ABSTRACT

WARRIOR TRANSITION PROGRAM: NEEDS ASSESSMENT
MARINES IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 2004-2005

By: Diana Buchanan

This report is an outline of the research completed to understand whether or not Marines in the United States Marine Corps stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina are transitioning successfully from combat environment to home environment. A qualitative assessment was used to identify the needs of the Marines who underwent the USMC Warrior Transition program from Operation Iraqi Freedom. This program was designed to address the warriors’ needs as they transition from a combat environment to a home environment. An analysis of qualitative interviews was then used to examine whether or not Marines attending Warrior Transition program consider themselves prepared for homecoming challenges post deployment.
WARRIOR TRANSITION PROGRAM: NEEDS ASSESSMENT
MARINES IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM 2004-2005

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Dedication: This investigation is dedicated to all those who serve selfless for the United States of America. May God Bless Keep them in the palm of his hand.

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Please accept my humble thanks to my committee for your support and guidance in completing this investigation. While I began this project to fulfill a requirement for a degree, I ended my journey with an endearing passion. Thus, graduate school has not just been a process of receiving a degree, but rather, it has been a life changing experience. I was able to use my bachelor’s degree to understand the complexities of failed diplomacy which leads to warfare. This warfare, inevitably, is affecting our American families. Major Bakkar, thank you for adopting me this past year, I would not have been able to get through graduate school without you. Your patience and dedication week after week was beyond the call of duty. Dr. Lloyd thank you for being an amazing advisor and mentor. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to complete this investigation. Colonel Conley, thank you for your mentorship and guidance throughout this research process. E, thank you for your continuing encouragement when the road got bumpy and the end seemed far. And finally Dr. Evans, thank you for giving me the opportunity to come to graduate school and fulfill my dreams. You have never given up on me and you have been one of my biggest cheerleaders. You have opened the door for me when all the other doors were closed. There are no words for my gratitude.
CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Today’s military families endure many complex problems during the reunification and reintegration process of international post-war deployments. As a result of America’s peacekeeping efforts and the Global War on Terrorism, the United States Congress has mandated many new policies and programs that directly affect military families—some specifically targeted towards reunification and reintegration. In light of new the policies and programs for service members and their families, this research examines the post-combat transition needs of active duty Marines returning to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina from Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

Justification of the Problem

As many as 250,000 military families are undergoing the effects of international deployments to secure peace and fight for freedom (Martin, 2004). Since March 19, 2003 approximately 100,000 Marines have been deployed in OIF (Marine Corps Community Services, the Office of the Chaplain and the Marine Corps, and Chaplain Religious Enrichment Development Operation, Department of the Navy, 2004). These deployments have caused Marines and their families to sustain unique stressors in which they must learn and develop novel coping styles and construct new forms of adaptation. Given the large number of affected people, Marines and their families, numerous policy issues arise and warrant in-depth research.

Purpose

This research addresses two aspects of the problem. First, a qualitative assessment was designed to identify the needs of the Marines who underwent the USMC Warrior Transition program from Operation Iraqi Freedom. The Warrior Transition program was designed to address the warriors’ needs as they transition from a combat environment to a home environment. Second, this research sought to examine whether or not Marines attending Warrior Transition program consider themselves prepared for homecoming challenges post deployment.
Outline of the Report

The next chapter provides a literature review that provides context for the problem, crystallizes some issues and describes the Warrior Transition Program. Chapter three discusses the methodology used during this research. Chapter four presents the results and observations. Lastly, chapter five offers conclusions and implications.
CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Five topics were researched to determine what knowledge exists in the public domain and to establish a context for this study. First, a review of the concept of deployment was investigated. Next, the processes of reunification and reintegration were discussed as they relate to the re-deployment process. Third, a close look at how the deployment cycle of Marines with relation to Operation Iraqi Freedom is presented. Fourth, an introduction of post traumatic stress syndrome (a potential effect of war combat deployments) was introduced with discussion of how it can affect the family. Lastly, in the literature review, an actual summary of the Warrior Transition Program is presented.

Military Deployments and the Family

The military defines deployment as leaving the normally assigned duty area, usually as a unit, to serve temporarily in another area or, in the case of naval and Marine personnel, on board ship. Family members may have a different definition for deployment such as: A period of long separation and stress handed down by the institution of the military. It is important to acknowledge that military life is often made up of a series of frequent and often lengthy separations (Applewhite & Mays, 1996). There are different types of deployments in the military that include:

- **Extended Deployment**: While deployed on a mission, an operation is held longer than the expected departure date.
- **Educational/Schooling Deployment**: Military personnel are engaged in educational endeavors to further enhance their career. Such endeavors include war colleges and academies.
- **Training Exercises Deployment**: Often, military personnel are sent to a base to complete routine and/or preparatory training exercises. Exercises may include survival skills, fighting tactics, and/or a comprehension of logistics and operational fundamentals.
- **War/Combat Deployment**: During a combat deployment a serviceman/woman is deployed to engage in some type of combat or warfare.
• **Peace Deployment**: During a peace deployment a serviceman/woman is deployed to engage in some type of peace aid or humanitarian effort (Orthner, 2002).

The type of deployment that is mandated by the military to an individual often provokes different types of reactions in families. Nevertheless, the most stressful type of deployment on families and service members are war deployments (Orthner, 2002). War deployments cause the most stress due to their intensity and amount of sacrificed time and human life (Bell, 1996).

The numbers of deployed personnel are quite large. Considered the war with Iraq. On 19 March 2003, President George W. Bush announced the beginning of the second Gulf War. On 20 March, the United States’ first Marine division crossed the Iraqi border letting the world know that the second Gulf War was in full force. Within the year more than 250,000 military members were deployed to serve in foreign countries, while another 180,000 were positioned in and around Iraq. Since 11 September 2001 and the announcement of the Global War on Terrorism, over 320,000 military members have been mobilized both nationally and internationally (Martin, 2004). As of 3 March 2003, more than 180,000 National Guard and Reserve members have been executing duties as active duty service members. In 2004, approximately 105,000 troops (40% of whom are Guard and Reserve members) have been deployed to Iraq with an expectation that troop commitment would continue beyond 2004 (Martin, 2004).

Families go through powerful emotional cycles when deployment is mandated. Specifically, research has indicated that there are five stages that military families will endure when engaging in deployment (Pincus & House, 2004). These stages include pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, redeployment and post-deployment. For the purposes of this investigation a focus on reunification will be analyzed.

**Reunification**

Stage four of deployment is a time of preparation and anxiety. Redeployment for a military member is identified as the month before the active duty member is scheduled to return home from deployment. This stage within the deployment cycle is generally marked with high anticipation and excitement. Often, there are a variety of emotions that are felt by the family. Concerns arise about the personality changes that have been made
and the roles that have been assumed. Such questions as: “Will we get along”, “Will I have to give up my independence”, and “Will the changes I made suffice”, emerge in the spouse who has been left on the home front (Pincus & House, 2004). Stage four in the deployment cycle does not last long, normally around 4-6 weeks (Pincus & House, 2004).

The anticipatory stage of redeployment is quickly followed by post deployment. Post deployment has been considered the most important stage for both active duty members and spouses. Successful reunification will be based on principals such as patience, communication, and learning to ‘know’ one another again. It is often noted that this stage can be a building or stumbling block for couples (Pincus & House, 2004). The stage begins shortly after the arrival of the deployed military member. This stage provokes a joyous occasion, as children are excited their parents are home and spouses are reunited. Normal stressors a family may go through when reunifying may lead to changes and adjustment. Some of the stressors that a family may experience include:

- Emotional letdown.
- Restlessness or sleeplessness.
- Understanding.
- Loyalty to marriage
- Did my spouse miss me?
- Friends seem different…
- Daily Life changes.
- Other people’s concerns seem petty.
- Spouses feel like strangers around each other.
- Children act out.
- Spouses question making up for lost time.
- Delayed financial problems.
- Concern about future deployments.
- The children appear confused and uncertain (Fort Carson Army Return and Reunion Brief, 2004).

Although reunification is a wonderful event, it can become a very frustrating and displeasing event. Often times, for example, the deployed are looking to be named and treated as heroes or heroines upon their arrival home. However, despite the best
intentions by the spouse, this acknowledgement cannot occur exactly when the returning spouse desires it. Sometimes children get sick, baby sitters cannot be found, spouses are unable to get off work, or a car has broken down. These events may not lead to the “expected” welcome military personnel look forward to, leading to sadness and a sense of unappreciativeness. Sometimes partners rage as “who had it worse”; when in reality both partners had a difficult job at completing very different tasks. For example, military personnel have expressed that they would rather be deployed than be at home agonizing over someone who was deployed. Thus, it is important that both spouses engage and encourage appreciation of one another (Pincus & House, 2004).

According to researchers, typically a deployment will not ruin a strong marriage but it will not solve marital discord either. During post deployment, expectations and responses to each other are crucial to the relationship. Often, a couple may notice that there are changes in behavior, attitudes, and self-confidence. Equally, partners may have a renewed self of independence and assurance (Blaisure & Mann, 1992). Roles have been confused during the separation and this can lead to tension within the couple. Spouses may report a sense of independence, which may lead to resentment at having been “abandoned” for six months or more. Basic household chores and responsibilities must be reassigned and roles that will be played in the house must be renegotiated (Pincus & House, 2004). Consequently, these self-found qualities sometimes convey the wrong message to a spouse of not being wanted or needed. Service members are cautioned against having what is identified as a “domestic change in command”. For six months plus, military personnel have been giving and receiving orders making up their daily communication. This type of communication, however, tends not to be looked upon favorably in the eyes of the receiver on the home front. Thus, often times, returning military personnel are asked to change their tone of voice and dictatorial communication (Blaisure & Mann, 1992).

Following the homecoming of the deployed member, the “honeymoon” phase begins. The honeymoon phase allows a couple to reunite physically, but not necessarily emotionally. It is common that spouses may feel awkwardness in addition to their joy. There are many physical challenges that a couple must go through when they are dealing with post deployment (Pincus & House, 2004). First, the couple must deal with physical
exhaustion, which ultimately may interfere with a joyous homecoming. Normally, service members stay awake the night before arrival of home due to last minute work and anticipation. It is also likely that awaiting spouse had difficulty sleeping as well. Coinciding with this lack of sleep, there may be time changes that a service member may have to adjust to. Sometimes, time changes can be as drastic as 24 hours. Thus, sometimes a service member may return home to lie on the couch and fall asleep. Often, service members would rather sleep on the couch or a chair, because it resembles their barrack beds provoking another problem in the marriage (Blaisure & Mann, 1992).

Spouses, when reunifying, often go through an awkward stage of intimacy even though the reunion is a joyous occasion (Pincus & House, 2004). One must recognize that most feelings of intimacy during the deployment have been dealt with through letters, cards, photographs, tape and video recordings, care packages, and the like. Thus, it will take time and patience to rekindle the intimacy that was present before. In particular, sexual intimacy may take time to reestablish. There are cases where one spouse is overly eager to express intimacy and affection and the other is not as eager. This can bring about marital distress and discomfort, as sexual fantasies of the ‘perfect reunion’ have been not fulfilled (Blaisure & Mann, 1992). Sometimes, the unfortunate event of infidelity is disclosed. This can provoke feelings of anger and or rage severely damaging the relationship. Members of the military are cautioned when arriving home to not expect too much for their first sexual encounter and to be patient when reestablishing intimate relationships (Blaisure & Mann, 1992).

The Marine: Enduring Operation Iraqi Freedom

Historically speaking, Marines have been a dynamic force in the national security of the United States of America. The fundamental mission of the Marine Corps is combat readiness. The force is made up of land combat, security, and service forces; Marine Corps aviation; and the Marine Corps Reserve (Estes, 1996). The Corps depends on effective performance in combat, which is a direct result of military discipline. Discipline in the Marines is executed through “a moral, mental, and physical state in which all hands respond to the commander whether he is there or not” (Estes, 1996, pg 59). To encourage and develop discipline Marines must be tested and trained to the maximum of
their mental and physical potential; normally to extreme and unusual exertion. For example, in a ten-week OCC class, Marines will be expected to perform one hundred and fifty-eight hours of physical training. They will hike fifty-two miles, run seventy-seven miles, complete six hundred and forty pull-ups, fifty rope climbs, and one thousand three hundred and fifty push-ups (Ruppert, 2003). When preparing for war deployments like Operation Iraqi Freedom engagement in exercises for combat will take place, such as:

- Infantry tactics
- Infantry weapons and supporting arms
- Patrolling
- Combat
- Tank infantry Operations
- Physical Training and Conditioning Techniques
- War fighting
- Field Firing Exercises (Ruppert, 2003).

During the difficult government transition period in Iraq, Marines endure daily insurgent attacks, roadside bombings, small-arms fire and intermittent mortar and rocket shelling. One of the tasks that Marines are undertaking is preparing Iraq’s new police and civil defense forces to carry out a battle for security and stability (Balzar, 2004). During training many Marines share quarters with Iraqi government defenders and amongst deadly scorpions, camel spiders, and snakes. Marines may share a single outdoor camp shower under temperatures well above 100 degrees. They also must endure carrying gear that weighs 50 or more pounds in the hot weather, which of course, is for their protection. Marines must shave with bottled water over a slit trench and only eat one hot meal a day. They often sleep crammed in barracks, with space for only a cot with room to stand next to it (Balzar, 2004). “Jump out. Kick in door. Spray machine-gun fire. Run to rooftop. Kill enemy. Jump back into armored vehicle. Move to new location. Repeat” (Balzar, 2004, pg 1). This according to one Marine, is a summary of a common daily activity for ground troops.

During Operation Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom, the military has utilized the Marines to their fullest potential and capacity. In fact, the military has begun to exceed their use of the forces using Marines in many consecutive operational rotations.
Within a four year time period from 2001-2005, the rapid increase in the fight against terrorism and the rate at which Marines have deployed is unprecedented. Since March 19, 2003 approximately 100,000 Marines have been deployed to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom (Marine Corps Community Services, the Office of the Chaplain and the Marine Corps, and Chaplain Religious Enrichment Development Operation, Department of the Navy, 2004). This is a phenomenal number considering the entire active duty force has only 172,000 members (Mercier & Mercier, 2000). Since the beginning of the war in Iraq, there have been over 2,000 total deaths and approximately 14,000 wounded service members. As of August 2005, 4,399 of the wounded service members have been Marines. Meanwhile, 550 Marines of the 2,000 killed in Iraq have been Marines (Department of Defense, 2005). These statistics are a definitive indicator of the significant contributions that the Marine Corps has sacrificed to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is the development of distinctive symptoms following a psychologically upsetting event outside the customary human experience (Dicks, 1990). After the Vietnam War, psychologists around the world began to notice that many combatants developed troubling psychological symptoms arising from their combat experiences (Williams & Sommer, 1999). Originally, within the military and psychiatric sectors, it was thought that the development of PTSD was an adverse reaction to combat that resulted from character defects residing within a service member’s personality (Williams & Sommer, 1999). The traditional views from the medical community and military were that healthy men and women should be resistant to the stresses of war combat. These views were challenged and changed in the 1980’s, when the term PTSD was officially introduced into psychiatric literature (Joseph, 1997). The new school of thought that was presented to psychologists was that PTSD was caused by the experience of traumatic events without the predisposition of psychological factors. A traumatic event could be classified as: any event that was experienced, witnessed, or confronted with events that dealt with death and/or dying, serious injury, a threat to one’s physical integrity; or a person’s response to intense fear, helplessness, or horror (Williams & Sommer, 1999). For adults, PTSD was further specified to be provoked by experiencing events, including but not limited to, military combat, being
kidnapped, experiencing a terrorist attack, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, a natural disaster, torture, a personal assault/attack, and/or a serious motor vehicle accident (Williams & Sommer, 1999). Effects of this disorder include but are not limited to: unwanted memories, images or thoughts; sudden feelings of anxiety or panic, flashbacks, nightmares, difficult with sleeping, irritability, rage, and anger; difficulty concentrating, and or having a difficult time expressing positive emotions. For the purposes of this investigation the argument is that one’s involvement or exposure to military combat and a diagnosis or symptoms of PTSD could affect the individual Marine and his family negatively.

**PTSD: Violence**

The military occupation should not be viewed as an occupation but as a lifestyle. Kohen (1984) reported that the military career is a family affair. Military policy adversely affects the family unit as policies are developed for the career individual and not the family. Examination of military literature suggests policies made for military families are not necessarily formed in the best interest of the family, and this has made transition times increasingly difficult and stressful. Coinciding with administrative/military policy are the lives and behaviors connected with such a lifestyle. At this time, the military institution employs about 1.5 million active duty men and women (Mercier & Mercier, 2000). In addition, to the active duty military members, America maintains approximately 26.5 million veterans (about 13% of our population). Seventy-seven percent of all these veterans have experienced combat and war (Mercier & Mercier, 2000).

As research progresses on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a correlation between military lifestyle, behaviors, and post-combat has given researchers reason to believe PTSD can provoke violence in an ex-combatant’s life (Solomon, 1993). Particularly, this violent and deviant behavior is seen within the family unit. Research suggests that the impact of combat training and experience influences the behavior that military members have post deployment when reuniting with their families (Mercier & Mercier, 2000).

In one investigation it was found that veterans displayed violent aggression towards their family including shouting, cursing, and the occasional slapping, throwing,
and the breaking of objects at no one in particular. When aggression did move beyond object boundaries and to a person, children were most often the target. The father usually justified his aggression as an “act of discipline” (Solomon, 1993). Often, the violence was triggered by something innocent-like a joke or a casual remark.

In a study of wives of Vietnam veterans in 1980, it was found that 50% of veteran couples that sought professional help for their relationship reported battery. The reported battery, however, was not a normal cycle of battery. Normally, in battery cases each beating of a woman leads to a subsequent more violent beating. In veteran families, however, there were a couple of violent episodes of abuse that ended once seeking professional help. Thus, the investigators concluded that the veteran violence was directly related to the experience of direct combat (Solomon, 1993).

Other violence that results from PTSD is a direct result of substance abuse. Once under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, the state of the mind is altered-provoking aggression in an ex-combatant. There have been many reports of increased substance abuse for those ex-combatants that serve in violent warfare. In one research study of 40 Vietnam veterans diagnosed with PTSD, the investigators found that 63% reported abusive alcohol consumption (Joseph, 1997). In an even larger investigation of 268 Vietnam veterans, almost half of the veterans were diagnosed with PTSD and reported heavy drinking and drug use. Although this information is overwhelming in itself, another investigation done by Friedman and colleagues of 440 Vietnam veterans showed a clear case of substance abuse. Of those who were diagnosed with PTSD, 22% also had a diagnosis of alcohol abuse or dependency, and another 6% were suffering from drug abuse or dependency (Joseph, 1997). Clearly, these studies cannot represent the whole generation of Vietnam fighters; however, they can give some support that PTSD can lead to substance abuse (Joseph, 1997). In general, most researchers of domestic violence have found that alcohol is involved in about 40% of incidents of marital violence, with the range of consistent estimates being between 22% to 60% (Miller & Downs, 1993). This evidence supports the claim that one who has already been diagnosed with PTSD and who is showing unstable mental health with the added influence of mind altering drugs or beverages of alcohol in the internal system, could potentially perpetrate violence within the family unit.
The outlined research gives reason to believe that PTSD can be a potential cause of family violence within the military family. PTSD is often seen during post deployment in a Marine. Thus, it is very important that a Marine has a successful transitioning period after a war deployment. Statistically, military families have five times more domestic violence problems than civilian families. The Marine Corps as a whole maintains the highest rate of child and spousal abuse post deployment as compared to any other branch of the military (Mercier & Mercier, 2000). Often, this violence is induced after combative deployments and training.

Research has identified that because of the nature of the Marine occupation and training, Marines are not socialized well outside of the base, which can lead to domestic violence in the home. Marines engage in very intensive recruiting exercises and training, which make Marines very aggressive and assertive. According to one Sergeant, “Marines are naturally aggressive, and we have to encourage that”; this implies that Marines are warriors first and then the individual takes on other roles within his/her life (Mercier & Mercier, 2000). Research suggests that Marines have increased domestic abuse because violence is lived and learned in combat and training. Thus, in every day life, Marines are readily able to use violence in their houses. In general, Marines are taught that violence is acceptable and good during combat; therefore, there is a correlation of this thought in the home environment. Sadly, there is no real system in place to correct the violent behavior of the Marines (Mercier & Mercier, 2000).

**PTSD: Effects on Marriage**

PTSD can have adverse affects on a military marriage causing a couple to go through a lot of strain and stress. The concept of a “military marriage” refers to a couple that maintains one or more spouses in a position of active duty in the United States military. Research studies suggest that combat decreases marital quality and stability (Gimbel, 1984). An investigation of the different types of strained relationships can be measured by examining the indicators of marital quality including divorce, infidelity, and abuse. Deployment effects, in general, can lead a marriage to strain and stress. According to a research investigation using 2,101 Vietnam Veterans, it was found that there are distinct patterns of behavior to those assigned to fight in combat.
First, people who are assigned to combat by others or who volunteer for battle may be more likely to possess psychological problems or engage in anti-social acts before they ever enter into combat (Gimbel, 1984). Hence, this may lead them to be poor partners for marriage from the very beginning. Moreover, because of this predisposition, once the combatant has symptoms or a diagnosis of PTSD this aggravates even further their psychological problems, straining the marriage.

A second pattern of behavior that is associated with PTSD victims and the effects on marriage is that combat directly and indirectly affects qualities in all who are involved-decreasing the marriage quality and stability (Gimbel, 1984). Battle experiences may be so violent and threatening that posttraumatic stress syndrome takes over the mental and physical well being of the individual. One must recognize, however, that it is not combat itself that has a direct relationship to the quality and stability of a marriage. Rather, it is the stress that is created by engaging in combat and the effects that it induces (Gimbel, 1984). Such stress symptoms that are induced by combat can include all or some of the following:

- General Irritability, hyperexcitability, depression
- Impulsive behavior, emotional instability
- Overpowering urge to cry or run
- Inability to concentrate, flight of thoughts
- Feelings of unreality, weakness, dizziness, fatigue
- Emotional tension and alertness
- Trembling, nervous tics, easily startled
- Hyperactivity, increased tendency to move about
- Excessive sweating
- Increased use of prescribed drugs
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Nightmares

As research progresses on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, there is a trend that demonstrates a correlation between post-combat and strain, stress, or violence in the family. Thus, it is important that the military creates options to help stabilize marital quality against vices like divorce, infidelity, and abuse.
Warrior Transition Program

Literature highlights the importance of reintegration and reunification programs for military individuals and their families. Few studies, however, have studied the impact of the programs on the process of reunification and reintegration on families after deployment. One of the main causes for the lack of studies in this particular area is due to the fact that a high number of active duty military members have not been deployed since the first Gulf War and Vietnam (Orthner, 2002). As there is an increase in international peacekeeping efforts and the war on terrorism rages, there has been an increase in deployments, which has increased the need for post-deployment programs.

Those studies that have been completed to assess family programs for active duty members and their families have had some general conclusions that should be noted in this investigation. In the early 1980’s, researcher Dennis Orthner conducted a study on the attitudes of family enrichment and support programs among Air Force families. In his study, it was found that overall programs such as marriage encounter, couple communication training, parent effectiveness training or family clusters, could be instrumental in reducing stress (Orthner & Bowen, 1982). The study concluded that relationships in the military are dependant upon policies and programs implemented that support family relationships, thus, maximizing their potential for communication, problem solving, socialization, and interpersonal support. Furthermore, the study concluded that military effectiveness and family functioning are interdependent. Most importantly, programs are needed to focus on providing service members with the skills and support needed for fostering strong and functional relationships (Orthner & Bowen, 1982).

In the early 1990’s, a study was completed on the Return and Reunion program aboard Navy Ships. It was instrumental in providing insight as to the successfulness and effectiveness of the program on deployed sailors and their spouses. The goal of the program was to increase the resources of Navy personnel to respond effectively to the normative and stressful event of family reunions. The study was grounded in the Family Stress Theory (ABCX model) analyzing the family adaptive resources that were available to a family during a separation (Blaisure & Mann, 1992). In the study, there were
common patterns identified that contributed to the family stressors during separation. The Navy and Marine Corps deployments were determined to be predictable stress. This helped military administration develop programs to help family units deal with readjusting to separation, mobility, and sometimes death. It was determined that family members must attempt to readjust to changes in each other and in themselves for a functional relationship. It was also found that sometimes expectations from home life and personal goals were in disagreement. Thus, programs were created to help with family cohesion, adaptability, and communication as a means to assist the family in their crisis. One of the most important results concluded in the study was that the most teachable moments for active duty personnel were when they were en route to come home. During homecoming, members began to feel a variety of emotions and began to discuss their families rather than the mission that was at hand. This allowed for the reunification process to begin (Blaisure & Mann, 1992). These results inevitably solidify the importance of understanding the needs of the Marines who go through the Warrior Transition program en route from Iraq to the United States of America.

The actual Warrior Transition program is part of a larger program called the Return and Reunion Program. The focus of the Return and Reunion program is on combat/operational stress and successful reintegration with family and society (CMC.Department of Defense, 2004). The Warrior Transition program is one of six elements that make up the Marine Corps Return and Reunion Program. The Return and Reunion Program as a whole consists of the following elements: 1) Unit Commander Combat Stress Control Brief (Commanding Officers/Officers-in-Charge-in Theater), 2) Warrior Transition Program (In Theater), 3) Return and Reunion Brief for Marines (Marines In Theater), 4) Return and Reunion for Spouses Brief (Spouses), 5) Care for the Caregiver Brief (Volunteers providing care of others) and 6) Return and Reunion Guide (Marine-In Theater and spouses) (CMC.Department of Defense, 2004). The Warrior Transition program to date has been conducted in-theater en route to the United States at the small unit level. Originally the program was intended to be conducted by the base/unit Chaplain; however, reports have indicated that the Chaplain is not trained adequately enough to carry out the training and most units have assigned other discussion leaders (CMC.Department of Defense, 2004).
There are three main elements to the Warrior Transition Program. The first element is to thank the Marines for their service in Operation Iraqi Freedom and reinforce their positive contributions. The second element is to provide an opportunity for Marines to formally debrief experiences by telling their stories, in accordance with critical debriefing models. The final element to the Warrior Transition Program includes offering the Marines formal warrior transition training, which includes critical issues to note in past actions; current responses; and future plans. It also includes helping the Marine to transition from combat to home environment (Marine Corps Community Services etc., 2004).

In the Warrior Transition program the desired overall outcome is to guide Marines who were deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom into a smooth transition back into home, work, and social life. Due to the number of strains that are placed on a family during a deployment cycle the program tries to encourage greater family communication, role flexibility, and emotional closeness. Specifically, within the Warrior Transition program there are three focus areas. Focus areas include:

1) **Where We Have Been**-Marines are encouraged to focus on the leadership decisions he/she has made in combat. The desired outcome is to allow the Marine to analyze the positive and negative experiences associated with their deployment (Marine Corps Community Services etc., 2004).

2) **Where We Are**-Marines are encouraged to explore what feelings and emotions they possess. Conversations focus on both the negative and positive feelings and how these feelings should be addressed (Marine Corps Community Services etc., 2004). The desired outcome is to assist Marines in transitioning and dealing with their internal feelings.

3) **Where We Are Going**- Marines are encouraged to explore what leadership roles they will be taking once they have returned home. Any concerns of the future are addressed and focus specifically on relationships, work, body, mind, and spirit (Marine Corps Community Services etc., 2004).

The military has identified perceived needs of homebound Marines including: 1) to categorize and debrief their combat experiences, 2) to analyze and reinforce their experiences with one another, 3) transition period prior to homecoming, 4) and the need
to expect new adjustments at homecoming, and to plan some sort of response (Marine Corps Community Services etc., 2004).

Having the specific program needs identified for this investigation, it can now be understood the evolution of the final research questions in this project. Revisiting these questions is important before moving on to the methodological procedures.

1. What are the needs that the Marines incur during their transition from Iraq to the United States?

2. Do Marines attending the mandated Warrior Transition program consider themselves prepared for homecoming challenges post deployment?
CHAPTER THREE
Methodology

Fundamentally, the research problem asks the questions: 1) What were the needs of the Marines who underwent the USMC Warrior Transition program from Operation Iraqi Freedom and 2) How well did the Warrior Transition program prepare the Marines for homecoming challenges post deployment. These what and how questions lend themselves to a qualitative research design. Under the original research plan, the researcher would collect multiple forms of data, summarize those data and spend adequate time in the field. As explained below, the general design tenets were retained but unforeseen circumstances forced several changes.

Research Design

The type of program assessment one undertakes depends upon what is being analyzed within the program (McNamara, 1998). This study was designed as a qualitative program assessment using the case study approach. This case study focused on the program at Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base in North Carolina. Eighteen Marines at Camp Lejeune were to complete a survey questionnaire and, later, be interviewed face-to-face. Content analysis techniques would then be used to identify perceived needs and how well the Warrior Transition Program met those needs.

However, unexpected real-world turn of events created greater on-base access restrictions and limited our ability to be selective in choosing research participants.

Sample

A convenience sample population was to be selected by Marine Corps Family Specialist, Debbie Carter, who worked with the families at Camp Lejeune. Each candidate was to be a male member of an active duty battalion stationed at Camp Lejeune. Each Marine was to have recently returned within five to six months from Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005.

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1 Camp Lejeune is known as the most senior command in the Atlantic Ocean and is home to an active duty, dependent, retiree, and civilian employee population totaling nearly 150,000. Settled in the early 1940s, it continues to uphold its mission of providing combat ready units for expeditionary deployments.

2 The Camp Lejeune units deployed to Iraq were experiencing an increase in casualties.
The candidates were to be enlisted (junior) or of officer (senior) rank and in the age range between 18-30 years old. The candidates were to be married. Coinciding with these specifications, it was proposed to have an equal sample between majority and minority racial groups in the investigation. The three identified racial/ethnic groups at for the project were Caucasian, Black, and Latino. Ideally, six people would have been selected from each racial/ethnic group.

Due to extenuating circumstances, during the latter phases of the project Ms. Carter was unable to execute her part of the project. Fortunately, Major Aisha Bakkar of the NROTC unit at Miami University was able to develop an alternative plan. After numerous telephone calls and considerable discussion, Commander Gary Carr agreed to pick potential candidates according to the established criteria proposed.

Procedures and Measures

Prior to the commencement of the face-to-face interviews, a background questionnaire assessing the background of each candidate was to be completed. The purpose of giving background questionnaires before the interviews was so that appropriate coding could occur and to ensure that each candidate chosen for the study met the criteria set for the sample population. Coinciding with the background questionnaires the Marines were asked to sign consent forms allowing the information they filled out on the background forms to be used and to allow the researcher to follow-up with a taped interview.

Commander Carr chose a convenience sample of eighteen male Marines, requested they complete the questionnaire and consent forms, and returned the information to the principal researcher. Neither the envelope nor the questionnaire contained the Marine’s name or military ID number. Before distribution of the questionnaires occurred, Commander Carr created an ID list so that the questionnaire data could be linked to the interview. Each questionnaire had an ID number from 1-18. This ID list has been kept in a separate locked location from the questionnaires.

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3 Ms. Carter’s husband was deployed to Iraq and she experienced several emergencies.
4 Commander Gary Carr is one the installation chaplains at Camp Lejeune.
5 This occurred later than scheduled before Ms. Carter’s unfortunate situation. However, the questionnaires were completed prior to the interviews by Commander Carr.
After the questionnaires were returned, under the original plan, the researcher would travel to Camp Lejeune and conduct face-to-face interviews. The purpose of the interview process was to identify the needs of the Marines who have fought in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom as it relates to transitioning from combat to home environment. The candidates would be taken into a quiet room on base where they would be interviewed. The interviews were to be tape recorded with the permission of the interviewee.

Beyond the control of both Commander Carr and the researcher, approximately two hours before the flight to Camp Lejeune, all interviews were cancelled by the installation commander.6

A methodological change was coordinated with Commander Carr, Commander Reynolds, and the project’s research advisor. Specifically, Commander Carr obtained the participants’ telephone numbers and requested they consent to taped telephone interviews. Each Marine signed a consent form to have their telephone interview taped with each interview lasting approximately 10-20 minutes.7

To ensure reliability and validity the interview protocol was tested with a pilot group before the interviews were scheduled with the Marines at Camp Lejeune. The pilot group consisted of two individuals and was conducted to ensure that the questions were fair, understandable, and of sufficient depth. After the interviews were completed, each interview was transcribed to ensure accurate analysis of all data. The last step to ensure reliability and validity was to form a committee of advisors from the United States Marine Corps, Air Force and Miami University. Each member of the committee was chosen to serve as a peer examiner and advisor to ensure a carefully completed study and analysis.

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6 The reason given for cancellation was that four large battalions of Marines were unexpectedly deployed to Iraq.
7 Also, procedures were established to handle possible stressful situations during the telephone interviews. Fortunately, no one became distressed during the interviews.
**Ethical Considerations**

There was an obligation when conducting this investigation to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the informants (Creswell, 2003). The following safeguards were taken to protect the rights of the Marine informant:

1. The research objectives were clearly communicated to the informant in writing and a description of how the data was to be used was explained in written detail.
2. Written permission by each informant was solicited.
3. An explanation of data collection through devices and activities was given to each informant.
4. The informant’s rights as a participant in the study were considered first and foremost when reporting data.
5. Candidates were informed that any time they could cancel their participation in the investigation.
6. A telephone number for a Chaplain was given to the participants in case of any emotional stress caused by the interviews or questionnaires.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are many limitations that occurred in this study. Specifically, there are three limitations that should be discussed. The first limitation within this investigation was that there were methodological changes in the interview process. The interviews were changed from qualitative face-to-face interviews to telephone interviews. This limited the amount of rapport that could be built by each of the individual Marines and the researcher. Furthermore, the telephone interviews were not conducted in a sterile environment, which led to some Marines being cautious of answering questions or being influenced by others around them while they were on the telephone. Finally, only 10 out of the 18 interviews were completed. Overall, the study would have been stronger if all 18 of the qualitative interviews were conducted.

The second limitation was that the researcher was not able to visit Camp Lejeune, where all the Marines were stationed. Thus, the investigation was based on literature and
other resources given to the researcher by chaplains and military personnel. Coinciding with not being able to visit Camp Lejeune was the fact that the researcher was unable to physically go through the Warrior Transition Program to see how it is executed or operated. This limited how much the researcher could interpret about the program. All conclusions must, therefore, be made on assumptions, inferences, and the information provided by both the Marine Corps and the interviewed Marines.

The final recognized limitation was that the group of Marines that were interviewed did not have the same amount of decompression time from Iraq. This flawed the study results, in that, some Marines had been back longer and had time to reflect and heal their physical and emotional problems. Other Marines, however, did not have as much time, thus, their time to reflect and heal had not been as long. This, inevitably, may have contributed to why there was such a large discrepancy in the decompression trend, and why some Marines felt so very strongly about it and others did not mention decompression.
CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To help aid in the thoroughness of this qualitative investigation, physical paper questionnaires were given to the individual Marines to fill out and return to the primary researcher. These questionnaires ultimately became an aid for identifying demographic information about each Marine, along with major patterns that were apparent without the actual interviews. These questionnaires were then followed up with an actual telephone interview. In this chapter analyses of both the questionnaires and the phone interviews are presented. The entire analysis was completed by multiple research meetings with select advisors and the primary researcher. Within each session a discussion of patterns, relevance and applicability was discussed forming the final patterns outlined below.

Questionnaire Study

Demographic Data

Eighteen active duty Marines stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, participated in the research project. All 18 candidates completed a background questionnaire, which asked basic questions (See Appendix B). The men ranged in age from 20 to 38 with the average age being 26. Seventeen of the 18 men were married. The Marine who was not married was excluded from the study, leaving 17 background sheets to assess. Years of service to the United States Marine Corps ranged from 2 to 19 years with the average service time being five years. There were four Lieutenant Officers with the remaining 13 holding enlisted ranks ranging from Staff Sergeant to Corporal. Racially, 10 of the Marines were White, three were Black and four were of other races. Ten out of the 17 Marines were fathers and had a child or children and/or were expecting. Finally, 15 out of the 17 Marines did attend the mandatory Warrior Transition Program. Those who did not attend the program were not in attendance due to combat injuries sustained in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

To identify trends and patterns from the background questionnaires, Major Bakkar of the NROTC unit helped review the questionnaires. Major Bakkar’s insights
were invaluable, as her experience within the Marine Corps allowed her to contextualize the overall story that was inherent in the questionnaires.

Five key observations that were identified within the background sheets. The first major observation was that many had been affected indirectly from their experiences of combat. These Marines, whether they realized it or not, showed patterns suggesting the need for a carefully constructed transition program. This conclusion was drawn from analyzing the Marines’ responses to the questions on their PTSD symptoms (Table 1). In fact, 11 out of the 17 suffered from some form of anxiety, meanwhile, 12 out of the 17 displayed impatience for loved ones.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTSD SYMPTOMS</th>
<th>DAILY</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NIGHTMARES</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAKES</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WITHDRAWL</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLASHBACKS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANXETY</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWAEATING</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLEEP DEPRIVATION</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VERBAL OUTBURSTS</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMPATIENCE WITH LOVED ONES</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12/17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNEASEINESS IN CROWDED PLACES</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12/17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: PTSD Symptoms

The second major observation was that most of these Marines were not spared the reality of war in Operation Iraqi Freedom. All but two of the Marines saw a member of their unit injured or they themselves were subject to injuries (see Table 2). All 17
Marines indicated that they received fire and mortar attacks in the rear. The rear is supposed to be a space that is protected and safe from outside insurgents. This is the space where Marines will retire at night and eat with their fellow unit members. The fact that all Marines indicated that insurgent fire occurred in the rear shows that the Marines had to be on guard, cautious, and vigilant at all hours of the day. Along with an experience of an insecure rear, 11 out of the 17 Marines indicated that they witnessed hostile combat always, sometimes, or often. In fact, six Marines admitted to firing a weapon that resulted in injury and death to another. Fourteen out of the 17 Marines admitted to losing unit members while only three were spared this experience. Unfortunately, this trend became a trend of statistics through time. When this investigation began in 2004, there were approximately 860 service member deaths in Operation Iraqi Freedom. As of October 26 2005, there are over 2,000 deaths and over 14,000 wounded in relation to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COMBAT during OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NO RESPONSE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When firing your weapon did it result in the injury of another?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When firing your weapon did it result in the death of another?</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did your unit lose any of its members?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you lose any members of your unit close to you?</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During combat did you see any member of your unit injured?</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you ever receive insurgent fire in the rear (ie. mortar attacks).</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did you witness hostile combat?</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Combat in Operation in Iraqi Freedom

The third major observation was that there was no time to decompress while in a combat environment. Twelve out of 17 Marines replied that they did not have an
opportunity to decompress following combat operations Iraq (see Table 3). This information indicated the level of intensity of their jobs and the inability to be relaxed. This, inevitably, could contribute to the difficulties a Marine may have when transitioning back from combat to home environment. This observation is important to recognize because if Marines do not have time to decompress in battle, there is no time for them to be introspective and reflect on the long-term effects of their experiences. Furthermore, it was not uncommon for Marines to put in many duty hours without sleep or food, which could have contributed to a lack of decompression while in deployment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECOMPRESSION IN OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM</th>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>While in Iraq, did you ever feel there was time to decompress?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there platoon measures taken at the end of the day, to discuss the emotional impact of your combat experiences that day?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24 HOURS</th>
<th>36 HOURS</th>
<th>48 HOURS</th>
<th>60-90+ HOURS</th>
<th>NO RESPONSE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What was the longest period without sleep?</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Decompression

In addition to these three major observations, there were two additional observations that emerged from the analysis of the questionnaires. The first additional observation that should be noted was the number of Marines who were confronted by Americans not being thankful or understanding for the service the Marines have given in
Iraq. Eleven of 17 Marines have had someone in the United States confront them with anti-war sentiments. This could possibly contribute to feelings of anger in that they have worked so hard and returned home to feel like people do not care or do not appreciate their efforts in Iraq to secure peace for the United States. The second observation is the pattern of arguments between the Marine and his spouse and is actually reinforced by the literature review. Ten of the Marines recorded that they sometimes argued with their spouses prior to their departure for Iraq. While on deployment, however, 12 out of the 17 stated they never or rarely argued with their spouse during deployment. According to 11 Marines, arguments increased once they returned from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Qualitative Interviews/Analysis**

Due to the methodological changes that were made during the research, it was possible only to conduct taped interviews for 10 of the 18 Marines. As noted earlier, one Marine was not included because he was not married. Two other Marines were re-deployed and no longer at Camp Lejeune. Another was excluded due to a wrong telephone number. Finally, four more Marines were excluded because they simply could not be reached via the telephone despite repeated attempts. The remaining ten Marines were interviewed and the interviews were taped. The taped interviews were then transcribed to ensure accuracy in the final analysis.

Four categories of observations emerged from the transcript analysis. Interestingly, many of the observations were in some capacity hinted at in the demographic sheets.

**Needs**

The first objective of this research was to identify the needs of Marines who attend the USMC Warrior Transition program after deploying to Operation Iraqi Freedom. The United States Marine Corps is correctly identifying the needs of the Marines, however, these needs are not being adequately met. The military has properly identified the needs of homebound Marines including: 1) to categorize and debrief their combat experiences, 2) to analyze and reinforce their experiences with one another, 3) to create a transition period prior to homecoming, 4) and to prepare the Marines to expect new adjustments at homecoming and to plan some sort of response (Marine Corps Community Services etc., 2004). The interviewees made it clear that revisions needed to
be made in meeting their needs for transitioning from combat to home environment. For example, one Marine made these statements during his interview:

*Researcher:* Did the program meet your needs coming home from a combat environment to home environment?

*Marine:* It covered issues, but it did not help.

*Researcher:* Well the program identified your needs as the following: 1) to debrief your combat experiences, 2) reflect with other Marines, 3) look at some of the transitioning things you will go through prior to homecoming, 4) and look at some of new adjustments you will have during your homecoming... are those accurately identified needs?

*Marine:* I think they are accurate, but they can reevaluate certain things, but overall they are accurate.

The second study objective was to examine whether or not Marines attending the mandated Warrior Transition program considered themselves prepared for the homecoming challenges of post deployment. Generally speaking, the group was split as to whether or not the Warrior Transition program was preparing them for homecoming challenges. Some Marines were very adamant that the program was helping them prepare for the challenges they would face coming home, while others were resolute that the program did absolutely nothing to further the success of the reunion with their families. Nine of 10 Marines, when asked what the one thing they looked forward to when coming home, answered their “family”.

**Family**

The study examined whether or not Marines attending the mandated Warrior Transition program consider themselves prepared for homecoming challenges post deployment. While many said early in their interview that they were superior physically and emotionally during their transition as the interview continued it was apparent that homecoming challenges were experienced by the Marines. For example, one Marine was faced with not being able to see his wife naked, because she felt uncomfortable around him; she felt that he was a stranger. Two other Marines were faced with coming home to
newborn children they had never seen and a wife who went through a pregnancy alone. Furthermore, Marines expressed how arguments and disagreements shattered homecoming dreams. One unfortunate Marine had to deal with a messy divorce. Finally, the two Marines who were unable to go through the Warrior Transition Program experienced even more difficulties making homecoming strained and uneasy. These homecoming challenges, however, were not adequately discussed in the Warrior Transition Program. Thus, there was a general consensus among the Marines that more could have been done to discuss familial issues. One Marine put it quite frankly:

Researcher: How would you improve the program to meet your needs?

Marine: I would send the married Marines to counseling alone with their wives… to give them time together and [let them have the] option to try to make it. A chance to discuss things that are bothering me. When we [the Marines] were in Iraq, we could be as violent as we wanted to be and would not get into trouble. In the States, and with the people you love, I cannot be as violent as I want-because there are rules.

Another Marine expressed even further:

Marine: Um... more of the secondary like reactions... like... just... um being in not being in combat... and being in Iraq and in combat is a lot different, just because... sometimes, like my wife, I have been married to her for over two years, and she came... she um... we were in the square of Wal-Mart or something.... And she decided she was going to jump out and surprise me, which wasn’t the smartest thing in the world to do. Because I just came from Fallujah, which means I was really... I mean I didn’t yell at her or anything, but she knows that I didn’t really like that too much. But I mean... more stuff to get us into tune, stuff that they are going to do because there is stuff they [spouses] just don’t understand.

Researcher: So, maybe like not just individual training but also spousal training.
Marine: Right, Yeah, Cuz I knew she was doing it out of good nature, but it was probably would have been best, if she didn’t do it at the time...
And finally, another Marine expressed the importance of knowing the difference between the people you have worked with in combat and taking that mentality to the home front and the complications that arise:

Marine: The fact that it was like a class, it was quick and not drawn out. It wasn’t something they really emphasized, and [they] just said what might happen. They said you might have problems. It would be better if the married Marines could get some help. Like I said you can be nasty as you want to be [around one of the other Marines in your unit]-someone might say that guy is a “Dick” but then a couple hours later they’ll be cool and they won’t take it to heart. If you do that to your wife [act nastily], she will take it to heart and won’t want to come to you and then when you ask her what is the matter she won’t talk to you.

Many of the interviewed Marines, mentioned that perhaps a partnering warrior transition program for the spouses would be beneficial. Only one Marine indicated having gone through a readjustment program with his family. And yet, throughout the 10 qualitative interviews conducted, family was considered the most important and pivotal component to ensuring a successful transition from combat and home environment. Marines expressed the need for more information on transitional issues to their home environment than what was provided during the Warrior Transition Program. Hence, the second important observation that was identified in this investigation was that Marines felt that important, effective, and pertinent information needed to be given to them during their transitioning from combat to home environment.

**Debriefing Experiences**

This may be the most surprising of the research observations. It was repeatedly mentioned by the interviewees that there was a desire to undergo individual counseling rather than group counseling or sessions. Many Marines felt intimidated or unable to ask the questions or voice the concerns they had during the Warrior Transition Program. One Marine voiced a concern that was echoed throughout the entire investigation in this manner:

Researcher: Right...so if you could change the program to meet your needs
Marine: How would I do it ...?
Researcher: Yeah
Marine: I would have the Chaplain speak to everyone individually, and I know there are a lot of Marines coming back but some way or another they [the Marine Chaplains] should find the time to speak to everyone one by one. Because it’s more like –like “Oh I don’t want to raise my hand”, or “I don’t want to look like a chicken”, or” Look I have problems.” [when the Marines are in the Warrior Transition Program]

Another Marine voiced his concern stating:

Researcher: Well the program identified your needs as the following: 1) to debrief your combat experiences, 2) reflect with other Marines, 3) look at some of the transitioning things you will go through prior to homecoming, 4) and look at some of the new adjustments you will have during your homecoming... are those accurately identified needs?

Marine: Counseling-they need counseling... and we are all going to say that we don’t need help but the Marines when they get home need counseling.

Finally other Marines expressed concerns like this:

Researcher: If you could identify how the needs could be met now, what and how would they be?

Marine: I would say they need more one on one counseling-especially the combat troops-especially if they have seen their buddy get killed or something. Those are the ones who are really going through stuff.

While no Marine during the interviews stated that the Warrior Transition Program should be dismissed, most felt that the need to debrief their experiences would be better met by doing it individually with a Chaplain or in small group sessions like fire teams - rather than in a large unit group session.

Another component to this observation that should be noted is that some Marines felt that groups should be divided up according to job title and exposure to combat. Some Marines felt that the presentation could not be considered a “one program fits all program”, but rather, should be tailored according to group need. One Marine pointedly remarked:
Marine: [The program could be improved] by recognizing each unit. Each group is different. You have some units that are supported and don’t really see anything and that stay in one area and that’s it...but then you have some who are out there, they are seeing stuff. It all depends on the units and their mission – [that is how the program] and transition should be set up for...

Paraphrased, the Marines were saying they need to debrief their experiences, but to debrief in a group setting may not be the most effective method.

**Decompression**

The last observation is that the Marines in this study felt they had little or no decompression time during their transition from combat to home environment. Many Marines felt that transitioning was difficult and stressful. As it relates to the Warrior Transition Program, Marines stated they would like to see some sort of discussion of effective decompression methods if possible. One Marine was adamant that he needed decompression time stating the following:

*Researcher: Would you improve the program to meet your needs?*

*Marine: Yes, I would ....I would improve it by incorporating more time to actually get one-on-one time. A lot of people need to get back to civilization. I think we need time to be around people on base. Maybe like [spending time in an off combat base] in Kuwait or something, just to get back into the swing of things. We had to come home after being in the rear and it is like just a culture shock.*

*Researcher: So, like more decompression time?*

*Marine: Yes, that is what I am saying –that is exactly what I am saying–because we worked from the day we left [with no time to decompress]*

*Researcher: Was there anything else that needed to be discussed in the session?*

*Marine: No he (the chaplain) covered a lot of points and those are the points we needed to hear–he covered a lot.*

*Researcher: Did the program meet your needs?*

*Marine: Yes, a lot of things were things I didn’t know –that I needed to [time to] take back to the states–it was very hard getting back into the swing of things.*

Other Marines mentioned in passing that they needed decompression time:
Researcher: Since you were in a different situation than your comrades what were you needs at the time?

Marine: Probably would have been along the lines of transition -like direct combat and coming home to an environment that was not the same...I know there are a lot of Marines including myself, just being around anything that was loud and startled us, they were doing mortar training the second day we were back – and hearing mortars coming in – creeped us out.

Within this investigation the Marines both solidified in their questionnaires and in their qualitative interviews the need for decompression. While the questions were limited on the extent and the type of decompression needed, it was a reoccurring theme that should be noted. A dialogue on the ramifications of this trend will be further discussed in the limitations section of this investigation.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Implications

As with any research, conducted in an academic environment, various concepts, implications, conclusions, and /or things learned should be identified to help promote future research. Within this investigation there were many identifiable conclusions, as well as future implications and supported ideas for future research. Chapter 5 is an outline of final conclusions to this investigation’s analysis.

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to conduct a qualitative assessment to identify the needs of the Marines who undergo the USMC Warrior Transition program from Operation Iraqi Freedom. Secondly, this study examined whether or not Marines attending the mandated Warrior Transition program consider themselves prepared for homecoming challenges post deployment. There were many conclusions that can be noted within this investigation. Conducting research investigations is an intense learning process to answer the proposed questions. A researcher must be prepared for methodological changes when engaging in this type of research process. As can be seen within this investigation, flexibility was a must to complete the study. A lesson learned for future research is that one must be willing to adapt and refocus when things within the study go awry, especially when dealing with a large organization like the military.

The second conclusion from this investigation is a rather important. It is important for civilian researchers to recognize that there is a huge delta of terms and perspectives that are used by those in the military and not necessarily those who are civilians. To conduct a successful and well-presented investigation it is vital that the researcher is both educated on military culture and lifestyle before engaging in a study. It is helpful to secure a military advisor. By securing some sort of awareness and education on military culture and lifestyle one is able to interview effectively, and understand what is being said during the interview. Often, there are words, phrases, places, or events that only those who are in the military are able to relate. By ensuing that research is conducted
closely with military personnel one can make certain that a thorough and fair analysis can be completed.

The final conclusion for this investigation is that there is a need to re-evaluate the Warrior Transition Program. This hopefully will bring about happier, stronger, more unified families and Marines in the Marine Corps. It is our duty as supporting Americans, to ensure those who serve our country do not return to civilian life as dysfunctional and disgruntled ineffective citizens. It is important to re-emphasize that the family is a major element to any service member’s transition and success in life, even though most military policies are focused for the individual service member.

**Implications of the Research Findings**

Many implications for the future of the Marines and their transition from Iraq can be speculated with the results of this research. Specifically, there are three that are glaring in this investigation. First, if the problem of successful transition in the Marine Corps is not addressed properly then this could influence our American communities on and off base.

Another implication that is apparent in this study is the possible cost of executing programming that meets the needs of Marines effectively. Because the needs of the Marines are not being met, there should be a re-evaluation of how the needs of the transitioning Marines are being met. Thus, this could have severe economic repercussions on the Marine Corps. If the transitions are not successful the Marine Corps may have to hire more social workers, chaplains, and psychologists to help guide Marines through their adjustment phases. The individual Marines are not the only family members within the unit of the family suffering from the stresses of transition. The children of service members suffer greatly as well. For example, as of October 2005, there are more than 14,000 wounded service members from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, according to the Department of Defense. More than 7,000 youth have a severely wounded parent from these war injuries. These types of wounds include severe burns, loss of a limb(s), brain & spinal cord trauma, and mental stress. Many service members have come home to spouses, children, and siblings acting as their main providers and caregivers. Developing various resources, therefore, for children who are
or will become a caregiver to a wounded service member is a significant contribution to a
problem that society is facing in increasing numbers and at a very rapid pace.
Furthermore, teaching these children how to cope with the stresses of deployment, a
wounded parent, or transition is imperative as well.

A final implication of this study is that if service members are not being taken
care of physically and mentally then the military may have recruiting and retention rate
problems. Since September 11, 2001 there have been numerous military operations which
have increased the tempo of the military services, requiring large-scale mobilization of
service members both active and reserved. These mobilizations have resulted in
significant battle casualties. By default, if we as a nation have Marines and families that
are dysfunctional (because of their experiences in Iraq and other military operations) this
could lead to a bad image of the military, which inevitably, will affect the retention and
recruitment rates of the Marine Corps

Future Research

It is imperative that the topics of morale and welfare for families and Marines in
the United States Marine Corps continue, especially as the War in Iraq continues and the
role of the military increases in national security. Specifically, three major areas of
research should be considered when engaging in this topic. First, it would be beneficial to
understand the dynamics of a given transition program by conducting a quantitative study
with a large unit, to conclude whether or not the results are similar to that of this study.
The study should delineate and define the role between those who work in combat
infantry and those who work in combat support, as these are two distinct groups of
Marines with very different jobs. Furthermore, it will be very important in future research
to see how different branches are transitioning from Iraq. A study should be conducted on
how different branches cope with transitioning from Iraq, looking at each branch’s
programs. As identified in this literature review, the Marine Corps, as a branch, functions
very differently from any other branch in the United States armed forces, thus, what may
be applicable and appropriate in this investigation may not be applicable or appropriate
for other branches such as the Air Force.
Secondly, if time and finances allow, it would behoove an institution, the military, or a researcher to conduct a qualitative study that investigates the well being of the spouse and the Marine and how this influences the transition of the individual. Particularly, the researcher(s) should interview both the spouse and Marine individually, and then interview the two together. Subsequently, the researcher should conduct an analysis of all the interviews and look for major discrepancies between the two individuals, their needs, patterns, and trends. Other variables that can be looked at when investigating could be race, gender, age, rank, and deployment time. Rank, especially, should be noted. In this investigation an attempt to have both enlisted and officer rank was made. During this investigation it was found that there was a rather large disconnect between those who were enlisted and those who were officers. It was also found that the enlisted tended to have more identified problems with the Warrior Transition Program than the officers. It was also found that the officers are the people that are creating transition programs. Enlisted men should not be left out of the creation process of an effective transitioning program. They can add valuable advice as to how they are feeling and how their needs can be met.

According to Debbie Carter, liaison to the Marine Corps Community Service Center (MCCS) Family Resource Center, there is a significant need for family education programs directed towards combatants post deployment. There currently exists a mandated (2003) transition program that assists Marines returning from combat and their families. To complement the Warrior Transition Program for the individual Marines there is no support program designed to aid spouses of Marines deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom helping them to transition back into home, work, and social life (Department of the Navy & United States Marine Corps, 2005). A workshop should be developed to meet the transitional needs of families welcoming home a Marine. The goal of the workshop should be educate military spouse’s deployment stressors including Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Finally, research designed to identify the most effective tools to meet the needs of the Marines would benefit and assist with successful transitioning of the Marines. This study’s main result was that the Marine’s transitional needs were identified correctly, and yet these needs were not being adequately addressed by the Warrior Transition Program.
Further study should investigate how the WTP changes over time, and whether these changes effectively meet the identified needs of Marines who are transitioning from combat to home.

In conclusion, this research would like to thank all who made this project possible. To gain further legitimacy within this study, the researcher secured a position at the Department of Defense to learn more about the Marine Corps and military families during the summer of 2005. While on this internship the researcher developed a curriculum for children of wounded soldiers in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. The main goal of the curriculum was to meet the transitional needs of youth caregivers around the country. While working on the curriculum one-on-one interaction with wounded service members at Walter Reed hospital, in Washington D.C., was required. It was during this time that the final conclusion of this study was revealed. As civilians, often times, one may forget the reality and the brutality of war. Yet, war is real and there is a need to take care of those who fight and defend our constitution. Hopefully, this study will serve as a reminder to the realities of war, and stimulate further research for military families.
TERMS
**Camp Lejeune**: known as the most senior command in the Atlantic Ocean and is home to an active duty, dependant, retiree, and civilian employee population of nearly 150,000. Settled in the early 1940’s Camp Lejeune’s continues to uphold its mission of providing combat ready units for expeditionary deployment.

**Chaplain**: A chaplain is a priest or a member of the clergy serving in the US military.

**Combat Environment**: An environment where Marines will engage in physical combat against insurgents in Iraq.

**Commander**: ranked officer in the US navy

**Convenience Sample**: A sample made up of Marine spouses the researcher finds to be easily available and willing to participate.

**Deployment**: Leaving the normally assigned duty area, usually as a unit, to serve temporarily in another area, normally on board ship. Often a period of long separation and stress handed down by the institution of the military.

**Department of Defense**: A US department that is in charge of ensuring national security and regulating military moves. It has one of the largest budgets within the government

**Greedy Institutions**: Those institutions that seek exclusive and undivided loyalty from its members.

**Hostile environment**: An environment in which there is the demand for combat and or hostility between the Marines of United States of America and the militant forces of Iraq.

**Home environment**: The residence in which the Marine holds with a dependant family consisting of a wife or children awaiting his arrival upon the completion of his deployment to Operation Iraqi Freedom.

**Military Career**: Defined as a male career both because the majority of the married military have been and continue to be male and because the military family policy has been based on a male career model. It is also confined to the full time, active duty military personnel whose primary career is with the military services.

**Military Marriage**: refers to a couple that maintains one or more spouses in a position of active duty in the United States military.

**Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)**: The overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime
To establish a secure, peaceful, democratic Iraq that will stand against terrorism and no longer threaten the national security of the United States, the Middle East or the world.

**Post Traumatic Stress Disorder:** is the development of distinctive symptoms following a psychologically upsetting event outside the customary human experience.

**Program Evaluation:** A careful collection of data about a certain program in order to make assessments and decisions of the program. The purpose of the assessment is to provide accurate and relevant information that can assist in sound decision making which will likely help to produce organizational success.

**Stakeholders:** Those who have a vested interest in a particular program.

**United States Marine Corps:** a branch of the US military historically concerned with shipboard security service and amphibious warfare. The Marine Corps is the second smallest of the five branches of the United States military. Currently, the Corps of the US military maintains 172,000 active and 40,000 reserve Marines.

**Warrior Transition Program:** a brief given to Marines of which assists the individual Marine transition between Operation Iraqi Freedom and his home environment.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT
Consent Form

You have agreed to participate in the investigative study entitled: Warrior Transition Program: Needs Assessment in Operation Iraqi Freedom, which is conducted by Diana Buchanan, Miami University. Your participation is entirely voluntary; you can withdraw your consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as yours, returned to me, removed from the research, or destroyed.

Please read the following points:

1) The reason for this research is to gather information about the needs from active duty Marines who have been deployed out of Camp Lejeune to Iraq: the data collected will be used for the completion of a master’s thesis at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

2) The benefits that participants can expect from this are opportunities to self analyze, evaluate, reflect upon and clarify their values and experiences concerning their experiences with their family during deployment reunification and reintegration. The benefits of this study will help Marine Corps create the most effective program possible to meet the transitional needs of the Marines from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

3) Your participation will consist of a taped telephone interview with the investigator, in which several questions about your experiences in transitioning from deployment to home environment. Questions may include discussing combat, personal relationships, mental health, and experiences related to the Warrior Transition Program.

4) Participation in this research entails no high risks. There is the risk that you could become stressed or discomforted during the question and answer session. If you should become upset and wish to stop the interview, please just say so, and we will immediately stop the session. You will have access to the number of a chaplain who is employed by the Marine base who will be available to discuss your experiences and concerns with you if you so choose.

5) Your participation will not be confidential. However, your identity will never be revealed and is strictly confidential. Only aggregated data will be shared; all material will be examined only by Ms.Diana Buchanan and Dr. Sally Lloyd. Your name will not appear on the any transcripts. Your name will not appear in the final report of this research, or in other publications of this project. Excerpts from your interview may be used in this report and published reports, but again, such excerpts will be anonymous.
6) The investigator will answer any further questions about the research, during the course of the interview.

7) If you have further questions about the study, please contact Diana Buchanan at 513-255-7691 or at buchande@muohio.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3734 or email: humansubjects@muohio.edu.

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Participant                                        Date

__________________________________________________________
Signature of Investigator                                      Date
Consent Form

I agree to complete this questionnaire and am a possible candidate in the investigative study entitled: Warrior Transition Program: Needs Assessment in Operation Iraqi Freedom 2004-2005, which is conducted by Diana Buchanan, Miami University. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time without penalty and have the results of the participation, to the extent that it can be identified as mine, returned to me, removed from the research, or destroyed.

8) The reason for this research is to gather information about the needs from active duty Marines who have been deployed out of Camp Lejeune to Iraq: the data collected will be used for the completion of a master’s thesis at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio.

9) The benefits that participants can expect from this are opportunities to self analyze, evaluate, reflect upon and clarify their values and experiences concerning their experiences with their family during deployment reunification and reintegration. The benefits of this study will help Marine Corps create the most effective program possible to meet the transitional needs of the Marines from Operation Iraqi Freedom.

10) Your participation will consist of filling out a preliminary questionnaire, in which several questions about your experiences in transitioning from deployment to home environment will be asked. Questions may include discussing combat, personal relationships, mental health, and experiences related to the Warrior Transition Program.

11) Participation in this questionnaire entails no high risks.

12) The results of your participation will not be confidential. However, your identity will never be revealed and is strictly confidential. Your information will be combined with that obtained from other individuals and so will not be able to be identified with you personally; all transcripts and tapes will be examined only by Ms. Diana Buchanan and Dr. Sally Lloyd. Your name will not appear on the transcript of the
interview. Your name will not appear in the final report of this research, or in other publications of this project. Excerpts from your interview may be used in this report and published reports, but again, such excerpts will be anonymous.

13) If you have further questions about the study, please contact Diana Buchanan at 513-255-7691 or at buchande@muohio.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3734 or email: humansubjects@muohio.edu

______________________________________________
Signature of Participant                      Date

______________________________________________
Signature of Investigator                    Date
APPENDIX B

BACKGROUND DEMOGRAPHIC SHEET
Questionnaire Sheet for Needs Assessment of
Warrior Transition Program

Please answer the following questions accurately and truthful. You do not have to answer any question you do not feel comfortable answering.

What is your rank? __________________________________________________
What is your title? __________________________________________________
Are you married?  
Yes  
No
How long have you been married to your current spouse? __________________________________________________
Do you have children? __________________________________________________
Do your children reside with you?  
Yes  
No
How many children do you have? __________________________________________________
What is your ethnic background?
- Black /African American
- White /Caucasian
- Latino/Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Middle Eastern
- Other

What year were you born? __________________________________________________
What is your religion/faith (Please circle that which applies)?
- Catholic
- Protestant
- Non Denominational
- Muslim
- Hindu
• Buddhist
• Judaism
• Atheist
• Other
• I do not practice a religious faith

To what extent is your education (Please circle the highest level achieved)?

• High school
• Some college
• Associates
• 4 year degree college
• Masters
• Doctorate

How long have you served in the United States Marine Corps? ________________

What operation did you just come back from? ________________

Did you go through the Warrior Transition Program in theater?  Yes  No
## SECTION I DEPLOYMENT IN OIF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Were you given a pre-deployment brief to prepare you for the events you would encounter?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How much access did you have to news reports and the media while on deployment?</td>
<td>ALOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How many times in your military career have you been deployed for combative purposes?</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you feel that the American public supports you in Operation Iraqi Freedom?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How do you feel when you wear your uniform? (Circle all that apply)</td>
<td>PROUD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANGRY</td>
<td>READY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Have you ever had an anti-war person confront you in the United States?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Do you feel that you have made a difference in Iraq?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Do you feel your unit accomplished its mission?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Did you or your unit receive any awards or recognition for your efforts in Operation Iraqi Freedom?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. How do you feel about possibly having to return to Iraq for future deployments?

11. While in Iraq, did you feel there was time to decompress after being in combat?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ALWAYS</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>RARELY</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. Do you feel that your spouse appreciates why you were in Iraq?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

13. Have you discussed the events that occurred in Iraq with your spouse?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. Has your spouse ever told you to choose between the military or the family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

15. Do you feel your spouse understands why you were in Iraq?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### SECTION II COMMUNICATION DURING OIF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Were your chaplains available to lend counsel and/or talk?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How many times were you able to talk to your spouse on the telephone?</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did you have e-mail communication with your spouse?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did you receive any mail from family members or your spouse while on deployment?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SECTION III RELATIONSHIPS DURING OIF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How would you describe your relationship with your spouse?</td>
<td>STRONG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WEAK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did you argue with your spouse before being deployed?</td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did you argue with your spouse while on deployment?</td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Did you argue with your spouse upon returning from deployment?</td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OFTEN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NEVER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Was your spouse faithful to you while you were deployed?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAYBE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Were you faithful to your spouse while deployed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Have you ever hit your spouse?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Have you gone through a transition program with your family?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Have you ever missed a birth of a child due to deployment OIF?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Was support available from family when you were deployed?</td>
<td>ALOT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NOT MUCH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## SECTION IV COMBAT DURING OIF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have you ever fired a weapon at anyone?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If the answer is NO please skip to question number 5.</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When firing your weapon did it result in injury to another?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. When firing your weapon did it result in death to another?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When firing your weapon did you fire at an innocent civilian or child?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Did your unit lose any of its members?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Did you lose any member of your unit close to you?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Did you ever aid anyone wounded due to combat injuries?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did you ever remove a Marine injured in the hot zone?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. During combat did you see any member of your unit injured?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. How long were you deployed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Did you ever receive insurgent fire in the rear? (ie. mortar attacks)?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Did you witness hostile combat? | ALWAYS | OFTEN | RARELY
| SOMETIMES | NEVER |
## SECTION V HEALTH DURING OIF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What was the longest period of time you went without sleep?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What was the longest period of time you went without food?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Were there any platoon level measures taken at the end of the day to discuss daily emotional impact of any combat experienced that day?</td>
<td>ALWAYS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Were you ever injured while in combat?</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What kind of injuries did you sustain?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>ANSWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since returning to the United States of America from OIF I have experienced…</td>
<td>Please circle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmares</td>
<td>DAILY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakes</td>
<td>DAILY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flashbacks</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bouts of Sweating</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Deprivation</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verbal Outbursts</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatience with loved ones</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DAILY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering your family around</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uneasiness in crowded places</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Violence toward any human being</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
1) Tell me a little bit about your history in the Marines:
   a. (Officers only): What was your commissioning source?
      i. NROTC, Academy, OCC, PLC
   b. (Enlisted only): Where did you go to boot camp?
      i. Paris Island or San Diego
   c. Why did you join the United States Marine Corps?
   d. What has been the best thing about being a Marine?

2) Please tell me, briefly, about your deployment in Iraq?
   a. When did you get back?
   b. Where in Iraq were you?
   c. Describe your typical day – your duties and responsibilities?

3) Let’s talk about coming home…
   a. What did you look forward to the most?
   b. While being transported back to the States what were you hoping would be available to you to assist in your transition?
   c. What were your worries about coming back to the United States?
   d. Since you have been home what have been some positive experiences with family, friends, and coworkers?
   e. What have been your greatest “stress points”?

4) Coming back from deployment and preparing and to go on redeployment can be very stressful. Looking back, what do you think were the most critical needs physical and emotional you had in making the transition from your combat environment to your home environment?
   a. What would have helped your transition back home easier?
   b. Was this kind of help available to you?
   c. What issues came up?
   d. What didn’t happen that you wish could have happened?

5) Tell me about the Warrior Transition Program
   a. What was the best thing about the program?
   b. Did the Warrior Transition Program meet you needs from combat environment to home environment.
c. How would you improve the Warrior Transition Program?
   The program says your needs are …. Are these your needs?
APPENDIX D

PROPOSAL TO HUMAN SUBJECTS
1. Purpose

There are many problems that military families endure during the reunification and reintegration process of international post-deployments. As a result of the American peace keeping efforts and the War on Terrorism, there are many new policies and programs that affect military families during international deployments. The purpose of the present investigation is to conduct a qualitative needs assessment, specifically to examine the needs of the Marines in the United States Marine Corps at Camp Lejeune Marine Corps Base, North Carolina, and post-deployment in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF). An examination of the individual needs of the Marines post deployment Operation Iraqi Freedom will be identified. During the summary and conclusion of this investigation, a researcher’s analysis of whether the individual needs of the Marines are being met through the Warrior Transition program to reunify and reintegrate with their families will be documented.

Recently the Global War on Terrorism and the conflicts in the Middle East, such as Operation Iraqi Freedom, have had an impact on American military families. As many as 250,000 military families are undergoing international deployment/separation to secure peace and fight for freedom (Martin, 2004). Since March 19, 2003 approximately 100,000 Marines have been deployed in Operation Iraqi Freedom (Marine Corps Community Services, the Office of the Chaplain and the Marine Corps, and Chaplain Religious Enrichment Development Operation, Department of the Navy, 2004). Deployments have caused individual Marines and their families to sustain unique stressors, in which they must learn and develop novel coping styles. In particular, they must construct forms of adaptation during the reunification phase after an active duty war deployment. The purpose of this qualitative research program evaluation is to understand needs of the Marines who undergo are transitioning from deployment to home. The Warrior Transition program is a program dedicated to assisting Marines with the homecoming transitional process after a deployment with Operation Iraqi Freedom. Particularly, the study will identify the transitional needs of Marines post deployment and analyze whether these needs are being met to deal with homecoming reunions with their families.
Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. What are the post deployment stressors Marines recently deployed in Iraqi Freedom face?
2. What are the needs Marines have when trying to transition from combat to home environment?
3. Do the Marines who are mandated to go through the program feel better prepared for homecoming challenges they may encounter post deployment?
4. Are the identified needs from the Marines being met by the current program design of the Warrior Transition Program?

2. Subject Population

This study is being done in collaboration with the Marine Corps Family Service Center and the Department of Family Studies at Miami University. Every respect of the study’s design has been reviewed and cleared through A) Military advisor and B) a family specialist located at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The study is intended to provide valuable information to assist the United States Marine Corps help transition their combatants in Operation Iraqi Freedom to their respective home environments. Each candidate for this investigation will be a male Marine in an active duty battalion stationed at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Each Marine stationed at Camp Lejeune will have recently returned within two to four months from Operation Iraqi Freedom in 2005.

All candidates will be either enlisted (junior) or of officer (senior) rank. The age range will between the ages 18-30 years old. Each of the candidates will be married and have children. An attempt will be made to have an equal sample between majority and minority racial groups in the investigation. The three major racial/ethnic groups represented at Camp Lejeune are Hispanic, Black, and White. There will be eighteen candidates chosen to ensuring each racial/ethnic group is represented equally.

3. Recruitment and Selection of Subjects

The intended sample population used for this investigation will be selected out of convenience. Debbie Carter, a civilian and a Marine Corps Family Specialist, works with
the families at Camp Lejeune and will be identifying possible candidates who meet the selection criteria of age, martial status, race, and rank. Ms. Carter will send to potential interviewees a flyer asking for their participation (See appendix C). Ms. Carter will follow up with a telephone call asking if the identified person would like to participate in the study. The potential candidate may decline if he does not want to participate. No records will be kept of who declined to participate in the study. Ms. Carter was chosen to recruit subjects because she is a civilian, and is not, in the chain of command.

4. Potential Risks and Discomforts

Because some of the questions to be asked pertain to experiences during a highly stressful event (deployment in a combat zone), a trained family specialist who is employed by the Marine base will be present during all interviews. This way, if a Marine becomes upset during the interview, he will have immediate access to a trained family therapist. In addition, if a Marine is showing severe signs of PTSD or stress, the specialist will be able to assist him in seeking assistance from services that are available on the base. In the event of such distress, the interview will be terminated to allow the specialist to take over in service provision.

5. Potential Benefits

Through this investigation one should be able to understand the intensity and the importance of conducting research on military families. A better understanding the of individual needs of the Marines when transitioning from combat to home will assist the Department of Defense and Family Life Educators become more valuable resources to those who are enduring the transition. Understanding the unique stressors like loss of stability, structure, and security will likely create more efficient and effective methods of assisting military families during reintegration. As military personnel reintegrate, it is important for the Department of Defense to ensure there is a fair and well-organized plan of departure for the individual and his family.

6. Informed Consent

There is an obligation when conducting scientific research to respect the rights, needs, values, and desires of the informants. Safeguards will be taken to protect the rights
of the Marine informant and to provide them with informed consent. The research objectives will clearly be communicated to the informant both verbally and in writing and a description of how the data will be used will be explained. An explanation of data collection through devices and activities will be given to each informant. The informant may at any point in time during the investigation cancel their participation by informing the researcher. Each participant will be free to make the decision to participate in the research project based on full knowledge of relevant aspects to he project and its implications for their personal welfare. Please see provided informed consent form for further detail.

7. Exempt Status Report

None – There will be no request for exemption in this report.

8. Research Procedures/Methods

This study is designed as a qualitative program assessment of the Warrior Transition Program. A qualitative program assessment is a careful collection of data about a program in order to make assessments of and decisions about the program. The type of program assessment one undertakes is dependent upon what is being analyzed within the program. There are different types of program assessments, but for the purposes of this investigation an assessment of needs by the Marines will be conducted. This particular needs assessment will be conducted on an explicit program, that is a program that has specific goals and a clear beginning for the researcher to analyze. A qualitative approach to conduct a needs assessment includes means of measurement for which specific categories are not identified.

The study will be conducted on the 58-year-old Marine base Camp Lejeune in the state of North Carolina. The Marine base is situated in Onslow County next to the New River area of North Carolina. It is home to an active duty, dependant, retiree, and civilian employee population of nearly 150,000. Camp Lejeune is the Corp’s most senior command in the Atlantic Ocean, and maintains a very strong sense of historic value of national defense for the armed forces. Settled in the early 1940’s Camp Lejeune’s continues to uphold its mission of providing combat ready units for expeditionary deployment.
The first phase of this investigation involves a questionnaire assessing the background and experiences of each participant. Questionnaires will be sent to Camp Lejeune in care of Ms. Debbie Carter, Marine Corps Family Specialist’s. Carter will ask each individual Marine to complete the questionnaire, and then seal it in an envelope before returning it to her. Neither the envelope nor the questionnaire will contain the Marine’s name or military ID number. Before distribution of the questionnaires occurs Ms. Carter will create an ID list so that the questionnaires data can be linked to the interview. Each questionnaire will have an ID number from 1-18. This ID list will be kept in a separate locked location from the questionnaires. Demographic questionnaires will be given before the commencement of the investigation so that groups can be coded and to ensure that each candidate chosen for the study meets the criteria set for the sample population. After each candidate completes the demographic questionnaire they will be returned to Ms. Debbie Carter who will then forward the sheets to the researcher. The questionnaire can be viewed in appendix A. A cover page and an informed consent sheet will be provided with each questionnaire.

One of the most common practices for conducting a qualitative needs assessment is an open-ended interview. The purpose of the interview in this study will be to identify the needs of the Marines who have fought in combat in Operation Iraqi Freedom as it relates to transitioning from combat to home environment. Thus, at the beginning of the investigation candidates will be taken to a quiet room on base where they will be interviewed (these interviews will be tape recorded with the permission of the interviewee). During the interview, the first 15-20 minutes will be used to explain the project in detail and establish rapport. Establishing rapport with each candidate will be important so that there is some level of comfort with the researcher. During this first 15-20 minutes the informant will be made aware of all their rights as a participant in the study and will sign the consent form. The remaining 65 minutes of time will be used to question the Marine about their needs for transitioning from combat (Operation Iraqi Freedom) to home environment (Camp Lejeune). Specific questions will be asked pertaining to the topics of deployment, combat, familial relationships, and individual well-being. A list of interview questions can be viewed in appendix B. Because some of the questions to be asked pertain to experiences during a highly stressful event
(deployment in a combat zone), a trained military family specialist that is employed by the Marine base will be present during all interviews. This way, if a Marine becomes upset during the interview, he will have immediate access to a trained therapist. In addition, if a Marine is showing severe signs of PTSD or stress, the social worker will be able to assist him in seeking assistance from services that are available on the base. In the event of such distress, the interview will be terminated to allow the social worker to take over in service provision.

After each taped 90-minute interview, the tapes will be transcribed and a thematic analysis will be conducted, using a constant comparative method. Triangulation of data will be conducted by linking the data transcribed during the interviews with my personal observations made during the interviews, observations made by the family specialist who will be present during the interviews, literature on the transition from deployment to home, and analysis of documents that describe the Warrior Transition Program. Prior to conducting interviews with the Camp Lejeune Marines, a pilot group consisting of two individuals will be held to ensure that the questions are fair and understandable, and to ensure the questions are getting into sufficient depth to ensure that the research questions will be addressed. To ensure that the given answers to asked questions are not being misinterpreted, data will be tape-recorded to ensure accurate transcription during final analysis. The last step that will be taken to ensure reliability and validity will be to form a committee of advisors from the United States Marine Corps and Miami University. Each member of the committee will serve as a peer examiner and advisor to ensure a carefully completed study and analysis.

9. Research Location
   a. Camp Lejeune, North Carolina
   b. Military Transition and Deployment Office – Washington D.C.
      Used for statistics and literature review. No research will be conducted with this sight.

10. Procedures for Safeguarding Confidentiality of Information
This investigation will follow the appropriate procedures of safeguarding confidentiality of its participants. The information that will be obtained will be safe guarded at all times. All interview participants will be coded and will be kept anonymous in the final findings of the project. All data that is typed on a computer will be safe guarded by ensuring that there is a password that only the researcher will know to enter into the system. No official names of the participants will be used on the computer. Informed consent forms and coinciding tapes will be kept in two separate locked sites. Transcripts will not use real names but will refer to each person by a pseudonym. Six months after data analysis has been completed, the tapes of the interviews will be destroyed.

11. Deception

None – There will be absolutely no deception in this investigation.
References


