

**Washington State University**

**College of Education**

**Katharine (Kat) Smith**

**Will defend the dissertation**

**Date: November 12, 2019**

**Time: 1:00 P.M.**

**Location: Pullman - Cleveland Hall 353**

*Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.*

**EXPLORING MILITARY FAMILIES AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE  
TO CRITICALLY ANALYZE NARRATIVE FICTION  
CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS**

Chair: Jane Kelley

The positive impact of a teacher knowing and understanding their diverse students and their family lives is well documented in the research. The purpose of this study was to explore how military members describe the lives of military children and families in order for teachers to better plan their instructional to be more relevant and engaging to their students. This study utilized communities of practice to analyze 25 interviews from military parents, a grandparent, and teachers of military children, an observation of a military base, and military support documents provided by the Family Service Center. Findings indicate military families function as communities of practice through mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. Military families engage in relationships so as to support each other within the family as well as to support other families. Military families understand their position to serve a higher cause and negotiate meaning about what that means for them in order to survive challenges. Special concepts to military members include pride and resiliency. The findings collected from the first manuscript were used guide the literature review for the second manuscript. Additionally, the findings were used as a lens during my creation of the coding instrument called the Military Coding Instrument for Narrative Fiction Picture Books (MCINFPB). This instrument was used to critically analyze picture books about military children and their families. The second study reviewed and analyzed 47 picture books for focalization of the story, social processes of characters, social processes among characters, and assumptions in the story's closure. Findings indicate picture books about military children tell the story of the affection, caring military parent rather than focusing on the military children. Picture books do not depict resilient family members which contradicts the research about military families as resilient. In picture books featuring deployment, the story endings show reunion, but rarely depict reintegration. Suggestions for future research are included in each manuscript.