Upon returning from deployment, the soldier may be physically present with the family, but their mind may still be on the activities of the deployment (Faber et al., 2008). In addition to psychologically rejoining the family, military wives also cite the resumption of roles and responsibilities (Faber et al., 2008) and re-learning

how to live together when both partners may have changed as a result of deployment (Aducci et al., 2011).

Business Travelers

The US operates in a global economy that has created a demand for workers to be flexible and available to travel in order to support the financial needs of organizations (Casinowsky, 2013). Business travel is defined as “a necessity for mobility and flexibility and requires absence from the home and regular place of work at regular or irregular intervals” (Nicholas & McDowall, 2012, p. 337). Business travel is a male-dominated work pattern with men accounting for over 80% of business trips (Collins & Tisdell, 2002). Men, who are fathers and travel routinely for business, spend time away from home and their families. Business travel is a subset of the population that is becoming increasingly common due to the global connections that exist worldwide. Business travel is unique because it involves traveling on an irregular basis, therefore creating uncertainty for the family members of business travelers.

Nicholas and McDowall (2012) conducted a qualitative study involving 11 participants who engage in business travel as a part of their employment with at least five overnight stays in a 1-month period. The participants also had to be married or cohabitating with children living in the home. The researchers were interested in the impact of business travel on family and personal relationships. The results of the study demonstrated that business travel is unique because it is irregular and therefore can cross over into family time. One way that business travelers’ bargain for the time spent away from family is to value quality time upon their return.

This involves listening to what was missed, organizing special family time, and buying gifts while away on trips.

Boss et al. (1979) were some of the first researchers to examine the intermittent husband syndrome in an industry outside of the military. Their study focused on the wives of corporate executives including senior insurance executives, middle managers, general agents, and salesmen. The focus of the study was to determine how these wives coped with their husband's routine absence due to work. The average age of the participants was 35 and the average age of their spouses was also 35. The average number of children was 3, with eight families without children. The husbands in this study averaged 9 days away from home per month.

Boss et al. found that the women in the study coped with their spouses' absences by fitting into the corporate lifestyle, developing themselves and also interpersonal relationships, and establishing independence and self-sufficiency. The authors suggested that the wives' coping mechanisms helped to strengthen the family system by reducing the wife's vulnerability to stress (Boss et al., 1979). These factors may have also contributed to the wives' marital satisfaction, as 77.3% of the respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied in their marriages.

Offshore Oil Workers

The offshore oil industry is a male-dominated industry, 97% of employees in the UK's offshore oil industry are male (Parkes, Carnell, & Farmer, 2005). Offshore oil workers typically spend 2 or 3 weeks away from home. Parkes et al. (2005) reported several concerns associated

with this work pattern for marriages and families. Wives are concerned about their husbands' safety while they are offshore, and they are left to contend with parenting and managing domestic tasks alone. Wives of offshore workers may also work outside of the home, which can lead to frustration as one continues to manage childcare and routine household chores alone, even after the husband returns home.

Parkes et al. (2005) surveyed 245 participants and conducted a follow-up interview with 39 of the participants. The sample ranged in age from 22–59 years old. The majority of participants (87%) had at least one child. Sixty-six percent of the sample was employed outside of the home. The average length of marriage during which the partner had worked offshore during the marriage was 15–19 years. The themes that emerged from the study were: his offshore life (i.e., meaning the husband's life while he is working offshore), single life at home, which considers the wife's time while her husband is working offshore, and the joint life of "togetherness." Fifty-nine percent of the sample reported that they sometimes or always experience problems in adjusting to their partner's absences.

The respondents also showed a similar adaptation pattern upon their husband's reunion: happiness followed by annoyance, normal, and then tension a few days prior to their husband's departure. While the husbands generally experienced fatigue from work, the family members desired his time and attention, which can serve as the source of irritation and conflict. Conflict over authority is also a source of tension, as spouses "found it hard to give up control and independence when their partners returned from offshore" (Parkes et al., 2005, p.

420). The literature further indicated that the last few days before the husband leaves are also a time of tension as anxiety builds up about the departure (Parkes et al., 2005).

Offshore work impacted spouses in some cases by contributing to loneliness (Morrice et al., 1985). The position of being married, but alone, creates a paradox for some as they could not fully participate in the “single” life, as to reduce the temptation to engage in extra-marital relationships (Parkes et al., 2005). For others, loneliness is combated by caring for children, working, keeping in touch with family members, recreational activities, and keeping in contact with their husbands while he is offshore.

However, for some, the oil family lifestyle was a positive in that it allowed spouses to develop more independence, confidence, and coping ability. Some spouses reported their conscious efforts to help their husbands ease back into the family system by giving him space and avoiding arguments (Parkes et al., 2005). A similar pattern emerged for wives of firefighters. Regehr et al. (2005) found that most wives indicated that they were much attuned to reading the moods of their spouses and therefore gave them space to adjust upon re-entering the family unit.

Forsyth and Gauthier (1991) examined the adaptation patterns of families of offshore oil workers who are cyclically in and out of the family system. The first adaption pattern is the replacement father/husband. The replacement male is usually a relative who lives near the family, makes decisions, and handles discipline with the children while the husband is away; the husband assumes these responsibilities upon his return. The second pattern is contingent authority. In this pattern, the wife assumes all of the responsibilities during her husband’s

absence. A third adaptation is alternate authority. Authority is equal between both parents, and the wife possesses the power of decision-making when her husband is not home; however, when he returns, the husband regains power. This adaptation pattern is common amongst those with traditional gender roles. A fourth adaptation is conflict. The mother assumes all power and decision-making in her husband's absence; however, upon her husband's return, he has a different way of doing things, which she disagrees with and becomes the source of conflict. This is generally in relation to childrearing. The final adaptation pattern is the periodic guest. In this situation, the mother assumes all responsibilities and decision-making except wage earner. When the husband returns, there is celebration, but he does not have a functional role in the family and serves as a disruption to normal family functioning. Of the 147 families interviewed, Forsyth and Gauthier (1991) found that the majority of families adapted with an alternative authority pattern (49%), followed by contingent authority (17%), conflict (11%), replacement father (3%), and egalitarian (6%). Each of these patterns has its advantages and disadvantages in terms of marital satisfaction and family functioning.

The Commuter Family

Van der Klis and Karsten (2009) defined a commuter family as having a large physical distance between one's residence and place of employment. They further identified commuter families as having one home-based parent when the person is primarily responsible for the management of the home and associated responsibilities on a daily basis, while the commuter-parent is the parent who works away from home on a regular basis. In many cases, commuting is done to move the entire family for the career of the commuting parent.

Van der Klis and Karsten (2009) sought to explore how families adapt to the commuting reality. They found that couples either adopt one of two lifestyle choices; the first is the traditional model in which the male works away from home, while the female partner works reduced hours or zero hours in order to care for the home. The second choice is the egalitarian model in which both partners work and share domestic responsibilities. In the traditional model, if the wife is employed, she tends to choose “jobs to fit around the family obligations; the location of the job, the required number of work hours, and the flexibility of work hours” (Van der Klis & Karsten, 2009, p. 346). However, in the egalitarian model, both partners are given equal rights towards the work and family obligations. If the wife is the one who commutes, then the husband will support and vice-versa. However, there may be a situation when both partners commute. In this case or even in the case of dual careers in general, egalitarian couples in this study were more likely to contract help for cleaning and childcare.

For many parents who commute, maintaining a quality family life involves attentive parenting. One such example is providing children with mindful attention (St. George & Fletcher, 2012). Being mindful of or ‘tuned in’ to the child also means that parents are deliberate and consistent in their involvement with their child. This might be in routines with children, for example, making sure story-time is always completed, allowing later bedtimes, or spending time with the child in routines of getting dressed; and talking and explaining to the children about work, travel, and play. Parents can also be attentive to their children by communicating with them and giving them their undivided attention.

Lester, Watson, Waters, and Cross (2016) examined adolescent wellbeing of students in Australia enrolled in grades 5–10. The comparison was between children whose parents work a fly in/fly out (FIFO) work pattern in which the FIFO worker has a repeated cycle of separation and reunion in the family system. Of the 3,000 children surveyed, 600 had a parent with a FIFO work pattern. The results showed that adolescents in a FIFO situation tended to express more depressive symptoms and emotional and behavior difficulties, as well as less family connectedness than those not in a FIFO situation. However, the more parental presence and family connectedness, a family exhibited the lower the depressive symptoms and emotional and behavioral problems regardless of the work pattern. This study is significant for the present study in that it is one of the only studies to focus on the impact of cyclical absence on children.

Maintaining Relationships While Apart

An important aspect of maintaining a positive work-life balance is communication between the commuting partner and the rest of the family. Merolla (2010) reported on ways that couples who are apart can maintain their relationship by developing relational continuity constructional units or RCCUs, which are defined as behaviors that help to sustain a relationship.

The RCCUs are divided into three different categories: (a) prospective RCCUs, (b) introspective RCCUs, and (c) retrospective RCCUs. Prospective RCCUs occur when partners are together before the separation. Examples include saying goodbye, exchanging material objects and “spoors (e.g., objects that mark ‘relational territory’)” (Merolla, 2010, p. 172). Introspective RCCUs occur during the separation and serve as a reminder that the relationship is ongoing.

Examples of introspective RCCUs may include phone calls, video chats, and photographs of the absent partner, making scrapbooks or keeping journals to share when the absent partner returns. Finally, the retrospective RCCUs happen upon the reunification of the couple. Examples can be as simple as greetings and debriefing conversations in which each partner shares about their time apart, these RCCUs serve to connect the couple to each other and fill in the gaps on the time apart (Merolla, 2010).

Time apart can place a strain on marriage and parenting relationships. However, there are ways to prepare for an absence that can help to ease some tension. The commuter can also maintain these relationships by communicating with the family while away and being mindful and psychologically present when they return to the family.

Summary

Commercial airline pilots work in a demanding field that requires focus and precision to protect the safety of airline travelers. Due to the travel associated with flying commercial aircraft, commercial airline pilots often spend time away from their homes. The wives of pilots must absorb the roles and responsibilities of their husbands while he is working away from home.

There are other male-dominated career fields that share similar intermittent circumstances in which the husband works away from home. Firefighters, for example, must work a shift schedule which requires time away from home on a regular basis. The wives of firefighters reported feeling lonely, often like a single parent. Most families in the military will face a deployment at some point in the soldier's career. However, for military reservists who

are not used to deployment or the active lifestyle of the military, deployment can create new challenges. The wives of military reservists admit to worrying about their husband's safety and security and to taking on more responsibilities while he is away. The military wife may also experience ambiguous presence when her husband physically returns home, but he is not psychologically in tune with the family system. Wives of business travelers also face a unique circumstance in that work and leisure time often cross, as business travel is irregular and can be called on a moment's notice.

In general, commuting families must negotiate household and childcare responsibilities and decide if they are going to operate using traditional gender roles or egalitarian roles. Regardless of the role taken, families involved in a commuting relationship must make deliberate efforts to maintain their relationship by communicating before, during, and after they return.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of wives of male regional airline pilots. This chapter will describe the purpose of qualitative research, explain the application of phenomenology, and describe the sample population and the recruitment process. Finally, ethical considerations, data collection methods, data analysis strategies, and limitations will be discussed.

Qualitative Research Design

The qualitative research design process allows participants in the research study to share their personal perspectives on the research topic. Qualitative researchers aim to understand the experiences of others, reduce societal alienation, effect change, and expose oppression, amongst many other objectives (Gergen, 2014). In addition to the societal contribution of qualitative research, researchers often want to contribute to the well-being of individuals and families (Gilgun, 2012). Throughout the qualitative research process, the researcher must focus on learning the meaning of the topic from the participant's perspective, rather than from the researcher's perspective (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers conduct in-depth studies, seek multiple points of view, and use multiple methods to pursue their research questions (Gilgun, 2012). Furthermore, qualitative research is typically conducted in a

natural setting, uses multiple methods, focuses on context, is evolving and is interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Qualitative research is marked by several methods to ensure trustworthiness, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). In the current study, credibility was established as the researcher became familiar with the culture of the potential participants, triangulation, debriefing sessions, peer review, member checking, and thick rich descriptions of the research phenomenon. Each area of credibility is discussed in detail throughout the chapter. Transferability and dependability were established by providing detailed accounts of recruitment, data collection methods, and data analysis information to allow the study to be replicated in the future. Finally, confirmability was established through triangulation, acknowledging the researcher's previous experiences and bracketing personal beliefs, as well as providing in-depth descriptions on account of each participant.

Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology allows participants to explain a phenomenon through their own lenses (Creswell, 2014). The phenomenologist assumes that people are inseparable from their contexts; a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to view the participants' experiences within the rich context of their lives including their interactions with others, their beliefs and their practices (Gilgun, 2012). Phenomenology searches for meaning about a particular point in time and is centered on a specific type of experience (Roberts, 2013). Phenomenological accounts are taken through in-depth methods, then analyzed for further interpretation (Roberts, 2013).

Utilizing a phenomenological approach in the current study was a way to understand the experiences of pilot wives. As suggested in the literature review, the experiences of pilot wives were limited in the literature, as these experiences were often explored through the pilot's perspective of work-life balance. This study added to the qualitative research by focusing on the experiences of wives of regional airline pilots with at least one dependent child living in the home. This study included both in-depth interviews and an online questionnaire as the data collection methods to help the researcher better understand the lived experiences of regional airline pilot wives. This study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience their daily lives when their husbands' schedules keep them physically away from the family system?
2. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience changes in the family system when their husbands physically return to the family system?

Sampling Procedures

Population

The target population for this study was wives of male regional airline pilots, married for at least 1 year, with at least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home at the time of the study. The participant's husband must have been employed as a pilot with a regional airline for at least 1 year at the time of the study. In addition, the participant's husband must have been an active duty first-officer or captain with a company and on the company's schedule full-time. The geographic location of the participants was open as face-to-face interviews were not required.

Recruitment

Social media, also known as social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, has helped researchers reach targeted audiences, recruit participants in different locations, and reduce recruitment time (Andrews, 2012). People with common characteristics can be joined together in an open or closed group on Facebook. A closed group requires the group administrator to accept or reject members, while an open group is available to anyone with an interest in the topic. For this study, the researcher obtained permission to post a recruitment announcement on a closed Facebook group intended for wives of pilots with children under the age of 10 (see Appendix A).

The researcher began recruitment on the Facebook group by posting an announcement on the group's feed and attaching a picture of the recruitment flyer for the study (see Appendix B). Andrews (2012) suggests that using social media for recruitment allows for interactive communication between the researcher and the potential participant. In an effort to protect the privacy of potential participants, the researcher included her email address in the recruitment announcement so that participants did not have to respond directly in the comments of the announcement. However, when potential participants replied directly in the comments, the researcher directed the respondents to the email address provided. The researcher then replied using the email transcript (see Appendix C).

In addition to the email transcript, the researcher also included a copy of the consent form for the study (see Appendix D), and a Google form (see Appendix E) to give the researcher a general idea of when and what format to schedule the interview. Each respondent was

assigned a code number, which was used to complete the Google form. If respondents were interested in continuing with the study, they had to print, sign, and return the consent form either via email, in person, or through the mail. All 10 participants returned the consent form via email. Once the signed consent form was returned, the researcher sent the participant a link to the online questionnaire (see Appendix F), which was also completed using the assigned participant code number.

Interviews were conducted either in-person, over the phone, or using video conferencing. All interviews were audio recorded. Video interviews were both audio recorded, and video recorded. The researcher began the interview by reviewing the signed consent form (see Appendix D) and the interview protocol (see Appendix G). The interview time for each interview ranged from 25 minutes to 1 hour.

Reciprocity

Participants' time and personal contributions to the study were not taken for granted. In this study, the participants volunteered to participate in an in-depth interview, and they completed an online questionnaire about their experiences. The researcher provided each participant with a \$25 gift electronic card upon completion of the interview and the online questionnaire.

Trust

Trust was established with the researcher by being open and honest with the participants from the beginning of the recruitment process. The researcher outlined any

potential risks, time commitments, and benefits of participating in the study in the consent form (see Appendix D).

Protection of Human Subjects

The participants in the study are valuable to the fields of family studies and general aviation, as their experiences will help to add the body of knowledge concerning the impact of a pilot's work schedule on marriage and family relationships. The researcher submitted a Protection of Human Subjects application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Texas Woman's University in Denton, TX. The researcher received approval from the IRB prior to beginning the recruitment process.

The researcher was concerned with protecting each participant from risk factors that may inhibit them from participating in the study. Some of the risk factors from participating in the study include loss of confidentiality, emotional discomfort, topics of a sensitive nature and invasion of privacy. In order to address these issues, the researcher informed the participants about their right to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. The researcher also helped to ensure participants' confidentiality by expressing the safeguards in place to secure their information, as outlined in the Consent to Participate in Research consent form (see Appendix D). Finally, the researcher provided a list of resources for counseling or emotional support if participants became uncomfortable or had an intention to seek counseling as a result of participating in the study (see Appendix F).

Ethical and Political Considerations

The participants in the study were married to employees of regional airlines at the time of the study. Their participation in the study may have created some conflict in relation to their spouses' professional position within the company. A political consideration from the company's standpoint is the fact that the spouses of the regional airline pilots may not speak favorably of the company or the company's scheduling. However, the names of the airlines were not used, and the names of the participants and their families were removed.

Data Collection Methods

According to Creswell (2014), interviews are useful in qualitative research when participants cannot be directly observed in a natural setting. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants in person at a location of the participant's choice or via video phone call using a web-based video conferencing application, or over the phone. The researcher audiotaped each interview using a digital voice recorder. The voice recorder stored each recording. The device was secured in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. The video conferences were also recorded using the recording feature within the video conferencing application. The video conferences were downloaded from the computer application and stored on a flash drive in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. The files that remain on the computer are restricted by a personal computer passcode.

Participants were also asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, which included reflection questions regarding a time when their husband was working away from home at the beginning of his career as a regional airline pilot, and to reflect upon a more recent time, within

the past month, at the time of completing the questionnaire documenting their time when their husband was home and how the family prepares for his departure. The researcher sent out a link to the demographic questionnaire to each participant prior to the interview.

Data Analysis Procedures

Interview sessions were audio recorded using a digital voice recorder. Video interviews were also recorded using a computer video recording application. Seidman (2006) suggested tape-recording serves the purpose of retaining the original data and ensuring the participants that their words will not be misconstrued. Rodham, Fox, and Duran (2015) recommended that all researchers involved in the process listen to the audio recordings in order to contextualize the responses. The interviews were transcribed by the researcher and verified by a peer debriefer, a fellow doctoral student at Texas Woman's University in order to reduce bias and ensure rigor (Roberts, 2013).

Coding

Next the researcher divided the transcripts into chunks of information in order to begin reducing the text (Seidman, 2006). Following the grouping of information, the researcher began the first cycle coding process. Saldana (2013) describes coding as a "word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p.3).

During the first cycle coding phase, the researcher utilized analytic memos. Analytic memos are a type of journal to capture the reflection process in one or multiple places (Saldana, 2013). Lein, Pauleen, Kuo, and Wang (2014) defined reflection as "the process a

researcher undertakes to effectively and unbiasedly understand a research participant's life experience and be able to communicate in a way that the reader can subsequently understand" (p. 190). This process of chunking the data, first cycle coding, and writing analytic memos helped the researcher organize the data around themes stemming from the research, as well as the data. The researcher used both descriptive codes, which summarized the topic and In Vivo codes, words taken directly from the participants (Saldana, 2013).

Triangulation

Triangulation is a validity process in which the researcher uses multiple methods to find common themes or categories (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The researcher utilized the participants' own language through their interview responses, and responses to the demographic questionnaire. In addition to triangulating through multiple methods, the research also used a range of individuals with differing backgrounds such as geographic location, demographic characteristics and life experiences. Therefore, viewpoints and experiences were verified against others, creating a picture of attitudes, needs and behaviors specific to the research questions (Shenton, 2004).

Member Checking

Brit, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, and Walter (2016) described member checking as an opportunity to reduce researcher bias by giving participants an active role to check and confirm the research results. Participants in the current study were asked if they would like to participate in member checking during the interview process; 3 out of 10 participants agreed to complete member checking.

Brit et al. (2016) suggested utilizing synthesized member checking, which allows participants to view both interview data and interpreted data. This is done through a five-step process of 1) preparing a summary of themes and interview quotes that represent the themes; 2) check participant's eligibility to receive the member checking report; 3) send out the report with a cover letter asking participants to read, comment and return the report in a prepaid envelope; 4) gather responses and added data, with the final step; and 5) integrating the additional findings from the participants.

Debriefing

A peer debriefer is someone external to the study for whom the researcher can use as a sounding board, may challenge the researcher or the assumptions and asks questions about the researcher's interpretations (Creswell & Miller, 2000). According to Creswell and Miller (2000), peer debriefers add credibility to the study. In the current study, the researcher employed the assistance of one peer debriefer, a peer in the dissertation phase of the doctoral program. The researcher utilized the peer debriefer throughout the data collection and data analysis process.

Summary

This qualitative study focused on the wives of male regional airline pilots. The study examined how pilot wives experience their daily lives in light of their husbands' intermittent work schedules. The researcher utilized a phenomenological approach in which the lived experiences of this unique population were documented through the use of interviews and an online questionnaire.

The participants received a gift card with a monetary value of \$25 for their participation in the study. Participants were protected by being informed of any risks for participating in the study with an informed consent form approved by the IRB of Texas Woman's University. All data collected was kept confidential in a locked and secure location until the conclusion of the study.

Upon completing this study, the researcher aimed to address two research questions:

1. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience their daily lives when their husbands' schedules keep them physically away from the family system?
2. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience changes in the family system when their husbands physically return to the family system?

This study will add to the family systems theory literature by focusing on an understudied subpopulation, wives of regional male commercial airline pilots.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter presents data findings from 10 wives of male regional airline pilots. This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of the pilot wife while her husband was working away from the family system, as well as when he returned home. The researcher gathered data via semi-structured interviews, as well as through an online questionnaire that captured demographic data and reflective responses. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then analyzed by the researcher with the assistance of a peer reviewer to develop themes and subthemes common amongst the participants. This chapter will describe the demographic characteristics of the participants and their families, followed by the themes and subthemes which will incorporate the participants' narratives.

Demographic Characteristics

The participants in this study were recruited through a social media post in a group dedicated to pilot wives with young children. In order to participate in the study, participants had to have been married for at least one year to a regional airline pilot. The pilot must have had at least 1 year with a regional airline at the time of the study, and the couple must have had one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home. After the initial recruiting process, 10 participants returned the signed consent form, completed the online questionnaire

and participated in an interview. Table 1 displays the demographic characteristics of age, race and education level. The mean age of the participants was 31 years old, with participants ranging in age from 27–36 years old. Seven participants identified their race as white, one identified as Asian, one identified as Hispanic, and one identified as White and American Indian or Alaska Native. The highest level of education of the participants ranged from some college classes to doctorate degrees; one participant completed some college classes, one participant obtained an associate’s degree, five participants obtained a bachelor’s degree, one participant obtained a master’s degree, and two participants obtained a doctorate degree.

The participants were asked about being employed outside of the home. Seven participants were employed outside of the home at the time of the study, whereas three participants were not employed. Five of the seven employed participants worked less than 21 hours per week, ranging from 10–21 hours per week. Two of the seven employed participants worked 40 hours per week. The length of time in the current employment position ranged from 8 months–5.5 years. The job titles among the seven participants varied; however, two of the participants worked as registered nurses. Other job titles included: administrative assistant, business owner, community engagement specialist, project director, and research specialist.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Age, Race and Education

Characteristics	Category	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%	Range
Age		10			27–36 years old
	27–30 years old		5	50%	
	31–34 years old		4	40%	
	35–38 years old		1	10%	
Race		10			
	American Indian or Alaska Native and White		1	10%	
	Asian		1	10%	
	Hispanic or Latino		1	10%	
	White		7	70%	
Education		10			Some College – PhD
	Some college classes		1	10%	
	Associate's Degree		1	10%	
	Bachelor's Degree		5	50%	
	Master's Degree		1	10%	
	PhD		2	20%	

**N = number of participants in the study; n = number of participants for which the characteristic applied*

Each participant selected activities that described how she spent her free time.

Browsing the internet including social media, and spending time with family were two top activities that were enjoyed amongst all the participants. Table 2 highlights the other free time activities in which the participants engage.

Table 2
Participant's Free Time Activities

Characteristics	Category	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	%
<i>Free Time Activities</i>		10		
	Browse the internet including social media		10	100%
	Cooking and Baking		1	10%
	Exercise		6	60%
	Kids Extracurricular Activities		1	10%
	Play Games		1	10%
	Read		8	80%
	Self-Care including baths, manicures, pedicures, massages		5	50%
	Spend Time with Family		10	100%
	Spend Time with Friends		9	90%
	Watch Movies or TV including web series such as YouTube		8	80%

In order to participate in the study, participants had to be married for at least 1 year, with a least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home. Table 3 highlights the number of years married, how many children each participant had, and the age of the children. Participants ranged in years married from 2 years to 13 years; five participants have been married 2–4 years; three participants have been married 5–7 years; one participant has been married for 10 years; and one participant has been married for 13 years. Five of the participants had one child living in the home, four participants had two children living in the home, and one participant had three children living in the home. The children ranged in ages from 9 months to 9 years old.

Table 3
Demographic Characteristics of Years Married, Number and Ages of Children Living in the Home

Characteristics	Category	N	n	%	Range
Years Married		10			2 years–13 years
	2–4 years		5	50%	
	5–7 years		3	30%	
	10–12 years		1	10%	
	13–15 years		1	10%	
Number of Children Living in the Home		10			1–3 children
	1 child		5	50%	
	2 children		4	40%	
	3 children		1	10%	
Age of Children		16			3 months–9 years old
	1 year old or younger		7	44%	
	2 years old		1	6%	
	3 years old		3	19%	
	4 years old		3	19%	
	8 years old		1	6%	

9 years old	1	6%
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In addition to learning about the characteristics of the pilot wives, the researcher also deemed it essential to include information about the pilot husband's career. This information is critical to this study because it reflects the type of schedule a pilot may receive based on rank within the company (first officer, captain, or instructor), as well as time with the current company. The information about the pilot husband's schedule also reflects the diversity in scheduling patterns across the regional airline industry in terms of the length and frequency of trips.

Three of the participants' husbands were employed as first officers, six were employed as captains, and one was employed as an instructor. The pilot's employment with their current regional airline ranged from 1 year to 15 years; however, total time as a career pilot ranged from 4 years to 15 years. In terms of the pilot's weekly flight schedule, trips ranged from 2 to 6 days per week, with a frequency of trips occurring every 3 days, or once a week. Table 4 highlights the pilot's frequency and length of trips. The schedule is also described in the participants' voices below.

So currently his schedule he's gone about three to four days a week. Occasionally five but majority, mainly its three to four days a week he'll be gone. We've been doing good lately. He gets 12 days off a month. (Participant 7)

So, he usually does three to five days stretches most of the time like he's about to leave today to go on a three day. At the end of his three day if it ends before his last available trip to commute home. So, he has to stay an extra night and commute the next

morning. So, we're usually you know, trekking without him for three to five days.

(Participant 5)

He's usually gone four days a week and he come home for three days. In lucky weeks he goes away for like three days and he comes home for like four days. (Participant 3)

Table 4

Participant's Husband's Career Information - Length and Frequency of Trips

Characteristics	Category	N	n	%	Range
Average Length of Trip		10			2–6 days per week
	2–3 days		2	20%	
	3–4 days		3	30%	
	3–5 days		1	10%	
	4–6 days		4	40%	
Frequency of Trips		10			3 days - once a month
	Every 3 days		4	40%	
	Every 4 days		1	10%	
	Once a Week		3	30%	
	17–18 days per month		1	10%	
	Varies based on need		1	10%	

Data Analysis

The information from the demographic questionnaire was compiled to create data tables and statistics. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The researcher listened to the audio recording of each interview and read the transcripts several times before beginning the coding process. Each interview question and response were

compiled into a spreadsheet in order to view all of the responses at once. During the first cycle coding process the researcher read each interview question and response and highlighted words and phrases from the participants' narratives, and typed notes in the next column in the spreadsheet. The researcher used both descriptive codes, which summarized the topic and In Vivo codes, words taken directly from the participants (Saldana, 2013).

Table 5
Example of First Cycle Coding

Reflective Question	Participant Response	Descriptive & In Vivo Coding
Think of a time in the past month when your husband has worked away from home. Describe the time before he left for work, while he was away, and his physical return into the family system at home.	My husband is currently on reserve so there often isn't more than a few hours' notice. I tend to get really irritated when he gets called, and also anxious (I also have diagnosed postpartum anxiety). It's been leading to a lot of arguments, as there have been multiple times where I have had to juggle working from home with my daughter here all day and getting neither done very well.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reserve schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Few hours' notice" ○ "Irritated" ○ "Anxious" ○ "Arguments" • Juggle working from home with baby

Axial coding was used in the second cycle coding to explore how the descriptive and in vivo codes from each participant related each other (Saldana, 2013). The researcher utilized the comment section in the word processing program and created categories and subcategories for each first cycle code. For example, in Table 5, the researcher recorded reserve schedule on the first line, followed by four in vivo codes. During the second cycle coding the researcher added the comment, "Schedule can be unpredictable which leads to frustration" in the comment section. This comment was used anytime a code was related to an unpredictable schedule. The

researcher utilized this method throughout the second cycle coding in order to condense the codes developed during the first cycle. After all of the codes were created during the second cycle, the researcher mapped out the remaining codes, looked for patterns, similarities, and duplicate codes. Finally, the codes were synthesized into respective categories in which three major themes emerged.

This research project was guided by two research questions designed to permit the participants to share their lived experiences as the wives of regional airline pilots. Table 6 listed the two research questions and the supporting interview questions. The first research question invites participants to share how they experience their daily lives while their husbands are physically away from the home; while the second question examines how participants experience their daily lives when their husbands return home from a work trip. In addition to the interview questions, participants completed a demographic questionnaire that included two reflective response questions, which supported the research questions. Table 6 also included how the demographic questions align with the research questions.

Table 6
Research Questions & Interview Questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
RQ1: <i>How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience their daily lives when their husbands' schedules keep them physically away from the family system?</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Describe your husband's typical work schedule. 2. What was your initial reaction to your husband's work schedule during your first year of marriage? 3. How disruptive, or is your husband's current work schedule to your family life? 4. How do you children react when your husband is working away from home? 5. Has your husband missed any significant events such as holidays, birthdays, or school events due to his career as a regional airline pilot? If so, what ways was he made to feel included even though he was

physically absent?

6. What challenges do you face as a wife and mother due to your husband's work schedule?

Demographic Questionnaire Question

1. Who is responsible for cleaning the home, doing the laundry, preparing meals, gardening, fixing things, administrative tasks, shopping and childcare when your spouse is away?
2. Who is responsible for making household decisions while your spouse is away from the home for work?
3. When your husband is working on a trip, what is the average length of a trip?
4. How often does your husband have work trips?
5. How do you communicate with your husband while he is away from home?
6. How do you receive emotional support while your spouse is away?
7. Think of a time at the beginning of your husband's career as a regional airline pilot. Describe how the schedule impacted your life then. What adjustments had to be made in order to accommodate your husband's schedule?

Research Questions

RQ2: *How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience changes in the family system when their husbands physically return to the family system?*

Interview Questions

1. What type of adjustments, if any, do your children make upon your husband's return?
2. What are the benefits, if any, of being married to a regional airline pilot?

Demographic Questionnaire Question

1. Who is responsible for cleaning the home, doing the laundry, preparing meals, gardening, fixing things, administrative tasks, shopping and childcare when your spouse is home?
 2. Who is responsible for making household decisions while your husband is home?
 3. Think of a time in the past month when your husband has worked away from home. Describe the preparation before he leaves for work - such as the mood in the house and adjustments that have to take place. Describe what your time and family life is like while your husband is away. Finally, describe what your life and family life look and feels like when your husband returns home from his trip.
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Findings

The researcher analyzed interview transcripts, field notes, the online questionnaire, and engaged the assistance of a peer reviewer in order to determine the major themes of this study. Three major themes emerged from the study: flexibility in daily living, unpredictability in family relationships, and benefits. In addition to the major themes, each theme yielded several subthemes. A subtheme was developed if four or more of the participants expressed similar sentiments about a topic. Table 7 summarized the major themes and subthemes. Each theme will be discussed in detail to include the narratives of the participants.

Table 7
Major Themes and Subthemes

Major Themes	Subthemes
Flexibility in Daily Living	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Schedule can be unpredictable● Moving or commuting is common● Special events rescheduled● Communication is key
Unpredictability in Family Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Harder with children● Family life while husband is away from home● Loneliness● Overwhelming● Independence● Resentment
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Travel● Strengthens time together

Theme One: Flexibility in Daily Living

A recurring theme that emerged in this study was flexibility in daily living. The wives of pilots must be flexible in order to accommodate the ever-changing world of aviation. Flexibility in daily living was described in several aspects of each participant's lives, but it was particularly pertinent in relation to the pilot's schedule and family life. This section describes how the regional airline schedule can be unpredictable, how families may have to relocate, or how the pilot may commute in order to accommodate his career, and how pilot wives plan to include their husbands in special events. Finally, this section will highlight how pilot wives demonstrate flexibility in daily living by communicating with their husband while he is working away from home.

Schedule can be unpredictable. Participants were asked to describe how their husband's work schedule impacted their marriage and family life at the beginning of their career as a regional airline pilot. For three of the participants, the regional airline schedule was actually a welcome change, given that their husbands were previously employed as pilots in different sectors which kept them away from home for longer stretches of time or utilized a different type of scheduling system. One participant was in a long-distance relationship with her husband prior to their marriage, she described the type of work that he did before joining a regional airline:

When he first started, he actually went up to Alaska. He was a bush pilot. And that's how he built up his hours and that was a two week on, two week off cycle and that versus not seeing him for like six months was like a piece of cake. Then it switched to

this schedule where you have like every three to five days and that's even better.

Honestly, it's easy. Just in terms of what we've been through in the past. (Participant 10)

While the regional airline schedule was a welcome change for some of the participants, for others the schedule came as quite a surprise. Part of the surprise was due to the fact that many entry-level pilots, or first officers are often assigned a reserve schedule which means that the pilot may be on call and may or may not fly for the day. However, once the pilot on reserve receives their call to report to duty, they have a 2-hour window to arrive at the airport. For five of the participants, their husbands spent part or all of their first year with a regional airline on a reserve schedule. The unpredictable schedule made it difficult to make plans or make accommodations for daily living:

You know in 20 minutes notice you're like bye, I'll see you in four days. He's got two different suitcases he's got his long haul like four days suitcase, and he's got like just an overnight suitcase. ...that it hit me when we first got married, and that was our huge bumpy road of just this like trying to get over he's not deciding to leave me, he's being called into work which pays our bills. (Participant 4)

So that was really, really hard for us. He was in reserves for about 10 months and the reserve schedule at his airline was awful. Like absolutely awful. It wasn't necessarily days together and we were eight hours from his base, and he had to be within two hours of the airport. So, he was having to like travel up, stay with friends those days, sit all day, and then not get used to and then fly back home or drive back home depending

on what, and they switched his base like three times during that first period. (Participant 5)

So, his first regional job really came as quite a blow. Just the amount of time I would have without him. Yeah so it was out of base reserve. So, it wasn't even like he was home, it was like you're going to go sit at LaGuardia, you're going to sit in Houston, you're gonna go sit anywhere except the base we live on. But I'm not gonna work, because they're not calling, I'm just gonna hang out. Then that's especially frustrating, because they don't always pay for like a crash pad, and you know it's not super expensive but, like now I have to pay for you to go to work when you could be you know, we live in base, you could be here. So was it was definite a level of frustration doing that. (Participant 9)

Moving or commuting is common. While airports are located in nearly every major city and small town, airline bases, or domiciles are limited to a few major cities across the US. In order for a regional airline pilot to fly from their domicile, the pilot must either live in or near the city where the domicile is located, or the pilot must commute. Seven participants described moving in order to accommodate their husband's career:

We made the move from one state to another because he was joining the airline industry and he went from the 9 to 5 you know, university flight instructor to the airline industry. I told him I couldn't, I can't do it without the help. (Participant 1)

I finished my first-year teaching and then I joined up with him down in a different state.

So that was me quitting my job to you know support him and I haven't been back to work since. (Participant 2)

We had a bunch of changes because we moved to the east coast, and I started working again. So, it was a big adjustment. (Participant 8)

Participants also described how their husbands had to commute from home to their domicile, which if commuting by air, the commute often results in an additional day away from home.

He flies out of Florida, but his actual home base is in North Carolina. So, he has to commute. (Participant 5)

Sometimes he has to go out the night before because he has to drive three hours to base.... even though he has three days off it pretty much feels like two days. So, this third day he's leaving and the day he leaves, it almost feels like it's a wash. (Participant 3)

Special events rescheduled. A pilot's seniority within a company impacts his ability to request and receive days off, especially holidays. For many wives in the study, it was not unusual for their husbands to miss special events such as holidays, birthdays, or school events due to their work schedule. However, eight of the families in the study have adopted the practice of rescheduling the special event, if possible, for a different day and time to include their husbands. This practice of rescheduling is another example of the flexibility in daily living demonstrated by pilot wives:

We just rescheduled the day. Everybody was really understanding, and we still had fun.

We always say that the holiday isn't that day it's about the family. (Participant 10)

Birthdays, it's kind of like you know you adjust to them being gone. You go ahead and plan. OK we're going to celebrate on this day, not the day of. (Participant 7)

He's missed my birthday; he's missed our anniversary you know. So, there's times we've just celebrated the same event on a different day and then there's something else that he just misses out. (Participant 1)

Communication is key. The final area where pilot wives show flexibility in daily living is in the area of communication. Seven out of the ten participants expressed the importance of communicating with their spouse. The participants were asked how they communicate most when their husband is working away from home. Table 8 summarizes their responses. Phone calls, including video calls and text messaging, were common amongst all participants, while others utilized apps and social media to communicate with their husbands.

Table 8
Communication between Participant and Pilot Husband

Characteristics	Category	N	n	%
Communication Methods		10		
	Email		2	20%
	Facebook		1	10%
	Marco Polo App		1	10%
	Phone Calls Including Video Calls		10	100%
	Text Messaging		10	100%

Communication often requires flexibility due to the fact that pilots may fly across different time zones or end their workdays at different times. The husband or wife may be occupied with other tasks that interfere with communicating such as working, caring for the children or household, even sleeping, or eating. These scenarios are described below:

Communication is the biggest thing. He and I talk to each other every day, either we text all day, back and forth or he calls at night when he's done. He calls in the morning before he goes, you know if he's still in the hotel room. Communication is the biggest thing in order to continue to have that intimacy with each other. (Participant 1)

A lot of people don't understand that he's not going to be able to talk a lot, but that doesn't mean that your marriage is crumbling. You just have to figure out a way to connect while he's gone, even if it's just text me "I love you" before you go to sleep. If that's the only time I hear from him all day, I'm good, and if I don't whatever, but, just figure out how to connect while he's gone, whatever it is you have to do while he's gone to make sure he's okay. (Participant 10)

Like my husband had a bad situation happen ... there was a plane that had to be kept on the ground for a suspicious white substance. It turned out to be talcum powder, but yeah...I couldn't speak to him for a whole day. (Participant 6)

In addition to maintaining general communication with their spouses, participants also described the challenges of communicating about deeper topics while their husband is away:

So here we are trying to have a deeper conversation, a meaningful conversation over a cell phone that is undoubtedly breaking up every five minutes. ... And we're having

these conversations over a cell phone, where it's really hard to read the other person's body language and read like, the whole social situation going on. So that's probably the biggest, like, do you wait the four days for him to come home? Do you just sit and have a conversation on the phone? I don't know which ones easier. And then when you come home you don't want to be like, so we have 20 things that we need to talk about because the laundry list has added up. (Participant 4)

And now you know like we know that we have to really spell out what we're thinking right instead of like wondering, like we got to the point where we have to tell each other (Participant 5).

Theme Two: Unpredictability in Family Relationships

The second theme to emerge was unpredictability in family relationships. This theme has several subthemes as many of the challenges described by the participants fell into multiple categories, which are: harder with children, family life while husband is away from home, loneliness, overwhelming, and independence. Some participants expressed a sense of resentment towards their husbands because of their work schedule. Each subtheme will be described in this section.

Harder with children. Five participants in the study became mothers after their husbands began their career as a regional airline pilot. For these participants, the regional airline schedule made more of an impact on their marriage and family relationships after the children were born:

I think the bigger change is my daughter. So, we had figured it out after a few years, you know I became really independent. ... And then my daughter came along and became much more disruptive I would say even more than the first year, because it was this level of, I'm tired. I just, I need a break and I need help and you're not here. And I think that was the bigger change. (Participant 9)

Right now, I'm not sure if it's disruptive, but ever since my daughter was born it's been really hard when he is gone because you know how it feels to me, your partner is gone. It's like you're a single mom right. I know single mothers go through a lot more than I do, I know that for sure, but it almost feels like there is no help. Especially because all my family members live in a different place, I don't have anyone nearby. (Participant 3)

For new moms adjusting to child-rearing and the regional airline schedule is a challenge. However, the challenge does not necessarily get easier as the children get older. For pilot wives, managing the daily routines with children of any age was difficult with an absent partner. Pilot wives with children must also manage their children's emotions on their own when their father is working away from home:

Just trying to fit everything in the day. I like routine, and I like schedule. But like when my youngest son was doing sports, it was hard to make sure everything was done like baths, and teeth brushed, all the things that are important, but sometimes they don't get done. Those are the days that I wish I had more hours in the day. I think that's really my biggest struggle. (Participant 8)

We are in the toddler stage, so his tantrums it's really, really that's like my biggest struggle right now is keeping my sanity. We have outbursts, so to me it's really hard when my husband is away because you know I'm doing the business, then I have school, then I have to clean the house, then cook, and I think everything relies on you.

(Participant 7)

You can still do it. It's just that much harder to do it when you're not here. It's like a 20-pound weight on my ankle like grocery shopping. It's not impossible when you're not here, it's just that much harder to unload the groceries with the baby. (Participant 4)

I mean it's a full-time job. You know being a parent being you know, I guess on call through the night. Our toddler's in this phase where he is waking up multiple times a night and coming into our room. And then having to wake up and be the one that's available to do breakfast and be ready and put out all the fires all day long and then to continue doing all the chores around the house. (Participant 2)

So, my 8-year-old definitely has a harder time. He tries to push boundaries a little bit more when he knows my husband's not home. He tends to have a little bit more of an attitude kind of acting out emotionally. It's a lot harder for me to manage by myself with him. But my four-year-old, he's more like fussy about it but he's not to the point where he is acting out, he just wants more like physical attention from me, my daughter could care less about but she's a year old. (Participant 5)

Family life while husband is away from home. While their husbands are working away from home, life at home continues; however, the adjustment was a challenge as mentioned by

eight of the participants. The participants described what it was like to continue with family life without their husbands at home:

I had to rethink many friendships and plans in my life to make them work with his schedule. Meaning, at times hanging out with friends whose husbands worked a 9-5 schedule I would be by myself or the third wheel so to speak. Doing "family based" activities were done almost as a single parent or we would have to know about the event way in advance and hope that it would work with his schedule or he would have to miss it. (Participant 6)

I know the other day, she started crawling and he wasn't home. I think it didn't crush him by any means, but I think it was a feeling like I left three hours ago, and she couldn't have done that this morning. I try to take videos as best I can but it's definitely a thing there. (Participant 9)

I don't even RSVP him for weddings anymore. I can't remember the last wedding we went to together. (Participant 4)

Loneliness. Another area in which family life was unpredictable for pilot wives was to be alone on a regular basis. Five participants expressed loneliness from missing the company of their husband, or another adult, due to their husband's work schedule or moving to a different place and not knowing many people:

You know aside from my daughter, there's days where I just want my husband. You know I want to go to dinner. I try to get across like I married you because I like being

around you right. It's difficult when I know I'm here and I just want to hang out.

(Participant 9)

I hear other moms talking about how, like my friends saying oh my mom visited me, and she was helpful, and I like I'm leaving to my mom's place. And it was like that doesn't happen with us. (Participant 3)

I am also really into cooking and enjoy preparing all of our meals from scratch. When my husband is away, the time to do that is very minimal and tends to result in too many leftovers. I also do not find a lot of pleasure from cooking for little kids who show minimal appreciation. (Participant 2)

At first when we were here this was a really big adjustment because I was very isolated. I didn't have any friends. It was a big thing, very isolated. And the closest town is about a half hour away. After about a year of being here I actually made some good friends with people who will appear in the neighborhood so I can call it my mini village and they all know you're the pilot wife. (Participant 6)

A lot of my friends are in a different state, where 'm from, so I don't have any friends back here. It's mostly just my husband's family which I do hang out with them.

(Participant 10)

Overwhelming. Overwhelming was a sentiment expressed by all of the participants throughout the study. The word overwhelming was attributed to parenting, decision-making and managing domestic responsibilities. Participants were asked how they and their husbands manage decision-making and domestic responsibilities while he is home and when he is

working away from home. All of the participants selected equal sharing in terms of making decisions while their husbands are home. In addition, all of the participants stated that they are responsible for managing domestic responsibilities while their husband is working away from home, including cleaning the home, doing the laundry, preparing meals, gardening, fixing things, administrative tasks, shopping, and childcare. However, four of the participants stated they divided the tasks evenly when their husbands returned home, while six participants stated they remained responsible for domestic duties:

I think that's probably the hardest part in this not trying not to get overwhelmed. I mean it's hard that you're essentially a single parent when he's not there. (Participant 10)

I think sometimes I feel overwhelmed with like the pressure to be all. (Participant 5)

While he's away it's all on me. Every wake up during the night (we have a 4-month-old), every diaper change, every meal prep, every dog walk, every soothing of the baby. I juggle all this while still working a 40-hour week from home. I feel like as soon as the baby and I get into our routine while he's gone, he comes back and as soon as life gets back to normal, he leaves again. (Participant 4)

You know, haggle with the landlord and you know the heat goes what do I do. The tire went flat, who I call, what do I do. So those are probably the biggest challenge for me. (Participant 1)

I had the household responsibilities to keep up with including raking and snow removal. I found it difficult to prioritize time and figure out when it was best to work outside to tend to the yard. (Participant 2)

On the harder days he goes to a drop-in daycare for me to have some alone time. Most importantly, I make certain to workout 5x a week for my mental and physical health.

(Participant 7)

Independence. Finally, one of the traits that wives of many regional airline pilots possesses in this study was independence. This trait was mentioned by seven of the participants in the current study in terms of daily living or addressing problems while their husbands were working away from home:

You learn how to be independent, you learn how to be your own person, and basically superwoman in all aspects of your life because you basically don't have any other choice. (Participant 10)

The main benefit I've found along with this is my independence and learning not to have to depend on my husband. I need and can go out in public or to get things. That's a proud moment. (Participant 7)

I think to do it, you have to be really strong, and you have to be kind of an independent person. You know, kind of for those times when things do go wrong, or you kind of just have to step out on your own. (Participant 1)

When he's not here, it seems like the house runs smoother, and you know it's because I'm not expecting an additional person to pick up any sort of slack and I just do it all myself. (Participant 2)

So, for me we're both really independent. For me it wasn't too big of an adjustment. (Participant 6)

Resentment. One emotion that was alluded to by four participants was resentment. In the current study, resentment often resulted from feelings of frustration or feeling overwhelmed, especially related to parenting:

I think that's been a big one and just a feeling that he never had that level of responsibility because I know how every single night. I think that's an argument that we get into quite often. (Participant 9)

Mores I think the sacrifice of any free time that I have, is really where I struggle. (Participant 2)

Before my daughter started sleeping through the night, my husband would sleep on an airbed downstairs so that he can get an uninterrupted night's sleep, which honestly made me resentful. Even though I understood the importance of my husband getting a full night's sleep for the safety of him and his passengers, I was operating on interrupted and short hours of sleep (my daughter was on breastfeeding. (Participant 3)

He's overnighing in the Bahamas, and I'm at home with the baby screaming. (Participant 9)

Theme Three: Benefits

The final theme that emerged from this study was benefits. Among the challenges pilot wives take on, there were several benefits that each participant mentioned; each benefit falls into two subthemes: travel and strengthens family relationships.

Travel. One major benefit afforded to most regional airline pilots was the ability to add family members to a list of beneficiaries of non-revenue airline travel. For a nominal yearly fee,

immediate family members can fly virtually anywhere the regional airline or the partner major airline flies as a standby passenger. Five of the participants described utilizing this benefit; however, travel was also one of the areas of life that is more difficult with children:

Well we get to fly, even though it's not always the easiest way. Sometimes you really want a ticket rather than let's wait to see if we can get on. (Participant 3)

I'd say the travel is nice, but we don't do really much of that. It's hard with three kids to like, just pick up and go with him. But we have done a few trips with him with our benefits. We'd like to do another one coming up this summer, but we'll see how that goes. (Participant 5)

Well it is, it's nice to be able to fly back home, that was one of my biggest concerns is if we move this far away will we be able to make it back, if there's been an emergency. So that's really nice. (Participant 8)

I would say the number one benefit to me is, well I guess the travel benefits. And that's what, like I used to do myself, especially before my daughter. Like you know his schedule kind of sucks some months, and he's gone, but we get to travel around the world when he's home. I have the opportunity to pick up and go. (Participant 9)

My family's in a different state, so I do use it quite a bit to go see them, but we still travel, like we like to go to Tennessee, or Seattle. We've gone to the UK a few times. I like to try to use them when I can. We haven't used them as much, lately, with my son, but yeah, I try to use it. (Participant 10)

Strengthens family relationships. Finally, nine out of ten participants stated that their husband's absence and return home has strengthened their marriage and family relationships in many ways:

We saw each other every day, but we were so used to each other, seeing each other every day, that everything was just kind of dying. But now, we have a chance to miss each other. And we get our own personal space and our own personal time, that when we come back together, we enjoy it and we put each other first. (Participant 1)

I think it also gives us more appreciation for when everybody's at home. I feel like we feel that more than other families who are always together. (Participant 3)

I do think it's strengthened our marriage in terms of like we've had to really learn how to communicate. And I don't want to say like we were lacking in that prior to him doing this but like we've become much more efficient just because that first year is really tough. (Participant 5)

Returning home is the BEST! Because my son is realizing when Daddy is gone, it makes it even more special when he sees Daddy come home. He runs straight to him and gives him the biggest hugs. (Participant 10)

Summary

This chapter described the demographic characteristics of the 10 participants in the study including information about the participants, their husband's careers, communication methods and decision-making and domestic responsibilities. Data analysis was described in detail and research questions were aligned with interview and demographic questionnaire

questions. Finally, three themes were discussed including: flexibility in daily living, unpredictability in family relationships and benefits. The theme of flexibility in daily living included four subthemes: schedule can be unpredictable, moving or commuting is common, special events rescheduled, and communication is key. The second theme, unpredictability in family relationships yielded several subthemes including: harder with children, family life while husband is away from home, loneliness, overwhelming, independence and resentment. Finally, the third theme benefits yielded two subthemes which were discussed: travel and strengthens family relationships.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This qualitative study explored the lived experiences of 10 wives of regional airline pilots. The participants completed an online questionnaire with demographic questions and reflective questions regarding the impact of their husband's career as a regional airline pilot on their marriage and family life. In addition to the questionnaire, participants also participated in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim and analyzed by the researcher in order to produce three major themes: flexibility in daily living, unpredictability in family relationships, and benefits. This study was guided by the family systems theory as a theoretical framework, and was centered on two research questions:

1. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience their daily lives when their husbands' schedules keep them physically away from the family system?
2. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience changes in the family system when their husbands physically return to the family system?

This chapter presents a discussion of the major themes and subthemes. In addition, the findings will be connected to the family systems theory. Finally, the implications of the study, limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Discussion of Findings

Flexibility in Daily Living

For many wives, the first year their husband worked for a regional airline was particularly challenging, and in some cases, frustrating. For many involved, adjusting from seeing their husbands every day to seeing them every 3 to 4 days. The transition from pilot in training to full-time pilot was also a mental and emotional adjustment for some. Being married to a pilot requires a lot of adjustment as it is can be difficult to establish a routine (Rigg & Cosgrove, 1994). Flexibility in daily living can include staying focused even on the bad days, rearranging work patterns, and adapting to circumstances as they arise (St. George & Fletcher, 2012). This section will discuss the four subthemes related to flexibility in daily living: unpredictable schedule, moving or commuting are common, special events rescheduled and communication is key. These are the areas where the pilot wives in this study exhibited flexibility in their daily lives.

Unpredictable schedule. First year pilots are on the low end of the seniority rankings amongst pilots within a company. They are often given reserve schedules in which they are guaranteed work hours, but they may or may not fly on the days they are assigned. It may be difficult to participate in extracurricular activities or make plans to spend time together if the schedule is unpredictable (Leibbrand, 2018). Lee (1999) described this type of uncertainty as a career-specific type of boundary ambiguity, in which environmental factors, such as being called into work, create a presumptive expectation. In the case of a pilot on reserve, personal or family plans may be altered or dismissed, as the pilot is unsure as to whether or not he will fly,

while also being prepared to report to work. Boundary ambiguity is exemplified (Faber et al., 2008) when the pilot waits on reserve from home, in which case, he is presumably available to assist in the home even though he is on-call for work. For many pilot wives the unpredictable reserve schedule can cause frustration as their husbands are given a 2-hour report time, in which case the pilot's wife must shift her thinking from "we" to "me."

The financial burdens of travel and maintaining a separate residence often can have an impact on marital satisfaction and health (Yoder & Du Bois, 2020). When pilots were assigned to an out of base reserve, the pilot wives in this study found themselves worrying about the cost associated of their husband's reserve schedule. In many cases, the regional airlines do not pay for sleep accommodations, so the cost is covered by the pilot by staying in a hotel, or a crash pad, or in a few cases, the pilot may know someone to stay with in the area where he is temporarily based.

Moving or commuting are common. Internal family migration or long-distance residential moves of couples with or without children within a country (Lersch, 2016) are often husband-centered, in which case women may leave their employment, or simply move for their husband's career (Shihadeh, 1991). In the present study, seven out of ten participants described moving for their husband's career as a regional airline pilot. While the impacts of the move were not explicitly explored in the present study, many participants described moving away from their family and friends and the feelings of loneliness that ensued as a result of the move.

However, in the current study, the impact of the pilots who commuted from their home to their domicile airport were more pronounced by the participants. Participants and their spouses reflected a traditional commuting model (Van der Klis & Karsten, 2009) in which the wives orchestrated their careers around their husband's schedules. Two of the participants described working reduced hours in order to be at home and care for their children, while other wives chose to stay at home, or work alternating schedules with their husbands in order to accommodate child care arrangements.

Special events rescheduled. One of the unintended consequences of working days away from home is missing out on special events (Fursman, 2009; Regehr et al., 2005). Entry-level regional pilots are often unable to bid for holidays or other special occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, or school events in advance, so they often have to miss out on these events year to year. These social activities help to bind a family together (Presser, 2000). When missing out on these activities, the wives in this study expressed empathy towards their husband's absence and found a unique way to continue to celebrate as a family by rescheduling the special day for another day if possible. Prior to having children, some wives even flew out to where their husband was based in order to spend the holiday or special occasion with him, but this is another area in which it is harder with children.

Communication is key. Another area in which pilot wives must be flexible is communication. Effective communication has a positive impact on marriages by enhancing conflict resolution, empathy and understanding (Raschmann et al., 1989). RCCUs are actions or behaviors that couples utilize before, during, or after an absence as a way to maintain their

relationship (Gilbertson, Dindia, & Allen, 1998; Merolla, 2010). Maintaining communication and relational continuity occurs in three categories: 1) prospective, 2) introspective, and 3) retrospective (Gilbertson et al., 1998, Merolla, 2010). Prospective relational continuity occurs before the departure and can include telling your partner what you will be doing, saying goodbye, kissing goodbye, and saying I love you. Gilbertson et al. (1998) found that for women, the prospective RCCUs between them and their partner affects relational satisfaction. Participants in the present study described the time before departure as a time when they tried to keep the mood in the house positive some wives drove their husbands to the airport, or said goodbye from their driveway. However, for others, the time before their husband leaves is often stressful as the family tries to complete laundry, prepare meals, and stabilize the mood of the children.

Introspective relational continuity is the communication that takes place while husbands are working away from home, this includes phone calls, text messaging, instant messaging, sending pictures, and videos and video calls (Gilbertson et al., 1998; Lapp et al., 2010; Merolla, 2010). Introspective RCCUs are generally used less than prospective and retrospective RCCUs (Gilbertson et al., 1998). Some challenges that impact introspective relational continuity include protective buffering and interference in communication. Protective buffering occurs when the wives must decide what type of information to share with their husbands while they are away (Adduci et al., 2011). Wives may limit the information they shared with their husbands in an effort not to distract them (Strong & Lee, 2017). Communication can also be limited due to time zone differences or work obligations (Lapp et al., 2010) Participants in the current study

expressed similar sentiments in regard to having difficult or intense conversations over the phone and frustration with the fact that they were unable to communicate with their husbands at times.

Finally, the pilot wives described how they communicated with their husband once he returned home from a trip. Some examples of retrospective relational continuity included picking up their husband from the airport and venting on the way home, planning a date night, staying up late and binge watching a TV series, or driving around in the car while drinking coffee. While some of the participants did not have a set ritual or way to connect when their husband returned home, the first day their husband returned from a trip was a time for the family to reconnect and to be more relaxed.

Unpredictability in Family Relationships

This study revealed some very intimate truths about the pilot wife's experience, which led to the second theme unpredictability in family relationships. Pilot wives spend a great deal of time without their husbands, so in addition to being flexible, they have to grapple with the reality of being physically on their own while their husbands are working away from home. Pilot wives try to maintain their husband's psychological presence while he is working away from home, which creates a boundary ambiguity and contributes to unpredictability in family relationships. The second theme, unpredictability in family relationships, produced six subthemes: harder with children, family life while husband is away from home, loneliness, overwhelming, independence and resentment. Each subtheme is discussed below.

Harder with children. Prior to having children family roles are minimal and couples can combine work and family demands, including work related travel without too much strain on a relationship (Roehling & Bultman, 2002). The addition of a child to a family increases the number of tasks that have to be carried out in a home as well as incorporating the child into the family, with very specific needs, especially during the first few years of life (Dominguez-Folgueras, 2015). Young couples with young children are at a greater risk for stress while their husband is working away from home (Landesman & Seward, 2013; Morrice et al., 1985). For pilot wives, managing family demands while her husband is away often results in domestic role overload (Cooper & Sloan, 1985), lack of sleep and overwhelming responsibility (Lapp et al., 2010).

Pilot wives must attend to their children's emotions when their father is working away from home. Acting out, missing their parent who is working away from home, difficulty with the concept of time and sleep disturbances are some of the common behavior patterns seen in children with one parent working away from home (Strong & Lee, 2017). Even the youngest babies in this study "noticed" when their dads were gone, as noted by a change in sleep schedule, while the toddlers, preschoolers, and school-age children asked many questions such as "where is daddy going?" or "when will daddy be back?" The children's behavior was a source of stress for many moms in the present study, as their children acted differently when dad was working away from home.

Family life while husband is away from home. Morrice et al. (1985) studied oil wives and intermittent husbands; they reported three main responses from the wives when their

husbands were away. One response was the wives found it difficult to adjust to life without their husbands and could not wait until he returned. A second response was a lifestyle in which the wives' behavior remained consistent when her husband was present and when he was working away from home. The final response was a response of resentment, in which the wife resented her husband for leaving, but also resented him upon his return home.

In the current study, none of the wives described their husband's absence as too difficult to adjust, rather the majority of the participants continued family life without their husbands at home; many of the wives have become accustomed to their husband's absence. Participants mentioned scheduling fun activities or educational activities such as gym, dance, library, going to the park, the swimming pool, and playdates as a way to stay busy and occupy the time that their husband is away.

However, there were times when their husband's absence became evident such as family outings with other families or invitations from other couples. It was during these times where the wives of pilots either felt like "a third wheel," they participated without him, or they choose not to participate. Cooper and Sloan (1985) defined this as feeling isolated as a family unit. It is in these times where a few of the wives expressed resentment.

Loneliness. While marriage is associated with less loneliness than singleness (Stack, 1998), some wives in the study stated they simply felt lonely. Many had moved away from their home cities, as well as their family and friends for their husband's career, which in some cases resulted in feeling isolated. Lack of family ties can promote loneliness (Stack, 1998). Many of

the participants did not have family nearby to relieve them of parenting responsibilities, or simply to sit and enjoy the company of another adult who knows them well.

It is suggested that the more time couples spend together, the more satisfied they are with their relationship (Gilbertson et al., 1998). In addition to lack of family, loneliness in marriage is also associated with intimacy and companionship (Stack, 1998), which may be difficult to maintain while one spouse routinely works away from home. One participant stated that she just wanted her husband. She married him because she enjoys being around him and feels lonely with him away so often.

Wives who were particularly at risk for increased stress, include: recently married, caring for preschool age children, and no previous experiences of husband absence (Morrice et al., 1985). Regehr et al. (2005) found that wives of firefighters who were not working and caring for young children often felt lonely and at times frustrated with the care of the children. Loneliness in this study was particularly prevalent among moms with infants and toddlers who experienced multiple wake up times during the night, while they had to get up the next morning and began again. Stack's (1998) study also measured loneliness amongst parents and found that the presence of children was associated with lower loneliness, particularly among men. However, Stack's study was not inclusive of parents who work intermittent schedules away from home.

Finally, loneliness can come from a lack of social support (Lapp et al., 2010; Morris & Blanton, 1994). While family and friends may provide support, their support may not alleviate loneliness (Lapp et al., 2010). The lack of social support from others in different life situations

and lack of contact with others can have a negative impact on the home-based partner, in this case, the pilot wives (Lapp et al., 2010; Regehr et al., 2005). Half of the participants in the current study expressed loneliness to some degree.

Overwhelming. There are times when the wives of pilots feel overwhelmed by having to do it all. More coordination is required in order to make the domestic life more efficient while one parent is working away from home (Casinowsky, 2013). One wife stated that she was tired, and the cycle seemingly did not end, as the intermittent work schedule was simply part of the regional airline life. Role overload is an imbalance in work and family roles as the traveling partner relinquishes their role to the person remaining at home (Fursman, 2009; Roehling & Bultman, 2002). In the present study, role overload was particularly prevalent in mothers with young children and those who worked from home. Three of the participants developed their work schedule around their husband's work schedule in order to eliminate the need for childcare, tag-team parenting (Presser, 2000). However, in tag-teaming, the pilot wives, and presumably their husbands, feel like they never have a day "off" because they were either working for paid employment or responsible for childcare. There was a similar sentiment among stay at home mothers, their duties often required caring for their children during nighttime sleep hours, then waking up the next morning to care for their children again.

The wives in the current study spoke of the relief they felt when their husbands returned home. Many of the wives stated that their husbands jumped back into parenting duties and served as equal partners around the house. This had a positive impact on their relationship as they worked together to manage their responsibilities.

However, the quality time that the wives may be expecting could be impacted if the pilot is exhausted from his work (Leibbrand, 2018; Raschmann et al., 1989). Two of the participants in the study described the conscious effort they made to give their husband's a reprieve from work the first day that he returned home to the family, in which case the couple were relieved of the immediate expectation to return to a normal routine.

Independence. In spite of the challenges that the wives face as their husbands work away from home, there was a great sense of independence. Participants were proud of figuring out what needed to be done on their own and venturing out without their husbands. It is not unusual for the home-based parent to engage in new hobbies or activities while their spouse is away in order to remain occupied (Aducci et al., 2011; Morrice et al., 1985; Regehr et al., 2005).

In addition to pride of accomplishing things on their own, the non-traveling spouse can find independence by managing demands and expectations on their own (Stewart & Donald, 2006). Yoder and Du Bois (2020) found that individuals in long distance relationships marital relationships may become more similar to single individuals than those in a proximal marital relationship. Pilot wives may reflect characteristics of single individuals, as the family dynamic is slightly shifted due to the pilot working away from home. This type of independence was reflected in the current study as one participant stated that since she did not have the expectation that her husband would help her with household tasks when she was home alone, she did everything by herself. In contrast, when her husband returned home, there was a level of frustration if he was not meeting her expectations. Participants also expressed the

independence to enjoy watching television shows or movies that their husbands may not enjoy and the freedom to control the television remote.

Resentment. Another feeling that pilot wives expressed was resentment. Women are often expected to put the needs of family members ahead of themselves, while the same is not necessarily expected of men (Casinowsky, 2013). In this study, the participants dealt with the challenges of unpredictable schedules, moving, forgoing, or adjusting their career plans, parenting alone part-time, shouldering domestic responsibilities the majority of the time and managing feelings of loneliness and being overwhelmed. While the pilot wives were incredibly supportive, there were times when they felt resentful towards their husbands.

Benefits

Some of the benefits mentioned by the participants in this study of being married to a husband who is a regional airline pilot included travel and strengthens family relationships. These two subthemes are discussed in this section.

Travel. Airline pilots are able to provide their family with travel benefits, which allow the family to fly standby for an exceptionally low yearly fee. Families can take advantage of these benefits and plan family trips together as a means of quality time (Flight Wife, 2015). Nearly all of the participants in the current study took advantage of the travel benefits, some traveling to their home states to visit family, while others took vacations with their spouse, or by themselves. However, as with other aspects of the pilot wife life, traveling became much harder with the addition of children. Participants mentioned the challenge of waiting to see if there was room aboard a flight made them increasingly anxious when traveling with their children.

However, the participants appreciated the availability of the travel benefit, especially in the case of an out-of-state family emergency.

Strengthens family relationships. Traveling parents tend to compensate for their absence by intensifying their participation in family activities upon their return home (Landesman & Seward, 2013; Stewart & Donald, 2006). In this study, the participants noted the change in family dynamics when their husbands returned was generally positive. Father involvement as described by Pilarz, Cuesta, and Drazen (2020) includes three tenets: accessibility—the amount of time fathers are available to their children; engagement—the frequency and quality of the father’s interaction with the children; and responsibility—managing resources and daily childcare. For participants in the present study, the positive change was noted with the husband's interactions with the children; the children anticipated their fathers’ return, either by marking the days on a calendar, or with help from their mother. The fathers engaged in intensive play with the children. Families organized their family activities around their husband’s schedule and tended to participate in more family outings and activities when their husbands were home. The family schedule also becomes more relaxed when the husbands returns home. Some examples included: sleeping later, more elaborate meals, extended mealtimes, and later bedtimes.

Family Systems Theory

In a review of family systems theory, Cox and Paley (1997) described the interdependent nature of a family, in which all members of the family exert a continuous and reciprocal influence on each other. Families also exist as subsystems in which dyadic pairings create rules

and boundaries within the subsystem. Finally, families self-stabilize by making coordinated changes within the family system. This section will examine each of these tenets of the family systems theory while addressing the following research questions:

1. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience their daily lives when their husbands' schedules keep them physically away from the family system?
2. How do female wives of male regional airline pilots experience changes in the family system when their husbands physically return to the family system?

Family Members as Individuals

Each individual within the family affects the attitudes and behaviors of other members within the family system, as well as the subsystems (Hammer, Neal, Newsom, Brockwood & Colton, 2005). Upon entering the family system, the pilot must make a psychological shift from work to home. For a regional airline pilot, the adapting and adjusting period may happen on average every 3 to 5 days.

While the pilot is working away from home, the pilot's wife may also be managing work demands as well as the demands of the home. There is a reactive and interactive dyadic relationship in which one partner works nonstandard hours, and the other does not (Leibbrand, 2018). In the process of this arrangement, the partner who is not employed in nonstandard hours must adjust their conceptual resources including income, time, human capital, and psychological capital. In the current study, pilot wives expressed the need to work around their husband's sometimes unpredictable work schedule. In previous research, Boss et al. (1979) found that corporate executive wives dealing with intermittent husbands developed

themselves and interpersonal relationships with others, as well as established independence and self-sufficiency. While these are isolated themes related to the wife's coping patterns, Boss et al. (1979) cautioned that the individual, in this case the wife, must be taken into consideration when understanding the family dynamics.

The children in this study were not studied exclusively, rather, their perspective was reported from their mother's perspective. Nonstandard work schedules can have either a negative or positive impact on the child (Leibbrand, 2018). The negative impact occurs when the parent working nonstandard hours is stressed and exhausted, which can impact their ability to engage in development activities and model positive relationships. Nonstandard work hours can have a positive impact if the schedule increases the time the parents have with their children, which can influence the child's well-being. The mothers in this study reported that their children all missed their dads while they were away from home, as described as feelings of sadness when daddy puts on his uniform, asking questions about when daddy will return or requesting to call, or video call their dads multiple times per day. Some moms described their children's behavior as different when their dad was not home: changes in sleep patterns, more emotional attachments, and acting out or testing limits.

Families as Subsystems

One of the tenets of family systems theory is the concept of hierarchical subsystems such as parental, marital, or even sibling subsystems. Boundaries and rules exist within each subsystem for each person to relate to one another within the same subsystem as well as across each subsystem (Cox & Paley, 1997). The participants in this study emphasized the

importance of communication within the subsystems. There are different roles for the mother-child, and father-child subsystems in this study. The non-traveling parent must address any emotions that the children might be facing as a result of the traveling parent's absence (Stewart & Donald, 2006).

Communication was also key in the marital subsystem as participants described the challenges, they sometimes face in communicating with their husbands such as not being able to communicate due to an airline related emergency, change in time zone, or differences in schedules. The wives emphasized that finding a way to communicate was the key to maintaining intimacy while their husbands were away from home. One wife said she and her husband try to text back and forth all day, while another said she simply needs to hear from her husband once in the day to know that he is okay.

Boundaries within the subsystem. The intermittent nature of the regional airline schedule can be a challenge for any family. The frequent departure and reuniting as a family can be more disruptive because it does not allow for families to settle into a new routine (Dimberg et al., 2002). Some families experience boundary ambiguity as roles and responsibilities are redistributed (Faber et al. 2008). Boundaries can be too fluid, or allow too much outside influence, known as enmeshment, or boundaries can be too rigid to prevent contact with others, known as disengagement (Lee, 1999). Similar to military reintegration after deployment, wives of pilots may find it difficult to let go of control, involve their husbands in parenting and negotiating their husband's role in the household (Strong & Lee, 2017). The constant need to adjust is a source of stress for many of the pilot wives. The family must make

an ecological adaptation as they operate within the boundaries of the subsystem internal to the family, and the boundary between the family and the social environment (Lee, 1999).

Self-Stabilization within the Family

Self-stabilization refers to making coordinated changes within the family to compensate for any external changing conditions (Cox & Paley, 1997). When the father is working away from home, the entire family must reorganize in order to adjust to the change and achieve stability (Lapp et al., 2010; Nicholas & McDowell, 2012). Having realistic expectations for the household and parenting roles, giving the children more attention, focusing on the immediate family, and maintaining open communication are some of the ways that families can stabilize after a departure (Strong & Lee, 2017). The families in this study demonstrated self-stabilization in many ways. However, because some children were born into the intermittent lifestyle, they did not know any difference and the father's absence is the norm (Nicholas & McDowell, 2012). Families also stabilized by capitalizing on quality time and enjoying travel benefits when possible.

Stressors after the husband returns from a recent trip can include a lack of harmony between the two spouses, as both are tired and need support (Dimberg et al., 2002). Couples are in a constant state of negotiation as they adapt to the regional pilot lifestyle. In some cases, the wives and their families have adjusted to the intermittent routine, and they value the time that they have together as a family. However, others, especially those with young children, still find the schedule for particularly challenging. Figure 1 illustrates the application of the family systems theory in relation to the current study.

Application of Theory

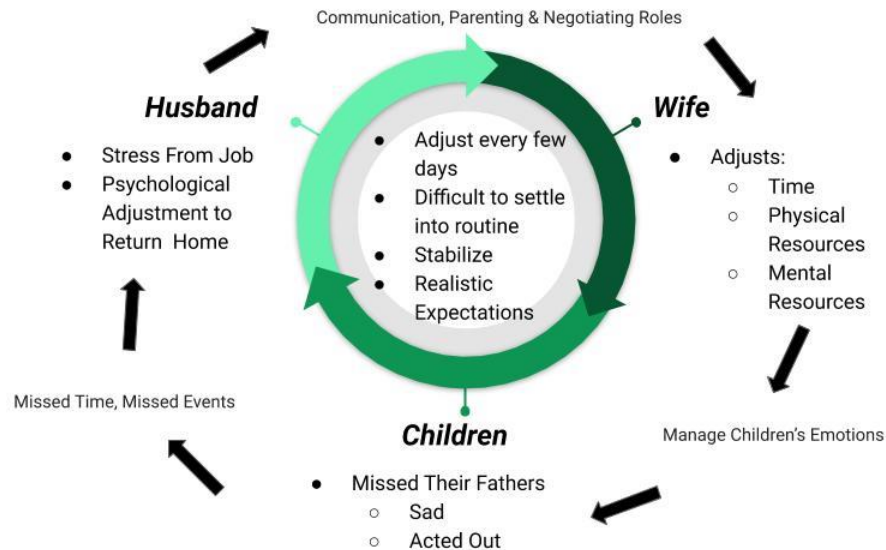


Figure 1: Application of Theory

Reflections as a Researcher

As the wife of a pilot, the researcher set out to find women who would share their stories about being married to a regional airline pilot. Almost all of the participants stated that two misconceptions they often hear being married to a pilot are: 1) it is a glamorous lifestyle, 2) they must make a lot of money. The participants in this study would inform the reader that while those perceptions could come further into a pilot's career, a career in a regional airline does not necessarily afford those opportunities. Landing a job as a first officer with a regional airline is a major steppingstone in the career of a pilot, but it comes with a lot of sacrifices that both the pilot and his wife have to endure. For the pilot, there are endless hours of training, which may take place out of state. This training also requires the pilot to spend hours completing intense preparation and study, which often excludes the pilot's wife and children.

Once the job is secured, then the pilot is on the low end of the seniority rankings, and thus receives the lowest bidding for his schedule, which as the researcher learned in this study can often result in a reserve schedule. From there, a first officer can work his way up to captain, and from there, regional airlines generally have agreements with major airlines and a captain can flow to a major airline, where the seniority rankings begin again.

What amazed the researcher the most in this study was the resilience and strength that each woman has as she supports her husband through his career. As stated, all of the participants have at least one dependent child living in the home, and over half of the participants work in paid employment. The researcher is often asked, “How do you do it, manage the kids and your job with your husband being gone?” The women in this study could not have painted a better picture of the realities of being married to a pilot. At times it is frustrating, lonely, overwhelming, and there may be feelings of resentment, but these women demonstrated that families are unique, and the way they have adapted to this lifestyle is remarkable.

Limitations

This study was intended to focus on the lived experiences of wives of male regional airline pilots. Using the family systems theory as a framework this study will add to the literature focused on ambiguous loss in families by male workers who work intermittent schedules that keep them away from home on a routine basis. However, this study is not without limitations, which are discussed below.

While this study provides a general prospective of the lived experiences of pilot wives with little ones, the study lacks the perspective of pilot wives with older children. The researcher attempted to recruit from a broader range of pilot wife populations but was limited to one social networking group with a singular focus: pilot wives with little ones—ages 10 and under. Therefore, the participants who were recruited all had younger children. Out of the 16 children total from all participants, 14 of the children were age 4 and younger, while only two children were ages 8 and 9 years old. Older children present with different challenges such as resisting their father's authority when he returns (Regeher et al., 2005), and they have more situation awareness and are therefore not as willing to accept the same responses as younger children (Lapp et al., 2010). A study including older children may not have yielded the themes which were established.

While this study allowed pilot wives to share their stories through their lived experiences, this study was conducted from a singular perspective, the pilot's wife. Radcliffe and Cassell (2014) suggest focusing on an individual overlook the interconnectedness of individuals within a family system. A suggestion for future research would be to conduct a study that includes both the pilot and his wife.

Implications

Continuing with the recommendations set forth by Rigg and Cosgrove (1994), airlines should seek to establish schedules as early as possible in order to avoid family disruption. Wives should be encouraged to be involved with the airlines as much as possible if they are

interested. Regional airlines can provide preventative supports for family life and programs for family life educators to educate these families.

The results of this study suggest that women married to regional airline pilots face unique challenges. Some of the challenges and feelings expressed by participants and other pilot wives such as loneliness, feeling overwhelmed, and resentful could be potentially damaging to a marriage. It is important that family life educators, marriage and family therapists, as well as other professionals working with families become educated on this family dynamic in order to provide support when needed. The most effective sources of support come from those living with a similar experience (Lapp et al., 2010).

This study also provides an opportunity for regional airlines to create their own family support groups, similar to a military base, and similar to the grassroots social networking groups online. The airlines provide this type of platform to their employees to share stories, ask questions and get support from other pilots, the same type of support is necessary for the wives who come alongside their husbands in this career endeavor.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research about wives of commercial airline pilots is limited, while blogs and other nonacademic sources of information are increasing. This is a unique population which could be studied further to better understand the challenges they face. The following are recommendations for future research:

1. Replicate the study with wives of pilots from major airline carriers or international carriers.
2. Replicate the study with participants who have children of different ages.

3. Design a study to include the husband's perspective of how his schedule impacts his marriage and family life.
4. Design a mixed methods study to measure variables such as marital satisfaction, parenting stress and coping skills.

Summary

The purpose of the current study was to explore the lived experiences of wives of regional airline pilots. The participants in this study gave credence to the incredible strength and support they show to their pilot husbands and their families. Pilot wives are tasked with shouldering the responsibilities of their home and family life while their husbands work away from home. In addition, pilot wives must adjust quickly to adapt the family lifestyle or routines, redistribute domestic responsibilities and realign power and authority when their husbands return home.

While the participants in this study were proud of their husbands and their accomplishments in their careers, their husbands career choices were not without sacrifices. Many of the participants expressed feelings of being overwhelmed, lonely and at times resentful. However, it is also important to note that many of the participants also attributed their husband's career as a regional airline pilot to some of the positive aspects of their individual or family lives such as improved communication, strengthened their marital and family relationships, and participants enjoyed the benefit of airline travel at a significantly reduced rate.

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APPENDIX A

Permission to Post Flyer

February 26, 2019

Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board
ACT, 7th Floor
304 Administration Drive
Denton, TX 76201

Dear Institutional Review Board at Texas Woman's University,

I currently serve as the Facebook group administrator for the "Pilot Wives with Little Ones". This is a closed Facebook group geared towards pilot wives with children under the age of ten. This group provides a place for pilot wives to receive support, encouragement and solace while our husbands work in the challenging field of aviation.

Kalvanetta McPherson reached out to me on January 1, 2019 through Facebook Messenger about posting a recruitment flyer for her research on our group page. I agreed and consider this an amazing research project. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Kelly

Elizabeth Kelly
betsykellyteacher@gmail.com
612.636.9363

Appendix B
Recruitment Flyer

RECRUITING *Pilot Wives*

Welcome to a research study about pilot wives!

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A PILOT WIFE?

This study seeks to analyze how the work schedule of a regional airline pilot impacts marriage and family relationships.

Your input would be provided in an in-depth interview at your convenience either in person or through a video call which will require approximately 1 hour of your time. You will also be asked to complete an online questionnaire about you and your family and your experiences of being married to a pilot.

- ***In order to participate you must meet the following criteria:***
- Be a female spouse of a male regional airline pilot
- Married to your spouse for at least one year
- Your spouse must be employed in his current position for at least one year
- You must have at least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home

If you meet the criteria above, and you are interested in participating in the study, please send an e-mail to kmcpherson1@twu.edu stating your interest, and I will contact you as soon as possible. By participating in the study, you will receive a \$25 gift card upon completion of your interview and questionnaire.

Appendix C

Email Protocol

Email Protocol

Greetings,

Thank you for your interest in the research study about Pilot Wives. My name is Kalvanetta McPherson, and I am a doctoral student at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. I am conducting a research study exploring how pilot wives experience marriage and family life within the context of their pilot husband's work schedule.

A few years ago, my husband trained with a regional airline for two months, leaving me and our three children, at the time behind. After training, his intent was to commute from our home-base to his domicile (airport base), which would require him to be in and out of the family picture on a regular basis. His recurring absence in our lives became the basis of my research study on pilot wives. As every family is different, this study seeks to hear how you manage your marriage and family life within the context of your pilot husband's cyclical work schedule.

In order to participate in the study, you must:

- Be a female spouse of a regional airline pilot
- Be married to your spouse for at least one year
- Your spouse must be employed in his current position, as regional airline pilot for at least one year
- You must have at least one dependent child under the age of 18 living in the home with you and your spouse

Participation in this study is voluntary and can be withdrawn at any time. Your participation will include an in-depth interview, totaling approximately 1 hour of your time, with the principal investigator, myself, at the location of your choice or through a video call. You will also be asked to complete an online questionnaire about you and your family and your experiences of being married to a pilot, which will take approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete. The total time commitment will be approximately 2 hours which will include the interview and the online questionnaire.

If interested in participating or for additional study information, [please reply directly to this email](#). *There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.*

Kalvanetta McPherson
Doctoral Candidate, Department of Family Studies
Texas Woman's University
kmcpherson1@twu.edu,
(972) 383 - 9819

Appendix D

Consent to Participate in Research Form

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU)
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title: The Airline Pilot's Wife: A Qualitative Study Exploring the Lived Experiences of Wives of Male Regional Airline Pilots

Principal Investigator: Kalvanetta McPherson, BS, MS kmcpherson1@twu.edu 972/383-9819

Faculty Advisor: Shann Hwa Hwang, PhD shwang@twu.edu 940/898-3155

Summary and Key Information about the Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms. Kalvanetta McPherson, a student at Texas Woman's University, as a part of her dissertation. The purpose of this research is to explore the lived experiences of wives of male regional airline pilots. You have been invited to participate in this study because you are female married to a male regional airline pilot, with at least one dependent child living in the home. As a participant you will be asked to take part in an in-depth interview regarding your experiences as a pilot wife. This interview will be audio recorded if conducted face to face, and video recorded if conducted using video conferencing. We will use a code name to protect your confidentiality. The total time commitment for this study will be about two hours. Following the completion of the study you will receive a \$25 gift card for your participation. The greatest risks of this study include potential loss of confidentiality and emotional discomfort. We will discuss these risks and the rest of the study procedures in greater detail below.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review this consent form carefully and take your time deciding whether or not you want to participate. Please feel free to ask the researcher any questions you have about the study at any time.

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to spend one hour of your time in an interview with the researcher. An additional time of approximately 30 minutes to one hour may be needed to complete the online questionnaire. The researcher will ask you questions about your marriage and your family's daily routines while your husband is working away from home. You and the researcher will decide together on a private location where and when the interview will happen, or a time when you can communicate on a video call. You and the researcher will decide on a code name for you to use during the interview. The interview will be audio recorded or video recorded and then written down so that the researcher can be accurate when studying what you have said. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older, married to a male regional airline pilot for at least one year, your husband must be employed in his current position for at least one year, and you must have a dependent child living in the home.

Potential Risks

The researcher will ask you questions about your marriage and family relationships. The researcher will also ask you questions about how your husband's travel has affected his relationship with you and your family. A possible risk in this study is discomfort with these questions you are asked. If you become tired

or upset, you may take breaks as needed. You may also stop answering questions at any time and end the interview. If you feel you need to talk to a professional about your discomfort, the researcher has provided you with a list of resources.

Initials
Page 1 of 2

Another risk in this study is loss of confidentiality. Confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The interview will be held at a private location that you and the researcher have agreed upon. A code name, not your real name, will be used during the interview. No one but the researcher will know your real name.

The audio recording and the written interview will be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The video recording will be downloaded and stored on a flash drive; the flash drive will also be stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. Only the researcher, her advisor, and the person who writes down the interview will hear the audio recording or read the written interview. The audio recording and the written interview will be destroyed within three years after the study is finished. The signed consent form will be stored separately from all collected information and will be destroyed three years after the study is closed. The results of the study may be reported in scientific magazines or journals but your name or any other identifying information will not be included. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions.

Your audio recording and/or any personal information collected for this study will not be used or distributed for future research even after the researchers remove your personal or identifiable information (e.g. your name, date of birth, contact information).

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will try to help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Following the completion of the study you will receive a \$25 Target gift card for your participation. If you would like to know the results of this study, we will email or mail them to you. *

Questions Regarding the Study

You will be given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep. If you have any questions about the research study, you should ask the researchers; their contact information is at the top of this form. If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research or the way this study has been

conducted, you may contact the TWU Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 940-898-3378 or via e-mail at IRB@twu.edu.

Signature of Participant

Date

*If you would like to know the results of this study tell us where you want them to be sent:

Email: _____ or Address: _____

Page 2 of 2

Appendix E

Google Form – Pilot Wife Interview Information



Pilot Wives Interview Form

Thank you for your interest in the study about Pilot Wives. The information on this form will guide me in setting up an interview time and location that works best for you.

* Required

Please enter your assigned participant number below. *

Your answer

Which type of interview do you prefer? *

- ☐ Face-to-Face, I live in the Dallas-Fort Worth area
- ☐ Video, due to flexibility, or I live outside of the Dallas-Fort Worth area
- ☐ Phone call, I do not have access or wish not to participate in a video call

What time of day is best for the interview? *

- ☐ Morning (Between 7:00 am to 11:00 am)
- ☐ Afternoon (Between 12:00 pm and 4:00 pm)
- ☐ Evening (After 5:00 pm)

If face-to-face, can you suggest a location in your community where the interview can take place in a private setting?

Your answer

In order for the interview to take place, I must have a signed consent form. If interviewing via video call, how would you like the consent form delivered and returned to me? *

- ☐ Email - I can print it, and scan it back
- ☐ Physical address - please mail it to me, with a self-addressed envelope and I will send it back
- ☐ Our interview will be face-to-face, so I can sign it in person

Please provide an email or physical address where I can send the consent form for this study. *

Your answer

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Appendix F

Online Questionnaire

What do you enjoy most about your job?

(1000 characters remaining)

What do you like least about your job?

(1000 characters remaining)

Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

What do you enjoy doing in your free time. Select all that apply.

- ☒ Browse the Internet, including Social Media [Checked=1]
- ☒ Exercise [Checked=1]
- ☒ Read [Checked=1]
- ☒ Self-care such as baths, manicures, pedicures, shopping [Checked=1]
- ☒ Spend time with family [Checked=1]
- ☒ Spend time with friends [Checked=1]
- ☒ Watch movies or television, including web series such as YouTube channels [Checked=1]
- ☒ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

Family Information

★ How many years have you been married?

★ How many children live in your home?

Please indicate the age of each child living in your home.

Child 1

--Select-- Child's Age

- 1 [Value=1]
- 2 [Value=2]
- 3 [Value=3]
- 4 [Value=4]
- 5 [Value=5]
- 6 [Value=6]
- 7 [Value=7]
- 8 [Value=8]
- 9 [Value=9]
- 10 [Value=10]
- 11 [Value=11]
- 12 [Value=12]
- 13 [Value=13]
- 14 [Value=14]
- 15 [Value=15]
- 16 [Value=16]
- 17 [Value=17]
- 18 [Value=18]
- 19 [Value=19]
- 20 [Value=20]
- 21 [Value=21]
- 22 [Value=22]
- 23 [Value=23]
- 24 [Value=24]
- 25 [Value=25]

10/6/2019

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

- 26 [Value=26]
- 27 [Value=27]
- 28 [Value=28]
- 29 [Value=29]
- 30 [Value=30]

Child 2

--Select-- Child's Age

Child 3

--Select-- Child's Age

Child 4

--Select-- Child's Age

Child 5

--Select-- Child's Age

Child 6

--Select-- Child's Age

Child 7

--Select-- Child's Age

Child 8

--Select-- Child's Age

Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

Spouse's Travel Information

What is your husband's position in the his airline?

- ☐ First-officer [Checked=1]
☐ Captain [Checked=1]
☐ Instructor [Checked=1]
☐ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

★ How long has your husband been in employed in his current position?

★ What is your husband's total time as a career pilot (any position)?

(1000 characters remaining)

★ When your husband is working on a trip, what is the average length of a trip? Please explain.

- ☐ Overnight [Value=1]
☐ 2-3 days per week [Value=2]
☐ 4-6 days per week [Value=3]
☐ 1 week at a time [Value=4]
☐ 2 weeks at a time [Value=5]
☐ Other (please specify) [Value=6]

How often does your husband have work trips?

- ☐ Every day [Checked=1]
☐ Every other day [Checked=1]

<https://www.psychdata.com/auto/surveyprint.asp?UID=96360&SID=187252>

4/7

- ☐ Every two days [Checked=1]
☐ Every three days [Checked=1]
☐ Every four days [Checked=1]
☐ Once a week [Checked=1]
☐ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

 Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

Decision Making and Domestic Responsibility

- ★ Who is responsible for making household decisions while your spouse is away from the home for work?

- ☐ I am [Value=1]
☐ My husband [Value=2]
☐ Equal Sharing [Value=3]
☐ Other (please specify) [Value=4]

Who is responsible for making household decisions while your husband is home?

- ☐ I am [Checked=1]
☐ My husband [Checked=1]
☐ Equal sharing [Checked=1]
☐ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

Who is responsible for cleaning the home, doing the laundry, preparing meals, gardening, fixing things, administrative tasks, shopping and childcare when your spouse is away?

- ☐ I am [Checked=1]
☐ My husband [Checked=1]
☐ Equal Sharing [Checked=1]
☐ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

- ★ Who is responsible for cleaning the home, doing the laundry, preparing meals, gardening, fixing things, administrative tasks, shopping and childcare when your spouse is home?

- ☐ I am [Value=1]
☐ My husband [Value=2]
☐ Equal sharing [Value=3]
☐ Other (please specify) [Value=4]

 Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

Support System

How do you communicate with your husband while he is away from home? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Phone calls - including video calls [Checked=1]
☐ Text messages [Checked=1]
☐ Email [Checked=1]
☐ We don't communicate while he is away [Checked=1]
☐ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

How do you receive emotional support while your spouse is away? Select all that apply.

- ☐ Keeping open communication with my spouse about my feelings [Checked=1]
☐ I rely on family that lives in the area [Checked=1]
☐ I connect with friends that live in the area [Checked=1]
☐ Connecting with other wives in a similar situation [Checked=1]
☐ Talking to family or friends who do not live in the area [Checked=1]
☐ Other (please specify) [Checked=1]

Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

- ★ Think of a time at the beginning of your husband's career as a regional airline pilot. Describe how the schedule impacted your life then. What adjustments had to be made in order to accommodate your husband's schedule?

(28000 characters remaining)

Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

- ★ Think of a time in the past month when your husband has worked away from home. Describe the preparation before he leaves for work - such as the mood in the house and adjustments that have to take place. Describe what your time and family life is like while your husband is away. Finally, describe what your life and family life looks and feels like when your husband returns home from his trip.

(28000 characters remaining)

If you would like to know the results of this study please follow the link on the last page.

Page Break

THE AIRLINE PILOT'S WIFE

Automatic Page Break

[End of Survey "Custom URL Redirect" is enabled]

At the conclusion of this survey, the survey will redirect to:

- <https://www.psychdata.com/s.asp?SID=187320>

Please note that this redirect will bypass the "Standard Conclusion Page."

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APPENDIX G

Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Participant's Code: _____

Date of Interview: _____

"Thank you once again for volunteering to participate in this research study. Before we begin, I want to review the consent form with you." (Hand a copy of the consent form to the participant. Read each section as the participant follows along.) "Do you have any questions?" (Pause.) "Please initial each page of the consent form and sign the last page. If you would like to receive a copy of the study summary results, please write your address at the bottom of the last page." (Wait for participant to sign two copies of the consent form. Give one copy of the consent to the participant and keep the other copy of the consent.)

"I also have a demographic questionnaire for you to complete before we begin the interview. The demographic questionnaire will ask you for general information about your work status, ethnicity, and family. There will also be questions that pertain to your husband's job, as well as his years in the aviation industry. I will ask you to read and fill out the questionnaire before the interview. Do you have any questions about the demographic questionnaire?" (Pause. Allow participant to complete the demographic questionnaire.)

"The purpose of this study is to explore how you experience your marriage and family life while working with your pilot husband's work schedule. By sharing your story, you will be adding to research in this area to help others understand what it is like to be married to an

airline pilot. The questions I will ask you are designed to permit you to tell your story and how you experience your marriage and family life. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study without any repercussions. Do you have any questions about the study?" (Pause.) "You may take as many breaks as you may need during the interview."

"I will be audio-taping your story and may take some notes as you are speaking. I may ask you questions in order to clarify the relationship of any person you may name. I will edit their names out of the transcript and will only use a general description such as the mother, the brother-in-law, the friend, etc."

"Now I am turning on the audio recording and will start asking you questions. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers. I would like you to speak freely, openly, and share as much as you feel comfortable with sharing. If anything, I say or ask is unclear, please let me know. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, let me know. Do you have any questions before we start?" (Pause).

Interview Questions

1. Describe your husband's typical work schedule.
2. What was your initial reaction to your husband's flight schedule during his first year of employment with an airline?
3. How disruptive is it for your husband to be gone on a regular or irregular basis now, after the first year of employment?
4. How do your children react to your husband's absence?
5. What type of adjustments if any, do your children make upon your husbands' return?

6. Has your husband missed any significant events in the family, such as holidays, birthdays, or school events due to his career as a regional airline pilot? If so, describe what it was like for him to be away from the family? In what ways, if any was, he made to feel included even though he was physically absent?
7. What challenges, if any, do you face as a wife and a mother when your husband is working away from home?
8. Follow up question from the demographic questionnaire.
 - a) Describe the emotional support you receive from (refer to response on questionnaire) while your husband is working away from home.

Prompts

- Facial expression showing focused attention and interest.
- Attentive silence
- Umm Hmm.
- What do you remember most?
- Tell me more about that.
- Who did you tell?
- Who else did you tell?
- How did you make sense of that?
- What did that mean to you?
- How was that helpful?
- Tell me the first thing that popped into your head when I asked that.
- Because?
- And then what happened?
- So, then you ...?
- And the response?
- You look thoughtful... (or sad, or happy)

Appendix H
Support Resources

Support Resources

Free or Low-Cost Counseling Services in the Dallas/Fort Worth Area:

Child and Family Guidance Centers
8915 Harry Hines Blvd.
Dallas, Texas 75235
www.childrenandfamilies.org
(214-351-3493)

Metro Care Services
1353 N Westmoreland Rd Cottage 5
Dallas, Texas 75211
www.metrocareservices.org
(214-743-1286)

Bien Star Counseling
13140 Coit Rd Suite 326
Dallas, Texas 75040
<https://www.facebook.com/bienstarcounseling/>
(214-256-1217)

Other Counseling Resources

Psychologist Locator of the American Psychological Association Practice Organization
<http://locator.apa.org>

Appendix I

IRB Approval Letter



Texas Woman's University
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

irb@twu.edu

<https://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>

October 11, 2019

Kalvanetta McPherson

Family Sciences

Re: Initial - IRB-FY2019-132 The Airline Pilot's Wife: A Qualitative Study Exploring the
Lived Experiences of Wives of Male Regional Airline Pilots

Dear Kalvanetta McPherson,

The above referenced study has been reviewed and approved using expedited review procedures on October 10, 2019 by the TWU IRB - Denton operating under FWA00000178. If you are using a signed informed consent form, the approved form has been stamped by the IRB and uploaded to the Attachments tab under the Study Details section. This stamped version of the consent must be used when enrolling subjects in your study.

Note that any modifications to this study must be submitted for IRB review prior to their implementation, including the submission of any agency approval letters, changes in research personnel, and any changes in study procedures or instruments. Additionally,

the IRB must be notified immediately of any adverse events or unanticipated problems.

All modification requests, incident reports, and requests to close the file must be submitted through Cayuse.

Approval for this study will expire on December 31, 2020. A reminder of the study expiration will be sent 45 days prior to the expiration. If the study is ongoing, you will be required to submit a renewal request. When the study is complete, a close request may be submitted to close the study file.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact the IRB analyst indicated on your application in Cayuse or refer to the IRB website at

<http://www.twu.edu/institutional-review-board-irb/>.

Sincerely,

TWU IRB - Denton