

**Perceptions of Military Spouses Working In Federal Employment
on Changes in Their Work Environment During a Pandemic**

by Rose M. Holland

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Approved by the following Committee on 5/4/23

Chair: Henry St. Maurice, University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point

Uzeyir Ogurlu, University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point

Catherine Scheder, University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point

Hisako Sonethavilay, Researcher

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PERCEPTIONS OF MILITARY SPOUSES WORKING IN FEDERAL
EMPLOYMENT ON CHANGES IN THE WORK ENVIRONMENT DURING A
PANDEMIC

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Rose Holland

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Doctoral Program Director

DocuSigned by:
Erin Redman
379EF585254B4FB...

Committee Chair

DocuSigned by:
Henry St. Maurice
9948A80B46F340A...

Assistant Dean and Head of the School
of Education

DocuSigned by:
Lynda Fernholz
15AEB7ED17DD45D...

Dean of the College of Professional
Studies

DocuSigned by:
Marty Loy
2547FD28D638481...



School of Education
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Abstract

In this study I used a systems-thinking framework through the chaos theory of careers. I assigned categories from the military-spouse employment collective framework (MSECF) as attractor types. I addressed the following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment on changes to the work environment during a pandemic? I found that military spouses in federal employment did not report feeling supported by their employer during the pandemic. I identified a connection between participating military spouses' reported employment experiences during the pandemic and their perceptions of their employers' knowledge and attitudes. I conclude that increased telework for military spouses is important for position retention of participants in military moves, known as a permanent change of station (PCS) and increased work schedule flexibilities are important to support military spouses in the workplace. I recommend federal employers increase telework and promote position retention in PCS situations.

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I would like to express my appreciation to my biggest cheerleader and fan, my husband, Colonel Michael Holland, USA Retired. Throughout my career he has encouraged me to go beyond what I thought possible. I would not be where I am today without his support. I also want to thank the rest of my family for allowing me to focus and continually cheering me on. My son, Nicholas, listened to me talk endlessly about my topic and even shared my research with his coworkers. My in-laws, Pat and Don Fallon, listened to me talk about my topic at many family events. My brother-in-law, Marty Holland, cared and provided much-needed support, especially this past year, it meant more than you will ever know. Each of you have provided support and encouragement over the past three years and I cannot thank you enough.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Military-spouse unemployment is four times the national average for active-duty spouses, and their pay is 28% to 32% less than others with the same education and experience (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021; Burke & Miller, 2018; DoD, 2019). Underemployment of military spouses is estimated to be between 60% and 90% (Strong et al., 2021). Because active-duty military families move every two to three years on average, these spouses have difficulty in obtaining and retaining meaningful employment. Spouses of Reserve and National Guard service members also face challenges with higher unemployment than their civilian counterparts.

In response to these challenges, efforts to increase the hiring of active-duty military spouses in the federal government have included executive orders (EO), updated 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and legislation efforts through National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA). The Department of the Army (DA) recently developed strategies that include the prioritization of hiring, retaining, and accurately tracking military spouses in DA civilian positions through the Army People Strategy Civilian Implementation Plan ([APS-CIP] DA, 2020). The Secretary of Defense outlined plans to increase military spouse hiring in the Department of Defense (DoD) (Austin, 2022) and the Undersecretary of Defense authorized a pilot program that provides overseas military spouses with a direct hiring authority (Cisneros, 2022). Federal programs covering all military spouses include the Military Spouse Employment Partnership and Spouse Education, Career Opportunities programs along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes which reaches out to military spouses through chambers from around the world (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018). Even with

these efforts, military-spouse un- and under-employment continues to remain high (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018).

The federal government differentiates between telework, defined as, “a work flexibility arrangement under which an employee performs the duties and responsibilities of such employee's position, and other authorized activities, from an approved worksite other than the location from which the employee would otherwise work.” and remote work, defined as, “scheduled to perform their work at an alternative worksite and is not expected to perform work at an agency worksite on a regular and recurring basis” (Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2021b, pp. 10-11). This study uses the word telework to describe both telework and remote work. The expansion of the use of telework was mandated in the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. A report to Congress (2018) indicated that 22% of all federal employees from participating agencies participated in telework and 51% were eligible for telework (OPM, 2020b, p. 29). The report provided a baseline to measure pre-pandemic use of telework and remote work in the federal government. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, federal agencies were forced to send workers home, quickly converting many employees to full-time teleworkers. The memo provided a background to the transition to telework during the COVID-19 pandemic (Vought, 2020). The consequences of the March 17th memo can be seen in the 2020 Federal-Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). It noted that 59% of employees teleworked every day during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, only 3% of which had done so prior to the COVID-19 pandemic (OPM, 2021a, p. 14).

Problem Statement

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were far-reaching, including closures of schools, childcare facilities, and businesses. It accelerated work from home in corporate and federal workforces, an effect that has potential to provide military spouses employment stability as they experience a military move, known as a permanent change of station (PCS). Studies identified the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations and projected potential changes to the work environment post-pandemic (Barrero et al., 2021; Brynjolfsson et al. 2020; Collins et al., 2021; & Kane et al., 2021). Telework from home during the pandemic has created new ways to work for many organizations. A 2021 study noted that more will rely on digital connections for telework, emphasizing that it will expand virtual connections for commerce, medicine, and education (Anderson et al., 2021). This expansion provides an opportunity for military spouses in developing and maintaining careers through virtual means.

Purpose Statement & Research Question

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine influences of the COVID-19 pandemic on employment practices in federal settings among a sample of military spouses. I addressed the following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment on changes to the work environment during a pandemic?

I used a survey to collect participants' responses to Likert-type-scale items measuring their perceptions based on the 2020 FEVS section on workplace experiences during the pandemic. The survey included two qualitative questions. One focusing on the support that occurred or was needed from the employer during the pandemic and the other asking for anything else participants would like to share.

Positionality

I seek to study the challenges military spouses have connecting to meaningful employment as they navigate military life. As a military spouse of 33 years, 4 months, and 22 days, I realize my view is shaped by my insider experiences as the military spouse of an officer. I have lived in 14 different communities and witnessed dramatic changes in the expectations of military spouses. I have experienced challenges in accessing services and finding employment. I have spent most of the 33 years volunteering or working with military families which has created an awareness of additional challenges. Many attempts to address military-spouse un- and under-employment challenges tend to take each related issue in isolation rather than a holistic approach. The complexity of military spouses connecting to meaningful employment requires systems-thinking to provide a holistic approach along with other sustainability competencies.

I have lived in urban and rural communities and found unique challenges with each. In urban areas there are many residents who are transient, potentially making it easier for military spouses to find meaningful employment, however you are less likely to have military families in your area who understand the challenges service brings. The biggest challenges I have experienced were at installations located in rural locations, where opportunities are fewer and residents tend to have more established relationships which can inadvertently exclude and discriminate against military spouses, particularly for employment.

Those who are non-White find additional challenges in rural communities. Although the military community is a diverse with 43% non-White (Barroso, 2019), rural communities are less diverse with an average of 36% being non-White (Housing Assistance Council, 2012).

This creates a division, particularly when the local community rejects the diversity of the military community.

As I have worked with military families, I have discovered many challenges directly related to the military lifestyle. Moving every two to three years creates financial hardships which are often tied to the challenges of military life. The location of many military installations in rural locations adds challenges in accessing services in a timely manner (childcare, medical, educational, etc.), obtaining meaningful employment for military spouses, and connecting to an established community with little diversity. In my role as an Employment Readiness Program Manager, I have seen the effect of local attitudes on military-spouse careers, particularly in rural locations. A spouse I worked with at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin was told, “we don’t hire your kind,” once she revealed she was a military spouse. This occurs at the same time local community leaders espouse to welcome military families into their community and value the role the military plays.

Another challenge I have experienced is a lack of timely access to services. This can be caused by a lack of available service providers and/or the systematic requirements to access services. For example, at Fort Meade, Maryland they were in the process of building three new childcare centers in 2018. If all three were up and running there would still have been a waitlist of one year to access care, depending on the age of the child. For a family only in a location for two to three years, this impacts the spouse’s ability to work outside of the home for half to one third of the time at the duty station.

My work within the military community has also opened my eyes to the governmental and non-government organization (NGO) approaches to working with military families. Most

programs are one dimensional in nature, seeking to address one specific problem. Programs within governmental agencies are often siloed, choosing to work alone in addressing a specific problem. The same occurs with NGOs who are also competing with other NGOs rather than working in tandem. The problems experienced by military families are often complex and require solutions concentrated on multiple arenas. For example, a financial situation may be caused by a combination of a move with additional expenditures, a military spouse being under- or un-employed, a lack of available childcare, and additional time needed to connect to key medical services. When only one area is addressed, the issue is not resolved, yet to address the entire issue the family may need to work with several organizations creating additional burdens on the family and extending the financial crisis.

These experiences provide an opportunity as I have the insights of having lived the systematic challenges of military life. At the same time, they have created personal beliefs and biases that I accounted for as I complete my research. I find I distrust local community members, although I do believe the communities as a whole value the military families, particularly the financial stability brought by the military presence. As an outsider, I am unaware of motives and drivers of community members and the community as a whole. I believe the communities are uncertain how to work with and help the diverse military families. They may want to assist military families but may be hesitant to put the time and effort into this transient community. To help spouses connect to meaningful employment, there needs to be a community-wide effort to help make the transition into the local community easier by enabling military families to easily access a wide variety of services. Solutions need to be local in nature as each location is unique with different perspectives, job markets, and service

availability. I see the complexity of many issues within the military community as challenges that need holistic solutions rather than siloed services.

With these beliefs and biases in mind, I recognized the need to apply systems-thinking to this complicated issue. To do this, I included collaborative thinking to incorporate key stakeholders such as local community members, governmental agencies, NGOs, and a diverse group of military spouses. I identified best practices of supporting military families that may already exist to identify possibilities for action.

Conceptual Framework

Military-spouse employment is a wickedly complex problem, due to additional challenges thrust upon military spouses such as frequent moves, lack of opportunities due to duty location, and lack of timely access to services such as childcare. This study utilized a framework links the chaos theory of careers (Bright & Pryor, 2011) with the military spouse employment conceptual framework (MSECF) by the Military Spouse Employment Research Collective ([MSERC] 2021). The chaos theory of careers addresses the complex nature of career development in a systems-thinking approach. The MSECF identifies specific complexities for military-spouse employment that can be identified as a type of attractor from the chaos theory of careers.

Bright and Pryor (2014) identified the four cornerstones of chaos theory of careers as follows:

1. Complexity;
2. Change;
3. Chance; and

4. Construction.

They noted the complexity of career decision making due to numerous influences that determine a career. For military spouses, this complexity may be tied to the ability to access services in a timely manner such as childcare and necessary medical care or availability of employment opportunities in their career field. Identification of change as an influence was concentrated on the complex nature in which even minor changes to another system might influence a career. Change for military spouses includes the move to a new location with a PCS, unavailability of their service member spouse due to deployment or training requirements, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Chance, the inability to predict change due to complex connections, was identified as a norm in careers rather than the exception. Military spouses may see chance as an opportunity to work in an auxiliary career field or utilize volunteering to gain experience in a new skill. Finally, they identified construction as a way to control the unpredictability by a careerist taking active control in the creation of their future. For military spouses, construction may include working with employers to transfer to a new location or work remotely. Construction is a skill military spouses need to be successful in developing and maintaining a career through the changes thrust upon them through military life.

In later work, Pryor and Bright (2019) noted four types of attractors or patterns, associated with the theory:

1. Point attractors are systems which operate as pointed towards a fixed point--such as focusing on a goal and only the goal;
2. Pendulum attractors operate when a system moves between two fixed points and could be seen as a choice between two competing outcomes;

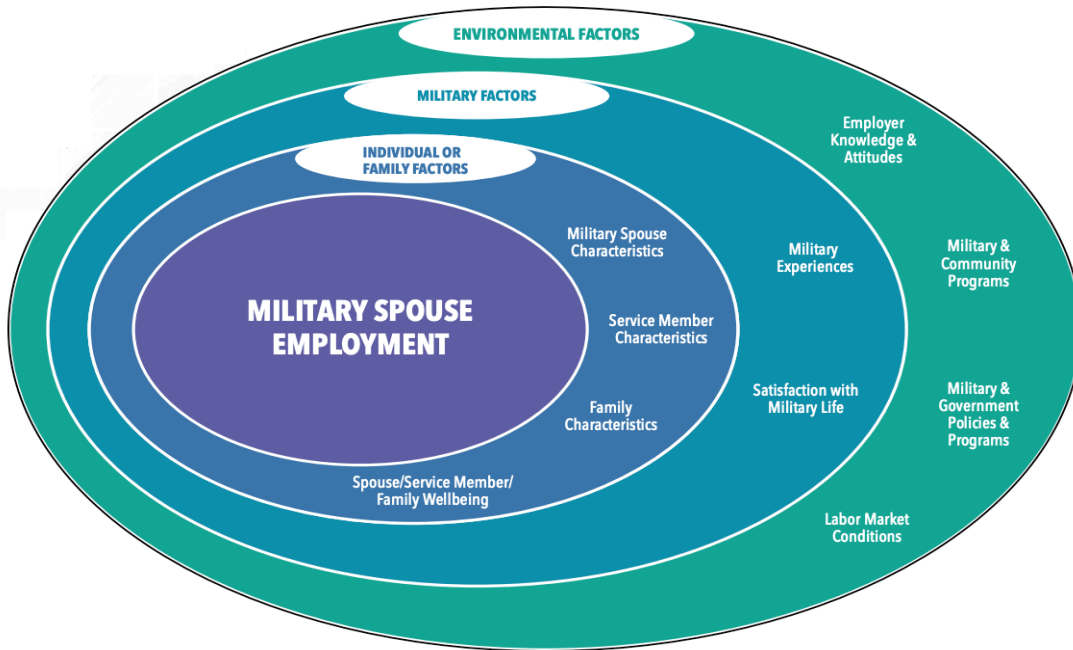
3. Torus attractors are identified as a system cycling between set points such as repetitive routines; and
4. Strange attractors are seen as an open system associated with complex systems that interacts with other systems. Strange attractors can influence other systems and be subject to influence from other systems.

These attractors are a complex dynamic system. They are “the limits on the system, or the motivational forces applied to the system” (p. 137).

The chaos theory of careers is a strong foundation for military-spouse career counseling and research, addressing the complexity of developing and maintaining a career amidst military life. The cornerstones and attractors provide career counselors a structure to assist military spouses with their career and the researcher with tools to apply a system thinking approach to the multifaceted problem of military-spouse employment. It is important for both the career counselor and researcher to comprehend the many facets that influence military spouse un- and under-employment.

Although the chaos theory of careers provides a foundation, the MSECF identifies influences that can be correlated to the chaos theory of careers attractors. The influences identified in the MSECF are military-spouse employment, individual or family, military, and environment (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Military-Spouse-Employment Conceptual Framework



Each category is further broken down into areas of interest that provide context. The categories are concentric to symbolize their interconnected nature. The categories are further defined by providing examples (Table 1). The COVID-19 pandemic influences each of these areas by changing the dynamics of work and home life, adding to the complexity of military-spouse employment.

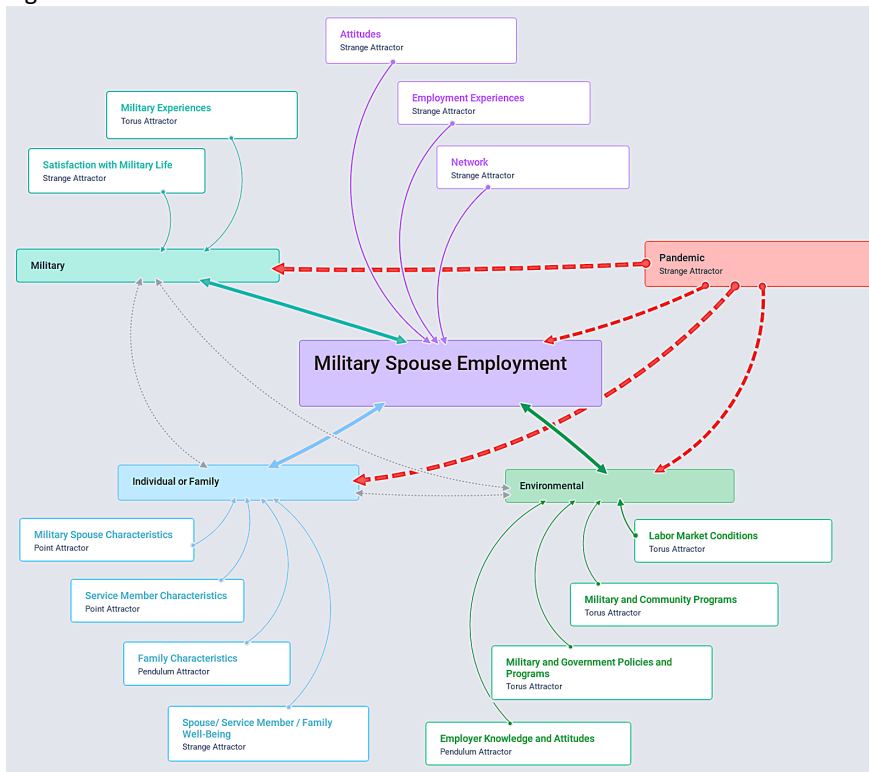
Table 1. MSECF Categories

Categories	Examples
Military-Spouse Employment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes 	Desire to work, employability, career seeking
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Experiences 	Employment status, hours, income, skillset (mis)match
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network 	Mentorship, professional network, peer support
Individual or Family	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spouse Characteristics 	Age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level, disability status

Categories	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Member Characteristics • Family Characteristics • Spouse, Service Member & Family Wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paygrade, MOS, service branch, disability status • Caregiver status, child care needs, number and ages of children, number of other dependents • Mental health, quality-of-life, food security, housing stability
Military	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences • Satisfaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deployments and separations, Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves • Retirement or separation intentions
Environmental	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer Knowledge & Attitudes • Military & Community Programs • Military & Government Policies & Programs • Labor Market Conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job opportunities, understanding of military life, willingness to hire spouses • Private sector internships and training, child care, Caregiver support, Installation level resources, community specific resources • Executive Orders, hiring authorities, interstate licensing compacts, maternity/ paternity leave, Status of Forces Agreements • Unemployment rate, gig economy, local job opportunities

MSECF categories, along with the COVID-19 pandemic, can be linked to the types of attractors associated with the chaos theory of careers (Figure 2). By correlating the MSECF variables and the areas detailed under each variable to attractor types, interactions between the attractors provide insights and allow for identification of areas needed to create change and develop strategies to overcome challenges. In doing so, it is possible to identify methods for military spouses to utilize the fourth cornerstone of the chaos theory of careers, construction, to provide employment stability and build careers.

Figure 2. Linked Framework



The MSECF focus on military-spouse employment that include attitude, employment experiences and network. All three are identified strange attractors. The attitude surrounding the employment or experience can influence and be influenced by all other areas of the MSECF. The network created through employment is likely to influence and be influenced by other variables in the military and individual areas. The employment experience can influence and be influenced other areas, particularly spouse wellbeing and satisfaction with military life.

In reviewing MSECF area of individual or family, the inclusion of characteristics of spouses and service members are identified as point attractors because they are fixed. Family characteristics are pendulum attractors with movement between them, particularly with the state of the service member being home and away. The wellbeing of the family and individual

members is identified as a strange attractor, having numerous influences on wellbeing as well as having the potential to influence attractors in all areas of the model.

In viewing the influence of the military, satisfaction with military life is identified as a strange attractor and military experiences as a torus attractor. Although they could both potentially be viewed as strange attractors, the military determines the assignments and much of military life is cyclical; therefore, there is little influence that a spouse or service member has on the military experience itself. The satisfaction with military life both influences and is influenced by environmental and individual or family attractors making it a strange attractor.

Environmental influences include three torus attractors: labor marketing conditions, military and community programs, and military and governmental policies and programs, along with a pendulum attractor of employer knowledge and attitude. Labor market conditions are identified as a torus attractor because of variance by location based on local industries, community support, and unemployment rate. Military and community programs, as well as governmental policies and programs, tend to be cyclical due to funding, senior leader emphasis or non-emphasis, and personnel managing the programs; therefore, are identified as torus attractors. Employer knowledge is identified as a pendulum attractor as it tends to swing between the two points of supportive understanding and refraining from engaging or hiring military spouses. It can be influenced and changed based on interactions with other attractors.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a strange attractor that affects each of the areas of the MSECF, creating both opportunities and challenges for military families. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided opportunities for telework, particularly in the federal government

(Vought, 2020), influencing the labor market. It has caused childcare centers to close for periods of time and affected other military and community programs, which in turn affected the labor market, individual, and family categories (Collins et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2021; Kane et al., 2021; Wang, B. et al., 2021). Many service members provided support of national efforts during the pandemic (Aiken et al., 2021) affecting the military experience, military life, family characters, and family wellbeing.

The complex nature of military-spouse employment is reflected by utilizing chaos theory with the MSECF categories as attractors. This model provides an understanding of the interconnectedness of the many attractors, to include the pandemic, providing the backdrop for the research into military spouse perceptions of their federal position during a pandemic. I used this model to score responses, identify whether the four cornerstones of the chaos theory of careers apply to military-spouse careers along with the key influences that allow military spouses to maintain, or not, their federal careers.

Significance of the Study

I have found little on federal employment of military spouses among studies of military-spouse employment, un-employment, and under-employment (Blue Star Families, 2016; Burke & Miller, 2018; Council of Economic Advisors, 2018, DaLomba et al., 2021, De Silva et al., 2019; Dunham, 2020; Godier-McBard, 2020; Huffman et al., 2019; Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee, 2021; Meadows, 2016; Strong et al., 2021). The studies that include the federal employment of military spouses acknowledge the inability to accurately track the number of military spouses working for the federal government (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018; Dunham, 2020; Joining Forces Interagency Policy Committee 2021; Kamarck,

2020). As of this writing, I have not found studies on retention of nor use of remote work by military spouses in federal employment. Federal employment has the potential to provide military spouses, particularly spouses of active-duty service members, with stable employment as they move with their service member. With the onset of the pandemic, many federal positions converted to telework. There is the potential that this may enable more spouses to retain their federal positions with a PCS.

Summary

Military-spouse employment is a wickedly complex problem with many contributing issues. This study researched military spouses in federal employment, concentrating on those whose who worked during the COVID-19 pandemic to identify perceptions on the changes experienced due to the pandemic. In my qualitative study I viewed the complexities through the lens of the chaos theory of careers and the MSECF with the goal of examining military spouses' perceptions of their federal careers. It has the potential to provide a way forward for military spouses and federal employers.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

This chapter reviewed studies of military-spouse un- and under-employment along with efforts by the Department of Defense (DoD) to reduce the problem. In it, I reviewed studies of effects the COVID-19 pandemic had on workplaces. This chapter is in four sections. The first describes studies concentrating on challenges military spouses face in securing adequate employment. The second provides a background to the regulatory and legal efforts supporting military-spouse federal employment. The third reviews studies on telework in the federal government, including conversion of federal positions to telework during the pandemic. The fourth reviews studies of changes to workplaces due to the pandemic.

Military-Spouse Employment

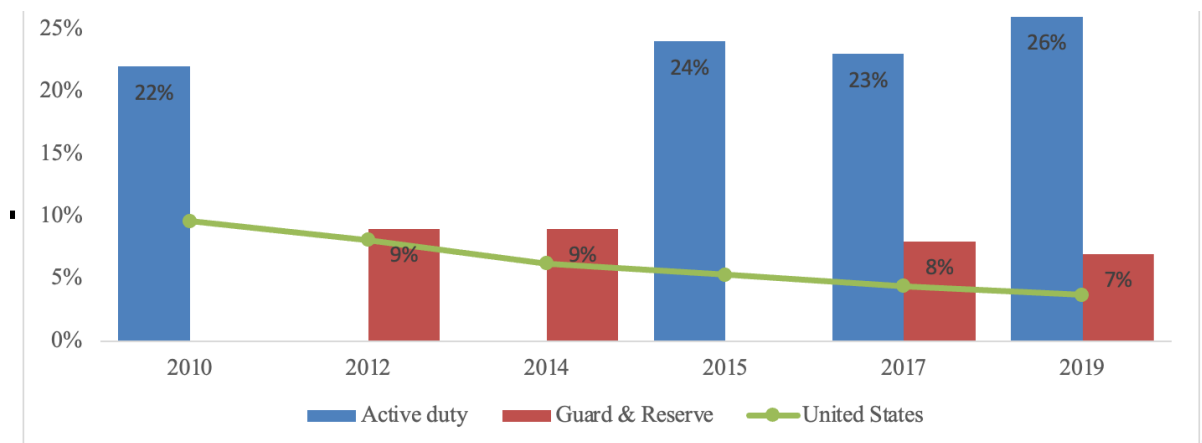
Studies and reports on military-spouse employment agreed that the unemployment and underemployment rates are significantly higher than their civilian counterparts (Blue Star Families, 2018; Burke & Miller, 2018; Council of Economic Advisors, 2018; & Department of Defense [DoD], 2019). Studies identified aspects contributing to these challenges which aligned with the military spouse employment collective framework (MSECF) and chaos theory of careers. Sonethavilay et. al. (2020) noted that employment has a positive impact on military-spouse wellbeing and self-esteem. They also noted that employment has a positive effect on family relationships and quality-of-life.

A DoD 2019 report detailed military-spouse demographics, employment, and unemployment. The report indicated 91% of spouses were women, 49% of whom were 30 years of age or younger (p. 139). Slightly different demographics were identified in a report (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018) that identified 92% of military spouses as women and the

average age of working military spouses as 33 years of age in comparison to the U.S. average of 41. This report noted that military spouses are more educated, with 40% holding a degree and 34% having some college in comparison to 30% and 26% respectively of their civilian counterparts. It also noted that 76% of military spouses did not participate in the labor market, versus 57% of civilian counterparts (pp. 1-2).

Historical unemployment figures for active-duty spouses, identified significantly higher unemployment rates than their Guard and Reserve counterparts (DoD, 2019, pp. 187 & 161) and higher than the national average for the same years (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Unemployment Comparison



Note: (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2021)

The unemployment rate identified in the Council of Economic Advisors (2018) report noted the rate is twice that of overall population, however showed a lower rate of 16% in 2017 (p. 5). In their study of nearly 11,000 participants, Strong et al. (2021) found that military-spouse unemployment rate was higher in active-duty spouse respondents of color (27% vs.17%), recently relocated spouses (31% vs. 16%), and that many (42%) spouses had stopped working sometime during the COVID-19 pandemic (p. 13).

In addition to unemployment, studies reviewed potential wage gaps. According to the Council of Economic Advisors (2018), military spouses made an average of \$12,374 less than their civilian counterparts, leading to estimated losses over a 20-year career of almost \$190,000 (p. 5). With data from the 2016 survey by Blue Star Families, Burke & Miller (2018), reviewed the cost of un- and under-employment of military spouses. They found that 42% of military spouses were not in the labor market, in comparison to 26% of civilian spouses. Additionally, the study noted that 35 to 40% of military spouses were underemployed earning approximately 31% less for those with a high school education or GED and 40% less for those spouses with bachelor's degrees. The social cost of this un- and under-employment is approximately \$710 million to \$1.07 billion annually (Blue Star Families, 2016, pp. 16-18). Burke & Miller's quantitative study sought to identify the impact permanent changes of station (PCSs) on military-spouse employment. They created a longitudinal database to track over 900,000 military spouses from 2001-2012, pulling data from military records and matching to Social Security earnings records. They found that a PCS reduced spousal earnings an average of 14% (p. 1262), along with a pay gap between service members and their spouses at an average of \$23,000 annually, thereby identifying military spouses as tied migrants (p. 1268). Their study included male and female military spouses and noted that while male spouses made an average of \$13,070 more than female spouses, the reduction in income was greater for male spouses during moves (p. 1273). Additionally, the study identified that female spouses had longer gaps of unemployment when moving, particularly when they had young children. Another study (Meadows et al., 2016) identified a larger wage gap. This study concentrated on female military spouses who participated in the longitudinal Deployment Life Study (DLS),

which provides a weighted sample representing the military population. It matched military spouses to civilian spouses with similar backgrounds, comparing income and hours worked.

Matched variables included:

1. Race;
2. Age group;
3. Presence of children under the age of six; and
4. Highest education level achieved.

Their study found that military spouses worked an average of 15 hours less per week than their civilian counterparts, regardless of education, and earned an average of \$17,000 less (p. 551). Military spouses earned 67% less than their counterparts, however when adjusting and only viewing working spouses against their counterparts, military spouses earned 34% less (p. 553).

Strong et al. (2021) identified affordable childcare as a major issue with 35% unable to find childcare that works for their current situation, 39% indicated that they may sometimes find care, with 23% being able to find care. Respondents identified potential solutions as remote work, schedule flexibility, and financial support (pp. 55-56). The study noted that spouse employment has been identified as one of the top concerns that contributes to financial instability for military families since the inception of the survey in 2009.

This evidence of military-spouse un- and under-employment was confirmed in the 2021 study by the U.S. Army Public Health Center ([USAPHC], 2021). This study provided a holistic review of military families. It identified adverse effects on military-spouse mental health and satisfaction with military life due to financial stress. The study documented

adverse effects of the pandemic on job loss along with closures of schools and day care. The results of this study are echoed by Sonethavilay et. al. (2020) who also identified that the type of employment matters. Meaningful employment impacted wellbeing with 84% of military-spouses who identified as not underemployed indicating they felt independent, satisfied, with opportunities to grow whereas only 67% of military spouses who were underemployed felt the same (p. 19).

In a qualitative study of military spouses who sought adequate employment, DaLomb et al. (2021) interviewed military spouses with advanced degrees. They found spouses adapted to meet challenges out of stress and loss of identity as they searched for meaningful work. Four themes were identified by these spouses:

1. Impact of military life on career;
2. Adaptability and reinvention of professional self;
3. Sense of duty to others; and
4. Need for additional support.

In another qualitative study, Huffman et al. (2019) interviewed service members about their perceptions of career challenges their spouses faced. They identified three themes, as follows:

1. Frequent relocations;
2. Physical distance; and
3. Challenges of military comes first.

They identified two themed benefits of military-spouse employment as follows:

1. Personal fulfillment of the spouse; and

2. Positive effect on marital relationships.

They noted that none of their study's participants discussed federal initiatives to assist military spouses with career development.

The COVID-19 pandemic increased unemployment, particularly for women with children, as schools converted to virtual learning and daycares closed (Collins et al., 2021). The effect of the pandemic on military-spouse employment caused an increase in unemployment for military spouses. Strong et al. (2021) noted that since March 2020, 42% of military spouse respondents who had been working prior to the pandemic reported they had stopped working at some point during the pandemic, with layoffs and furloughs as the top reported cause. Most (68%) of those who stopped work remained unemployed as of survey in September and October 2020. The primary reasons cited for loss of jobs and reduction of work hours among active-duty spouse respondents after March 2020 included fear of COVID-19 exposure for themselves or their children, layoffs or furloughs, difficulty juggling work and children's educational supports, lack of childcare options, and employers who were unwilling or unable to support flexible work options or remote work. The trend continued in 2021, with Strong et al. (2022) noting that childcare capacity has been further reduced since the onset of COVID-19, compounding the challenges faced by military spouses.

Strong et al. (2022) noted that there is potential that the pandemic could benefit military spouses because of the conversion to remote work. The report noted 44% of military spouses who identified employment as a top issue noted that remote work opportunity would best address concerns. The report did caution that many military spouses are employed in industries that do not transfer to remote work.

Federal Hiring of Military Spouses

In response to these challenges, efforts have been made to increase the hiring of military spouses in the federal government. Efforts have included Executive Orders (EO), updated 5 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), and legislation efforts through various National Defense Authorization Acts. The Department of the Army (DA) recently developed strategies that include the prioritization of hiring military spouses. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) produced annual reports on military-spouse hiring and added a military-spouse identifier to the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) in 2021. Attempts to measure the effectiveness of each of these measures created challenges. More recently, in 2022, DoD initiated a pilot program for those stationed in a foreign country.

According to the 2020 FEVS, 1% (6,119) of respondents indicated they were military spouses. This is the first time this question has been asked (p. 41). The 2021 and 2022 FEVS both indicated 1% of respondents were married to a service member, an additional 2% indicated they were married to a retired or separated service member. Both surveys showed that only 13% of those indicating they were a military spouse or spouse of a retired or separated service member were hired through the military-spouse noncompetitive hiring authority (OPM 2022, p. 23 & OPM 2023, p. 42).

Dunham's (2020) study provided a background and analysis of congressional and presidential efforts to provide support for military-spouse employment. The analysis covered military-spouse initiatives in National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA) of 2005, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Of note was section 573 of NDAA 2019 expanding noncompetitive appointment for military spouses. Dunham addressed the EO 13473 in 2008 providing expedited hiring of

military spouses to federal position and EO 13482 in 2019 providing noncompetitive appointment for certain federal positions, allowing spouses to apply for positions normally only open to current federal employees and allowing agencies to appointment military spouses without competition. Dunham noted inadequate reporting on the effectiveness of the efforts and suggested potential improvements for monitoring and implementation.

Title 5 United States Code (USC) is applied to governmental organizations and employees. 5 USC § 3330d allowed a federal agency to noncompetitively appoint the spouse married to an active-duty service member, spouse of a 100% disabled service member, or spouse of a deceased service member to a governmental agency. This section was temporarily amended in 2018 with Public Law 115-232 (5 USC § 3330d, 2018) expanding the noncompetitive appointment. EO 13473 provided a noncompetitive appointment authority for military spouses for all federal agencies. The order applied to spouses of active-duty service members, spouses of disabled retired or separated service members, and widows or widowers of service members killed while on active duty. The executive order noted that the noncompetitive appointment authority was issued to retain and recruit service members. EO 13832 promoted the hiring of military spouses among all federal agencies. The order required OPM to provide information to agencies about the military-spouse hiring authority and information on NDAA of 2017 that amended 5 USC 3330d(c) by eliminating the time limits on noncompetitive appointments for spouses relocating with a service member. It required OPM to provide clarifying guidance to agencies on provisions of military-spouse hiring authorities and techniques for effective use of telework. This order required agencies to track the number of positions made available under the military-spouse hiring authority, the number of

spouses hired under the authority, and other actions to promote the hiring of military spouses, reporting this information to OPM for an annual report.

Additional support to military spouses was outlined in DoD Instruction (DoDI) 13422 of 2021 that provided guidance on required family readiness program for all armed services, to include the Employment Readiness Program (ERP). The DoDI stipulated all family centers include an ERP to provide career and educational services. The DoDI outlined four standards for ERP, as follows:

1. Communication of the labor market to include job postings;
2. Education of the civilian community on the benefits of military families;
3. Information on education programs and scholarships; and
4. Direct program support to assist in the employment search.

All four standards can be applied to federal employment.

Kamarck et al. (2020) reported on federal initiatives to aid military spouses in the areas of careers and employment. Initiatives included monetary support for education, outreach, and partnerships with businesses, and federal hiring authorities. The study identified legislative proposals for the 116th Congress and other considerations. Of note for this study was the clearly defined federal hiring flexibilities and statistics on agency utilization of non-competitive military-spouse hiring authorities within the federal government showing that 2,172 military spouses were hired in 17 agencies during fiscal year 2019, an increase of 1.3% from the previous fiscal year (p. 41).

The Department of the Army ([DA] 2019) published the Army people strategy (APS) to manage talents of soldiers and civilians. This strategy identified the following four lines of effort (LOE):

1. Acquire talent to include market, recruit, and onboard;
2. Develop talent through educate, train, and credential;
3. Employ talent to engage by identify, align, and advance; and
4. Retain talent which included engage, compensate, and transition.

The strategy identified the following four critical enablers to set the conditions for the lines of efforts:

1. 21st century talent management systems;
2. Quality-of-life;
3. Army culture; and
4. Resource and authorities.

The quality-of-life enabler included reviewing current care, support, and enrichment programs to include housing, healthcare childcare, spouse employment, and permanent change of station moves.

The Army people strategy civilian implementation plan ([APS-CIP], 2020) built on APS by expanding each LOE into tasks such as, “promote employment for military spouses” (A-2.3) that required the Army to quantify, assess, and expand military-spouse employment opportunities. The LOE included the requirements to accurately track the number of military spouses work for DA, identify and communicate reasons for hiring military spouses, and review and expand options for retention of employment with a PCS (DA, 2020). As a part of the

retain LOE, the APS-CIP identified “encourage telework, remote work, and flexible schedules” (p. 29). Both items were identified as part of the quality-of-life enabler. These federal efforts all connected existing military-spouse data to federal employee data.

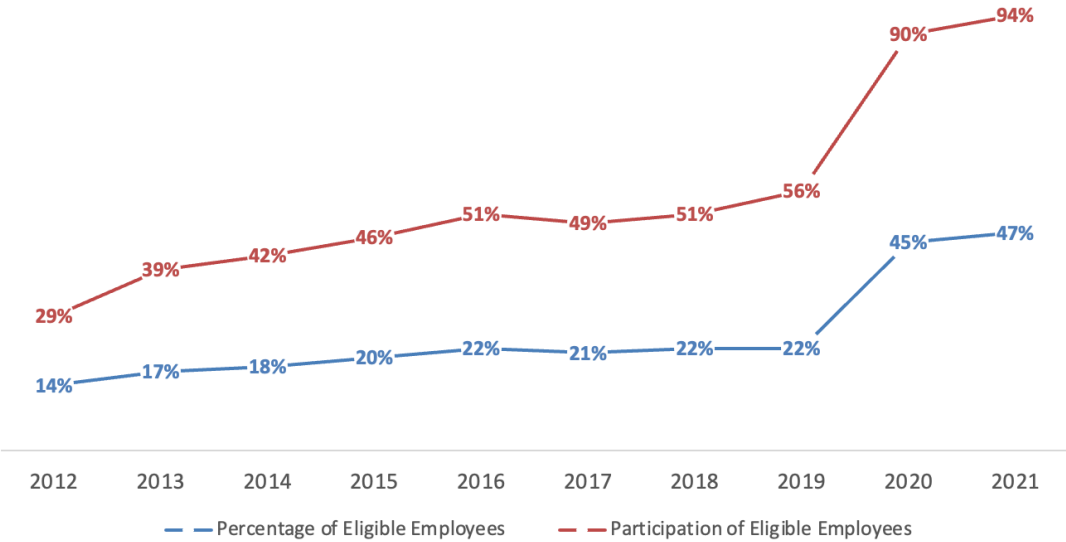
More recently, a memo from the Secretary of Defense emphasized the importance of supporting military families that includes addressing the childcare shortages and reducing the costs. The memo specifically addressed expanding military-spouse employment by increasing the use of noncompetitive and direct hiring authorities in the Department of Defense and launching a career accelerator pilot initiative (Austin, 2022). A direct hiring authority allows the direct hiring of those who meet minimal qualifications to be referred whereas a noncompetitive authority requires applications to be among the best qualified. The Department of Defense initiated a pilot program that allowed the direct hiring of military spouses for locations outside the United States. This program included a reporting mechanism with reports to Congress (Cisneros, 2022).

Telework in the Federal Government

The expansion of the use of telework in the federal government was mandated in the Telework Enhancement act of 2010. The Office of Personnel Management ([OPM], 2020b) reported on progress on telework in the federal government as required by Act. The report indicated that 22% of all federal employees in participating agencies participated in telework and 51% were eligible for telework (p. 8). In a subsequent report for 2019, OPM (2021c) found that a total percentage of teleworkers in the federal government remained steady at 22% (p. 8). The report found that the DoD reported an increase by 24,000 eligible employees due to updated eligibility measures (p. 9). Cost savings due to telework were identified by 36% of

federal agencies (p. 5) The report provided a baseline to measure pre-pandemic use of telework and remote work in the federal government. OPM’s 2020 report noted that an increase of telework eligible employees to 50%, an increase of 11%. Agencies noted that 90% of telework eligible employees participated in 2020, up from 45% in 2019 (2022b, p. 10). Telework eligibility remained at 50% in 2021 and participation of those eligible rose to 94% (OPM 2022c, pp. 12-13) (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Telework Eligibility & Participation



Potential cost savings are considerations affecting telework. It is estimated that telework provide savings of over \$180 million in 2020 related to reduced absences, human capital, utilities, office space, and training (OPM, 2022b, p. 28). A congressional hearing on July 20th, 2020, provided an overview of the private and public sectors efforts towards telework prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Dell Technologies, American Express, and the General Services Administration testified about the cost savings pre-pandemic time (*Lessons learned*, pp. 1-2). Their testimony included the results of global workplace analytics which identified potential reduction in real estate of 25% leading to savings of \$1.7 billion a year if

federal workers eligible to telework would do so half time (p. 8). It noted that more people have been teleworking than identified as eligible during the pandemic, so the savings have the potential to increase significantly. An additional benefit of telework identified at the hearing included the significant reduction of pollutants because fewer people are commuting to work. California saw a reduction of 15-30% of smog forming pollutants and 50% reduction in fine particles and greenhouse gases during the first six weeks of the pandemic (p. 39).

The cost savings does not include the potential savings through employee retention. Agencies identified retention as a reason for telework. The 2021 report noted that 42 agencies had included teleworking as a retention tool. The Department of Defense was quoted in the report,

Over the last few years, components discovered the necessity of telework to maintain retention. Navy specifically cites a reaction to FEVS survey data prompting a shift towards embracing telework in order to retain skilled employees. DLA [defense logistics agency] cites command climate survey data showing 78% of respondents remain due to the availability of telework. For components already heavily leveraging telework, the next logical step remains remote work which some components are beginning to write policy in order to retain more employees (OPM, 2022c, p. 24).

The emphasis of telework and remote work can be seen in the 2020 OPM guide to telework. The updated guide no longer included a clear requirement for employees to report to the workplace at least two days per pay period. The guide noted that telework is a tool for agencies during a pandemic or other emergency, allowing the agency to limit those in the worksite at one time to help reduce the spread. This expanded guide provided

encouragement to agencies to continue to utilize telework and remote work beyond the pandemic and includes an expanded section on remote work and specifically mentions remote work as a way to retain “highly talented employees who must move outside of an agency’s geographic location or personal reasons (e.g., military spouses...)” (p. 53).

Choudhury et al. (2021) reported on the United States Patent and Trademark Office’s (USPTO) successful telework program. They examined the results of a patent-examiners’ union negotiations for a change of title from work from home (WFH) to work from anywhere (WFA), a program that was open to employees who had a minimum of two years with the organization and had successfully proven the ability to WFH. The USPTO agreement allowed those living more than 50 miles from the headquarters to change to a WFA agreement. The agreement included requirements of changing the duty location to the employee’s residence and paying for any trips back to headquarters, capping those at 12 day and/or five trips during a fiscal year. The organization provided voice over internet protocol (VOIP) and other software to support those in the pilot. The employees in the WFA saw a 4.4% increase of productivity (p. 676). The relevance of this study arrived from the USPTO being a federal agency allowing employees to WFA, to include allowing employees to change their duty location. The study included the following quotation from a military spouse who had been able to retain their position through PCS moves:

I'm a military spouse, which means I live in a world with frequent moves and personal upheavals that prevent many spouses from pursuing lasting careers, especially careers of their choice. WFA has been the most meaningful telework program that I have encountered in the military social sphere, as it allows me to follow my husband to any

state in the U.S. at a moment's notice, and... pursue my own aspirations to contribute both to my home and to society (p. 672).

The willingness of the organization to allow this spouse to WFA not only allowed the USPTO to retain a highly trained worker, the USPTO provided continuity to the military spouse.

Work During & Following the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated uses of telework in corporate and federal workforces. A survey of business uncertainty (SBU), Barrero et al. (2021) identified the following four “reallocation shocks” that due to the pandemic:

1. Three to four new hires for every 10 layoffs March 1 to mid-May 2020;
2. Projection that one third or more of these layoffs are permanent;
3. Projections imply rates of expected job and sales reallocation are two to five times higher from April to June 2020 than prior to the pandemic; and
4. Full days working from home will triple from 5% prior to the pandemic to more than 15% following the pandemic (p. 1).

The SBU quantified the anticipated expansion of telework and showed that 6% of work was completed from home in 2019. Barrero et al. anticipated that 17% of work will be completed from home in the future (p. 20). The SBU and other studies they reviewed found that more half of all employees working from home during the pandemic reported themselves to be productive, and most of those reportedly wanted to continue working from home in the future (p. 5).

Brynjolfsson et al. (2020) reported on two surveys completed in April and May of 2020 that asked respondents about changes to their work location. They found that one third (37%)

of continued to commute to work while another third of respondents (35%) had switched to working from home. Of the rest, one-sixth (15%) reported previously working from home and one tenth (10%) reported being laid off or furloughed (pp. 3-4). This was data stratified by geographic location, gender, and age.

One of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was school closures that created challenges for parents. As Collins et al. (2021) said, “Never before have schools closed to the extent or duration that we have observed during the COVID-19 pandemic. One in three U.S. women who left employment cited child care demands as a primary reason for their departure” (p. 183). They reported that school closures and uneven reopening during the pandemic played on parent employment, particularly that of mothers. Their study compared employment data for fathers and mothers in 26 states from September to November of 2019 and 2020. They found that mothers were more affected by the changes to the school day than mothers with the largest gender gaps in states with primarily remote learning.

In a mixed-methods study, Wang et al. (2021) interviewed 39 and surveyed 522 Chinese workers, a majority (52%) of whom were women (p. 26). They asked about remote work challenges, virtual work characteristics, and individual variables or personal traits. they identified: the following challenges:

1. Work-home interference;
2. Ineffective communication;
3. Procrastination; and
4. Loneliness.

They identified the following virtual work characteristics:

1. Job autonomy;
2. Monitoring;
3. Workload; and
4. Social support,

They concluded that social support had the greatest impact along with self-discipline, and that respondents with reportedly more self-discipline completed their work more efficiently and had fewer issues with work-home interference than respondents with reportedly less self-discipline.

In a qualitative study, Kane et al. (2021) interviewed 50 executives between April and November 2020 about their experiences leading organizations during the pandemic. Respondents said that employees were more productive with remote work and remote collaboration between those who worked together continued to build those relations. Respondents added that connections to others dropped considerably and expressed concerns that lack of informal relationships would reduce innovation on new projects. Kane et al. found that maintaining culture, coaching, and mentoring proved to be challenges. They concluded that virtual work is still emerging and anticipated that a return-to-work plan would need to be purposeful.

The COVID-19 pandemic imposed the same challenges on federal workers. At the onset of the pandemic, federal agencies were forced to send workers home, quickly converting many employees to full-time teleworkers. On March 17, 2020, a memo provided guidance for all federal agencies to immediately reduce the spread of Coronavirus (Vought, 2020). The memo stressed the need to minimize face-to-face operations through reducing non-mission-

essential services, maximizing telework, streamlining processes for critical services, and ensuring those who are ill do not enter federal facilities. The memo provided a background to the transition to telework during the pandemic. The effects of the March 17th memo can be seen in results of a FEVS in 2020 that noted a majority (59%) of employees teleworked every day during the peak of the pandemic, whereas many fewer (3%) reportedly had done so prior to the pandemic (OPM, 2021b, p. 14). Other pertinent survey data were as follows:

- Many (39%) federal employees had childcare responsibilities;
- Of those, about one third (29%) reportedly relied on childcare at home or alternative work;
- A majority (65%) reported that expanded telework was available; and
- Most (72%) of indicated expansion of collaborative tools (pp. 14-16).

The pandemic changed the workforces in all sectors, and accelerated trends toward telework.

Summary

In this chapter, I reviewed selected literature on the challenges of military-spouse employment. First, I reviewed studies of challenges military spouses face in securing suitable employment and documented high unemployment rates, particularly for active-duty spouses. I then reviewed regulatory and legal efforts to support military-spouse employment throughout the government and showed the need for more accurate measures of military spouses working in the federal sector. I then reviewed studies on telework in the federal government that involved the conversion of many federal positions to telework during the pandemic. In the last section I reviewed studies of changes in workplaces during and following the recent pandemic that forced a shift to more telework.

I identified potential gaps in research that I have not found to this point. There is no comprehensive study of military spouses in federal employment. OPM reports do not identify the total number of military spouses in the federal workforce, an analysis of military spouses to counterparts to determine if military spouses are being hired into appropriate positions based on experience and education, nor explore efforts being taken by agencies to retain spouses who are hired.

Chapter 3. Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to answer the following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment during a pandemic? I sought evidence of perceived changes to federal workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic and to determine whether any changes were connected to challenges of military lifestyles such as retention of employment during a permanent change of station (PCS), telework, or other workplace flexibilities. I analyzed data within a conceptual framework based on the chaos theory of careers aligned with the military spouse employment conceptual framework (MSECF).

Population

The annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) first asked respondents whether they were military spouses, and 6,119 (1%) responded that they were (Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2021, p. 41), the 2022 FEVS indicated 1% of participants identified being married to a current service member and another 2% were married to a service member that was retired or separated from service (OPM, 2022). Per Jennings & Nagel (2021), 2,181,106 civilian employees were employed by the federal government at the end of 2020 (p. 2). Assuming the FEVS identified rate of 1% of federal government employees are military spouses, approximately 21,811 of the federal employees may be considered military spouses. Appendix A shows demographic differences between military spouses and federal employees. The DoD and OPM studies have only asked for the gender of male and female. This study incorporated other definitions of gender in the survey.

Participants & Setting

In this study, I conducted a convenience sample of 171 participants who represent military spouses stratified by gender, race, education level, and pay grade as identified through demographic data collected by the Department of Defense (DoD). I solicited participants through social media, LinkedIn and Facebook, and organizations serving military spouses as follows:

- Blue Star Careers Network;
- Career Military Spouses;
- FedFam: Resources for Federal Employees and Contractors;
- Hiring Our Heroes;
- Institute for Veterans and Military Families;
- MFRC Employment and Transition Team;
- Military Spouse Advocacy Network;
- Military Spouse Career & Education Support;
- Military Spouse Employment Network;
- Military Spouse Professional Development & Networking;
- Military Spouse Professional Networking;
- Military Spouse Professionals;
- Military Spouses Connected;
- Military Spouses with Advanced Degrees;
- National Military Family Association;
- Project Transition USA;

- The Resume Place;
- Veteran and Military Spouse Employment Network;
- Veteran Mentor Network; and
- Veterans to Federal Government Jobs.

Participants chose to respond at their workplaces, homes, or from anywhere in the world.

Measures

I used a survey instrument (Appendix B) to inquire about employee experiences during the pandemic. I adapted the 2020 FEVS. I requested demographic data and responses based on established DoD and federal employee demographic strata. The survey requested participants' responses sections that included:

1. Workplace changes due to the pandemic;
2. Remote work status during the pandemic; and
3. Retention of their federal position after a PCS.

The survey was based on the 2020 FEVS pandemic-focused series of questions, converting questions to a Likert scale. I added items to identify perceptions regarding employment retention with a PCS. Two added items asked participants: what is your opinion of support as a military spouse during the pandemic? and is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience during the pandemic as a federal employee?

Data Collection

Upon approval by sponsored professional groups and by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point (Appendix C), I solicited participants for the survey. From those who replied, I selected a purposive sample (Etikan et al., 2016) and

obtained signed informed-consent forms (Appendix C) from them prior to their completing the survey on Qualtrics. All data is kept on password-protected servers and retained for five years after publication.

Data Analysis

In this study I performed exploratory data analysis (EDA) in terms of a framework that links the chaos theory of careers (Bright & Pryor, 2011) with the MSECF (Military Spouse Employment Research Collective, 2021). The exploratory data analysis consisted of the following three phases:

- Coding;
- Categorizing; and
- The “four Rs” of EDA.

First, I coded data according to generally accepted techniques (Saldaña, 2016) in two levels and shown in a codebook (Appendix D). I derived four overarching categories with sub-categories corresponding to the framework, as follows:

1. Environmental area with employer knowledge, labor market conditions, military and community programs, and military and government policies and programs;
2. Military-spouse employment with employment experience, attitudes, and network;
3. Military experience with military experience and satisfaction with military life; and
4. Individual or family with family characteristics, military-spouse characteristics, service member characteristics, and wellbeing of the spouse, service member, and family.

Second, I assigned each category to an attractor type based on the chaos theory of careers. These categories provided an understanding of experiences which I identified as being

supportive or positive, non-supportive or negative, both, and neutral. Supportive was identified when a respondent expressed tangible outcomes of support such as being provided additional flexibilities due to challenges such as childcare closures or being provided emotional support. *Non-supportive* was identified as the respondent expressing challenges or roadblocks due to employer's action or inaction such as having a lack of resources or unwillingness to adjust due to challenges faced such as school closures. Some responses expressed both supportive and non-supportive and others were neutral. I then categorized data in the four themes of the chaos theory of careers: complexity, chance, change, and construction. I coded and categorized using Dedoose and Excel. An independent researcher checked all data and findings for inter-rater reliability.

Third, to seek connections among MSECF categories I tabulated the data as follows:

1. Telework, remote work, or a reference to working at home;
2. Additional workplace flexibilities;
3. PCS or move; and
4. Retaining, keeping, or kept a position or job with a PCS.

In these tables found connections among reported perceptions of being employed as a part of the federal workforce during the pandemic. I calculated central tendencies and used the "four Rs" of EDA (Pertl & Hevey, 2012, pp. 3 ff.), as follows:

- Revelation: I used histograms and box plots to display data in "different ways of describing the data to understand inherent patterns and to avoid being fooled by unwarranted assumptions" (p. 3).

- Residuals: I examined discrepancies in the data, because “the rough is just as important as the smooth and should never be ignored” (p. 4).
- Re-expression: I took a “flexible approach to examination of data patterns” (p. 5).
- Resistance: I took account of outliers (p. 5).

Validity & Reliability

I administered a pilot study in March 2022, through Military Spouses with Advanced Degrees social media group and select members of United States agency for international development (USAID) and Department of State (DOS) Military Spouse / DoD Professionals & Families Employee Resource Group. Most questions were from pandemic and employee experience areas of the instrument from OPM (2021, 2020 FEVS). I checked the instrument for internal reliability with Cronbach’s *alpha* ($\alpha = .924$). An independent researcher checked all data and findings for intra-rater reliability. I asked all participants to verify their data.

The pilot study yielded 21 respondents, of whom 16 completed the survey. One did not agree to informed consent, two did not fit within the parameters of being a military spouse in federal employment after March of 2020. The response times for those who completed the survey ranged from six to 25 minutes with an average time of 12 minutes. Only seven of the respondents answered the qualitative item. The survey was reviewed by three additional researchers. The survey was modified based on input from participants and the researchers.

Summary

In this study, I sought to answer the research following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment during a pandemic? I used

military-spouse social sites to solicit a purposive sample and sub-samples that represented the population of military spouses in the federal government. I used an instrument to collect survey data, and analyzed those data in term of a framework that connects a chaos theory of careers with military-spouse employment.

Chapter 4. Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to answer the following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment during a pandemic? I sought evidence of perceived changes to federal workplaces during the COVID-19 pandemic and asked whether changes met challenges of military lifestyles such as retention of employment PCS. I analyzed data within a conceptual framework based on the chaos theory of careers aligned with the military spouse employment conceptual framework (MSECF), to find connections among responses.

Survey Data

I distributed the survey over a three-week period through 11 Facebook and eight LinkedIn social media groups. The survey was also shared by the non-profit Hiring Our Heroes in local and national Facebook groups and the non-profit Military Spouse Advocacy Network through their social media hub. I received 171 responses, of which 147 met my criteria of having been a federal employee after March 2020 and being a military spouse. The following four groups completed the survey:

- Spouses of active-duty service members ($n = 117$);
- Spouses of a veteran or retiree ($n = 28$);
- Spouses of a reserve or guard service member ($n = 2$); and
- Did not identify the status of the service member ($n = 3$).

Participating spouses reportedly worked for 15 different agencies; the most frequently reported were as follows:

- Department of Defense ($n = 82$);

- Veterans Administration ($n = 11$); and
- Department of State ($n = 8$).

Four noted holding multiple positions with multiple agencies since March of 2020. Military spouses held positions in 15 different job groups with the most common being:

- Human Resources Management Group ($n = 21$);
- General Administrative, Clerical, and Office Services Group ($n = 19$); and
- Social Science, Psychology, and Welfare Group ($n = 18$).

Most respondents were paid through the general schedule (GS) with the remainder being non-appropriated fund ($n = 19$) and other ($n = 6$)

- GS 1-6 ($n = 11$);
- GS 7-12 ($n = 65$); and
- GS 13-15 ($n = 37$).

Of note is that while 42% of federal employees are in pay grades GS 13-15, only 26.6% of respondents are in that pay grade; 41% of federal employees are pay grades GS 7-12, while 46.8% of respondents were in these pay ranges; and 4% of federal employees were in pay grades GS 1-6, respondents were more likely to be in this pay range at 7.9% (Office of Personnel Management [OPM], 2022a).

The education of military spouse respondents also did not mirror federal employees. There were fewer respondents to my survey with technical or associate degrees, some college, and bachelor's degrees, however, the respondents achieving a master's degree or higher was 61.9% whereas 37% of federal employees had this level of education based on the 2022 FEVS (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents' Education Levels

Education Level	Survey	FEVS
High school, GED or less	0%	4%
Technical school or associate degree	4.2%	9%
Some college	5.5%	12%
Bachelor's degree	28.5%	35%
Master's, doctoral, or professional degree	61.8%	40%

Note: (n = 144)

At the end of the survey participants were asked the following two qualitative questions: what is your opinion of support as a military spouse during the pandemic? and is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience during the pandemic as a federal employee? Of the participants completing the survey, the number answering the qualitative questions were as follows:

- Answered the first question (n = 91);
- Answered the second question (n = 65);
- Answered both questions (n = 59);
- Answered only the first question (n = 32); and
- Answered only the second question (n = 6).

Detailed survey data are in Appendix E.

I coded qualitative data based on categories that I identified in the MSECF. I further broke down the statements noting if the participant shared a supportive or positive, non-supportive or negative, both supportive and non-supportive, or neutral statement. Negative statements outweighed positive, mixed, and neutral statements. The follow responses to the first qualitative question included:

- Supportive tones ($n = 22$);
- Non-supportive tones ($n = 41$);
- Mixed tones ($n = 12$); and
- Neutral tones ($n = 16$).

The responses to the second qualitative question included:

- Supportive tones ($n = 16$);
- Non-supportive tones ($n = 35$);
- Mixed tones ($n = 12$); and
- Neutral tones ($n = 1$).

I performed a deeper analysis of the comments to identify specific areas of the MSEC categories respondents mentioned in their responses (Appendix F). I identified multiple categories in all but four responses from question one and three responses from question two. Responses to the first question aligned with overarching categories from the MSEC included:

- Military-spouse employment ($n = 83$);
 - Supportive ($n = 21$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 36$);
 - Both ($n = 12$); and
 - Neutral ($n = 14$).
- Environmental ($n = 64$);
 - Supportive ($n = 16$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 32$);
 - Both ($n = 12$); and

- Neutral ($n = 4$).
- Military experience ($n = 17$);
 - Supportive ($n = 2$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 11$);
 - Both ($n = 3$); and
 - Neutral ($n = 1$).
- Individual or family ($n = 7$);
 - Supportive ($n = 1$);
 - Non-Supportive ($n = 4$);
 - Both ($n = 2$); and
 - Neutral ($n = 0$).

Responses to the second question aligned with overarching categories from the MSEC framework included:

- Military-spouse employment ($n = 62$);
 - Supportive ($n = 15$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 33$);
 - Both ($n = 12$); and
 - Neutral ($n = 2$).
- Environmental ($n = 62$);
 - Supportive ($n = 14$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 34$);
 - Both ($n = 12$); and

- Neutral ($n = 2$).
- Military experience ($n = 19$);
 - Supportive ($n = 4$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 11$);
 - Both ($n = 3$); and
 - Neutral ($n = 1$).
- Individual or family ($n = 12$);
 - Supportive ($n = 4$);
 - Non-supportive ($n = 7$);
 - Both ($n = 1$); and
 - Neutral ($n = 0$).

The categories of military-spouse employment ($n = 145$) and environmental ($n = 126$) had the most responses, as was to be expected since the survey and qualitative questions focused on these two categories. There were responses to the categories of military experience ($n = 36$), individual or family ($n = 19$). The unsupportive or negative tones significantly ($n = 76$) outweighed the positive ($n = 36$), followed by both ($n = 24$), and neutral ($n = 18$).

Following this analysis, I identified the four themes of the chaos theory of careers: complexity, change, chance, and construction in the response. Responses to the first question identified the following themes:

- Change ($n = 45$) of which six were coded with change as the only theme;
- Complexity ($n = 21$) of which no responses were coded with complexity as the only theme;

- Chance ($n = 9$) of which two were coded with chance as the only theme; and
- Construction ($n = 70$) of which 39 were coded with construction as the only theme.

The second question identified themes as follows:

- Change ($n = 49$) of which nine were coded with change as the only theme;
- Complexity ($n = 29$) of which no responses were coded with complexity as the only theme;
- Chance ($n = 6$) of which one was coded with chance as the only theme; and
- Construction ($n = 35$) of which 14 were coded with construction as the only theme.

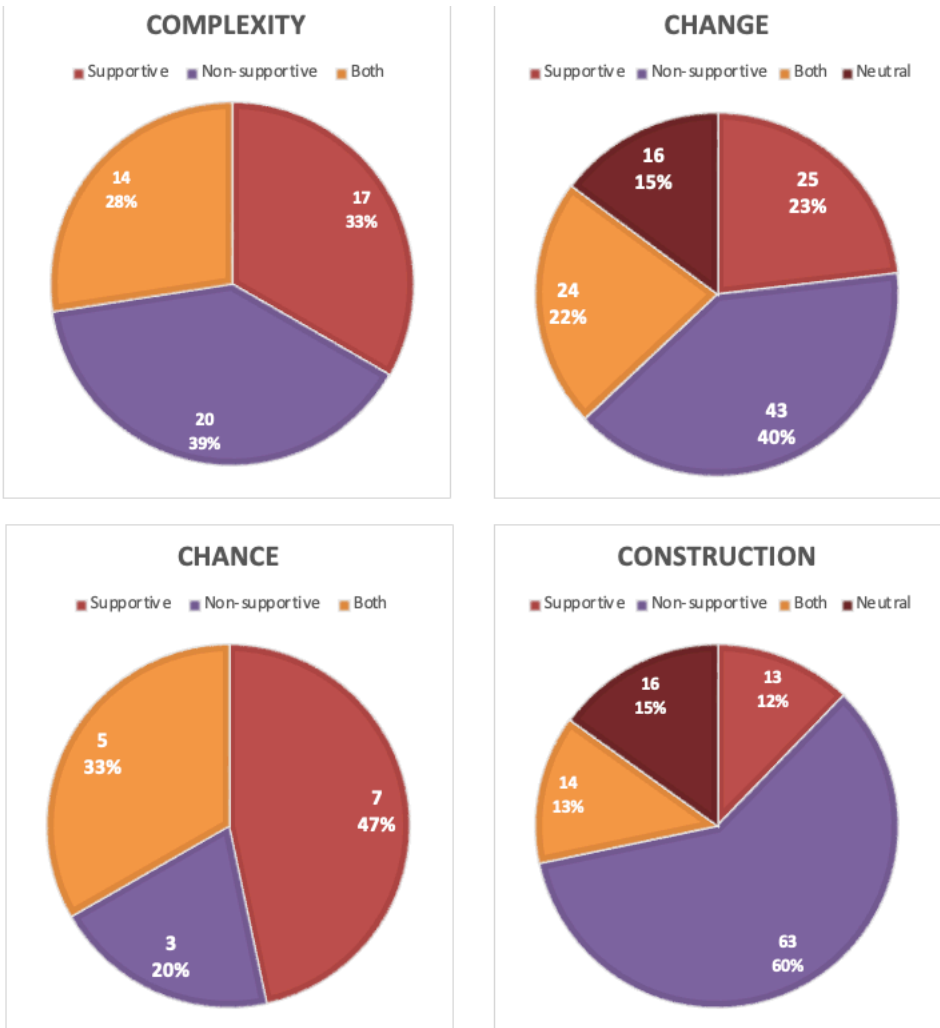
When combining the coding for the two questions, the cross population of themes (Table 3) highlights the complexity of military spouse employment during the pandemic.

Table 3. Multiple Coding on Responses by Theme

Theme	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction	Total
Complexity		47	8	16	71
Change	47		10	47	104
Chance	8	10		4	22
Construction	16	47	4		67

In reviewing themes by tone (Figure 5) chance was the only theme in which there were more supportive responses than non-supportive. The theme of construction provided the greatest disparity between supportive and non-supportive. response tones.

Figure 5. Themes & Tone



I then went back to look at the categories based on the chaos theory of careers. The framework identifies four types of attractors: point, pendulum, torus, and strange. The MSECF categories were each assigned a type of attractor. There were five strange, four torus attractors, two pendulum, and two-point attractors within the MSECF categories (Figure 2). The coding to the qualitative responses identified strange attractors ($n = 53.0%$) as most common, followed by torus ($n = 32.3%$) and pendulum ($n = 14.8%$) attractors. No point attractors were identified (Table 4).

Table 4. Attractor Types

Attractor Type	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction	Total
Strange	91	160	24	91	366
Torus	57	94	15	57	223
Pendulum	29	37	7	29	102
Point	0	0	0	0	0

The COVID-19 pandemic is a strange attractor that added additional complexities. The respondents faced a wide array of challenges and opportunities, were influenced by the pandemic. Respondents were able to maintain positions, some of which were not identified as remote, with a PCS due to the pandemic.

The most complexity in responses were related to the strange attractors. These included the categories within military-spouse employment of attitudes, employment experience and network, the category of experiences within the military experiences area, and the category of wellbeing within the individual or family area. The most prominent of these was the military-spouse employment experience ($n = 144$). Almost half of these responses identified non-supportive (47.2%, $n = 68$).

Pendulum attractors included the categories of employer knowledge ($n = 105$) within the environment area and family characteristics within the individual and family area ($n = 16$). The pendulum attractor of employer knowledge was associated with the military-spouse employment experience (98.8%, $n = 104$). This shows the interdependence between the military spouses' perception of employer knowledge and the spouse's employment experience.

The categories identified as torus attractors highlighted the difficulties of reduced services and visibility due to the pandemic. The military & community programs responses ($n =$

11) were all non-supportive in nature. I coded military & government policies and programs ($n = 70$), as non-supportive ($n = 32$); both ($n = 15$); supportive ($n = 19$); and neutral ($n = 4$). In the final torus attractor, under the overarching category of military experiences, I found one response that was non-supportive in the satisfaction category. Respondents noted programs providing support to spouses were difficult to find. Policies created challenges, particularly in relation to childcare, onboarding, and lack of information regarding exposure.

Change

Change is an integral part of the military-spouse experience since they move every two to three years. The COVID-19 pandemic created significant change for military families and employment. For the purpose of coding, I defined change as a difference in the participant's work, employer, or family experience to include a PCS. Change is a strong factor for military-spouse employment. Pryor & Bright (2011) note, "some of these changes are relatively minor, even trivial, when considered in isolation, but over time they have the capacity to cause a person to drift off course or to become stuck in a rut" (p. 163). Change was the theme most prevalent in responses ($n = 104$).

The COVID-19 pandemic was an event that brought about significant changes. Many federal workers moved to telework. Childcare centers and schools closed at the beginning of the pandemic and periodically throughout the pandemic. The impact of change to military spouse respondents to this survey shows the challenges of these changes with respondents providing statements indicating non-supportive ($n = 43$) experience, supportive experience ($n = 25$), a mix of supportive and non-supportive experiences ($n = 24$), and neutral experience ($n = 3$) (Table 5).

Table 5. Change Theme

Category	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neutral
Total change theme	25	43	24	3
Military-Spouse Employment	24	42	23	3
• Attitudes	8	15	8	1
• Employment Experience	24	41	22	3
• Network	2	1	2	0
Environmental	22	41	24	3
• Employer Knowledge	22	34	23	3
• Labor Market	0	3	2	0
• Military & Community Programs	2	5	1	0
• Government Policy & Programs	2	14	5	0
Military Experiences	9	19	8	0
• Experiences	8	19	6	0
• Satisfaction	1	0	2	0
Individual or Family	4	6	2	0
• Spouse Characteristics	0	0	0	0
• Service Member Char	0	0	0	0
• Family Characteristics	4	6	2	0
• Wellbeing	0	0	0	0

Respondent 53 noted the isolation, “The lack of communication, meetings, etc. made me feel isolated and decreased the morale of the workplace significantly.” For some, the changes brought on by the pandemic increased their workload. Participant 111 noted:

In 2021 my workload drastically increased as a result of the pandemic. Due to an increase in telework and lack of onsite availability, many policies were rewritten and published that changed working conditions of many employees causing an increased workload for me and my team. Additionally the ongoing COVID vaccine mandate and its continued changes have created great stress in the workplace. As an HR specialist

my workload increased dramatically due to the employee and labor relations fallout from the mandate. However, we were not authorized overtime to address the increased workload, nor were we approved for additional positions. In short, the COVID-19 pandemic forced O201s [human resource specialists] to do more work from home with less resources and aging IT equipment and infrastructure.

The change brought about some adjustments to the workplace and provided opportunities. Respondent 86 aptly noted, “I love and hate that it took a pandemic to change societal norms on a flexible schedule.” The change to telework brought about a potential future state, as noted by participant 30:

I felt our organization put our health as its priority and with the transition to home I believe its shown that the work can still be accomplished. I do feel that spouses who PCS with their military spouse will be able to more easily find federal employment with the opening up of remote work and it being more widely accepted. I definitely feel it's a positive for military spouses.

The change brought about by the pandemic created challenges such as a feeling of isolation and increased workload as well as opportunities due to telework. One of the most common responses by spouses had to do with the change to telework. The word telework appeared 47 times in qualitative responses, remote appeared 28 times, and references to working from home 12 times.

Complexity

Military-spouse employment is a wickedly complex problem. The COVID-19 pandemic created additional complexities. There is a multiplicity of influences in career decision making;

they are interconnected and have the potential to interact in unpredictable ways. In coding the qualitative data, I defined complexity as “a complex array of career influences, including parents, labor markets, friends, media, cultural tradition, teachers, gender, sexual orientation, politics, climate, and health” (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p. 163). The theme of complexity responses were close between supportive ($n = 17$) and non-supportive ($n = 20$). Of note is the environment category, sub-category of government policy and programs. I found a difference between non-supportive coded responses ($n = 11$) and supportive coded responses ($n = 2$). Findings are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Complexity Theme

Category	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neutral
Total complexity theme	17	20	14	0
Military-spouse employment	16	19	13	0
Attitudes	6	7	4	0
Employment Experience	16	19	13	0
Network	2	0	1	0
Environmental	16	19	14	0
Employer Knowledge	16	15	14	0
Labor Market	0	2	0	0
Military & Community Programs	2	4	1	0
Government Policy & Programs	2	11	5	0
Military Experiences	8	12	5	0
Experiences	8	12	3	0
Satisfaction	0	0	2	0
Individual or Family	4	7	1	0
Spouse Characteristics	0	0	0	0
Service Member Char	0	0	0	0
Family Characteristics	4	7	1	0
Wellbeing	0	0	0	0

Respondents provided insights into the complexity that the pandemic brought to military spouses. There was not a consistent response to the pandemic by federal employers as was shown by participant 46 who stated:

I live on Fort Bliss and while the military installation had their own requirements like households to quarantine together, I was not able to do that because DOS [Department of State] and DoD [Department of Defense] lack in communication. Military spouses living on an installation and working off post for a different federal agency/department get stuck in between the different regulations.

Military deployment occurring the pandemic created unique challenges for military spouses with children who had positions that could not provide remote work. Participant 120 noted the additional financial hardship faced by their family, as follows:

Since my husband was deployed I could not do virtual schooling at all for my kids in order to keep my job as a nurse that has increased our childcare for private schools by \$1200 per month with no support to telework or change my schedule to help with this while my husband was gone 3 different times during the pandemic. I had to use annual leave two [consecutive] PCSs [permanent changes of station] by myself.

Another challenge due to the complexity created by the pandemic and military life was searching for employment with a PCS. Participant 82 noted:

It's already hard enough to find employment when you move every few years. So many businesses went to telework out minimal staffing that it became harder to find work. Add on the additional time it takes to onboard for any federal position. By the time you go from application to start work it can be 6 months and then you have 1-2

years at a duty location before it's time to PCS again. Most NAF jobs are flex and they're taking advantage of the fact that you need a job during the pandemic to not give you benefits or support.

This challenge can be amplified by difficulties accessing childcare due to wait lists and the policies requiring the spouse to be a full-time student or employee in order to retain childcare. Additionally, those living in military housing are not allowed to provide more than ten hours of childcare per week without being certified (U.S. Department of the Army, 2017).

Participant 32 shared these challenges as follows:

Not only did I not have the outbound processing down with HR but finding employment was difficult while PCS-ing and waiting on childcare. I paid for a random neighbor to watch my daughter who was 8 months at the time so that I could go on interviews and then another to start her childcare. I worked as a telemarketer making \$100 a week, from 8pm-6am just so that my kids would not lose her spot at daycare because I was a "working spouse". Once I finally got hired from MCCS [Marine Corps Community Services] again the onboarding process took longer because I was terminated in the system.

Change can be challenging, but it can also bring about much-needed adjustments. Respondents noted the additional flexibilities provided by employers due to the pandemic were helpful. Additionally, the move to telework provided new opportunities and allowed military spouses to retain positions during a military move such as that noted by participant 149:

My agency is still on telework status since March 2020. They were very understanding with childcare/school issues at the peak of the pandemic. I was actually able to switch

to remote because we recently PCS'd 2 months ago. I think seeing our numbers at work be the best they had been since we were in telework status it showed we can be successful without having to be in an office.

Participant 128 noted that while the position they held was to be in person, with the ongoing telework due to the pandemic they were able to retain their position through multiple PCSs and eventually were able to convert the position to be fully remote. Participant 128 shared:

I have been very fortunate that my supervisor has allowed me to move with my spouse during my federal employment. My job originally was supposed to be 100% in person (accepted job offer while in law school in fall 2019). By the time I started my job in August 2020, it was 100% situational telework and remained that way until May 2022. However, my supervisor allowed me to telework from locations outside my DC duty station, in NY/Fort Drum from September 2020 to February 2021. My wife then was TDY [temporary duty] in Arizona from February 2021 until July 2021, and I lived in DC area, anticipating my job to return to in person work. After discussing remote work options, my supervisor allowed me to become a remote worker, work from El Paso/Fort Bliss starting in August 2021 until current. As such, I've been able to keep my current job, remote working in Texas, while also living with my wife after we PCS'd to Ft Bliss in August 2021.

Responses in the theme complexity identified areas where the complexity of military employment was amplified to include the lack of resources for military spouses with children moved to at home schooling and additional time to onboard to a federal position. Respondents highlighted the challenges created by policies that do not allow childcare spots unless

both parents are working. Finally, participants noted new opportunities due to teleworking and an openness to remote work were identified in telework during the pandemic.

Chance

Another theme in military-spouse employment is chance. In coding the data, I defined chance as, “The consequence of complex connected change is the inability to predict precisely and control what happens within the system or in other systems with which the system interacts” (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p. 164). The fewest responses to the survey indicated chance played a part, but this was the only theme which indicated spouses indicated supportive ($n = 7$) over non-supportive ($n = 3$) experiences (Table 7).

Table 7. Chance Theme

Category	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neutral
Total chance theme	7	3	5	0
Military-Spouse Employment	7	3	4	0
Attitudes	2	1	2	0
Employment Experience	7	3	4	0
Network	0	0	0	0
Environmental	7	3	5	0
Employer Knowledge	7	2	5	0
Labor Market	0	0	0	0
Military & Community Programs	0	0	1	0
Government Policy & Programs	0	2	2	0
Military Experiences	2	1	3	0
Experiences	2	1	2	0
Satisfaction	0	0	2	0
Individual or Family	0	0	1	0
Spouse Characteristics	0	0	0	0
Service Member Char	0	0	0	0
Family Characteristics	0	0	1	0
Wellbeing	0	0	0	0

The unpredictable of military life and the unpredictability of the pandemic created chance opportunities for change. Three respondents noted an understanding supervisor. Respondent 111 shared:

I am lucky to have a supervisor with young children that supported me and allowed me to have a maxiflex schedule [a schedule that expands hours you are allowed to work beyond 6 am to 6 pm] to work around the kids and my spouse. If I had been in my previous federal position with the US Army Corps of Engineers, I know I would not have been as well supported.

This chance of the pandemic crossed with being a military spouse included the ability to retain positions. Respondent 25 noted:

Honestly, USAID [United States agency for international development] was extremely well equipped as we went into the Pandemic. I felt almost no hiccups because the IT infrastructure was already there. I also felt that it only made my life easier to request to work remotely as a military spouse because I was not married at the beginning of the pandemic and was going into the office but now I am married and my husband has had to move a lot in the last year. If the pandemic had not forced many to work from home, I am not sure if I would have been met with as much support for my remote work request.

The responses that I coded in the chance theme tended to focus on positive relationships that allowed additional flexibilities. The chance theme also indicated that spouses were

given the ability to move to remote work and retain their position with a move due to forced move of the organization to telework during the pandemic.

Construction

Another part of military-spouse employment is the lack of control. Often others make the decision, such as the military determining the location of the next move or an organization being unwilling to retain a spouse when they move. In coding, I defined construction as, “The lack of ultimate control or predictability opens up the opportunity for individuals to become active participants in the creation of their futures rather than pawns in a rigidly deterministic system of cause and effect” (Pryor & Bright, 2011, p. 164). This theme had the greatest disparity between non-supportive ($n = 63$) to supportive ($n = 13$). Of the 106 responses coded to this theme, 59.4% of respondents indicated non-supportive experiences (Table 8).

Table 8. Construction Theme

Category	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neutral
Total construction theme	13	63	14	16
Military-Spouse Employment	16	19	13	0
Attitudes	6	7	4	0
Employment Experience	16	19	13	0
Network	2	0	1	0
Environmental	16	19	15	0
Employer Knowledge	15	16	14	0
Labor Market	0	2	0	0
Military & Community Programs	2	4	1	0
Government Policy & Programs	2	11	5	0
Military Experiences	8	12	5	0
Experiences	8	12	3	0
Satisfaction	0	0	2	0
Individual or Family	4	7	1	0

Category	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neutral
Spouse Characteristics	0	0	0	0
Service Member Char	0	0	0	0
Family Characteristics	4	7	1	0
Wellbeing	0	0	0	0

Some participating military spouses who were faced with an organization that would not change chose to leave the workforce. Five indicated they left the federal service because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondent 10 shared, “I left my job in Oct 2021 due to a lack of support for our office.” In another case, respondent 120 stated, “I actually left my full-time position and converted to a 0.3 FTE [full-time equivalent] intermittent [hours that can vary based on organizational needs] because my department refused to let me telework when I was able.” Another left after eight years of federal service due to the lack of support and notification of COVID exposure. Respondent 147 shared:

I can't speak for other agencies but the Dept of VA [Veterans Administration] in my area (NC) was VERY behind on everything. We weren't given PPE [personal protective equipment] right away (and they often ran out/didn't have enough for everyone) and it took 5 months to get dividers between check in desks and the waiting rooms. They were somewhat flexible with school closures but not very. If someone in your area tested positive for COVID, they would only inform/test the other nurses and medical assistants - the admin staff had to fight with supervision to be notified and tested. Even though employees in other regions, doing our same job, were allowed to telework/flex schedule - we were not allowed to and were turned down ASAP if asked. I

left federal employment 10/2020, after eight years of service, due to lack of transparency and the treatment of employees and Veterans.

Another respondent noted that at the beginning of the pandemic there was a positive response, however as the pandemic went on leadership reverted to old ways, which led to her and others leaving. Respondent 114 noted:

My previous agency did pretty great responding to the Pandemic at the beginning and saw great rewards from it. However, as the statuses have started to improve, Directors seem to be pushing for employees to be onsite. Which resulted in a mass exodus of employees including myself.

One respondent left federal service because of the lack of support with her federal position and began a new career in the private sector. Respondent 142 noted:

My role responsibilities increased dramatically, but there was no support or formal acknowledgment. It eventually led me to leave federal service. I now work for a corporation in a 100% remote job that pays more and I have less stress.

Not all respondent who whose responses I coded as evidence of the construction theme left their positions. I coded the strongest non-supportive tone in responses in this theme.

Connections

Following my analyses for codes and themes, I tabulated responses to seek connections among MSECF categories. I counted comments related to employment experiences, specifically teleworking, flexibility, and job retention with a PCS and found the following most frequent instances:

1. Telework, remote work, or a reference to working at home ($n = 92$);
2. PCS (permanent change of station) or move ($n = 36$);
3. Flexibility ($n = 17$); and
4. Retaining, keeping, or kept a position or job ($n = 13$).

These comments were made in Sections 6 of the survey and correspond to questions in Sections 4 and 5 of the survey..

A majority (71%, $n = 85$) responses agreed or strongly agreed to increased telework, a slightly higher percentage than responses on the 2020 FEVS (65%) item on workplace changes (OPM, 2021a, p. 31). When I compared the tone of responses to expanded telework, I found that more respondents reported supportive tones and those who did not report expanded telework or remote work reported non-supportive tones (Figures 6 & 7).

Figure 6. Telework Availability

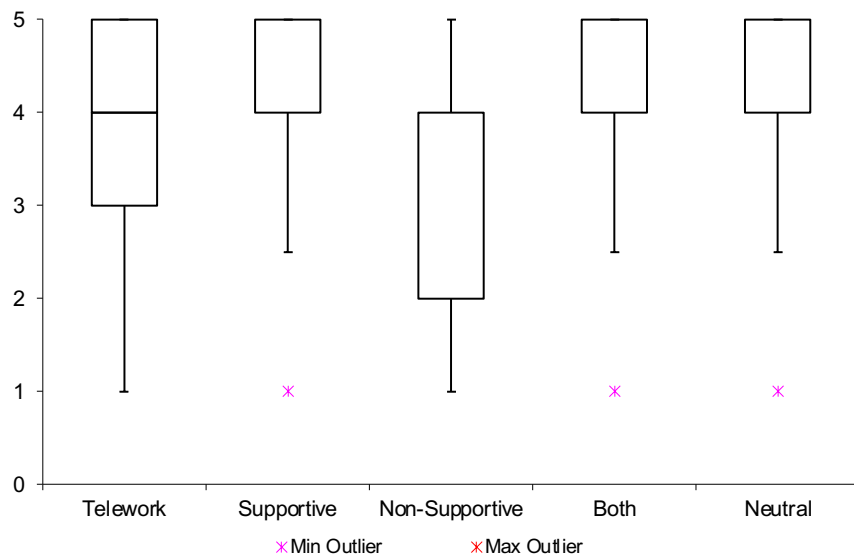
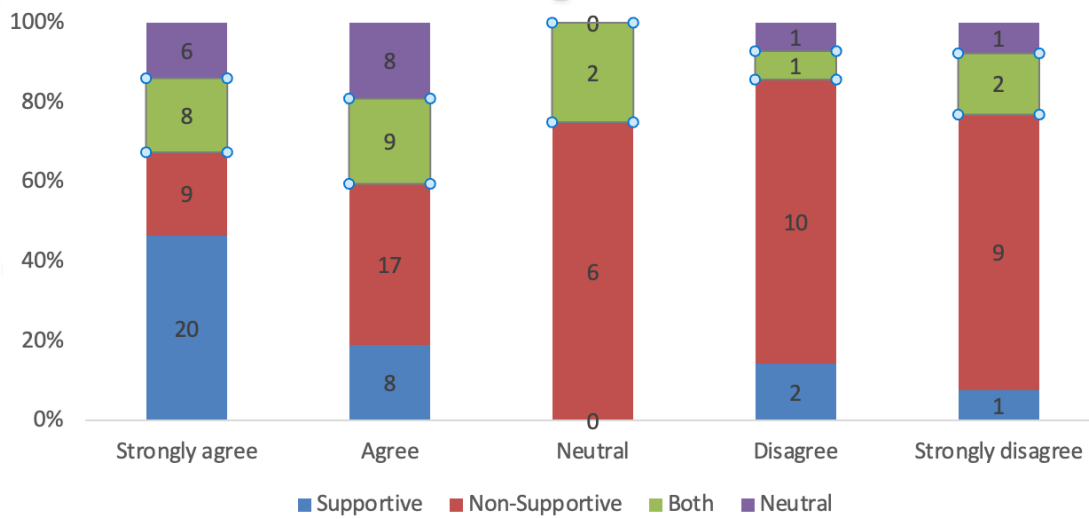


Figure 7. Additional Telework Availability



Over half (54%, $n = 68$) of responses to the question on expanded work schedule flexibilities, to include leave flexibilities, strongly agreed or agreed that additional flexibilities occurred, a slightly higher percentage (51%) than on the FEVS results pandemic question on workplace changes (OPM, 2021a, p. 31). When I compared the tone of responses to expanded flexibilities, the respondents who strongly disagreed had no supportive tones in their qualitative responses (Figures 8 & 9).

Figure 8. Work Schedule Flexibility

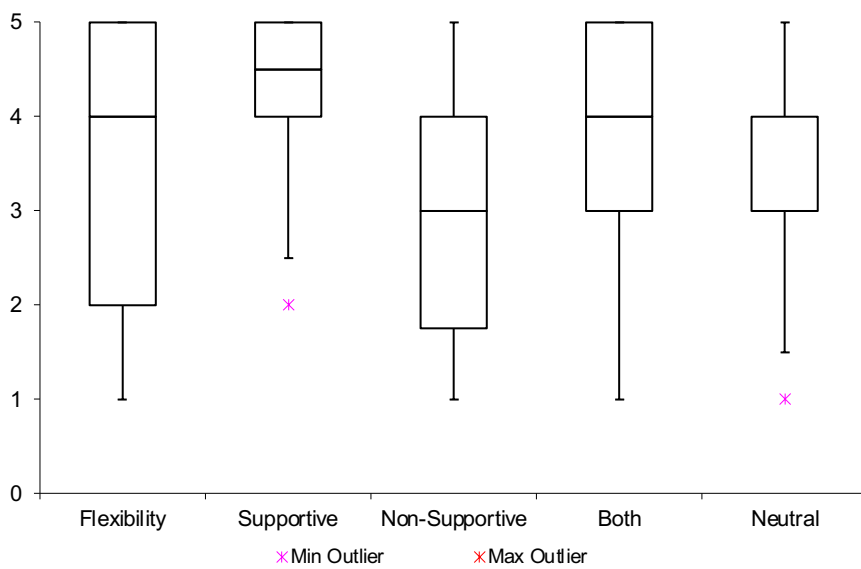
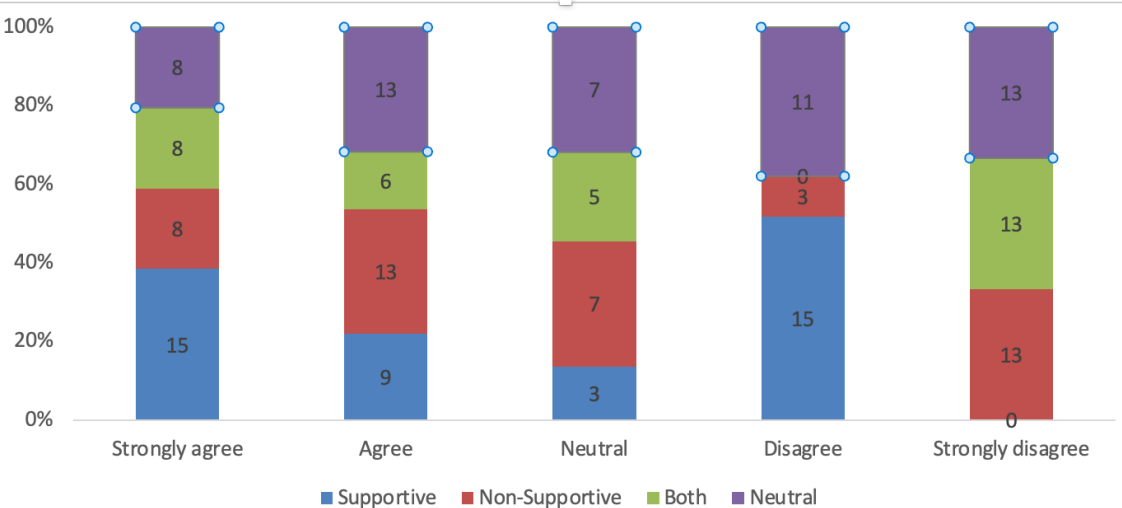


Figure 9. Additional Work Schedule Flexibility



Section 5 of the survey asked about job retention with a PCS. Less than half (38.6%, $n = 17$) of responses indicated retention in a PCS prior to the start of the pandemic versus more than half (56.5%, $n = 35$) experienced job retention with a PCS after that start of the pandemic (Table 9).

Table 9. Retention of Position Based on PCS Pre- or Post-pandemic

	Moved after March 2020	Moved prior to March 2020
Yes	35	17
No	27	27
Did not answer	3	8

Fewer respondents believed they would retain their positions ($n = 30$) with a PCS. More respondents ($n = 42$) were unsure of retaining their position with a PCS. Most ($n = 46$) respondents indicated they would not retain their position with a PCS (Table 10). There was little difference in responses between those who moved after the start of the pandemic and those who moved prior to the pandemic.

Table 10. Perception of Retention w/ Next Move

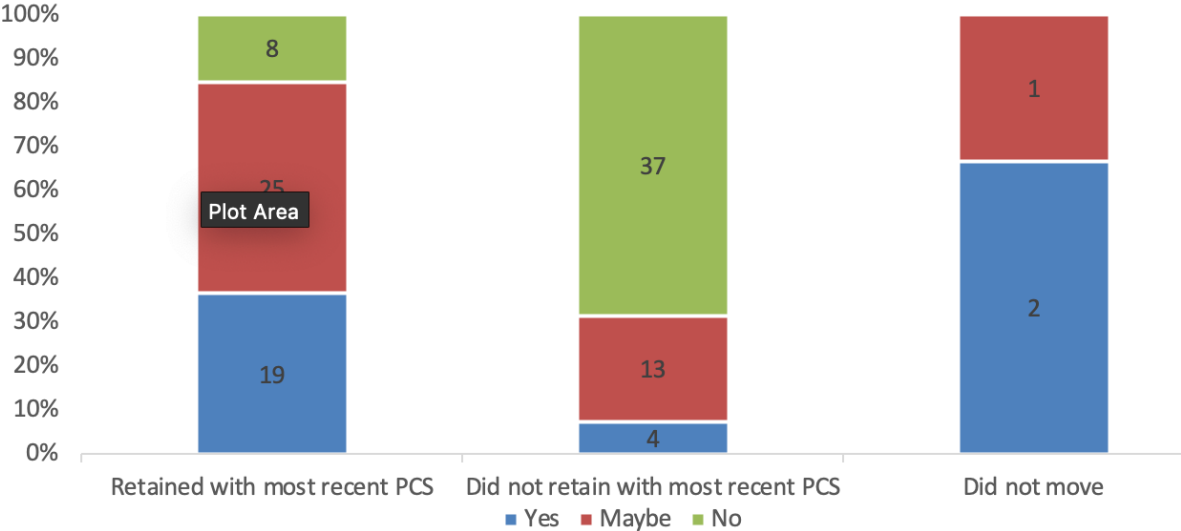
	Moved after 3/2020	Moved prior to 3/ 2020	Had not moved
Yes	16	12	2
Maybe	22	19	1
No	26	20	0

I then compared responses from respondents who indicated that they had moved and retained their position with responses from respondents who did not retain their position. I found that more respondents who had moved and retained their position ($n = 19$) indicated that they believed they would retain their positions with the next PCS than those who had not retained their position ($n = 4$) (Table 11). Responses from respondents who did not retain their federal position with a PCS were over four times more frequent (68.6%, $n = 27$) to believe they would not retain their position than those who had previously retained their position with a PCS (15.4%, $n = 8$). (Figure 10).

Table 11. Perception of Retention w/ Previous Move

	Retained position	Did not retain position	Did not move
Yes	19	4	2
Maybe	25	13	1
No	8	37	0

Figure 10. Perception of Retention

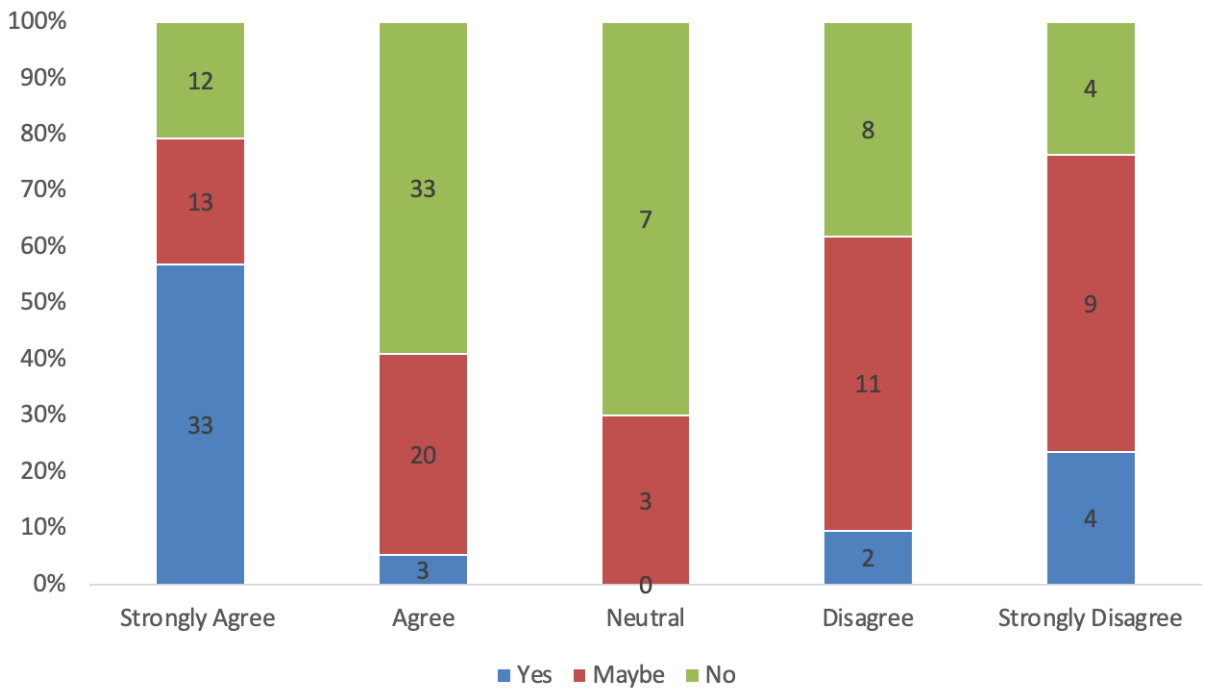


I then compared responses from respondents who reported expanded telework or work from home with responses that indicated belief that the respondent would retain their position with a PCS. I found that responses from those who strongly agreed that telework increased were the only ones (56.9%, $n = 33$) who reportedly believed that they would retain their position with a PCS (Table 12). Responses from those who agreed and were neutral were less frequent ($n = 3$) in reporting that they would retain their position with a PCS (Figure 11).

Table 12. Perception of Retention & Expanded Telework

	Yes	Maybe	No
Strongly Agree	33	13	12
Agree	3	20	33
Neutral	0	3	7
Disagree	2	11	8
Strongly Disagree	4	9	4

Figure 11. Telework and Retention Perceptions



I then compared responses from respondents who did not retain their positions and found that they more frequently (55.8%, $n = 29$) reported a non-supportive tone in their responses than supportive tone (29.6%, $n = 8$); compared to who retained their positions were had a non-supportive tone (40.4%, $n = 23$) and supportive tone (31.6%, $n = 18$) (Table 13).

Table 13. Tone of Responses

	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neither
Retained position	18	23	8	8
Did not retain position	8	29	13	8
Did not move	1	0	0	0

These tabulated data show connections among reported tone of responses with my and categories and themes. I found that telework had the strongest connection with support. Reported perceptions of retaining a federal position with a PCS were found to be connected to having retained or not retained a previous federal position. Respondents who did not

retain their positions also reported non-supportive tone responses, but those who did retain their positions reported more non-supportive than supportive responses.

Summary

I coded qualitative data as supportive, non-supportive, and/or neutral. I identified the four themes of complexity, change, chance, and construction. Non-supportive statements outnumbered supportive in all but the theme of chance. I found that the theme of complexity had the most supportive responses, and the theme of construction had the most non-supportive responses. I found that the theme of chance was the only theme for which supportive tone comments outnumbered non-supportive ones. In tabulated data, I found that telework was connected with supportive comments. I found that respondents who did not retain their positions reported that they were not supported; however, those who did retain their positions also reported slightly more non-supportive than supportive responses, highlighting the complexity of military-spouse employment.

Chapter 5. Conclusions, Implications, & Recommendations

Military-spouse employment is a wickedly complex problem. To study this problem, I analyzed data with a systems-thinking approach within a conceptual framework based on the chaos theory of careers, aligned with the military spouse employment conceptual framework (MSECF). My purpose in this study was to answer the following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment on changes to the work environment during a pandemic? I analyzed qualitative data in terms of four themes and explored connections among them.

In answer to my research question, I found that respondents did not report feeling supported during the pandemic. My analyses provided me with insights into the complexity of military-spouse employment. I found that chance can play a part for a positive experience. I identified the importance of telework for military spouses as a potential means to retain federal positions which can be seen through comparison of the qualitative response tone to the quantitative question regarding the expansion of telework. In this study I noted the impact the non-retention of military spouses may have on their perceptions of a non-supportive over supportive experience.

Discussion

This study used a systems-thinking approach, taking the framework of the chaos theory of careers with the four themes of complexity, change, chance, and construction along with the MSECF categories as attractors. This model proved effective in that I was able to identify and demonstrate the complexities of military-spouse employment.

In answer to my research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment on changes to the work environment during a pandemic?, the qualitative data indicated that overall respondents did not feel supported during the pandemic, but the answer is more complex highlighting issues such as moving during a pandemic with reduced access to programs and services, inconsistency within and between federal organizations, increased workloads due to the pandemic, and challenges accessing services such as childcare. While some of these were due to the military lifestyle, some, such as school and childcare closures, were due to the pandemic.

The results highlighted both the complexity of and change inherent in military-spouse employment. The categories within the MSECF that were identified as strange attractors, the most complex attractor, outnumbered all other attractor types. The theme of change was the most common theme with the second most common complexity.

The research identified a potential change brought by changes to work due to the pandemic. The research indicated that more military spouses retained their positions when experiencing a permanent change of station (PCS) during the pandemic than those who moved pre-pandemic. The importance of telework was further highlighted when comparing responses to quantitative questions to the tone of qualitative responses as well as the number of qualitative responses that mentioned remote work or telework.

Conclusions

From my data and findings on military-spouse employment after PCS during the COVID-19 pandemic, I identified categories from the MSECF, as well as themes from the chaos theory of careers. I draw the following four conclusions:

- Access to programs and services was reduced;
- Federal organizations were inconsistent in management of COVID-19;
- Workloads were increased; and
- Services such as schools and childcare were curtailed.

Although some of these conclusions are due to military lifestyle, others were due to the pandemic. The findings of my study highlight the complexity of military-spouse employment.

One of the complexities of military-spouse employment, highlighted in the review of the literature, is the high un- and under-employment. I conclude that military spouses are underemployed within the federal government. I further conclude that more military spouses retained their positions when experiencing a PCS during the pandemic than those who moved pre-pandemic. When I asked respondents whether they would retain their positions with their next PCS, more respondents reported that they would likely retain their positions if they had strongly agreed that telework had increased in their organization. This finding aligns with my review of literature that identified telework as a potential solution to military-spouse un- and under-employment.

Implications

Using a systems-thinking framework to analyze the wickedly complex issue of military-spouse un- and under-employment, I propose the following two implications: First, pay was an issue because federal locality pay tables vary greatly. For example, Participant 25 noted as follows:

We have not been stationed abroad which has caused lots of trouble for other colleagues of mine. There is also a problem where a close colleague of mine (on my team)

was denied to work remotely because her husband was PCS'd to California which has a higher cost of living. I believe that it is unfair that the location that your spouse is moved to would change someone's ability to work remotely.

With competition for remote positions, there is the potential for employers to consider the locality pay as a part of the hiring process. This competitive disadvantage may disqualify those living in high locality pay areas such as California and the District of Columbia. A second implication is scheduling. In my literature review I found that a need for flexibility from employers, particularly when a service member is deployed, or children are dislocated. This was highlighted in my research as those who strongly agreed that additional workplace flexibility occurred were more likely to have a supportive response and those who strongly disagreed had no supportive responses.

Recommendations

In this section I make five recommendations to improve military-spouse employment. First, I recommend offering more remote work opportunities to hire and retain military spouses, particularly when a spouse moves to a locality with higher pay or outside the continental United States (OCONUS). Such protections are possible under current DoD and Office of Personnel Management (OPM) regulations. Military spouse preference should be applicable to any position regardless of location. Currently this is the case through a temporary order from OPM, however this authority expires in August 2023, at which time military spouse preference will defer back to utilization being limited to the local commuting area of their spouse's duty location.

Second, there should be a Department of Defense (DoD) office dedicated to the employment and retention of military spouses. As Respondent 136 suggested,

The Federal government does not have a permanent office or position dedicated to the retention of federally employed military spouses, only for recruitment. That leaves of 17k [17,000] military spouses unsupported and unrepresented.

Tracking military-spouse hiring and retention, would require identifying best practices and working with hiring officials to provide opportunities for military spouses. An office which aids both employers and military spouses as they PCS could provide much-needed support and tracking of military-spouse employment within the federal government and/or DoD. Military spouses are potentially underemployed within the federal government. They are holding paygrades lower than the average federal employee despite higher levels of education. I recommend more study on pay grades, experience, and education of military spouses. The FEVS is a starting point.

Third, I recommend that military spouses be tracked by OPM. The FEVS has added a military-spouse identifier. The Army people strategy -civilian implantation plan calls for such an identifier. I recommend a military-spouse indicator as a part of the demographic information collected on all federal employees.

Fourth, I recommend that the DoD identify spouses as a priority in hiring. Currently military spouses can compete with other groups in the hiring process. They must be among those rated “best qualified” to be referred to the hiring manager when using the military-spouse preference. Veteran preference requires a lower rating level and need to be “qualified” or meet the minimum qualification. Additionally, if a qualified veteran is not hired, the

hiring manager must provide reasons to the personnel office. Veterans are also provided additional points based on their disability status. With military-spouse employment being a readiness issue for DoD, DoD should consider expanding the current OCONUS pilot to all of DoD to prioritize the hiring of military spouses over veterans.

Fifth, I recommend that military spouses who PCS with their service member be offered administrative leave or other accommodations for moving, as are often offered to civilian employees. At present, military spouses must utilize their personal leave to accomplish these moves. Respondent 59 said,

The military does not compensate military spouses for the lift, with money or leave flexibilities. A holistic approach to leave flexibilities for PCS and house hunting should be afforded federal civilian employees who are military spouses.

There are not existing policies for PCS leave for military spouses in federal employment. Policies should be developed, starting with a review of existing regulations to identify if it is possible to incorporate the expansion of PCS leave for military spouses moving with their service member and retaining their position without additional regulations or policies.

Limitations

This study was limited in sample, scope, and duration. I surveyed a purposive sample that did not fully represent age and service member rank among the population of military-spouses. Respondents were older and married to more senior officers and enlisted personnel. Five participants (3.4%) had not experienced a PCS.

The scope of this study does not encompass telework among civilian workers who were also displaced by the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional research is needed to identify the differences between military spouses to their counterparts in federal employment.

Researchers should study PCS over longer durations to examine the long-term effects of changes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Over half of military spouses retained their position during the pandemic; additional data is needed to find whether this rate of retention was unique. Such a study should seek data from employers and military spouses.

Summary

Military-spouse employment is a wickedly complex problem. The COVID-19 pandemic provided additional complications. In this study I used a systems-thinking framework through the chaos theory of careers. I solicited responses to a survey based on the FEVS and obtained 147 responses that met my criteria. I assigned categories from the MSECF as attractor types. I addressed the following research question: What are perceptions of military spouses working in federal employment on changes to the work environment during a pandemic? I found that military spouses in federal employment did not report feeling supported. I identified a connection between participating military spouses' reported employment experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and their perceptions of their employers' knowledge and attitudes. I conclude that work schedule flexibilities for military spouses and increased telework are important for a position retention of participants in PCS. I recommend increased telework and position retention in PCS situations.

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Appendix A. Military-Spouse Demographics

This database does not include either the Coast Guard nor the newly formed Space Force. Coast Guard is a part of the Homeland Security rather than Department of Defense (DoD) and therefore not included in DoD reporting. Space Force has not been in existence long enough for demographics to be published about the military spouses in that service. This study reached spouses of these services.

Table A1. Military Spouse and Federal Employee Demographics

	Active-Duty DoD Spouses	Federal Employees	Survey Respondents
• Gender (DoD, 2021, p. 120 & OPM, 2020b, p. 6)			
Male	9.3%	53%	3.4%
Female	90.7%	47%	96.6%
Transgender	male		
Transgender	female		
Other			
Race (Clearinghouse for Military Families, 2021, p. 4, OPM, 2020b, p. 6)			
White	15%	18.7%	7.3%
Black / African American	9%	6.1%	4.0%
Asian	3%	1.6%	0.7%
American Indian / Alaska Native	2%	0.5%	1.3%
Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	16%	9.1%	7.9%
Hispanic		1.5%	5.0%
Non-Hispanic multiracial			
Age (DoD, 2021, p. 121 & OPM, 2021a, p. 44)			
25 years or younger	23.5%	1%	1.4%
26-30 years (years)	24.4%	3% (26-29 yrs.)	11.0%
31-35 years	22.2%	19% (30-39 yrs.)	18.6%
36-40 years	16.1%		27.6%
Over 41 years	13.9%	77% (over 40)	41.4%

	Active-Duty DoD Spouses	Federal Employees	Survey Respondents
Education (Council of Economic Advisors, 2018, p. 2 & OPM, 2021a, p. 45))			
Less than high school		<1%	
High school or Other		4%	
Some college	34.4%	13%	5.5%
Trade or technical certificate		2%	4.1% (or Associate)
Associate degree		8%	
Four-year college or bachelor's degree	40.0%	35%	28.6%
Master's degree		27%	61.9% (or Professional/ Doctorate)
Professional or doctorate degree		10%	
Rank of Service Member (DoD, 2021, p. 120)			
Junior Enlisted (E1-4)	21.9%		4.8%
Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) (E5-6)	37.4%		16.4%
Senior NCO (E7-9)	16.8%		27.4%
Warrant Officer (W1-5)	2.4%		1.4%
Junior Officer (O1-3)	9.9%		14.3%
Field Grade Officer (O4-6)	11.3%		35.4%
General Officer (O7-9)	.1%		
Service of Spouse (DoD, 2021, p. 120)			
Army	39.7%		40.7%
Navy	24.1%		18.0%
Marine Corps	10.9%		12.0%
Air Force	25.3%		24.0%
Space Force (new service, not measured previously)			0.7%
Coast Guard (not part of DoD)			4.7%
Children (Clearinghouse for Military Families, 2021, p. 6)			
Under age of 18	67%		66.0%
Under age of 5	57%		30.6%
Under age of 2	25%		10.2%

	Active-Duty DoD Spouses	Federal Employees	Survey Respondents
Pay Grade (OPM, 2021a, p. 40)			
Federal Wage System		3%	0.7%
General Schedule (GS) 1-6		4%	7.9%
GS 7-12		41%	46.8%
GS 13-15		43%	26.6%
Senior Executive Service		1%	
Senior Level or Scientific or Professional		<1%	
Others		8%	18.0%
Length of Federal Service, Including military service (OPM, 2021a, p. 41)			
Less than 1 year		<1%	2.9%
1-3 years		10%	39.9%
4-5 years		8%	36.2% (4-10 yrs.)
6-10 years		17%	
11-14 years		19%	
15-20 years		18%	21.0% (>10 yrs.)
More than 20 years		27%	

Appendix B. Instrument

Informed Consent

My name is Rose Holland, a Doctoral student of Educational Sustainability at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. I would appreciate your participation in a research study. You are being asked to complete an anonymous survey that should take up no more than 15 minutes of your time. Your participation is completely voluntary. The benefit of this study is a greater knowledge about the perceptions of military spouses in federal employment during a pandemic.

We anticipate no risk to you as a result of your participation in this study other than the inconvenience of the time to complete the survey. You could, however, experience some discomfort if you have had an uncomfortable interaction as a federal employee and your completing the survey causes you to remember this.

While there may be no immediate benefit to you as a result of your participation in this study, it is hoped that we may gain valuable information about federal employment during a pandemic that will be of future value to society. While this information could be obtained by interviewing you, we feel that the survey is the quickest and easiest method for obtaining this information. You may also choose not to participate as an alternative.

The information that you give us on the questionnaire will be recorded in anonymous form. We will not release information that could identify you. All completed surveys will be kept in a password protected file on the desktop of Ms. Rose Holland's computer and will not be available to anyone not directly involved in this study.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you want to withdraw from the study, at any time, you may do so without penalty or loss of benefit entitled. Only anonymous information provided will be retained. All identifiable information will be removed from the study and destroyed or deleted.

Data may be used for secondary research, after all identifiable information has been removed, without additional informed consent required from the participant. You may be asked to participate in a focus group for secondary analysis of data. Once the study is completed, you may receive the results of the study. If you would like these results, or if you have any questions in the meantime, please contact:

Ms. Rose Holland

School of Education

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

Stevens Point, WI 54481

Rholl635@uwsp.edu

If you have any complaints about your treatment as a participant in this study or believe that you have been harmed in some way by your participation, please call or write:

David Barry, PhD

IRB Chair

Associate Professor, Sociology

2100 Main St.

Old Main 208

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point and Extension

Stevens Point, WI 54481

715.346.3799

irb@uwsp.edu

Although Dr. Barry will ask your name, all complaints are kept in confidence.

I agree (1)

I do not agree (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If My name is Rose Holland, a Doctoral student of Educational Sustainability at the University of Wi... = I do not agree

Q2 Are you a currently or have you been a United States federal employee?

I am a current federal employee (1)

I am a past federal employee. I left federal employment after March 2020. (2)

I am a past federal employee. I left federal employment prior to March 2020. (3)

I have never been a federal employee (4)

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you a currently or have you been a United States federal employee? = I am a past federal employee. I left federal employment prior to March 2020.

Skip To: End of Survey If Are you a currently or have you been a United States federal employee? = I have never been a federal employee

End of Block: Q1

Q3 What is the status of your Service Member spouse?

Active Duty to include Active Guard Reserve (1)

Reserve or Guard (2)

Retired or Veteran (4)

My spouse does not or has not served in the military (5)

Skip To: End of Survey If What is the status of your Service Member spouse? = My spouse does not or has not served in the military

Q4 What service is your military spouse currently affiliated with

Air Force (to include Reserve and Guard) (1)

Army (to include Reserve and Guard) (2)

Coast Guard (to include Reserve and Auxiliary) (3)

Marine Corps (to include Reserve) (4)

Navy (to include Reserve) (5)

Space Force (6)

Q5 What is the rank of your service member?

Junior Enlisted (E1-E4) (1)

Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) (E5-E6) (2)

Senior NCO (E7-9) (8)

Warrant Officer (WO1-5) (4)

Junior Officer (O1-3) (5)

Field Grade Officer (O4-6) (9)

General Officer (O7-9) (10)

Q6 How old are you?

Under 25 years old (1)

26-30 years old (2)

31-35 years old (3)

36-40 years old (4)

over 41 years old (5)

Q7 How do you identify? (select all that apply)

American Indian or Alaska Native (1)

Asian (2)

Black or African American (3)

Hispanic or Latino (6)

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (4)

White (5)

Other / Unknown (7) _____

Q8 How do you describe yourself?

Male (1)

Female (2)

Non-binary / third gender (3)

Prefer to self-describe (4) _____

Prefer not to say (5)

Q9 What is the highest degree of education you have completed

Less than High School (1)

High-school graduate or GED equivalent (2)

Some college (4)

Associate degree or Technical Certificate (5)

Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS) (6)

Master's, Doctorate or Professional degree (7)

Q10 What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply)

I have no children living at home (1)

Under the age of 2 (2)

2-5 years old (3)

6-18 years old (4)

Over the age of 18 (5)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Federal Employment

Q11 Have you been hired under a Military Spouse Non-Competitive Hiring Authority?

Yes, for my current federal position (1)

Yes, for a past federal position (2)

No (3)

I am unsure (4)

Q12 What is your pay category/grade?

Federal Wage System (1)

Non-appropriated Fund (NAF) (2)

GS 1 to GS 6 (3)

GS 7 to GS 12 (4)

GS 13 to GS 15 (5)

Senior Executive Service (SES) (6)

Senior Level (SL) or Scientific or Professional (ST) (7)

Other (8) _____

Q13 How long have you been with the federal government (excluding military service)?

Less than 1 year (1)

1 to 3 years (2)

4 to 10 years (7)

More than 10 years (4)

Q14 What agency do you work for?

End of Block: Federal Employment

Start of Block: Work during COVID

Q15 What types of leave have you used because of 1) the pandemic and 2) your Service Member's service related to the pandemic? (Mark all that apply)

Pandemic (1)

Service Member's Work Requirements due to the pandemic (2)

Leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act) (1)

Annual leave, sick leave, or other types of paid leave (2)

Unpaid leave (e.g. Leave Without Pay (LWOP)) (7)

I have not used leave because of the pandemic (8)

I left federal employment because of the pandemic (9)

Q16 How has your organization's support for your work changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Neutral (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree (5) N/A (6)

Increased communication (e.g., organizational status, what to expect) (1)

Increased training for new/changed work or work processes because of the pandemic (2)

Different options for work/business travel (5)

Different equipment and technology for working remotely (e.g., laptops, cell phone, Information Technology infrastructure) (8)

Expanded Information Technology (IT) support (11)

Increased information about data security policies and procedures (12)

Q17 How has your organization's support for your well-being changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A (6)
Expanded tele-work or work from home (1)						
Expanded work schedule flexibilities to include leave flexibilities (2)						
Expanded mental health resources (e.g., assistance with stress (5)						
Increased / timely communication about possible COVID-19 illness at my agency worksite (7)						
Additional protection of employees at						

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A (6)
higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 exposure (8)						
Limited access to my agency worksite buildings/facilities (e.g., closures, limits on activities with external visitors/groups) (9)						
Increased social distancing (e.g., limits on group size, reduced access to common areas) in my agency worksite (10)						
Rearranged workspaces to maximize						

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	N/A (6)
social distancing (11)						
Encouraged use of personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, or other safety equipment in my agency worksite (12)						

Display This Question:

If What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply) = 6-18 years old

Or What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply) = 2-5 years old

Q18 During the COVID-19 pandemic, how disruptive have school closures/changes been to your ability to do your work?

Extremely (1)

Very (2)

Somewhat (3)

Slightly (4)

Not at all (5)

N/A (6)

Display This Question:

If What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply) = Under the age of 2

Or What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply) = 2-5 years old

Or What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply) = 6-18 years old

Q19 During the COVID-19 pandemic, how disruptive have changes to your children's day care been to your ability to do your work?

Extremely (1)

Very (2)

Somewhat (3)

Slightly (4)

Not at all (5)

N/A (6)

Page Break

Q20 Did your military spouse's duties change due to the pandemic?

My military spouse teleworked during the pandemic (2)

My military spouse had additional duties due to the pandemic (3)

My military spouse deployed to provide support due to the pandemic (4)

My military spouse had decreased workload due to the pandemic (5)

There were no changes (1)

End of Block: Work during COVID

Start of Block: PCS and Retention of Federal Positions

Q21 When was your most recent Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move?

I have not experienced a PCS move (1)

After March 2020 (2)

Prior to March 2020 (3)

Display This Question:

If When was your most recent Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move? != I have not experienced a PCS move

Q22 Were you able to retain your federal position or transfer to a similar position with your most recent PCS?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q23 Do you believe you will be able to retain your federal job with your next PCS?

No (10)

Maybe (11)

Yes (12)

End of Block: PCS and Retention of Federal Positions

Start of Block: Qualitative

Q24 What is your opinion of support as a military spouse during the pandemic?

End of Block: Qualitative

Start of Block: Closing

Q25 Is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience during the pandemic as a federal employee?

End of Block: Closing

Appendix C. Approvals, Permissions, & Consents

Military Spouse Advocacy Network

Ms. Vernice Castillo, Founder, President, and CEO

Re: Reaching out through MSAN for my doctoral study



○ **Vernice Castillo** <president@milspo...>

Wednesday, November 10, 2021 at 4:17 PM

To: Holland, Rose; Cc: Kaycee Greninger

UWSP Information Security Phishing Disclaimer: A link to an external Google docs form has been detected. The University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point does not use Google docs in any official capacity; this message may be an attempt to steal your account or bank information. Do not click any links or respond unless you are sure the information is trustworthy. Do not contact any external email address listed in the email.

CAUTION: This message came from an EXTERNAL source. Do not reply to this message or follow any links in it unless you are certain they are not part of a phishing attack.

Hi Rose,

I hope you are doing well. How awesome that you are working on your dissertation.

Regarding your petition, MSAN will support you posting something on the HUB and facebook forum about looking for participants but it would have to be on a personal way and not as an MSAN's representative. Allowing you to use MSAN's title would put MSAN in a predicament where we would have to approve other volunteers' requests and make those that we did not approve in the past feel like we are not considering everyone's requests.

Thank you for your understanding and I look forward to reading your dissertation.

Thank you,
Vernice Castillo
Founder, CEO & President

The Resume Place

Ms. Kathryn Troutman, Founder and President

Re: New Resume Place Contact Submission - From Rose Holland - Working on PHD Dissertation



Kathryn Troutman <kathryn@resume-place.com>

Monday, February 21, 2022 at 3:50 PM

To: Holland, Rose; Cc: amacias@resume-place.com

CAUTION: This message came from an EXTERNAL source. Do not reply to this message or follow any links in it unless you are certain they are not part of a phishing attack.

TEN STEPS

Hi Rose, nice to hear from you. VERY exciting about your PHD and the dissertation topic as well.

My mailing list odes have a Military Spouse category. But I am not positive how great it is. Are you going to write a survey?

May 6 is Military Spouse Appreciation Day, and I was going to offer a free webinar - STars are Lined Up for Military Spouses.

The free webinars really do get specific attention from current spouses. So, that could be a new source of leads. And you could attend the webinar as well.

You could introduce yourself and what you are studying.

When I wrote a blog without some kind of offer, I don't get immediate feedback. I haven't done a free webinar for awhile.

I have attended a few of the employment webinars by Hlring our Heroes and Chamber of Commerce and a couple of others. They don't even talk about federal jobs or resumes.

SO weird. The last webinar I attended, I wrote some content in the chat about how military spouses don't mention that they are a military spouse on their resume.

They leave it up to the managers to guess what is going on with their employment history.

I'll look at my list and see how the spouse category looks. Alot of my Ten Step trainers are spouses also. That could be a good list to ask questions.

Glad you asked. This will be a great topic. Kathryn

I am in the initial phases of writing my dissertation and preparing for the research. I was wondering if it would be possible to obtain permission from the you to reach military spouses through your mailing list. I am studying the perceptions of military spouses in federal positions and their perceptions during the pandemic and as they experience a permanent change of station during/post pandemic.

Veteran Mentor Network

Mr. Tom Cal, Founder and CEO

The screenshot shows a LinkedIn messaging interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with icons for Home, My Network, Jobs, and Messaging. Below this is a search bar with the text "tom cal". The main content area is a message thread with the following details:

- Sender:** Tom Cal (Profile picture: Blue and yellow circular icon)
- Recipient:** Rose Holland, CWDP (Profile picture: Woman with glasses)
- Date:** Oct 17, 2021
- Message 1 (Rose Holland, 1:34 PM):**

Tom,

I hope all is going well. I wanted to let you know I am still open to coaching. I have not been on LinkedIn as much. I applied for a formal coaching certification program through work. I should hear something next month. Wish me luck!!

I am in the initial phases of writing my dissertation and preparing for the research. I was wondering if it would be possible to obtain permission from the Veteran Mentor Network to reach military spouses. I am studying the perceptions of military spouses retaining their federal positions as they experience a permanent change of station during/post pandemic.

--

Rose Holland
Doctoral Student
University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point
Educational Sustainability
- Message 2 (Tom Cal, 6:41 PM):**

Yes. I'll let Joe Paschall know.
- Message 3 (Rose Holland, 9:05 PM):**

Thanks Tom. As I get further along in the process, I'll find out what I need for the IRB process at the school.

Appendix D. Codebook

Table D1. Codebook for categories and themes

Category	Description	Themes			
		Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction
Military Spouse Employment					
Attitudes	Desire to work, employability, career seeking	Complex array describing career seeking	New / different description of career seeking	Unexpected / unique opportunity of career seeking	Lack of control over career seeking
Employment Experiences	Employment status, hours, income, skill-set (mis)match	Complex array of employment experiences	New / different employment experiences	Unexpected / unique employment experiences	Lack of control over employment experiences
Network	Mentorship, professional network, peer support	Complex array of network experiences	New / different network experiences	Unexpected / unique network experiences	Lack of control over network experiences
Military Experiences					
	Deployments and separations, Permanent Change of Station (PCS) moves	Complex array due to military experiences	New / different military experiences	Unexpected / unique military experiences	Lack of control over military experiences
Satisfaction	Retirement or separation intentions	Complex array determining separation	New / different reasons for separation	Unexpected / unique reasons for separation	Lack of control over separation
Environmental					
Employer Knowledge & Attitudes	Job opportunities, understanding of military life, willingness to hire spouses	Complex array of employer knowledge and attitudes	New / different employer knowledge and attitudes	Unexpected / unique employer knowledge and attitudes	Lack of control over employer knowledge and attitudes

		<u>Themes</u>			
Category	Description	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction
Military & Community Programs	Private sector internships and training, child care, Caregiver support, Installation level resources, community specific resources	Complex array related to military / community programs	New / different experiences related to military / community programs	Unexpected / unique experiences related to military / community programs	Lack of control over military / community programs
Military & Government Policies & Programs	Executive Orders, hiring authorities, interstate licensing compacts, maternity/ paternity leave, Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA)	Complex array of military / government policies / programs	New / different military / government policies / programs	Unexpected / unique military / government policies / programs	Lack of control over military / government policies / programs
Labor Market Conditions	Unemployment rate, gig economy, local job opportunities	Complex array of labor market conditions	New / different labor market conditions	Unexpected / unique labor market conditions	Lack of control over labor market conditions
Individual or Family					
Spouse Characteristics	Age, gender, race/ethnicity, education level, disability status	Complex array of own characteristics	New / different characteristics	Unexpected / unique characteristics	Lack of control over own characteristics

		<u>Themes</u>				
Category		Description	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction
Service Member Characteristics		Paygrade, MOS, service branch, disability status	Complex array of the service member's characteristics	New / different service member's characteristics	Unexpected / unique service member's characteristics	Lack of control over service member's characteristics
Family Characteristics		Caregiver status, child care needs, number and ages of children, number of other dependents	Complex array of family characteristics / needs	New / different family characteristics / needs	Unexpected / unique family characteristics / needs	Lack of control over family characteristics / needs
Spouse, Service Member & Family Well-being		Mental health, quality-of-life, food security, housing stability	Complex array relating to wellbeing	New / different wellbeing aspects	Unexpected / unique wellbeing aspects	Lack of control over wellbeing aspects

Appendix E. Survey Data

Q1.1

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	1	1	1	0	0	38
1	True	1	1	1	0	0	132

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	I agree	22%	78%	170
2	I do not agree	0	0	0

Q1.2 - Are you a currently or have you been a United States federal employee?

	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	1	2	1.28	0.45	0.20	29
1	True	1	4	1.43	0.83	0.68	133

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	I am a current federal employee	21	96	117
2	I am a past federal employee. I left federal employment after March 2020.	8	26	34
3	I am a past federal employee. I left federal employment prior to March 2020.	0	2	2
4	I have never been a federal employee	0	9	9

Q2.1 - What is the status of your Service Member spouse?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	1	4	1.44	1.07	1.14	27
1	True	1	5	1.64	1.23	1.52	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Active Duty to include Active Guard Reserve	23	94	117
2	Reserve or Guard	0	2	2
4	Retired or Veteran	4	24	28
5	My spouse does not or has not served in the military	0	1	1

Q2.2 - What service is your military spouse currently affiliated with

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	1	5	2.41	1.19	1.41	29
1	True	1	6	2.66	1.51	2.27	121

#	Item	True	False	Total
1	Air Force (to include Reserve and Guard)	7	29	36
2	Army (to include Reserve and Guard)	12	49	61
3	Coast Guard (to include Reserve and Auxiliary)	2	5	7
4	Marine Corps (to include Reserve)	7	11	18
5	Navy (to include Reserve)	1	26	27
6	Space Force	0	1	1

Q2.3 - What is the rank of your service member?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
1	True	1	9	6.51	2.86	8.18	120
0	False	1	9	6.73	2.70	7.27	26

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Junior Enlisted (E1-E4)	2	5	7
2	Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) (E5-E6)	2	22	24
8	Senior NCO (E7-9)	8	32	40

#	Item	False	True	Total
4	Warrant Officer (WO1-5)	1	1	2
5	Junior Officer (O1-3)	2	17	21
9	Field Grade Officer (O4-6)	9	43	52
10	General Officer (O7-9)	0	0	0

Q2.4 - How old are you?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	1	5	3.64	1.26	1.59	25
1	True	1	5	4.03	1.02	1.05	120

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Under 25 years old	1	1	2
2	26-30 years old	6	10	16
3	31-35 years old	2	25	27
4	36-40 years old	8	32	40
5	over 41 years old	8	52	60

Q2.5 - How do you identify? (select all that apply)

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	American Indian or Alaska Native	0	1	1
2	Asian	1	5	6
3	Black or African American	4	7	11
6	Hispanic or Latino	1	11	12
4	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	2	2
5	White	22	99	121
7	Other / Unknown	1	2	3

Q2.6 - How do you describe yourself?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	2	5	2.12	0.58	0.33	26
1	True	1	2	1.96	0.20	0.04	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
5	Prefer not to say	1	0	1
2	Female	25	116	141
1	Male	0	5	5
3	Non-binary / third gender	0	0	0
4	Prefer to self-describe	0	0	0

Q2.7 - What is the highest degree of education you have completed

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	4	7	6.12	1.05	1.10	26
1	True	4	7	6.55	0.73	0.53	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Less than High School	0	0	0
2	High-school graduate or GED equivalent	0	0	0
4	Some college	4	4	8
5	Associate degree or Technical Certificate	1	5	6
6	Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)	9	33	42
7	Master's, Doctorate or Professional degree	12	79	91

Q2.8 - What are the ages of children in your home? (Mark all that apply)

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	I have no children living at home	7	34	41
2	Under the age of 2	4	11	15

#	Item	False	True	Total
3	2-5 years old	3	32	35
4	6-18 years old	13	60	73
5	Over the age of 18	3	16	19

Q3.1 - Have you been hired under a Military Spouse Non-Competitive Hiring Authority?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	1	4	2.33	0.88	0.78	18
1	True	1	4	2.43	0.80	0.64	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Yes, for my current federal position	4	19	23
2	Yes, for a past federal position	5	36	41
3	No	8	61	69
4	I am unsure	1	5	6

Q3.2 - What is your pay category/grade?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	1	5	3.44	1.12	1.25	18
1	True	2	8	4.16	1.28	1.64	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Federal Wage System	1	0	1
2	Non-appropriated Fund (NAF)	3	16	19
3	GS 1 to GS 6	4	7	11
4	GS 7 to GS 12	7	58	65
5	GS 13 to GS 15	3	34	37
6	Senior Executive Service (SES)	0	0	0

#	Item	False	True	Total
7	Senior Level (SL) or Scientific or Professional (ST)	0	0	0
8	Other	0	6	6

Q3.3 - What is you federal job series or job code?

What is you federal job series or job code?

1702

0318

0801

I don't know, customer service

0633

079

2210

301

1712

0318

0201

1420

No idea

2210

101

1102

303

Child youth assistant

0301

0318

0201

0132

0560

1035

0101

Nf3

0201

0203

0080

Naf 04

0303

NAF

2210

Attorney Advisor

0343

0905

GS-132

0185

0201

0201 and 1860

0201

0967

0201

1102

0343

GS 13

Attorney Advisor, 0905

Attorney-0905

1102

904

0560

0130

0501

0132

I am not sure, sorry. I am a Management Analyst. GS-13 Step 5.

AD-K

Foreign service generalist- political cone

GS-0130

1035 public affairs/ Also Generalist

101

GS-0021-09

0510 Accounting

0301

0101

0201

0201

0201

0081

1001

1102

0132

0201

0185

0511

0856

0203 - HR Assistant (Recruitment & Staffing)

0203

0201

NF3-0303

0201

I don't remember

1740 Education Services

203

0346

1082

NAF-3

1173

not sure

0511

0303

0100

0340

1035

0201

0201

0201

185

0905

Naval Architect

Neuropsychologist

343

0343

Animal Health Assistant

0101

Unknown - Social Insurance Specialist Technical Expert

0861

0185

201

1740

0679

0301

0343

0610

0201

1410

0343

0300

1101

0301

1515

0101

Q3.4 - What agency do you work for?

What agency do you work for?

DOD CAC-CGSC-DDE

Air Force

Dept of State

Dodea

Social security agency

VHA

DHA

Marine Corps Community services

Department of Veterans Affairs

Dodea

USDA - APHIS - VS

MCCS

VHA

Navy

Army

USAF

DFMWR

HHS

Small Business Administration

Navy

Child development center

Navy

DoDEA

Ussf

Worked for the Dept of the Army and USDA

DOJ

Army

U.S. Army

Department of the Navy

Mwr

CHRA

US Fish and Wildlife Service

Army

MCCS Okinawa

Department of the Army, Army Reserve Family Programs

Defense Media Activity

DAF

Department of Education

VA

Joint Staff

Department of the Army

Department of State

Va

Air Force

Dept of AF and DHRA

CHRA (Army)

DOS

DON

Army

DHS

Dept of the Navy

US Department of Labor

U.S. Coast Guard

Navy

US Military Academy at West Point

DoD

USAID

State

USAID

USAID

NPS

Department of State

Department of State

Department of State

Air Force

Social Security Administration

NAVFAC SW

USMC

Army

Department of State

Department of the Navy

US Army CHRA

Navy

CHRA

DoA

DLA

Army Contracting Command

Dept of the Navy/USMC

Navy

Amry

VA OIG

NAVAIR /Fleet Readiness Center Southeast

Dept of Navy

DHR

GSA

DFMWR

DA

DHA?

Marine Corps Community Services

Tagd at hrc

DOD

DAF

MCCS

Dod/ air force

Marine Corps Community Services-Okinawa, Japan; Education Center

Marine Corps Community Services

DCAA

VA

Department of the Navy Fleet and Family Support Center

US Army Corps of Engineers

Department of the Army

CHRA

Civilian Human Resources Agency

Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA)

non profit

Army

US Navy

Albuquerque VA

National Institutes of Health

Department of the Army, DHR

NAF - US Army Veterinary Services

DoD

Social Security Administration

NASA

I worked for DOD as a military spouse. Currently work for VA and my husband is now a veteran.

CHRA

Air Force

VHA

Dept of Veteran Affairs

Virginia Army National Guard-HRO

Navy

VHA VA Medical Center

Army

Army

USPTO

Department of the Air Force

Navsea

Air Force

Aflcmc

Department of Navy

Navy

Q3.5 - How long have you been with the federal government (excluding military service)?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	1	7	3.65	2.27	5.17	17
1	True	1	7	4.28	2.24	5.01	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Less than 1 year	1	3	4
2	1 to 3 years	9	46	55
7	4 to 10 years	5	45	50
4	More than 10 years	2	27	29

Q4.1 - What types of leave have you used because of 1) the pandemic and 2) your Service Member's service related to the pandemic? (Mark all that apply)

Leave under the Emergency Paid Sick Leave Act (part of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act)

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Pandemic	0	27	27
2	Service Member's Work Requirements due to the pandemic	0	7	7

Annual leave, sick leave, or other types of paid leave

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Pandemic	1	53	54
2	Service Member's Work Requirements due to the pandemic	0	28	28

Unpaid leave (e.g. Leave Without Pay (LWOP))

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Pandemic	0	13	13
2	Service Member's Work Requirements due to the pandemic	1	8	9

I have not used leave because of the pandemic

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Pandemic	0	48	48
2	Service Member's Work Requirements due to the pandemic	0	34	34

I left federal employment because of the pandemic

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Pandemic	0	3	3
2	Service Member's Work Requirements due to the pandemic	0	3	3

Q4.2 - How has your organization's support for your work changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Increased communication (e.g., organizational status, what to expect)

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Strongly Disagree	0	8	8
2	Disagree	1	23	24
3	Neutral	0	23	23
4	Agree	1	43	44
5	Strongly Agree	0	15	15

Increased training for new/changed work or work processes because of the pandemic

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Strongly Disagree	0	15	15
2	Disagree	2	38	40
3	Neutral	0	23	23
4	Agree	0	29	29
5	Strongly Agree	0	9	9

Different options for work/business travel

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Strongly Disagree	0	14	14
2	Disagree	2	22	24
3	Neutral	0	10	10
4	Agree	0	39	39
5	Strongly Agree	0	19	19

Different equipment and technology for working remotely (e.g., laptops, cell phone, Information Technology infrastructure)

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Strongly Disagree	0	13	13
2	Disagree	1	22	23
3	Neutral	0	11	11
4	Agree	1	45	46
5	Strongly Agree	0	22	22

Expanded Information Technology (IT) support

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Strongly Disagree	1	16	17
2	Disagree	1	27	28

#	Item	False	True	Total
3	Neutral	0	27	27
4	Agree	0	24	24
5	Strongly Agree	0	19	19

Increased information about data security policies and procedures

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Strongly Disagree	1	16	17
2	Disagree	1	30	31
3	Neutral	0	25	25
4	Agree	0	33	33
5	Strongly Agree	0	11	11

Q4.3 - How has your organization's support for your well-being changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

Expanded telework or work from home

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	15	15
3	Neutral	0	8	8
4	Agree	0	40	40
5	Strongly Agree	0	39	39
1	Strongly Disagree	2	14	16

Expanded work schedule flexibilities to include leave flexibilities

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	18	18
3	Neutral	0	16	16
4	Agree	0	32	32
5	Strongly Agree	0	31	31
1	Strongly Disagree	2	18	20

Expanded mental health resources (e.g., assistance with stress)

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	30	30
3	Neutral	0	30	30
4	Agree	0	22	22
5	Strongly Agree	0	12	12
1	Strongly Disagree	2	19	21

Increased / timely communication about possible COVID-19 illness at my agency worksite

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	19	19
3	Neutral	0	15	15
4	Agree	0	45	45
5	Strongly Agree	0	19	19
1	Strongly Disagree	2	15	17

Additional protection of employees at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 exposure

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	27	27
3	Neutral	0	16	16
4	Agree	0	36	36
5	Strongly Agree	0	20	20
1	Strongly Disagree	2	12	14

Limited access to my agency worksite buildings/facilities (e.g., closures, limits on activities with external visitors/groups)

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	14	14
3	Neutral	0	12	12
4	Agree	0	51	51
5	Strongly Agree	0	26	26
1	Strongly Disagree	1	10	11

Increased social distancing (e.g., limits on group size, reduced access to common areas) in my agency worksite

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	10	10
3	Neutral	0	16	16
4	Agree	0	48	48
5	Strongly Agree	0	30	30
1	Strongly Disagree	2	8	10

Rearranged workspaces to maximize social distancing

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	33	33
3	Neutral	0	20	20
4	Agree	0	26	26
5	Strongly Agree	0	12	12
1	Strongly Disagree	2	13	15

Encouraged use of personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, or other safety equipment in my agency worksite

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	Disagree	0	2	2
3	Neutral	0	17	17
4	Agree	0	59	59
5	Strongly Agree	0	29	29
1	Strongly Disagree	2	5	7

Q4.4 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, how disruptive have school closures/ changes been to your ability to do your work?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	2	2	2	0	0	1
1	True	1	5	2.32	1.29	1.67	66

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Extremely	0	23	23
2	Very	1	17	18
3	Somewhat	0	15	15
4	Slightly	0	4	4
5	Not at all	0	7	7

Q4.5 - During the COVID-19 pandemic, how disruptive have changes to your children’s day care been to your ability to do your work?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	2	2	2	0	0	1
1	True	1	5	2.15	1.39	1.93	60

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Extremely	0	29	29
2	Very	1	11	12
3	Somewhat	0	9	9
4	Slightly	0	4	4
5	Not at all	0	7	7

Q4.6 - Did your military spouse's duties change due to the pandemic?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	3	4	3.50	0.50	0.25	2
1	True	1	5	2.24	1.16	1.34	119

#	Item	False	True	Total
2	My military spouse teleworked during the pandemic	0	33	33
3	My military spouse had additional duties due to the pandemic	1	35	36
4	My military spouse deployed to provide support due to the pandemic	1	3	4
5	My military spouse had decreased workload due to the pandemic	0	9	9
1	There were no changes	0	39	39

Q5.1 - When was your most recent Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Variance	Count
0	False	2	2	2	0	0	2
1	True	1	3	2.40	0.57	0.32	121

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	I have not experienced a PCS move	0	5	5
2	After March 2020	2	63	65
3	Prior to March 2020	0	53	53

Q5.2 - Were you able to retain your federal position or transfer to a similar position with your most recent PCS?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	1	1	1	0	0	1
1	True	1	2	1.51	0.50	0.25	105

#	Item	False	True	Total
1	Yes	1	51	52
2	No	0	54	54

Q5.3 - Do you believe you will be able to retain your federal job with your next PCS?

#	Field	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Variance	Count
0	False	11	11	11	0	0	1
1	True	10	12	10.86	0.79	0.63	117

#	Item	False	True	Total
10	No	0	46	46
11	Maybe	1	41	42
12	Yes	0	30	30

Q6.1 - What is your opinion of employment support as a military spouse during the pandemic?

Pandemic changed nothing

I feel it is well supported.

I was assisted as long as it was convenient for the agency.

I switched positions and agencies (army to navy) mid pandemic. My command with the army was considerably better/more supportive

There was none

Very little support for working parents in homeschool environment. I nearly left so many times, but my husband who had just retired was furloughed so I had to stay to bring in a paycheck

Not much

I feel th3 DoD trying but it doesn't help unless you are wanting to do sales or low-level positions

My agency lacked a coordinated and consistent response- which put the workforce at continued risk of exposure.

Due to the pandemic, my active-duty husband accrued a substantial amount of leave, however, I began as a new federal employee during the pandemic so it has been difficult to plan time off together due to my lack of paid leave, specifically compared to his. Even better flexibility with work from home so be able to spend some time together after his return from 14 months away would be nice. I think while some federal agencies, and some Army commands, are embracing continued flex schedules, my command is holding firm on everyone being in the office.

Little to no support

Negligible especially for new hires during the pandemic.

For me personally it has been amazing. My agency has been in telework status since March 2020. I think generally employment for spouses is hard due to lack of knowledge on how to exhaust all services and preferences for federal employment.

Remote work is a game changer for military spouses. I obtained a fully remote position in Mar 2022 and I expect it will transfer with us next year when my spouse retires.

I did not notice any changes in hiring processes.

Non existent

My personal experience may be different from others, but my leadership was not open to telework pre-COVID, reluctant to telework at the start of COVID and even after. I was provided with little to no support during the pandemic.

Not great. No additional support provided due to military spouse status

My corner of the agency already allowed remote work prior to the pandemic, which made it much easier to adjust. We had excellent support and communication throughout.

It was pretty poor in Army Legal Assistance

I don't know that employment support differed during the pandemic than at any other time. I've always been in charge of my career and my military spouse status was part of my identity, but I don't feel as if it was a huge factor in my employment. I was always treated equally to other employees - the only difference was the hiring mechanism under which I was brought on board. I was also not on a military installation during the pandemic, but at an embassy where there were many family members from various federal agencies.

My agency was 100% telework before the pandemic so no changes were necessary regarding that. DHRA kept employees very informed

My organization allowed for maximum flexibilities for those who needed it, others allowed no flexibility. I was thankful to be working for my organization. I was proud that they allowed spouses to retain their position with a PCS and hope it continues.

I live on Fort Bliss and while the military installation had their own requirements like households to quarantine together, I was not able to do that because DOS and DoD lack in communication. Military spouses living on an installation and working off post for a different federal agency/department get stuck in between the different regulations.

I was hired under the DOD Military Spouse Priority Placement Program during COVID. I had to go out and find all of the information for myself - it's a confusing process, infinitely more complicated by COVID where offices were closed and POCs were not identified.

There is nothing extra for military spouses; there isn't much support at all.

N/a

Abysmal at best.

I have been very fortunate that my supervisor has allowed me to move with my spouse during my federal employment. My job originally was supposed to be 100% in person (accepted job offer while in law school in fall 2019). By the time I started my job in August 2020, it was 100% situational telework and remained that way until May 2022. However, my supervisor allowed me to telework from locations outside my DC duty station, in NY/Fort Drum from September 2020 to February 2021. My wife then was TDY in Arizona from February 2021 until July 2021, and I lived in DC area, anticipating my job to return to in person work. After discussing remote work options, my supervisor allowed me to become a remote worker, work from El Paso/Fort Bliss starting in August 2021 until current. As such, I've been able to keep my current job, remote working in Texas, while also living with my wife after we PCS'd to Ft Bliss in August 2021.

In June 2019 I was forced to leave DoD Office of General Counsel (GS-15) because I was a military spouse and we had to PCS for spouses career. Telework not allowed. In March 2020, almost the entire DoD OGC teleworked under a plan I had proposed but was told was not an option.

It has been gradually improving over the last 15 years, but there is still much work to be done.

Did not change much. Only went remote when required.

Introduction of remote options is the only reason I was able to keep my job.

My federal agency had far more support than my spouse's organization. I became the default parent to support his work, even though I am a higher grade.

Honestly, things aren't perfect. I believe that USAID/Dept of State could certainly do a better job of expanding opportunities for Military spouses BUT I am pleasantly surprised that I have moved three times in the last year and I have been able to retain my job. I have found obstacles but I have also found support from leadership. It would be great to have blanket protections and ensure that the military spouse preference actually worked with hiring authorities (because this doesn't work) but overall, I am mostly happy. I have been able to continue working remotely because my spouse is active-duty National Guard and we have been doing a significant amount of travel over the last year. This being said, we have not been stationed abroad which has cause lots of trouble for other colleagues of mine. There is also a problem where a close colleague of mine (on my team) was denied to work remotely because her husband was PCS'd to California which has a higher cost of living. I believe that it is unfair that the location that your spouse is moved to would change someone's ability to work remotely.

None

My Department provides very little support to military spouses

The State dept. is very limited. I was fortunate to have a military spouse PDAS who advocated to allow me to DETO for a PCS to Japan in May 2019. But she had to push hard because others in the institution pushed back.

difficult to find permanent positions with moving

I felt supported, but I also believe it was because I worked with an amazing group of people and I loved my bosses.

As a military spouse and USMC civilian employee with no kids, the pandemic didn't affect my work very much. My coworkers who have children sometimes couldn't come into work because their kids had COVID or were close contacts. The accounting department offered them telework during these times.

Ha, same as before the pandemic. They give us jobs to play are us at each duty station and then we start over at the next.

No support

There were many accommodations made to support people working from home so they could be there with their children

Employment support for military spouses in my location significantly decreased in both locations I have lived since March 2020.

It was extremely difficult to get information out to spouses for employment and with organizations not able to hire certain qualified applicants due to vaccination requirements made it difficult.

increased remote/telework options have been extremely helpful

I was a federal employee prior to marriage so I don't have a lot of experience as a spouse.

None

I did not had any employment support as a military spouse during the Pandemic. My supervisor was micro-manager. It was stressful being at home 24/7, and obtaining support for office related issues came at a slow pace. Thus, I was unable to balance work and family.

The Marine Corps denied our exception to policy to PCS during COVID despite listing my GS position start date (and salary) and a high-risk pregnancy. The service member was counseled during his first month at the new duty station when he asked to take time off from the PME to assist his 7 and 8 yr. old with virtual school while I was beginning a new position.

My active-duty spouse was able to care for our child more than I was able to as a Federal employee due to our offices staffing shortage and hiring freeze

Zero support. Lots of additional barriers were created. My boss wanted to keep me and I work remotely; we were told not a chance. At our new duty station, was literally laughed at were looking for another position. Still unable to get a position at the new/current duty station.

My organization was great but we had a robust telework option prior to pandemic. Because of job requirements training was made available online instead of in person. Office was available but no longer required. We went through a reorganization during the pandemic and so we are primarily online for everything due to nationwide office audit teams. I know others who operate onsite positions or younger children had a harder time.

I was employed by the federal government before the start of the pandemic, so no support was necessary during it.

If you had a job you were probably able to keep it

From my new agency (GSA) it's been phenomenal. Previous agency, it is extremely dependent on whether leadership thought you could perform without close supervision.

Positive

Secondary to the soldiers career. Little to no support regaining employment after PCS

Pandemic support was fine but overall support was subpar

At first it was tricky, since no one knew what to expect, etc. and the support from my direct supervisor was "rocky". But MCCA leadership overall was great!

Neutral

It was about par with industry

Positive

Lack of resources

Poor.

I had no support. We were due to PCS in April 2020 overseas and my HR did not help me in-person. Therefore, I did not know that I could actually keep my job and do leave without pay until I found a new position with the same company in Okinawa. Instead I had to quit and then get rehired almost a year later.

I began my federal position after March 2020 in November 2020, and I left it in May 2022. I would say that PCSing overseas during the pandemic, there was no support for spouse employment during the pandemic. However as we come out of the pandemic and restrictions at our overseas installations ease, there is still very, very little support for military spouse employment - so I can't say that the lack of support is due to the pandemic in any way.

None

Same as before

Unknown, I have a career competitive position now

They try to accommodate as best they can, but not much has changed, in my opinion, as far as spouses retaining employment after a PCS.

No employment support at all

I am lucky to have a supervisor with young children that supported me and allowed me to have a maxiflex schedule to work around the kids and my spouse. If I had been in my previous federal position with the US Army Corps of Engineers, I know I would not have been as well supported.

No change

I don't think there was any more support for military spouses than other employees. And it was rough for everyone

It's been okay.

Limited as far as accommodations due to kids being out of school (unable to telework, had to use leave)

It's already hard enough to find employment when you move every few years. So many businesses went to telework out minimal staffing that it became harder to find work. Add on the additional time it takes to onboard for any federal position. By the time you go from application to worry start it can be 6 months and then you naughtly have 1-2 years at a duty location before it's time to PCS again. Most NAF jobs are flex and they're taking advantage of the fact that you need a job during the pandemic to not give you benefits or support.

Probably not much different for non-military spouses

Nonexistent.

Same as support to non-mil spouses for my agency

My husband ETS'd during the pandemic. The DOD job seemed much more accommodating at the height of the pandemic. I was also pregnant at the time. I transitioned to the VA in which teleworking was not an option for the same hospital position.

As I was already working for the federal government I didn't see much change and the transition to home was not that great of an adjustment as most work is performed via computer and resources we changed or provided for IT and electronic means of communication were provided. However if I hadn't already been employed I could see it being hard to get assistance to help with obtaining employment within the federal government as everyone was teleworking.

Horrendous

N/A- Veteran spouse

very good

My immediate chain of command has been great; I don't know about my agency.

I actually left my full-time position and converted to a 0.3 FTE intermittent because my department refused to let me telework when I was able.

Very positive

There was not a lot of support.

Nothing changed whatsoever. Held 3 jobs during pandemic due to PCS. No transfer just find a new job each time.

Being overseas spouse employment is difficult to start with. The pandemic increased amount of time to go through the onboarding process due to restrictions and offices being closed and reduced child care availability.

I changed federal organizations during the pandemic. Both orgs were supportive of telework and supportive during childcare issues with school or school age programs.

The number of remote options has increased, but the number of people interested in remote work has increased even more so. I am finding milspouse employment with a move equally challenging.

I think they have been very understanding and willing to assist. They know that my spouse is unavailable to support and that the location we are in has limited other options

Only full-time employees received pay increase due to pandemic however rest of us were left out

Q6.2 - Is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience during the pandemic as a federal employee?

Is there any additional information you would like to share about your experience during the pandemic as a federal employee?

Now a federal employee for DOE huge upgrade

No

My unit is supportive of telework but I get the impression that it would be different if I was in a different department or working for a man.

Very stressful wondering if my leadership would allow me keep my job. The agreement stated when it was not a benefit to the organization they would have to let me go. This was the source of much anxiety as we depend on a two-income family status.

Working for the CDC during Covid was extremely hard. A lot of miscommunication and slacking off on letting parents drop off sick children even the mist of Covid. Not properly doing door screenings

Lack of IT support was criminal. The computers we were issued were so old we all bought our own to achieve job objectives.

It was difficult to juggle work, a school age child at home, and a three- year-old (the CDC refused to take him since a school age child was at home for school during the pandemic).

Being preggo helped me but if I wasn't my building expected the same as prior to the pandemic. I think this had to do with commanders that "didn't believe in it"

We need better leadership making decisions based on actual information - not religious and/or political beliefs as I personally encountered

My company only has 3 days of bereavement making it nearly impossible for OCONUS spouses to visit family who became critically ill from COVID. Even just going home for a funeral would have used all of my accrued PTO.

Big push for employees so facilities could reopen but there was a distinct lack of support from management to account for necessary abscesses and protective measures

My agency is still on telework status since March 2020. They were very understanding with childcare/school issues at the peak of the pandemic. I was actually able to switch to remote because we recently PCS'd 2 months ago. I think seeing our numbers at work be the best they had been since we were in telework status it showed we can be successful without having to be in an office.

I changed federal jobs 4 times during the pandemic all with different agencies. The first time was because of military PCS. The others were for more desirable jobs or work conditions including telework and remote work.

No.

Lack of support for telework/ remote work when spouses move under a PCs. They lose a lot of experience from either the spouse leaving or the member separating from the military to keep spouse employed.

It's been rough to be both a military spouse and federally employed during the pandemic. We PCS'd twice in the last year and a half and I received no additional support or compassion from my workplace

I left my job in Oct 2021 due to a lack of support for our office.

I was employed overseas when the pandemic started. We PCS'd in August of 2020 after the SECDEF lifted the PCS travel ban. Knowing we were due to PCS, even in the months prior to the pandemic, I took full advantage of my non-competitive eligibility (NCE) status. I was working at an embassy and had access to all NCE job listings through State's family liaison office. I applied remotely for my current position, interviewed by phone during lockdown, and was offered the job. I was fortunate in that the only break in service I had was the time I chose to take to settle my family and kids at our new location. Given the nature of my position, I was at the office five days a week while most of my bureau was teleworking. Since then, I've been able to achieve some balance, although mission does come first. Finally, State took mitigating measures against COVID and enforced mask wearing, social distancing, encouraged maximum telework, restricted visitor access, enacted cleaning protocols, etc., etc.

DHRA was a very good employer to work for. Much better than AF when it comes to this type of issue.

I was in the DCELP program so I had exposure to others from all over DoD. It was interesting how different the support was, even within the same higher organization. My organization still remains at maximum telework. Others doing the same work were in the office within a month after the shutdown.

I found it very difficult to not have increased flexible work schedules.

I appreciate my current agency's TW policy. I am doubtful that I will be able to retain my position when we PCS, which is a shame since the job could be done fully remote. I will likely have to take a downgrade to stay a federal employee.

If you're a good worker, you'll end up with everyone's work because no one knows how to fire bad employees.

In Jan. 2020 I began with U.S. Coast Guard in a lower position.

My spouse was geobatching during the pandemic, and due to the challenges of the pandemic (and lucky maneuvering of personnel), he was able to come home a year earlier than anticipated.

Needs more flexible hours

The Federal government does not have a permanent office or position dedicated to the retention of federally employed military spouses, only for recruitment. That leaves of 17k military spouses unsupported and unrepresented.

My agency expanded telework options for employees. My spouse's agency did not for telework eligible employees, both active duty and civilian employees of USCG.

Honestly, USAID was extremely well equipped as we went into the Pandemic. I felt almost no hiccups because the IT infrastructure was already there. I also felt that it only made my life easier to request to work remotely as a military spouse because I was not married at the beginning of the pandemic and was going into the office but now I am married and my husband has had to move a lot in the last year. If the pandemic had not forced many to work from home, I am not sure if I would have been met with as much support for my remote work request.

Being a military spouse did nothing to help me gain employment neither federally nor any other. It hinders in most applications.

Difficult to look for and interview for remote work possibilities - especially when you are limited to time because of a military spouse

I love and hate that it took a pandemic to change societal norms on a flexible schedule.

The accounting department increased telework to reduce the number of employees at the office during periods of high numbers of COVID cases..

The inability for employees to work even partially remote is insane. We also need more flexible hours available to us.

My department is the least flexible of all other departments

Telework is the future and we proved that it is possible during the pandemic

I have worked with two agencies during the pandemic and the amount of support varies greatly between the two, as far as COVID communication and IT/Tech Support for virtual/telework.

I was overseas when it first was announced. My husband was preparing to retire and I was applying for jobs stateside to get set up prior to his retirement. I left in July 2020 to a position with AF and immediately was given a laptop and told to telework. Since it was the same agency it was not difficult, but I can't image a brand-new employee or transfer from a no -DoD agency.

As a firefighter we limited our medical runs to emergent only and have not picked up the other medical calls. We limited multi company training. Tdy for classes have all but stopped. I have not cared for the knee jerk reactions to the pandemic. The mask one day not the next etc.

During the pandemic the workload increased so the supervisor was in the habit of denying leave request unless they received proper justification. Some of my peers had to provided written documentation just to obtain approval. Owing to the stress we felt burnout so the turnover rate started to increase. Within three months the total amount of employee within our department decreased to six from thirteen.

My GS position does not allow for much productivity when teleworking, however, my supervisor has been as accommodating as possible to me working at 0330 - 0700 or 1800 -2300 in the building when our children were in daycare quarantine.

My Mangers [sic] became micromanagers

My boss wanted to keep me and I work remotely; we were told not a chance in hell. Keep in mind before I took the position, it was open for a year, and the person in the position before was fired. Lots of no answers and conflicting answers for options, including LWOP. We (my boss and I) called several agencies at my new location before I moved to see if there would be a job opening in the next six months or so. We were literally laughed at. I was even willing to go down several grades and/or change job series, in order to stay in the GS system.

The VA OIG was very accommodating before and during the pandemic. We are required 2 days per pay period in office but they are very lenient that if you have symptoms you may telework those days as well. We found audits to do that were virtual and utilized online training and TEAMS. There is a reason we are in the top 5 government agencies to work for 😊

Not me personally, but a friend recently transferred from my facility to a similar one in Virginia. He was a WG-12 here in Florida, but was not offered a WG-12 position in VA. In fact, he was asked to move there as a lower step WG-11, resulting in a net loss of income. Because the work is fairly specialized, there was no other facility he could try to transfer into.

During the pandemic we PCSed and in doing so I was hired at Ft Mccoy before leaving Ft Gordon

My previous agency did pretty great responding to the Pandemic at the beginning and saw great rewards from it. However, as the statuses have started to improve, Directors seem to be pushing for employees to be onsite. Which resulted in a mass exodus of employees including myself.

Lack of customer care or awareness of the impact on the service programs

Our commander Col Yaz, Benelux fought tooth and nail to require everyone to work and it was frowned upon to wear masks or other protective gear.

It was difficult to standardize employee pandemic behavior as a supervisor

Please let me know if you need anything else. I am a Doctoral Student myself and so I want to support as much as possible. PGHofmann@gmail.com

None to share

We already teleworked before the pandemic and are still able to be 100% TW if desired. I am now a fully remote employee, the first for my organization

Not only did I not have the outbound processing down with HR but finding employment was difficult while PCS-ing and waiting on childcare. I paid for a random neighbor to watch my daughter who was 8 months at the time so that I could go on interviews and then another to start her childcare. I worked as a telemarketer making \$100 a week, from 8pm-6am just so that my kids would not lose her spot at daycare because I was a

"working spouse". Once I finally got hired from MCCS again the onboarding process took longer because I was terminated in the system.

We live in Okinawa, Japan where, as of September 2022, we still have some pandemic-related restrictions to follow (especially off base). The actions taken were beneficial for our safety, I was allowed faster access to the vaccines as a federal employee than I was as a spouse, and I appreciate the measures put in to place. However, I see that other companies moved to having employees telework 24/7 and are still slow to bring their employees back, and I teleworked 1.5 business days for the federal government in my tenure with MCCS. While they took swift action, I don't think they were as flexible as many non-federal employers were as it relates to supporting employees through the pandemic.

No

No

The lack of communication, meetings, etc. made me feel isolated and decreased the morale of the workplace significantly.

In 2021 my workload drastically increased as a result of the pandemic. Due to an increase in telework and lack of onsite availability, many policies were rewritten and published that changed working conditions of many employees causing an increased workload for me and my team. Additionally the ongoing COVID vaccine mandate and its continued changes have created great stress in the workplace. As an HR specialist my workload increased dramatically due to the employee and labor relations fallout from the mandate. However, we were not authorized overtime to address the increased workload, nor were we approved for additional positions. In short, the pandemic forced O201s to do more work from home with less resources and aging IT equipment and infrastructure.

I was required to telework during illness vice using my sick leave for mission support. My military spouse had to quarantine in a hotel after return from OCONUS TCS as I could not be spared for telework due to mission. I was able to arrange for an Army-funded hotel since it was required for my job.

I started in July 2020 and left in March 2022. My first day was the first day back after closure in March 2020. We never closed our facility due to infection and were often the last to know when an infection occurred in our space, even when contractors were out due to exposure. The biggest challenge was to having to take leave for school closures and not being afforded telework options. My service member NEVER teleworked, except when exposed (even that was limited). Much pressure to come into work, which made it fall to me to care for children during exposure. Luckily we were not out due to illness. Location- Fort Campbell.

Job hours have gotten longer and new work is given to those who stick around with no increase in pay or benefits. It's expected that you'll work harder and more because now you're considered essential.

No

No

I was actually one of the first people to use the paid maternity leave in October 2020 and that was such an amazing benefit. Also, I was told I could not use leave without pay when transitioning to my new job but I don't think that was accurate information.

I felt our organization put our health as its priority and with the transition to home I believe its shown that the work can still be accomplished. I do feel that spouses who pcs with their military spouse will be able to more easily find federal employment with the opening up of remote work and it being more widely accepted. I definitely feel it's a positive for military spouses.

I can't speak for other agencies but the Dept of VA in my area (NC) was VERY behind on everything. We weren't given PPE right away (and they often ran out/didn't have enough for everyone) and it took 5 months to get dividers between check in desks and the waiting rooms. They were somewhat flexible with school closures but not very. If someone in your area tested positive for COVID, they would only inform/test the other nurses and medical assistants - the admin staff had to fight with supervision to be notified and tested. Even though employees in other regions, doing our same job, were allowed to telework/flex schedule - we were not allowed to and were turned down ASAP if asked. I left federal employment 10/2020, after 8 yrs. of service, due to lack of transparency and the treatment of employees and Veterans.

no

My spouse was deployed the whole of the pandemic overseas. I was the sole caregiver, and I hemorrhaged leave the past two years. Pandemic sick leave only paid 2/3, so I took pay hits. I had to use annual leave two execute 2 PCSs by myself. The military does not compensate military spouses for the lift, with money or leave flexibilities. A holistic approach to leave flexibilities for PCS and house hunting should be afforded federal civilian employees who are military spouses.

Since my husband was deployed I could not do virtual schooling at all for my kids in order to keep my job as a nurse that has increased our childcare for private schools by \$1200 per month with no support to telework or change my schedule to help with this while my husband was gone 3 different times during the pandemic

My role responsibilities increased dramatically, but there was no support or formal acknowledgment. It eventually led me to leave federal service. I now work for a corporation in a 100% remote job that pays more and I have less stress.

I had a relatively good experience overall compared with some people. I was able to telework and given that I work on the base my child goes to school and school age program, when issues arose due to close contacts etc., I did not have to take leave but was able to telework to flex around this. I also brought up inconsistencies between school and childcare policies to installation leadership and this was promptly looked into. I felt lucky to have childcare through most of the pandemic and did not have to use unnecessary leave to deal with these

issues. However now many civilians I work with are experiencing issues due to childcare staffing shortages and supplanting of their children in CDCs.

It appeared that options were improving - my supervisor attempted to move my position to a telework role. However, it has been in paperwork limbo for month. I'm on LWOP and searching for a new position.

I work in a small office and they have been very understanding when my child's daycare closed because of Covid. They expand telework and do not mind if I bring my child to the office a little. I started this job during the pandemic so missed a lot of the bigger initial changes.

They weren't informing employees for the confirmed cases within the work space. They didn't allow time off even if you're in contact with a positive case. No support other than providing disinfectant wipes and face masks.

Appendix F. Categories & Themes

Table E1. Support Responses by Category & Tone

Categories and Sub-Categories	Supportive (<i>n</i> = 22)	Non-Supportive (<i>n</i> = 41)	Both (<i>n</i> = 12)	Neutral (<i>n</i> = 16)
Military Spouse Employment (total)	21	36	12	14
Attitudes	0	1	0	0
Employment experiences	21	35	12	14
Network	0	0	0	0
Individual or Family (total)	1	4	2	0
Military spouse characteristics	1	4	2	0
Service member characteristics	0	0	0	0
Family characteristics	1	2	2	0
Spouse/service member/family wellbeing	0	2	0	0
Military Experience (total)	2	11	3	1
Military experiences	2	11	3	1
Satisfaction with Military Life	0	1	0	0
Environmental (total)	16	32	12	4
Employer knowledge & attitudes	14	21	10	2
Military & community programs	0	5	0	0
Military & government policies & programs	9	12	5	3
Labor market conditions	2	3	1	0

Table E2. Additional Information Responses by Category & Tone.

Categories and Sub-Categories	Supportive (n = 16)	Non-Supportive (n = 35)	Both (n = 12)	Neutral (n = 2)
Military Spouse Employment (total)	15	33	12	2
Attitudes	0	0	0	0
Employment Experiences	15	33	12	2
Network	0	0	0	0
Individual or Family (total)	4	7	1	0
Military Spouse Characteristics	0	0	0	0
Service Member Characteristics	0	0	0	0
Family Characteristics	4	6	1	0
Spouse/Service Member/Family Wellbeing	0	1	0	0
Military Experience (total)	4	11	3	1
Military Experiences	4	11	3	1
Satisfaction with Military Life	0	0	0	0
Environmental (total)	14	34	12	2
Employer Knowledge & Attitudes	14	31	12	1
Military & Community Programs	0	6	0	0
Military & Government Policies & Programs	10	20	10	1
Labor Market Conditions	1	3	1	1

Themes and tone corresponding to response to “expanded telework or work from home”

Table E3. Expanded Telework Related to Themes

	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction
Strongly agree	16	23	11	22
Agree	14	20	3	24
Neutral	1	6	0	8
Disagree	2	7	1	12
Strongly disagree	4	8	0	10

Table E4. Expanded telework Related to Tone

	Supportive	Non-Supportive	Both	Neutral
Strongly agree	20	9	8	6
Agree	8	17	9	8
Neutral	0	6	2	0
Disagree	2	10	1	1
Strongly disagree	1	9	2	1

Qualitative corresponding expanded work schedule flexibilities:

Table E5. Expanded flexibilities Related to Themes

	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction
Strongly agree	12	18	8	17
Agree	12	18	5	21
Neutral	6	12	1	11
Disagree	2	8	0	13
Strongly disagree	6	8	1	14

Table E6. Expanded flexibilities Related to Tone

	Supportive	Non-Supportive	Both	Neutral
Strongly agree	15	8	8	8
Agree	9	13	6	13
Neutral	3	7	5	7
Disagree	15	3	0	11
Strongly disagree	0	13	13	13

Qualitative corresponding to retention of position with a move:

Table E7. Retention of Position Related to Themes

	Complexity	Change	Chance	Construction
Retained position	19	28	10	36
Did not retain position	16	33	4	36
Did not move	0	0	0	1

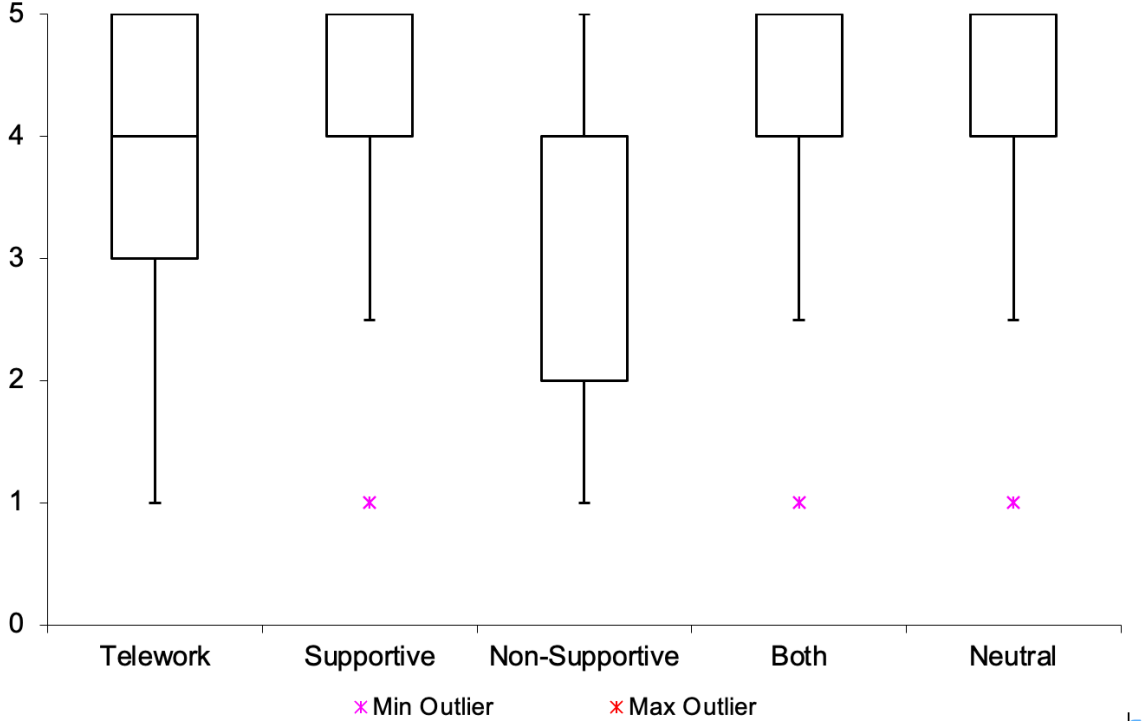
Table E8. Retention of position Related to Tone

	Supportive	Non-supportive	Both	Neither
Retained position	18	23	8	8
Did not retain position	8	29	13	8
Did not move	1	0	0	0

Table E9. Retention of position Related to Tone

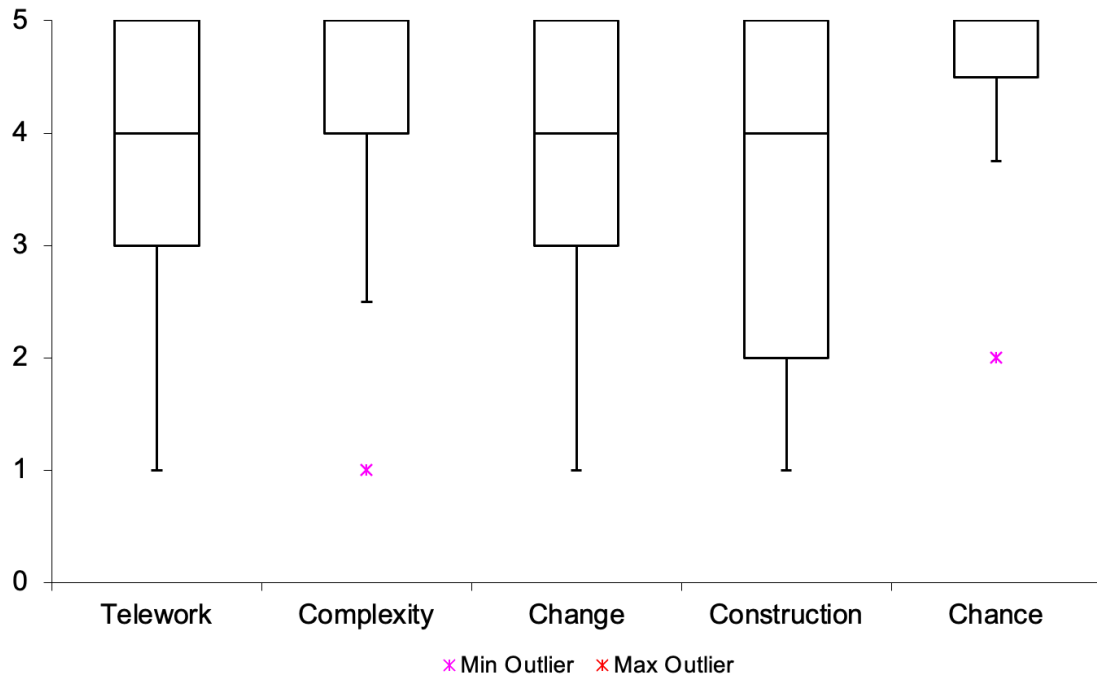
	Support- ive	Non-Supportive	Both	Neutral
Retained position with most recent move	18	23	8	8
Did not retain position with most recent move	8	29	13	8
Did not move	1	0	0	0

Figure E1. Telework Responses to Tone



Labels	Non-Supportive				
	Telework	Supportive	ive	Both	Neutral
Min	1	1	1	1	1
Q1	3	4	2	4	4
Median	4	5	4	4	4
Q3	5	5	4	5	5
Max	5	5	5	5	5
IQR	2	1	2	1	1
Upper Outliers	0	0	0	0	0
Lower Outliers	0	3	0	3	2

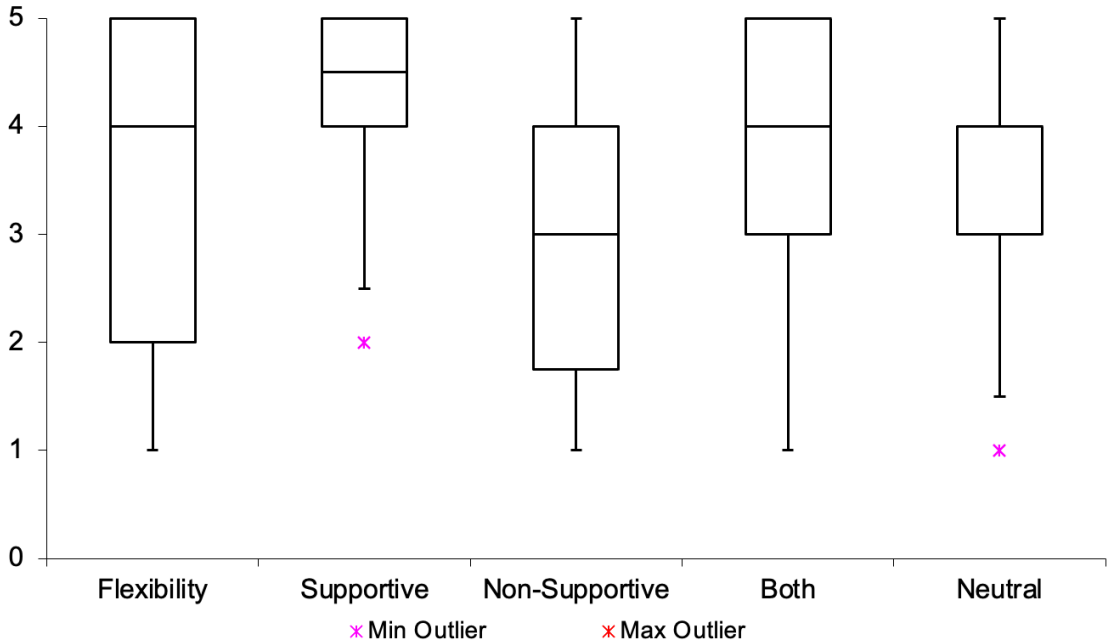
Figure E2. Telework Responses to Theme



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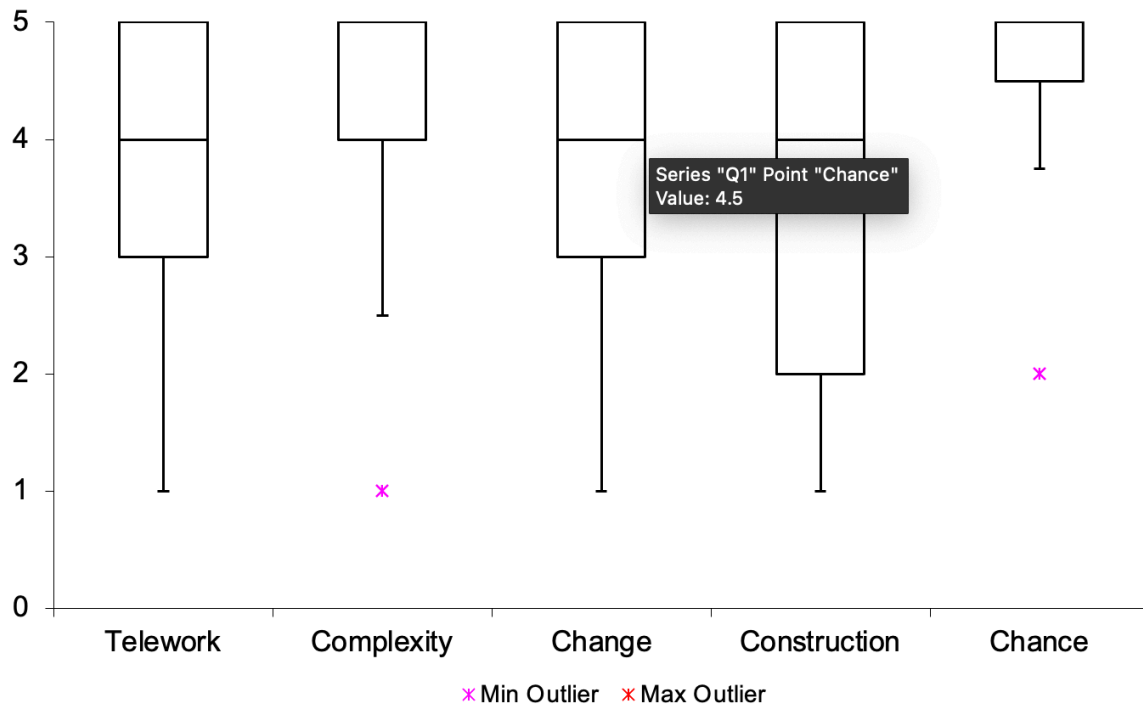
Labels	Telework	Complexity	Change	Construction	Chance
Min	1	1.0	1	1	2
Q ₁	3	4	3	2	4.5
Median	4	4.0	4	4	5
Q ₃	5	5	5	5	5
Max	5	5.0	5	5	5
IQR	2	1	2	3	0.5
Upper Outliers	0	0	0	0	0
Lower Outliers	0	6	0	0	1

Figure E3. Flexibility Responses to Tone



Labels	Flexibility	Supportive	Non-Supportive	Both	Neutral
Min	1	2	1	1	1
Q ₁	2	4	1.75	3	3
Median	4	4.5	3	4	4
Q ₃	5	5	4	5	4
Max	5	5	5	5	5
IQR	3	1	2.25	2	1
Upper Outliers	0	0	0	0	0
Lower Outliers	0	3	0	0	2

Figure E4. Flexibility Responses to Theme



Labels	Telework	Complexity	Change	Construction	Chance
Min	1	1.0	1	1	2
Q ₁	3	4	3	2	4.5
Median	4	4.0	4	4	5
Q ₃	5	5	5	5	5
Max	5	5.0	5	5	5
IQR	2	1	2	3	0.5
Upper Outliers	0	0	0	0	0
Lower Outliers	0	6	0	0	1