IMPLICATIONS OF PARENTAL DEPLOYMENT FOR ARMY NATIONAL GUARD AND ARMY RESERVE FAMILIES: PRACTITIONERS' ROLE IN SUPPORTING ADOLESCENTS

by

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Abstract

Since the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, a large number of service members have deployed multiple times to active combat zones as a result of U.S. involvement in the Global War on Terrorism. Army National Guard and Army Reserve families may find these deployments challenging as they are often isolated by living in civilian communities and have limited access to military support services and networks. Adolescents who live in these families may be particularly vulnerable as the stressors of parental deployment are layered on top of the normative stressors of adolescent development. This report will examine the challenges that adolescents and their families experience as a result of parental deployment. Additionally, protective factors that can help mitigate those challenges will also be discussed. Finally, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory will be used as a framework to identify ways in which parents, schools, communities, and the U.S. Army can support adolescents, thus helping them to positively cope with parental deployment.

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Dedication

To the families that serve alongside our servicemen and women.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Following the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States, the Global War on Terrorism was launched. Two main military operations have included Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Operation Iraqi Freedom in Iraq. As a result, more than one million U.S. service members have deployed overseas, with many serving multiple tours of duty (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2009). Because today's military consists of an all-volunteer force, troops have experienced repeated deployments, with each deployment potentially lasting up to 15 months (Huebner et al., 2010). In addition, in order to meet the demands of current military operations, many National Guard and Reserve units have been activated and deployed overseas.

While the stress of having a family member deployed is difficult for all military families, these deployments may be particularly challenging for those serving in National Guard and Reserve units. According to Houston et al. (2009), these families are "typically not integrated into military life, may not be completely aware of available military support, and live in communities (as opposed to military bases) that may not provide specific support for issues arising from having a family member deployed" (p. 806). Children may also be among a small number of youth in their school with a parent who is deployed, which can create difficulty in finding peers and staff members who understand and relate to their unique situation. As a result, many families experience the stress of deployment in isolation.

For adolescents, the stress of having a parent deployed is layered on top of the normative stressors of adolescent development. Cicchetti and Rogosch (2002) identified that adolescence is characterized as a transition period in which an individual experiences marked biological, psychological, and socio-emotional developmental changes. As adolescents are attempting to acquire independence, parents and society are often aware of the adolescent's lack of preparedness to handle adult responsibilities. Therefore, adolescents "must cope with parental deployment during a critical and rapid stage of social and emotional development, which is challenging in the most supportive and stable of environments" (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010, p. 218). Adolescents living in National Guard and Reserve families may be particularly vulnerable because they likely have limited access to support services and networks.

The purpose of this report is to examine the challenges associated with parental deployment and how they can impact adolescents living in Army National Guard and Army Reserve families.

Historical Perspective: Impact of Military Conscription

According to a study conducted by the Congress of the United States Congressional Budget Office (2007), the United States has maintained an all-volunteer military throughout its history. It has also relied on a conscription or draft system to supply soldiers when involved in many major conflicts. At times, there have been concerns about the military draft, especially regarding the fairness of who was called to serve. For example, during the Vietnam War men could receive an education deferment to attend college. This, however, created the appearance that poor or minority men were more vulnerable to being drafted because they were less likely to have the same access to higher education. The National Advisory Commission on Selective Service was formed in 1966 to review the draft system. The following year, the commission issued a report that rejected the idea of an all-volunteer force, but recommended that future military drafts should take place by lottery. As a result, in 1969, legislation was passed by Congress to enact a draft lottery, thus ending a system in which local draft boards were responsible for determining who must report for potential enlistment.

During his presidential campaign in 1968, Richard Nixon vowed to eliminate the military draft and after his election he established the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force. The commission was responsible for "developing a comprehensive plan for eliminating conscription and with studying the costs and savings of an all-volunteer force" (Congress of the United States, 2007, p. 5-6). While several commissioners were in favor of the draft at first, the report released by the commission in 1970 recommended the use of an all-volunteer military force. Additionally, it recommended that the country have a draft plan in place, should the need arise for additional military personnel. The military draft was abolished in 1973; and in 1975, the requirement for men to register with the Selective Service System was also eliminated. That requirement, however, was "reinstated in 1980 (after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) and remains in effect today" (Congress of the United States, 2007, p. 6).

With the elimination of the draft, the United States has depended solely on the military's ability to recruit and retain volunteer soldiers. Additionally, there has also been reliance on the activation of National Guard and Reserve units in its fight against the Global War on Terrorism

(Congress of the United States, 2007). As a result, many troops have deployed multiple times to these active combat zones. It is important to note that the deployment of servicemen and women is constantly changing. The length, timing, and location of these deployments can shift as a result of policy or involvement in wartime conflicts.

Case Example – Mariah's Story

The book written by Michelle Sherman and DeAnna Sherman (2009) entitled *My Story: Blogs by Four Military Teens* describes the feelings and experiences of four adolescents—Mariah, Adam, Carlos, and Meredith—as they journey through parental deployment. While the actual characters are fictitious, their stories are based on real-life experiences of teenagers who were interviewed by the authors. The following excerpts from Mariah's blog illustrate her experiences as her mother, who is in the Army National Guard, is deployed to Iraq.

> June 17: Off to War
> Two weeks to go until Mom leaves for Iraq and everybody is feeling the stress. Mom is in the Army National Guard and I never really thought much about being a "military family." She would just do her weekend drill and summer camp, and that's it. I've known about the war, but didn't think it would ever be something that I had to worry about. Well, she got her orders about a month ago and she's getting ready to leave. Everything is pretty confusing right now—Mom and Dad have lots of paperwork and business to take care of. I get scared when I think of her leaving. We're pretty close and I talk to her about everything. Dad's great but not the same. It freaks me out sometimes thinking about Mom being so far away… (Sherman & Sherman, 2009, p. 1)

> September 20: Iraq—The Other Side of the World
> Mom has been gone for two months now—we're doing OK but still trying to figure out who does what chores and how Destiny, Sasha, and I can get to all of our practices, games, and school stuff. Before Mom left we had a couple family activities—a short camping trip and movie night. It was fun but…I really miss Mom. It's so different without her.

Sometimes I can't watch TV when they show bombs, people getting hurt, and lots of homes and buildings being destroyed. It keeps me up at night—I have nightmares. I'm terrified Mom might get really hurt or, even worse, might not come home at all—what would I do without her? I can't believe she's over there—she seems so far away and sometimes I feel really alone. (Sherman & Sherman, 2009, p. 2)

April 18: Checking off the Days

New neighbors just moved in and they have two kids. They asked me to baby-sit which is perfect because I need the money. This deployment thing is getting really long—Mom's been gone 9 months now and she's missing much of my life. There's a mother-daughter lunch at church for Mother's Day next month—it really stinks that I have no one to go with. (Sherman & Sherman, 2009, p. 6)

August 13: Can't Wait to See Mom!

I cannot believe Mom will be home in a few days. I'm SO excited! We're cleaning the house like crazy. They've changed the homecoming date a few times which has been driving me insane. It's been a little over a year. Buses will bring all the soldiers to the armory downtown. There will be a group of us going to meet her, including Grandma and Grandpa. They've really missed Mom, too. We're gonna make Welcome Home signs. I'm actually pretty nervous about seeing her. I'm not sure what to wear. Will she look the same? Will she notice how I've grown? Will she like my new haircut? How will we get along? I've changed so much, and Mom has been gone for a long time—I'm worried we won't be as close as we were before. This is really awkward. I'm so nervous, but I can't wait to see my mom. (Sherman & Sherman, 2009, p. 7)

February 21: Family of Five Again

Mom's been home six months now, and I guess it's going OK. It's still hard to understand everything. We all changed when Mom was gone and now we are trying to get close as a family again. This may take a while. Even though it's good to be together again, I'm scared to death she may be sent back to Iraq. I've heard some people go back 2, 3, or even more times—I'm not sure I could handle that. It was so hard when Mom

was gone the first time…I can't imagine her being gone again. (Sherman & Sherman, 2009, p. 9)

As illustrated in Mariah's story, Army National Guard and Army Reserve families often see themselves in terms of a "family" and not a "military family." These families live and work together in communities, similar to their civilian counterparts. However, with the activation of Army National Guard and Army Reserve soldiers, these families likely undergo a shift in identity as they experience deployment. Now, they may feel as though they are part of a "military family." Mariah's story also illustrate the many factors—shifts in family roles, changes in household responsibilities, anxiety about the deployed parent's well-being, and nightmares—that can often be stressful in the lives of adolescents when they have a parent deployed. While some adolescents experience difficulties with academic performance, depression, irritability, and aggression, many are able to successfully cope with deployment (Huebner et al., 2010).

Chapter 2 - Adolescent Development: Normative Stressors

Adolescence is a period of development in which an individual transitions from being a child into an adult. Throughout this transition, adolescents are experiencing marked changes across biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional domains of development. These rapid and multiple changes experienced by all adolescents can result in a wide-range of normative stressors. Dealing with a deployed parent can pose an even greater challenge for adolescents as they progress through this period of development. For the purpose of this report, the age of adolescence will be defined as youth between the ages of 13 and 18 years of age. This age range was chosen because it encompasses youth in which many practitioners work with, especially with regard to the school setting and in youth-serving organizations such as the 4-H Youth Development program and Girls and Boys Clubs. Additionally, this age range covers youth who are not yet eligible to join the U.S. Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard.

Biological and Physical Domain

According to Boxer, Tobin-Richards, and Petersen (1983), pubertal development is "commonly consider to be a biologically-paced life event which marks the beginning of adolescence" (p. 85). In particular, during this stage of development a child's body is biologically changing into that of an adult's body. The rate at which these changes occur is "second only to the rate of growth occurring during infancy" (Boxer et al., 1983, p. 85).

Physical Changes

Boxer et al. (1983) stated that changes in hormone levels including testosterone and estrogen set into motion the changes that are associated with pubertal development. Children begin to develop secondary sex characteristics, including body hair, adult-sized bodies, breasts in girls and facial hair in boys. The process of developing these physical changes lasts for approximately four years and "begin and end about two years earlier for girls than for boys" (Boxer et al., 1983, p. 85). The first visible signs of pubertal development in girls include the growth of breasts as well as the presence of body hair. In addition, girls typically experience a growth spurt just prior to menarche (first menstruation). Boys, on the other hand, typically experience the growth of facial hair and voice deepening following the growth of pubic hair and

penis growth. Other changes during pubertal development include changes in height and weight, presence of acne, and the development of oil and sweat glands. Additionally, one of the major outcomes of puberty is the ability to reproduce. In girls, this reproductive ability is "marked by a menstrual period" (Boxer et al., 1983, p. 86), while in boys, this capacity is exhibited by the "ability to produce sperm and ejaculate seminal fluid" (Boxer et al., 1983, p. 86).

It is important to note that these biological changes do not occur in a single event. Instead, these changes occur over time and at a rate that can vary from individual to individual. For instance, "body hair may develop at the same rate and time as breasts in one girl, while in another, body hair may be developing at a much faster rate than breasts and be almost completed while breast development will continue for a few more years" (Boxer et al., 1983, p. 86). The unique body changes can be the cause of much stress or even confusion as adolescents mature at different rates. The support of caring adults is needed to help prepare youth to anticipate and understand this natural period of growth, in order to help them make a smooth transition into adulthood. If parental advice is limited or lacking, the adolescent may struggle in fully understanding the rapid physical changes they or their peers may be experiencing.

Brain Development

In addition to the physical changes described above, the adolescent brain is also experiencing further growth and development. In particular, the cortical areas of the brain continue to thicken and neural pathways become more efficient. Just prior to adolescence, there is an overproduction of gray matter or neurons and synapses in the brain, which peaks "at approximately 11 years of age in girls and 12 years of age in boys" (Johnson, Blum, & Giedd, 2009, p. 217). Following this proliferation, the brain becomes more efficient and refined as it goes through a pruning or a use-it-or-lose-it process (Giedd, 2008). During this process, the neurons and connections that are stimulated and strengthened survive, while those that are not exercised are eliminated. According to Johnson et al. (2009), the connections that survive become more proficient at communicating information through myelination. Myelin is a fatty material that is wrapped around neural axons, which acts as an insulator and allows "nerve impulses to travel throughout the brain more quickly and efficiently" (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 217). This pruning process and strengthening of neural connections continues throughout adolescence and "evidence suggests that, in the prefrontal cortex, this does not occur until the

early 20s or later" (Johnson et al., 2009, p. 217). Parents and caregivers can help adolescents "hard-wire" their growing brains by encouraging them to learn life skills and appropriate adult behavior through participation in an array of activities or opportunities. These learning experiences are important in helping to stimulate and strengthen connections in the brain (Giedd, 2008).

Giedd (2008) illustrated that one of the last areas of the brain to develop is the frontal lobe, and in particular, the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is responsible for coordinating higher level cognitive abilities and executive functioning. According to Johnson et al. (2009), executive functioning includes the "cognitive skills needed for goal-directed behavior, including planning, response inhibition, working memory, and attention" (p. 217). These cognitive skills assist individuals in the ability to evaluate a situation, consider possible options, and plan and carry out a course of action. The amygdala, on the other hand, which is the emotional center of the brain, matures before the prefrontal cortex (Giedd, 2008). As a result, adolescents may have difficulty in controlling their emotions because the areas of their brain responsible for response inhibition and emotional regulation are not yet fully developed. While the neural connections between the amygdala and the prefrontal cortex become denser during adolescence (Johnson et al., 2009), adolescents have not yet acquired the capacity to think like adults. This means that adolescents often make impulsive choices, rather than fully considering the possible consequences of their actions. Furthermore, while adolescents may appear to be cognitively sophisticated, they may make choices and take risks based on their emotions, rather than thinking through the potential outcomes of their decisions. As the areas of the brain involved in sound decision-making continue to mature, adolescents need parents and/or other caring adults to provide them with guidance in helping them to understand the potential impact of impulsive choices as well as their consequences.

Cognitive Domain

Unlike in infancy, adolescents are cognitively aware of the dramatic changes that they experience during pubertal development (Boxer et al., 1983). In his theory of cognitive development, Piaget (1970) stated that individuals develop cognitive thinking through four stages. In particular, cognitive development begins in infancy with the "sensorimotor stage" and continues to a more mature way of thinking in adolescence called "formal operational." As

individuals construct their understanding of the world, they use operations or mental actions. They "assimilate" or take in new information and make "accommodations" or changes in their existing schemata or cognitive structure. It is important to remember that Piaget (1970) stated that these stages have a "sequential property, that is, they appear in a fixed order of succession because each one of them is necessary for the formation of the following one" (p. 711). Even though all individuals progress through these cognitive stages in the same order, the rate at which one advances may be accelerated or delayed depending upon the individual's environment. Thus, maturation is a consequence of both biological factors as well as the quality of the environment around the adolescent.

According to Piaget (1972), the formal operational stage of thinking begins to appear during adolescence. During this stage, adolescents begin to be able to combine and classify information in abstract and sophisticated ways. Between the ages of approximately 11 and 15, "a whole series of novelties highlight the arrival of a more complete logic, that will attain a state of equilibrium once the child reaches adolescence at about 14/15 years" (Piaget, 1972, p. 41). During this stage of development, individuals transition from thinking logically in terms of the manipulation of concrete objects and real life events into being able to think abstractly and beyond the present. Piaget (1972) illustrated that an individual at this particular stage is capable of hypothetical reasoning and is interested in "problems that go beyond his immediate field of experience" (p. 42). The ability to think in these terms is a "decisive turning point because to reason hypothetically is to deduce the consequences that hypotheses necessarily imply" (Piaget, 1972, p. 41). More specifically, the adolescent begins to consider "what if" questions and "if-then" relationships as they think about possible outcomes or potential consequences to their actions. From a social perspective, hypothetical reasoning allows adolescents to understand others, construct theories, and participate in society. It is important to note that formal operational thinking does not occur all at once. Instead, it is a gradual process that occurs over time, between 11 and 18 years of age, and some individuals may never fully reach formal operational thinking. Consequently, the thinking of individuals early in the adolescent period is different from the thinking of individuals in later adolescence.

Socio-Emotional Domain

Socio-emotionally, adolescents may experience changes in their personality, emotions, relationships, and social interactions. They are continuing or extending their identity through interactions with their peers, parents, other adults, and institutions such as school and church to determine how they will fit into society. Peer relationships and the approval of others are also particularly important to the adolescent.

Identity

Erikson's (1963) theory of psychosocial development is marked by a series of eight stages that unfold across the human lifespan. Each stage consists of a crisis or conflict that each individual must resolve. Each crisis is "systematically related to all others" (Erikson, 1963, p. 271), which means that the resolution of each crisis subsequently impacts the resolution of future crises. These crises are viewed as turning points that require development to move in one direction or another for growth to occur. For instance, if the crisis is worked out in a satisfactory manner, then the positive quality becomes part of the individual's personality, thus enhancing the healthy resolution of future stages. However, if the crisis is resolved unsatisfactorily, then the negative quality is incorporated into the personality, which serves as the basis for and is integrated within future development.

Erikson (1963) identified the stage associated with adolescence as "identity versus role confusion." As adolescents make the transition from childhood to adulthood, they begin to question how the skills they have already developed will fit into the roles that they will play in the adult world. Rather than being concerned about what they think of themselves, adolescents rely heavily on the feedback of others, especially their peers, as they wonder who they are and what they want to become. The mind of the adolescent is "essentially a mind of *moratorium*" (Erikson, 1963, p. 262), or a psychological stage between "the morality learned by the child and the ethics to be developed by the adult" (Erikson, 1963, p. 263). While, initially, adolescents may experience mixed feelings about how they will fit into society, many are able to achieve a sense of who they are and where their lives are headed.

Marcia (1966) expanded on Erikson's work of identity formation during adolescence. There are two processes that are necessary in the formation of a mature identity—crisis and commitment. Crisis is defined as the "adolescent's period of engagement in choosing among

meaningful alternatives" (Marcia, 1966, p. 551), with respect to occupational choice, religion, and political ideology. Commitment, on the other hand, is the "degree of personal investment the individual exhibits" (Marcia, 1966, p. 551) in determining occupational goals, religious beliefs, or personal values. In utilizing these processes, four identity statues can emerge: identity achievement, identity diffusion, moratorium, and foreclosure. Identity achievement means that the individual has "experienced a crisis period and is committed to an occupation and ideology" (Marcia, 1966, p. 551). These individuals have spent time exploring choices and have reached a personal commitment to religious beliefs, personal values, and occupational goals. Furthermore, the individuals have made decisions on their own terms, "even though the ultimate choice may be a variation of parental wishes" (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). Identity diffusion means that the individual "may or may not have experienced a crisis period; his (sic) hallmark is a lack of commitment" (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). This individual does not appear to be concerned with making any commitments to any occupational goals, values, or beliefs. An individual in moratorium is actively trying to define his or her personal identity through experimentation of roles and beliefs, but his or her commitment remains vague. This individual is "distinguished from the identity-diffusion subject by the appearance of an active struggle to make commitments" (Marcia, 1966, p. 552). Individuals experiencing foreclosure have made personal commitments without having experienced crisis. Additionally, it may be "difficult to tell where his (sic) parents' goals are for him leave off and where his begin" (Marcia, 1966, p. 552).

Adolescents who are surrounded by caring adults who support the exploration process may be successful in these transitions. Adults who offer a variety of opportunities and possibilities to investigate, such as with regard to occupational roles, are helping adolescents as they formulate a positive identity. However, if adults limit or control the exploration process or are unwilling to provide opportunities for identity discovery, they may push an adolescent into premature commitments or no commitment. Additionally, adolescents may foreclose on an identity, without really taking time to explore several possibilities.

Moral Development

Moral reasoning abilities also develop as adolescents mature. Kohlberg's (1977) theory identifies three levels of moral development: preconventional or premoral, conventional or moral, and postconventional or autonomous. Individuals pass through these stages in an

invariant sequence. The stages also build as a hierarchy, which means that "thinking at a higher stage includes or comprehends within its lower stage thinking" (Kohlberg, 1977, p. 54). Most adolescents function at the conventional level (Muuss, 1996). According to Kohlberg (1977), at the conventional level, moral conflicts are "seen and resolved in group terms rather than individual terms" (p. 56). This level is divided into two stages—the "good boy-nice girl" orientation and the "law and order" orientation. In the "good boy-nice girl" orientation, individuals view good behavior as what is pleasing or helpful to others. Additionally, they may not behave in a particular way because it is necessarily the right thing to do, but because it wins the approval of their social group. The "law and order" orientation characterizes individuals as having a strong belief in rules and authority as well as maintaining social order. Individuals obey and respect laws in order to avoid punishment of legitimate authority. According to Muuss (1996), "moral rules and focus on duty becomes distinguishable from feelings of approval" (p. 183). At this important stage of development, parental direction is needed to help adolescents understand social expectations, aid in moral development, and help understand legitimate authority. It is important to note that Kohlberg's theory has been challenged by some researchers. Gilligan (1993) and Noddings (2003), for example, argued that the theory was written from a male perspective and reflected gender bias (Muuss, 1996). Consequently, Gilligan (1993) and Noddings (2003) argue that there is a need to consider how the approaches to moral reasoning are different for males and for females.

Effects/Impacts of Parental Deployment on Adolescent Development

Adolescence is a period of development in which individuals experience significant biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional changes. These changes often bring about normative stressors for adolescents as they deal with rapid body changes, search for how they will fit into society, or earn the approval of their peers. In addition, adolescents may experience non-normative stressors that go beyond the strain of normal development. Having a parent deployed to an active combat zone, for example, is considered to be a non-normative stressor (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). It is the coexistence of the normative and non-normative stressors that create cause for concern as a "pile-up of too many stressors has the potential to lead to adolescent adjustment problems" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 22).

When a parent is absent because of military deployment, the adolescent must cope with the stresses of normal development without the physical presence, support, and guidance of a parent or guardian. For example, advice and guidance may be limited or lacking from a parent who is deployed to help the adolescent understand the physical changes they experience during pubertal development. Additionally, a deployed parent may be unavailable to help direct or encourage important learning activities that can help promote active brain development or help the adolescent avoid risk-taking situations such as the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. And, finally, a deployed parent may not be at home to help support the exploration process as an adolescent develops his or her sense of identity. As a result, adolescents who have a parent deployed are at greater risk for poor adjustment if they do not receive adequate support, protection, and guidance as they cope with the normative stressors of adolescent development (Huebner & Mancini, 2005).

Chapter 3 - Understanding Army Culture

The U.S. Army is made up of three main components—Active Army, Army Reserve, and Army National Guard (Army National Guard, 2009). While each of these components has a slightly different organization, all soldiers serving in the Army work toward "protecting our national interests and supporting our friends and allies around the world (U.S. Army, 2011).

Generally, an individual is eligible to enlist in the U.S. Army if he or she is between the ages of 17 and 35, is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident alien, and is a high school senior or graduate (www.goarmy.com; www.arng.army.mil). Additionally, individuals must pass written and physical examinations and be in good moral standing. After enlistment, individuals participate in Basic Combat Training (BCT), and after completion they are considered soldiers. Throughout this training, individuals learn the Army's core values, how to work together as a team, and what it takes to succeed as a soldier. After completing BCT, soldiers attend Advanced Individual Training (AIT) where they learn skills necessary to complete their Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) or Army job. During AIT, soldiers receive instruction and gain field expertise to specialize in a particular career field.

Active Army and Army Reserve

Soldiers in the Active Army and Army Reserve work in tandem to protect and serve our county (www.goarmy.com). Active Army soldiers serve full-time. These servicemen and women typically live on or near a military base and receive daily military training (Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008). Their length of service can range from two to six years and they typically serve twelve months when deployed. However, the exact length of their deployment depends on their unit's specific mission. Army Reserve soldiers, on the other hand, serve part-time, which allows them to continue their civilian jobs or education and train near their home. These "citizen soldiers" usually spend one weekend a month training as well as completing a two week Field Training Exercise (FTX) each year. They usually serve three to six years, depending on their job and where their Army Reserve center is located. The reserve force may fill positions at home while active duty troops are deployed overseas or provide relief operations in the event of a natural disaster. In times of war, these troops may be called to full-

time active duty. However, their length of deployment may be somewhat longer as they must complete necessary training specific to their unit's mission before deploying overseas (Houston et al., 2009).

There are three categories of Active Duty and Army Reserve soldiers: enlisted soldiers, warrant officers, and commissioned officers (www.goarmy.com). Enlisted soldiers work under the direction of an officer as they perform specific job duties and responsibilities to carry out their unit's mission. Warrant officers are very skilled and highly organized soldiers. While gaining expertise in their career field, these officers provide leadership and guidance within their military specialty. In order to become a warrant officer, soldiers attend Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS). Following WOCS, these officers progress as a single specialty officer throughout their career. Commissioned officers, on the other hand, are soldiers who focus on increased levels of command and staff duty positions. More specifically, these officers have leadership skills and the ability to work as problem solvers and planners as they lead enlisted soldiers in all types of situations. There are four paths to becoming a commissioned officer. One option is for young men and women to complete a ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps.) while attending college. Upon graduation, ROTC cadets are commissioned as second lieutenants. Individuals who are professionals in fields such as medicine and religion with a college degree may be direct commissioned after completing an officer training program. Their career path determines their commissioned officer rank. The third path in which individuals can become a commissioned officer is by attending Officer Candidate School (OCS). After completion of OCS, college graduates are commissioned as second lieutenants. Lastly, individuals may attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in New York. Students at West Point work toward a college degree and learn about military culture and customs. Graduating cadets are commissioned as second lieutenants.

Army National Guard

Each state, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories of Guam, Virgin Islands, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico maintain their own Army National Guard component (Army National Guard, 2006). Each of these 54 Army National Guard units is unique because it has both a federal as well as a state mission. The federal mission is to "maintain well-trained, well-equipped units available for prompt mobilization during war and provide assistance during

national emergencies" (Army National Guard, 2006, p. 3). The U.S. President has the authority to federalize or call Army National Guard troops to full-time active duty either within their reserve component or to federal service. Examples of when Army National Guard troops have been federalized include deploying troops to Bosnia and Kosovo for stabilizing operations or deploying service members in locations around the world, including the Middle East, in the war on terrorism (Guard and Reserve Military Handbook, 2010). Under state law, the Army National Guard "provides protection of life and property and preserve peace, order, and public safety" (Army National Guard, 2006, p. 4). When not under federal control, Army National Guard units are directed by the governor of their respective state, territory, or commonwealth. The unit in the District of Columbia is commanded by the U.S. President. A governor may call troops to state active duty "during local or statewide emergencies, such as storms, fires, earthquakes, civil disturbances, or to support local law enforcement (Guard and Reserve Military Handbook, 2010, p. 4).

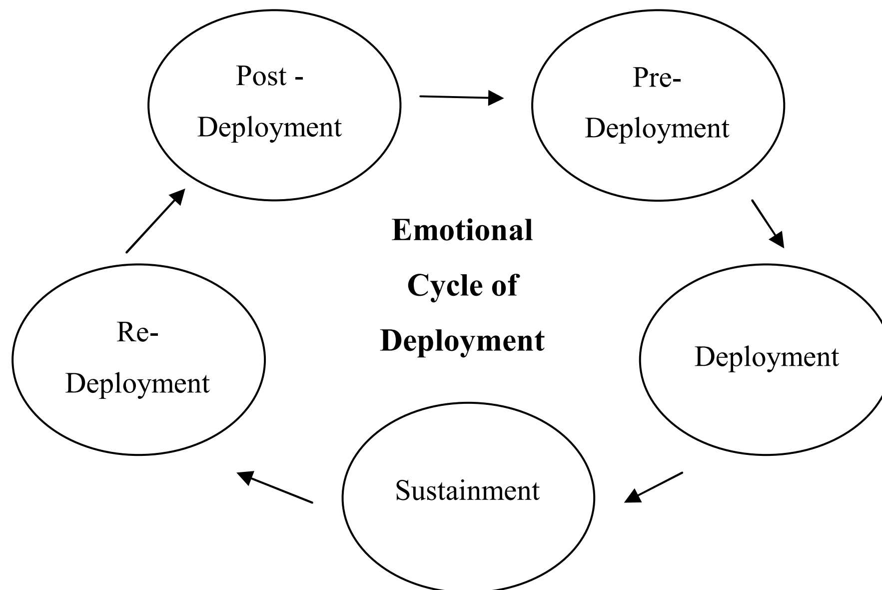
The Army National Guard is comprised of soldiers who serve their county, state, and community on a part-time basis (www.arng.army.mil). Similar to the training requirements of Active Army and Army Reserve troops, Army National Guard service members complete BCT and AIT. However, individuals planning to enlist in the Army National Guard may also attend a Recruit Sustainment Program (RSP) one weekend each month before leaving for BCT to learn about military life and prepare mentally and physically for their career in the military. After completing their necessary training, these "citizen soldiers" typically receive military training one weekend a month and two weeks during the summer (Army National Guard, 2009), while typically maintaining educational commitments or civilian employment.

There are three categories of officers in the Army National Guard: Basic Branch Officers, Specialty Officers, and Warrant Officers (www.nationalguard.com). Basic branch officers or commissioned officers serve in general management roles. These positions of authority are held by service members who have proven leadership skills and are willing to take on challenges and a high level of responsibility. A second category of officers is the specialty officer. These officers have professional skills such as doctors, lawyers, or chaplains. Like in the Active Army and Army Reserve, warrant officers have expertise within their military specialty. In order to become an officer in the Army National Guard, servicemen and women follow similar paths as those in the Active Army and Army Reserve.

Description of Emotional Deployment Cycle

When soldiers deploy, they and their families enter into an emotional cycle of deployment. The emotional cycle of deployment includes five phases: pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment, and post-deployment (Kudler & Straits-Troster, 2009; Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser, 2008; Pincus, House, Christensen, & Adler, 2004). Each of these five stages presents new challenges for the soldiers and their families as they experience periods of adjustment and readjustment. Furthermore, each deployment cycle "may be followed by preparation for still another" (Kudler & Straits-Troster, 2009, p. 64) and "families who successfully weather one phase may struggle in the next" (Kudler & Straits-Troster, 2009, p. 64).

Figure 3.1 Emotional Cycle of Deployment



Pre-Deployment

According to Pincus et al. (2004), the pre-deployment phase begins when a soldier receives notification for deployment and lasts until he or she actually deploys. The time frame of this particular stage of the deployment cycle can vary from several weeks to more than a year. Huebner and Mancini (2005) illustrated that during the pre-deployment phase, soldiers "prepare for war or other national emergencies by organizing their resources" (p. 9). Through their preparation, soldiers often experience increased field training and long hours away from home. Soldiers also strengthen bonds and camaraderie with the soldiers in their unit, which can be

beneficial in helping them to have a successful deployment. Pre-deployment preparation, however, can lead soldiers to be emotionally and physically distant from their families. During this phase, families must also prepare for life without the deployed family member. For example, families must make decisions about how to handle finances, employment, childcare, and social support (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Huebner and Mancini (2005) also illustrated that depending on the family's structure, plans may need to be made for adolescents to relocate and live with relatives or other guardians. If these individuals do not live nearby, this may mean that the adolescent has to change schools or leave friends behind. According to Pincus et al. (2004), issues that are left unresolved can create a cause for concern for soldiers as they deploy. For instance, a soldier who is preoccupied and worried about family issues may be inattentive and unable to completely focus on his or her responsibilities, which may lead to devastating consequences. Children and adolescents may also begin to develop feelings of uncertainty as they anticipate the loss of the physical presence of a parent. Furthermore, they may also wonder about what might happen to their deployed parent and whether or not they will return home safely.

Deployment

The second stage of the deployment cycle is the deployment phase. According to Pincus et al. (2004), this stage begins with the soldier's departure from home through the first month of his or her deployment. Huebner and Mancini (2005) defined deployment as when a service member becomes "geographically separated from his or her family" (p. 9). More specifically, soldiers relocate to where they will complete their mission with their assigned unit. According to Pincus et al. (2004), children, adolescents, and families in the deployment phase can often experience a rollercoaster of emotions. They may, for example, feel disoriented, overwhelmed, or even relief from not having to appear strong or brave. The departure of a loved one can also create a "hole" in which children and adolescents experience feelings of numbness, sadness, or even abandonment. These feelings may be especially prominent when the deployed parent misses important milestones and activities. Some of these events may include sports and school activities, birthdays, holidays, or even the birth of a younger brother or sister.

Sustainment

The third stage of the deployment cycle, sustainment, occurs during the second month of the soldier's deployment until about a month before the service member returns home. Pincus et al. (2004) highlighted that this is the longest phase of the deployment cycle, which can potentially last up to 18 months. During this stage, soldiers are in their assigned location with their military unit performing the duties and responsibilities in which he or she has prepared for prior to deployment. Pincus et al. (2004) identified that during this phase, families begin to establish new routines and sources of support. For example, families may rely on the Family Readiness Group (FRG), which is a support network that regularly meets to handle problems and disseminate information. Families may also seek support from relatives, close friends, and religious organizations. Chandra et al. (2010) highlighted that adolescents likely have to assume additional responsibilities as they may have more household chores and tasks such as caring for a younger brother or sister after school. As the time of deployment lengthens, families may begin to develop a sense of confidence and independence as they are able to cope with crises and make important decisions in the face of ongoing separation (Kudler & Straits-Troster, 2009). They may also begin to adjust to new family routines and find ways to deal with the changes that have resulted from the deployment. According to Pincus (2004), one of the challenges soldiers and their families experience during this stage of the deployment cycle is communication. Phone contact, for example, is typically unidirectional and must be initiated by the soldier. This can be frustrating for families as they wonder when they might hear from their loved one. Email, however, can be initiated by family members and provide a means for regular communication between the soldier and his or her family.

Re-Deployment

The fourth stage of the deployment cycle is re-deployment, which is defined as the month before the soldier is schedule to return home (Pincus et al., 2004). During this phase of the cycle, the soldiers are deploying again, but this time they are deploying from their assigned location where they have performed their duties and responsibilities to their home station. The exact return date of a soldier may change repeatedly or members of a soldier's unit may even return home at different times over a period of several days. This can be extremely frustrating for both the soldier as well as his or her family members as they await the return. Pincus et al.

(2004) characterized this period of the deployment cycle as one of intense anticipation. Just as in the deployment phase, families in the re-deployment stage may experience a variety of emotions. For example, adolescents may feel very excited to see their parent return; however, they may also have feelings of apprehension as they wonder how the deployed parent will fit back into the family structure and accept the changes that have taken place while he or she was gone. Another characteristic of the re-deployment stage is that families may hurry to finish or complete a variety of tasks in preparation for the soldier's return home. Re-deployment is definitely a time of uncertainty, anticipation, and change.

Post-Deployment

According to Pincus et al. (2004), the last stage of the deployment cycle, post-deployment, begins when the soldier returns home and may last for three to six months. Initially, a soldier's homecoming (sometimes referred to as the honeymoon period) can be an exciting and joyous time for families. This period, however, can also be a challenging and frustrating experience. Soldiers may find this period difficult as they attempt to reestablish their roles and routines as they reintegrate back into family life as well as their community (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Pincus et al., 2004). Additionally, Army Reserve and Army National Guard soldiers may have concerns about coming back to civilian employment (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Some of the tension that comes with the post-deployment period is that the soldier's return may upset the balance that has been established in the family while he or she has been gone. His or her role in the family may need to be renegotiated as he or she "may feel like they are no longer needed" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 10). In particular, adolescents who have assumed new responsibilities may be hesitant to relinquish their new roles, which may create strains on the family. Furthermore, adolescents may appear to be moody and may want to remain loyal to the non-deployed parent, which can impact attempts to discipline from the returning soldier (Pincus et al., 2004). The reunification of families may be difficult as they have to "contend with relating to the deployed parent again as well as any physical, mental, or emotional changes" (Chandra et al., 2010, p. 221) that may have occurred during the deployment.

Considerations for Army National Guard and Army Reserve Families

As illustrated by the emotional cycle of deployment, the deployment of a family member can be stressful and put strain on families as they deal with uncertainty, establish new routines, and renegotiate roles. These deployments, however, may be particularly challenging for Army National Guard and Army Reserve families. Unlike Active Army families, these families are typically not integrated into active duty military life because they do not live on or near a military base or installation. Instead, they have traditionally held part-time commitments to the military and may not have defined themselves in terms of a "military family" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Consequently, these families may experience unprecedented lifestyle changes because they may not be accustomed to having a family member away from home for a long period of time. These families may also have limited access to support services, military benefits, or other families in the community who can relate to having a family member deployed. As a result, Army National Guard and Army Reserve families may experience deployment in isolation (Harrison & Vannest, 2008).

Chapter 4 - Challenges of Parental Deployment and Adolescents

Adolescents living in Army National Guard and Army Reserve families may be particularly vulnerable during parental deployment. In particular, adolescents are dealing with the normative stressors associated with adolescent development while they and their families are also experiencing the strains of deployment with potentially limited support services. Even though many adolescents may successfully cope during deployment (Huebner & Mancini, 2005), there are factors that can put them at risk for poor adjustment. In 2005, Huebner and Mancini published a study to "explore the many dimensions of deployment experiences of adolescents in military families" (p. 12). Approximately 100 adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 participated in the study. Adolescents responded to a series of structured questions regarding feelings and experiences with parental deployment. All military branches were represented in the study. The results of this study were used to help provide a framework for understanding common themes in the literature with regard to adolescents and parental deployment.

Parental Deployment Factors that Influence Adolescent Development

The term resilience has been defined as "a positive outcome in the context of adversity" (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008, p. 30) and centers on the study of "protective factors that may be associated with positive adjustment despite exposure to risk factors" (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008, p. 30). Risk factors are defined as individual or environmental factors that can negatively affect normal healthy development. Additionally, single factors are rarely enough to put an individual at significant risk for poor adjustment; rather it is a cumulative effect of the presence of several risk factors (Condly, 2006). Protective factors, on the other hand, are the characteristics of the individual and his or her environment that reduce the possibility of negative effects on normal development (Vanderbilt-Adriance & Shaw, 2008). Additionally, "just as an increasing number of risk factors exponentially elevates the potential for negative outcomes, an increasing number of protective resources exponentially facilitates resilient outcomes" (Cicchetti & Rogosh, 2002, p. 16). Following is a description of the challenges that may be present in the lives of adolescents as they experience parental deployment. Additionally,

protective factors are presented that can help mitigate those challenges, thus helping adolescents to positively adjust to the deployment experience.

Challenges to Academic Success

"The first day he after he [dad] left, it was like no one wanted to do anything. We just wanted to sit in the house and stare at the wall…my grades were slipping and they are now too. All D's and I get in trouble a lot more" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 31).

The deployment of a parent can pose challenges for adolescents and their academic success. To illustrate, Huebner and Mancini (2005) found that many adolescents reported "that their grades worsened as a result of a lack of concentration, having less time for homework due to increases in other responsibilities or the fact that the deployed parent was not there to enforce completion" (p. 30). Additionally, some non-deployed parents may not have the time or energy to assist with homework assignments, which often results in students turning in incomplete assignments, if any at all (Richardson et al., 2011). The extra responsibilities that adolescents take on as a result of a parent's deployment can also negatively impact academic success as some adolescents may be too busy doing household tasks to complete homework (Chandra et al., 2010). It is important to note that Richardson et al. (2011) found that youth who had a parent deployed nineteen months or longer had lower scores on achievement tests as compared to those who had experienced a shorter or no parental deployment. A protective factor that can help diminish the potential for poor academic performance as a result of parental deployment is when the non-deployed parent places a high value on education (Chandra et al., 2010). If, for example, the at-home parent establishes routines and expectations for completing homework assignments, it is more likely the adolescent's academic success will not suffer as a result of a parent's deployment.

Challenges to Positive Behavior

"When my dad left, I stayed separate from the family. I would really keep to myself. I hid my feelings because when my dad left…And so I was taking on more and more responsibilities and I was taking charge so I tried to hide my feelings because my mom and my sister were constantly crying and stuff so I was always trying to comfort them. And I couldn't show any emotion for that because I had to be the strong one. I was hiding my emotions at

certain times then always lashing out at certain people that maybe I shouldn't have been" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 30).

Having a parent deployed can also result in adolescents exhibiting negative behaviors. For example, adolescents may have difficulty in expressing their emotions as they adjust to a parent's deployment (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, Mmari et al., 2009). Additionally, while some adolescents have reported holding in their emotions to protect family members who were also emotional (Huebner & Mancini, 2005), others exhibited negative behaviors (Mmari et al., 2009). School staff members have also reported that boys and girls often cope with parental deployment in different ways (Richardson et al., 2011). More specifically, in boys "anger and aggression were more common, whereas for girls, somatic complaints and internalizing behaviors such as depression were more prevalent" (Chandra et al., 2010, p. 221). Additionally, Huebner and Mancini (2005) found that some adolescents described that after their parent had deployed, they were quick to anger, experienced changes in sleeping and eating patterns, worried about their parent's safety, and had to act older to help or protect their family. There are several factors that help mitigate the emotional stress that adolescents often experience as a result of parental deployment, thus leading to better overall adjustment. These include exercise or the participation in physical activity such as team sports, use of distractions including listening to music or playing with pets, confiding in friends, or having a supportive at-home parent (Huebner & Mancini, 2005).

It is also important to consider ambiguous loss when discussing military deployment. Ambiguous loss is "by definition uncertain, vague, unclear, and indeterminate" (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007, p. 112). While the adolescent and their family are not dealing with the actual death of a deployed parent, they are experiencing a "loss" that is often unclear and difficult to understand. For instance, when a service member deploys, adolescents and families may find that the deployed parent is psychologically present, but physically absent. Even after the service member returns home, the family may still feel a "loss" because the soldier may be physically present, but psychologically distant. As Boss (2006) illustrated "we do not necessarily disconnect from loved ones just because they are physically gone, nor do we always connect to people just because they are physically present at home or in our daily lives" (p. 2).

According to Huebner et al. (2007), the only thing that is certain "about the deployment of a service member during a war in an era of terrorism is uncertainty from beginning to end" (p. 113). With a parent is serving in an active combat zone, adolescents are aware that their parent is often in harm's way, but they do not know at any one time how close she or he is to danger. This creates uncertainty and cause for concern regarding their parent's safety. Adolescents are also cognitively "aware of the possibility of losing a parent permanently through death or of a parent returning home maimed or incapacitated" (Huebner et al, 2007, p. 113). As a result, adolescents may wonder how their parents might have changed as a result of the deployment and how they will be when they return home. Furthermore, while a parent may be physically unharmed, the adolescent may question how the parent might be mentally or emotionally different. The added stress of uncertainty and unpredictability regarding parental deployment may impede healthy development and create cause for concern for negative adolescent adjustment.

Dealing with Media and Technology

"Media makes you feel worse because you hear about all the people that are being killed and stuff, so you worry about whether my dad could get killed" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 23).

"It makes you feel special when you get an email, you know, instead of just a blank page or nothing at all" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 42)

Adolescents are cognitively aware of what it means to have a parent deployed to an active combat zone. They also understand the potential for death or that a parent may sustain significant injuries, which increases uncertainty and unpredictability for the adolescent. This understanding is "reinforced on a daily basis because of explicit media coverage of war events" (Huebner et al., 2007, p. 113). This media coverage, which often includes graphic stories and pictures, can increase anxiety and stress for adolescents (Mmari et al., 2009). Additionally, many adolescents have reported that media coverage of the Global War on Terrorism has generated a cause for concern as they worry about their parent's safety (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Technology, however, can be a positive influence for adolescents. To illustrate, Mmari et al. (2009) found that parents reported the use of Web cams, email, and social media have

helped make a deployed parent feel closer to home. Not only do these forms of technology assist with communication, but they make images of family members available to both the adolescent as well as the deployed parent.

Influence of Non-Deployed Parent Mental Health

"My mom acts different, too, when my dad's gone. It's like she's not her normal self. She's kind of like stressed out and stuff. And her stressed out affects on me too" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 32).

"Well another change is since my dad left, my mom has been able to adapt and kind of do what she normally and what my dad does" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 33).

The mental health of the at-home parent can influence how well an adolescent adjusts to parental deployment (Chandra et al., 2010; Harrison & Vannest, 2008; Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Mmari et al., 2009). If, for example, the non-deployed parent exhibits signs of depression, is quick to anger, and is often stressed-out, it is likely that the adolescent will exhibit similar qualities, thus putting them at risk for poor adjustment (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Additionally, Chandra et al. (2010) found that some adolescents may even become the emotional partner of the non-deployed parent. As a result, adolescents experience increased stress and anxiety as they provide support and comfort to their at-home caregiver. Adolescent well-being and academic engagement (Chandra et al., 2009) as well as potential emotional difficulties and behavioral issues (Harrison & Vannest, 2008) have been associated with the non-deployed parent's inability to cope with the military separation.

The mental health of the at-home caregiver, however, can serve as a protective factor for the adolescent. If the non-deployed parent adjusts well to family life, routines, and roles while her or his spouse is deployed, the likelihood that the adolescent will also be able to adjust to the deployment increases (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). To illustrate, Mmari et al. (2009) found that adolescents who were emotionally supported by the at-home parent were able to adjust to the deployment experience. It is important to remember that "parents can role model both positive and negative behaviors, both of which will be reflected in the adolescent" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 32).

Challenge of Deployment

"I have seen kids go from totally lost after the first round of deployment to picking themselves up and living day-to-day. It becomes a new 'normal'" (Chandra et al., 2010, p. 221).

As previously discussed, the Global War on Terrorism has resulted in the deployment of a large number of troops to active combat zones. Additionally, because the current conflict is being fought with an all-volunteer force, many troops have deployed multiple times. Chandra et al. (2010) highlighted that since 2001, more than "800,000 parents have deployed with the U.S. military, most to Iraq and Afghanistan, with more than 212,000 deploying twice, and 103,000 deploying three or more times" (p. 210). Chandra et al. (2010) found that many adolescents were able to positively adjust to these repeated deployments. Additionally, school staff members have reported that while some youth initially exhibit a decline in academic performance, they were able to organize themselves and perform well. For example, "some students have learned skills from the first deployment that have strengthened their abilities to cope and function well for subsequent deployments" (Chandra et al., 2010, p. 221). While these deployments may become routine for some students, it is important to note, however, that the ability of students to successfully cope may be weakening. More specifically, the emotional resolve of adolescents to handle parental deployments is being hampered by the extended and multiple deployments (Richardson et al., 2011). As a result, adolescents may become more apathetic or less engaged in school (Chandra et al., 2010).

Response to Shifts in Roles and Responsibilities

"So when they try to come back and like, you know…try to help you do things you already know and you've been doing it. It's a ritual day after day. They [deployed parents] come and try to change things. It's kind of difficult" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 35).

"His promotion to me is man of the house" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 28).

Families often experience shifts in roles and household responsibilities as a parent deploys and reintegrates back into family life. In fact, Mmari et al. (2009) found that these changes in roles and responsibilities were "one of the most prominent sources of stress and anxiety of parental deployment" (p. 471). Huebner and Mancini (2005), for example, identified

that adolescents may take on additional responsibilities of caring for younger siblings, having more household chores, and being responsible for tasks typically assumed by the deployed parent. These extra responsibilities can often interfere with the youth's extracurricular activities due to time constraints, scheduling conflicts, or financial concerns. Furthermore, these extra household responsibilities may result in an adolescent's inability to complete homework assignments or often being tired after caring for his or her younger siblings (Chandra et al., 2010). The greatest stress, however, occurs when the deployed parent returns home (Mmari et al., 2009). This is because the adolescent's roles and responsibilities usually change once again. Additionally, adolescents may have to give up newly acquired tasks as the deployed parent integrates back into the family unit. These concerns are often coupled with the fact that adolescents must become reacquainted with the returning parent as well as his or her parenting style, which may be different from the parenting style of the at-home parent (Chandra et al., 2010; Mmari et al., 2009).

These shifts in family roles and responsibilities can often be stressful for the adolescent and put her or him at risk for poor adjustment as she or he copes with parental deployment. If handled appropriately, however, these changes can bring about growth in adolescents. For example, Mmari et al. (2009) identified that adolescents were prepared to handle the stress that often accompanies the shift in roles and responsibilities if the family took time to discuss the changes before the parent deployed. Additionally, adolescents seemed to cope if families established a sense of "normalcy" during the deployment by sticking to routines and schedules. This included making sure youth went to scheduled activities, establishing a regular dinnertime, and making time for homework. Some adolescents even reported that they had matured as a result of their newly acquired responsibilities (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Additionally, some adolescents take pride in their family roles, which has "enabled them to grow up faster and therefore be more responsible and dependable" (Mmari et al., 2009, p. 464).

Access to Support Networks

"I usually do a lot of school sports…but now with this [deployment] I don't have transportation very often to go to those activities and I usually have to skip them…Since my dad's deployed, track season started, and I really wanted to run track" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 28).

"I do confide in my friends a lot more than I did before" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 38).

"Well I made new friends. I've met new friends talking about the soldiers and stuff because at our school we have a military kids club" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 40).

As discussed above, many adolescents living in Army National Guard and Army Reserve families may have limited access to support services and networks. In turn, this may put adolescents at risk for poor adjustment as they experience parental deployment. Chandra et al. (2010) found that school staff members reported that youth in Army National Guard and Army Reserve families often lacked "a support network within their school that understood the military experience" (p. 220). Additionally, because Army National Guard and Army Reserve families are not clustered around military installations, youth may not have peers who share similar military experiences (Richardson et al., 2011). As a result, "under these conditions, a parent deployment can be an extremely isolating experience" (Chandra et al., 2010, p. 220). The access to both informal as well as formal support networks can, however, be considered as a protective factor for adolescents experiencing military deployment. According to Huebner and Mancini (2005), adolescents reported having someone to talk to and participate in activities with helped in releasing tension and diverting their attention from worrying about their parent who was deployed. Many adolescents also identified that having access to other military youth was helpful because they understood their feelings and experiences. Additionally, adolescents valued having adults in formal organizations such as schools, religious organizations, or youth centers who "had some experience with the military lifestyle, and consequently were more likely to open up to them" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 39).

Summary of Challenges and Protective Factors

In summary, there are many factors that can be challenging for adolescents as they experience parental deployment. This include the limited access to support services and networks, the inability of the non-deployed parent to cope with his or her spouse's deployment, media exposure to war events, and shifts in family roles and household responsibilities. The presence of these challenges may result in poor academic performance, inability to express emotions, irritability, changes in eating or sleeping patterns, feelings of isolation, and constant

worry about parent's safety. Protective factors, on the other hand, can help to mitigate these challenges. For example, an emotionally supportive at-home parent, participation in extracurricular activities, use of technology to feel closer to the deployed parent, others to confide in, and the important value placed on education are factors that can help adolescents positively adjust to parental deployment. As the non-normative stressors associated with parental deployment are layered on top of the normative stressors of adolescent development, it is important to remember that adolescents need caring adults and support networks to help increase their ability to cope.

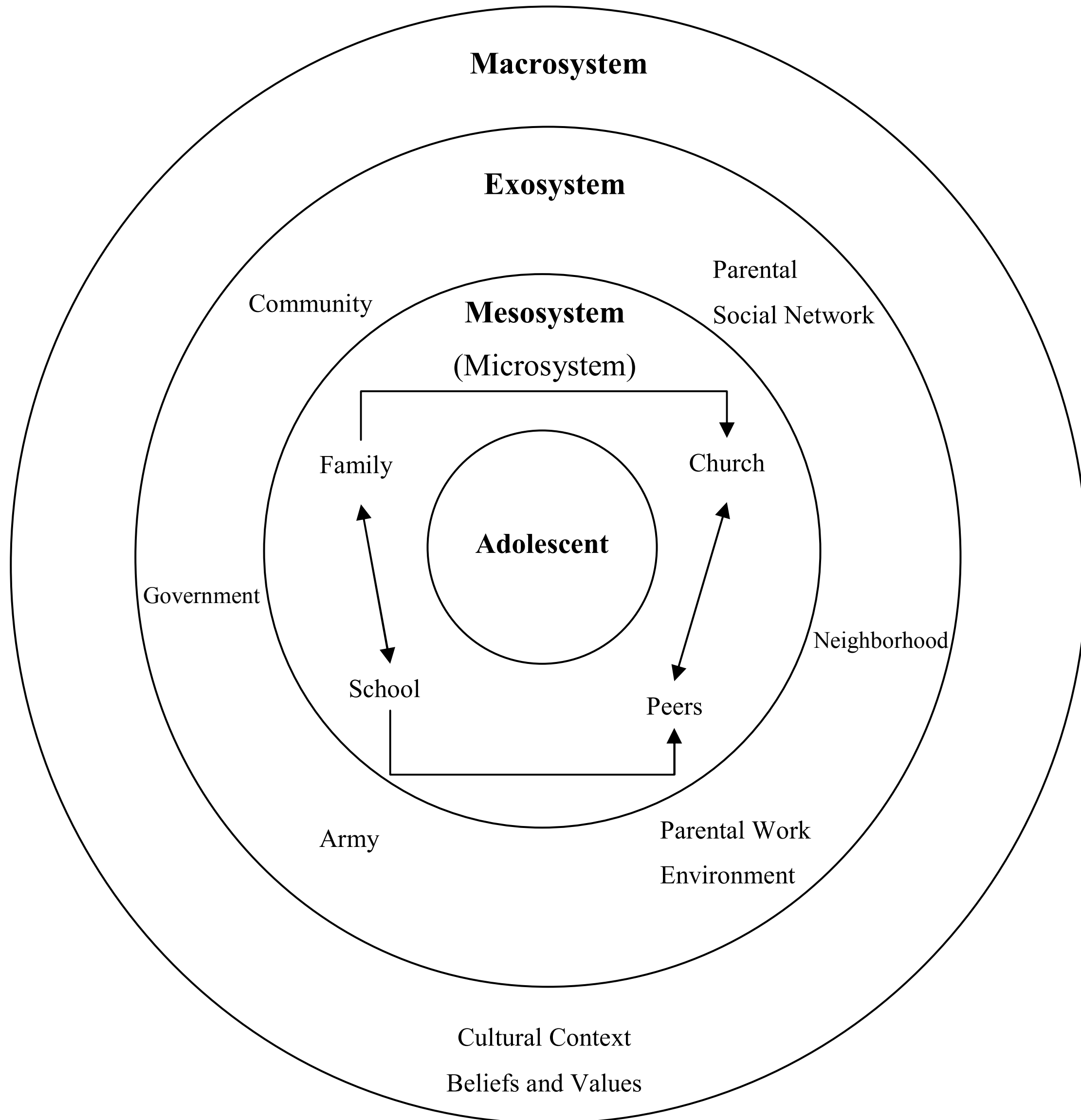
Chapter 5 - Implications for Adolescent Development

A systematic approach is necessary to increase adolescent resiliency. A network of support is vital in helping adolescents positively adjust to the deployment experience. This chapter will utilize Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory as a framework to identify elements in the environment that can positively impact adolescents as they cope with parental deployment. Areas in which additional research is needed will also be identified and discussed.

Bronfenbrenner's Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1986) bioecological theory examines development in terms of the relationships between the person and his or her environment. There are "different environmental systems that can serve as sources of external influence" (p. 723). These systems include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. The microsystem includes variables or immediate settings that directly involve the individual, such as families, schools, and religious institutions (Muuss, 1996). The interactions between the microsystems make up the mesosystem. For example, the events that take place at home may influence an adolescent's ability perform in school. These "processes operating in different settings are not independent of each other" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723). The exosystem describes the environment that impacts development but does not directly involve the individual. Examples of these influences include parental work environments, parental social networks, and the community. The macrosystem contains the values and beliefs of the culture in which an individual grows up (Muuss, 1996). The ecological theory provides a way of thinking in terms of context and how both direct and indirect influences can shape development.

Figure 5.1 Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Theory



Parent's Role

As part of the microsystem, the non-deployed parent or guardian has a direct impact on the well-being of the adolescent. More specifically, by maintaining a positive outlook and attitude, the at-home parent can play a vital role in helping the adolescent to cope with parental deployment. If the non-deployed parent is having difficulty coping with the separation from his or her spouse and exhibits signs of sadness, depression, and anger, there is a greater likelihood that adolescents will display similar characteristics. Parents may be "unaware of how closely

adolescents monitor and mirror parent's emotions and behaviors" (Huebner & Mancini, 2005, p. 33). It is important to encourage non-deployed parents to care for their own emotional health. This can be achieved by utilizing self-care methods such as getting proper nutrition, exercise, and adequate sleep. Also, at-home parents should seek support systems such as connecting with other parents in similar situations, which can provide an important respite during stressful times (Huebner & Mancini, 2005).

Non-deployed parents can also assist adolescents by establishing a sense of "normalcy." This can be achieved by maintaining family rituals, establishing family routines, and sticking to schedules. In particular, maintaining schedules and consistent expectations surrounding school activities and homework will assist youth in achieving academic success (Chandra et al., 2010). Parents can provide healthy outlets and opportunities for adolescents to relieve stress, such as encouraging them to participate in extracurricular activities or spend time with friends (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). At-home parents can also help adolescents find ways to share missed milestones or family events with the deployed parent when he or she returns. This may include creating a family scrapbook or taking pictures and videos. Mmari et al. (2009) illustrated that "family routines facilitate the organization of daily life and provide structure and family cohesion for the developing person" (p. 472).

Many adolescents take on additional household responsibilities as a result of parental deployment. In order to help adolescents adjust, parents should discuss how family roles and household responsibilities will likely change when the deployed parent is away. Parents need to make sure that the household tasks taken on by youth are developmentally appropriate. It will also be important to maintain realistic expectations for completing those tasks. In addition, parents may want to consider opportunities for youth to take skill-building classes to help them feel better prepared to take on new responsibilities such as taking a babysitting or cooking class (Huebner & Mancini, 2005).

School's Role

Another important context to consider in the adolescent's microsystem is the school setting. Because adolescents spend much of their time in school, it is necessary to look at the school's role in helping adolescents positively cope with parental deployment. In some situations, the school may become a comfortable refuge for youth in light of the instability that

they may be experiencing in their home setting. For instance, school staff members have reported that "students often stay after school for long periods because the school is seen as a 'safe place' for engaging with teachers and peers, and allows them to limit their time at home" (Chandra et al. 2010, p. 222). Even though the family setting and the school setting are part of the microsystem, when these two settings interact, they become part of the mesosystem. As illustrated, events that occur in the family setting can impact experiences in the school setting, and vice versa. This interaction highlights the need for parents to keep schools and teachers informed about home situations such as the deployment of a parent. Likewise, school personnel need to keep parents updated about their adolescent's behavior and academic performance.

School personnel have reported that "they did not have adequate information about the military and deployment status of the parents of the children at the school or about how to best help children and their families who are struggling with parental deployment" (Richardson et al., 2011, p. 70-71). Therefore, school staff should be educated about military culture and the potential impact that deployment can have on youth. It is also necessary to help educators identify strategies for assisting adolescents learn to positively cope with parental deployment as well as recognize changes in behavior or school performance (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Guidance counselors are often seen as key support individuals for adolescents and need additional training on what to look for in youth who are having difficulties coping with parental deployment (Mmari et al., 2009).

Additional training may be needed to help educators with non-deployed parents as well. Because of the stress of added responsibilities and coping with their situation, at-home parents may lack the time or energy to help adolescents with schoolwork. As a result, homework assignments may be incomplete or nonexistent. School staff members have "expressed frustration in repeatedly trying to contact parents, or in parents not showing up for parent-teacher conferences or meetings regarding student academic issues" (Richardson et al., 2011, p. 36). It is important to provide educators with training in working with parents as well as help them to better understand deployment experiences. This will ultimately help both the school staff as well as the family to have a positive school experience.

Community's Role

A part of the exosystem, the community in which a family lives has a direct as well as an indirect influence on adolescents. As discussed above, many Army National Guard and Army Reserve families may feel a sense of isolation because they typically live away from military installations and have limited access to support services. Mmari et al. (2009) found that "stressors may in fact be greater for military children who live in predominantly nonmilitary communities, where there are few peers with parents in similar situations" (p. 472). One way communities can assist adolescents is by promoting community events and activities that bring Army National Guard and Army Reserve youth together such as summer camps or recreational events (Houston et al., 2009). These opportunities provide a way for youth to interact and share their deployment experiences. Communities can also support adolescents by encouraging their participation in youth-serving organizations such as 4-H, Girls and Boys clubs, and Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (Huebner & Mancini, 2005). These opportunities provide youth with a way to receive formal support that can complement the support they receive from their family and peers.

Informal methods of support can also assist adolescents and their families to positively adjust to having a family member deployed. Huebner and Mancini (2005) illustrated that "support received from family members, friends, and others not connected with a support service or program can be invaluable for providing opportunities for adolescents to deal with concerns associated with a parent's deployment" (p. 37). When a family member deploys, the at-home parent may begin to feel as if she or he is living life as a single parent. Without the physical presence of a spouse, at-home parents take on the responsibility for caring for children and the household on their own. This may be an unprecedented experience for many Army National Guard and Army Reserve families who are not accustomed to having a family member deployed. As a result, communities can provide these families with informal support by offering activities including providing a means of transportation, helping adolescents get to school and extracurricular activities, or assisting with household tasks typically completed by the deployed parent.

A community support program entitled Essential Life Skills for Military Families was developed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Administration for Children and Families addresses the need for strengthening military families living in civilian communities (Huebner, Mancini, Bowen, & Orthner, 2009). In particular, it focuses on the skills

that these families need to help them cope with the challenges and uncertainties that often accompany military life. The intention of the curriculum is to "create a local partnership between a key community support organization (Cooperative Extension) and military families who may be coming to the course from different military branches of the National Guard and Military Reserves" (Huebner et al., 2009, p. 225). The program is taught in a series of five three-hour workshops on topics including money management, legal issues, parenting, and preparing for the unexpected. Through their involvement in the program, participants receive both formal as well as informal sources of support. Not only are they able to formally learn practical as well as relationship skills, they also have the opportunity to build an informal network of support with other participants that can be fostered following the conclusion of the program.

Cooperative Extension Service's Role

The author is employed by K-State Research and Extension. K-State Research and Extension is a partnership between Kansas State University and federal, state, and local government (www.ksre.ksu.edu). Through this partnership, research-based information is disseminated from the university to local clientele. This is accomplished through the use of Extension agents and educational programming in four areas: Family and Consumer Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Community Development, and 4-H Youth Development. Just as many Army Reserve and Army National Guard families are spread across the state, Extension offices and staff are located in every county in Kansas. By being located in local communities, this provides K-State Research and Extension with an opportunity to support adolescents living in military families, especially those living away from military installations. Local Extension offices are routinely seen as the place to go for information and to get answers for their many questions. The Extension staff also work county-wide and are aware of special or unique resources in their communities. Furthermore, because Extension staff live in the communities where they work, they are often well-known and have well-developed networks of working relationships that can assist them in their educational efforts.

Currently, K-State Research and Extension is a partner in a program called Kansas Operation: Military Kids (OMK) (www.kansasomk.org). As part of the National Operation Military Kids program, this collaborative effort of national, state, and local partners was launched in 2005 to support children and youth in military families. In 2009, over 150,000 youth

participated in OMK activities and experiences in 49 states and the District of Columbia (www.operationmilitarykids.org). OMK focuses on building community connections through "formal networks to promote and strengthen informal networks to the benefit of National Guard and Reserve families experiencing deployment" (Huebner et al., 2009, p. 222). Youth involved with OMK have opportunities to interact with other youth experiencing parental deployment, participate in recreational, social, and educational programs, gain leadership, organizational, and technical skills, and receive assistance with school issues.

One initiative offered through OMK is Operation Military Hero Pack which is a tangible way for communities to support military families. Through this project "hero packs" are filled by non-military youth and organizations with items that can assist youth in staying connected to their deployed parent. Packs include a handwritten letter of appreciation and encouragement, communication tools such as a journal or scrapbook, and a fun item such as a stuffed animal. This service project helps raise awareness in communities and fosters support for military families, especially those who are geographically dispersed and live away from military installations. A second program available through OMK is Ready, Set, Go! Trainings. These two hour programs can be led by an Extension agent and feature a short lecture, group building activities, and opportunities to brainstorm ways in which communities can show their support to military families. In short, the OMK initiative is a good example of the types of programs that the Extension Service can do to raise community awareness about military life, culture, and deployment as it may impact military youth and their families.

In communities where formal OMK programs do not exist, Extension agents are in the position to facilitate similar initiatives to support military families. Extension agents have expertise in volunteer management and leadership development and, in Kansas, are encouraged to provide education in the areas of community development. Agents also have the support from state specialists for educational resources and programming. By working with community organizations such as chambers of commerce, religious organizations, and parent-teacher associations, Extension staff can assist local planning groups in identifying military families as well as in setting goals and brainstorming ideas for supporting those families. While the Cooperative Extension Service may be structured somewhat differently in other states, the implications for raising awareness and supporting adolescents living in Army National Guard and Army Reserve families is relevant across the nation.

United States Army's Role

The U.S. Army, which is also part of the adolescent's exosystem, can play an indirect role in helping an adolescent to exhibit resiliency in the wake of parental deployment. This is true for families living on military installations as well as families living in civilian communities. By providing support to military families and helping them cope with adversity and challenges faced during deployment, the U.S. military is also supporting the deployed soldier. To illustrate, when a soldier is less worried about his or her family at home, he or she is better able to focus and carry out their duties and responsibilities abroad. In the past, much of the military support for families has been directed at families living on or near military installations. Currently, the military is looking at the need to provide more support to military families living in predominately non-military communities. This was highlighted by Huebner et al. (2009), "a large portion of the current military population comprises service members from National Guard and Reserve, it is important to expand the vision of formal support systems to include those agencies and organizations located outside of military installations" (p. 219). A primary way in which the Army supports youth living in Army National Guard and Army Reserve families is through the development and implementation of programs within civilian communities. Two of these programs include Operation Military Kids (discussed above) and National Guard Youth ChalleNGe.

National Guard Youth ChalleNGe, is a program designed to intervene in the lives of youth between the ages of 16 and 18 who are high school dropouts or expellees, unemployed, drug-free, and not currently on parole, probation or facing criminal charges or sentencing (www.ngycp.org). Its purpose is to lead, train, and mentor at-risk youth and help them develop values, life skills, education, and self-discipline in order to become successful and productive citizens. The program consists of a 22 week residential phase followed by a year-long mentorship with specially trained members of the youth's community. Since the program's introduction in 1993, over 100,000 youth have graduated with 60% receiving their high school diploma or GED and just over 50% have entered the workforce.

The challenge that comes with the implementation of these programs is connecting them to military families and youth. Houston et al. (2009) explained that "although National Guard or active duty services may be available to help with some of the causes of family stressors resulting from deployment, not all National Guard family members may be aware of these

services" (p. 810). Additionally, as discussed above, school teachers and administrators have identified a need to better understand military culture as well as ways to help families and adolescents cope with parental deployment. For example, the use of liaisons between the Army and school setting may better assist in connecting youth and families to needed programs and services.

Where Do We Go From Here?

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment (Figure 3.1) provides an overview of the experiences that adolescents and their families experience when a parent or guardian deploys. While it helps in raising awareness and gaining a better understanding of parental deployment, it does not encompass all of the complexities that adolescents and their families experience. More research is needed to explore the impact that parental deployment can have on adolescents. For instance, much of the research focuses on deployment from the perspective of having a father deployed. It is important to also consider how having a mother deployed might affect adolescents. Additionally, research is needed to identify the unique factors for adolescents who have duel parents involved in the military, especially when both of these parents are deployed at the same time. Research evidence suggests that there is a weakening in resiliency for some adolescents as they as they experience the repeated deployments of a parent (Chandra et al., 2010). It is necessary to look at what factors might be influencing this trend and what specific services are needed to bolster adolescents and their families.

Concluding Remarks

Today's military family is different from the military family of the past because families are currently experiencing repeated deployments. While this can put unique stresses on all military families, those living in National Guard and Reserve families may be particularly vulnerable because they may feel somewhat isolated as they live in civilian communities. Adolescents, in particular, may face additional challenges as they experience normative development stressors in addition to the non-normative stressors of having a parent deployed. Factors that can help protect military youth and families who live away from military installations include the positive mental health of the at-home parent as well as a network of formal and informal support from the adolescent's school and community as well as the Army itself. Park (2011) summarized the need to support military families by stating that "building

and sustaining healthy, resilient and thriving military children and families will bring benefits not just to them but ultimately to all Americans. The military family *is* the American family." (p. 71).

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