THE INFLUENCE OF PLANNED, REPEATED, AND EMERGENCY
INTERRUPTIONS ON THE WELL-BEING OF MILITARY FAMILIES

by

SUZANNE MYNETTE MAYO-THEUS

B.A., Grambling State University, 1979
M.A., University of District of Columbia, 1984

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the

Requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Family Studies and Human Services
College of Human Ecology

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

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ABSTRACT

The current military family life is punctuated by a series of events that are not present in the lives of most Americans, most notably the stress, fear, and disruption of lives that accompany the periodic absences of one or both adults in the family. These absences fostered by deployments, challenges of readjustments, coupled with combat injuries have tremendous effects on not only the troops and their families, but also the communities that military families live in as well.

This investigation examined how military assistance, family connectedness and community networks contribute to the well-being of families affected by anticipated and repeated deployments that cause family interruptions. Despite the myriad of studies on military deployments and the impact on families, there has been little focus on the spouse and children that relates to their resilience during the deployment process. Using an online national all service unit sample from military spouses (n = 185) who have children and have experienced a recent deployment (n = 153) it was possible to isolated the specific components that influenced the well-being of those affected by deployments.

The Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model—which combines ideas from both the ecological systems and boundary ambiguity perspectives—was tested and utilized in this study. It was disclosed that 45% of the variance in well-being could be explained by knowing how families perceive the deployment process, military assistance, community networks, family connectedness, and how these families coped with periodic family interruptions. These data revealed that deployments have a greater impact than originally conceived and that issues addressing deployments must be placed on the national agenda, particularly where family well-being is concerned.

The research findings underscore the importance of family to both the deployed personnel and the ones that they leave home. The implications from this investigation are simple and direct—there needs to be a more comprehensive program for children that employ pre-, during- and post-deployment related issues, such as adjustments to absent parents, developing better responses to the authority structure of the remaining parent, and some program focused on the immediate and long-term psychological needs of the children and their families.

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Farrell J. Webb

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DEDICATION

To my beloved son, Destin Curtis Melvin Theus

Who reminded me daily to "Never, Never, Never Give Up" ….Winston Churchill

My parents: The Late Estelle Ward Hart Mayo and The Late Theodore Curtis Mayo, Sr.

My godmother: Mrs. Thelma Alice Smith Washington Williams for believing in me.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, military families have shown great capacity for resilience and adaptation from deployments and tours. However, multiple combat deployments of U.S. Armed Service members have caused multiple challenges and for U.S. military families and children (Davis, 2010; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Wiens & Boss, 2006). Military families are more likely to adjust to separations than civilian families (U.S. Census, 2004). In the 21st century there are now more children than ever before living with their grandparents and other relatives while their parents are involved in some form of transitional living structures—these arrangements vary from incarceration to hospitalization to military deployment (U.S. Census, 2004). Military families are not immune to the stressors of interruptions due to repeated and induced deployments (Pfefferbaum, Houston, Sherman & Melson, 2011; Whiting & Moody, 2009). Approximately 3 million children have one parent deployed in the military (Joint Chiefs of Staff Report, 2007). Currently, an additional 400,000 spouses of Reserve members also have a child with a parent deployed (Lester, et.al, 2010). The well-being of American children has generated a nationwide debate and concern among social scientists, policymakers, educators and parent-child advocates.

Families of soldiers have always been affiliated with American military organizations to varying degrees (Albano, 1994). At times families have been viewed as a hindrance to mission accomplishment, but more recently they have been considered a critical source of support to the service member and the military (Flake, Davis, Johnson & Middleton, 2009). Military family policy during the last two centuries has shifted

from an informal, implied obligation to provide for family needs to formal, institutionalized support in the form of regulations, Department of Defense directives, public laws, policy statements and military Family Centers worldwide (www.whitehouse.gov: keywords: military families, 2010).

Families faced with interruptions typically experience problems with well-being for children and adults (Wiens & Boss, 2006). Deployments are challenging for families, especially for younger families and families with compounded stressors. Recent articles on military families have focused on special issues (Briggs & Atkinson, 2006), emotion-focused issues; (Hendriques, 2007), suicide populations (Doyle & Peterson, 2005), military families (Murdoch, 2006), and military women and spouses (Gerwitz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011; Karney & Crown, 2007).   An alarming number of families today are experiencing family interruptions as a result of job placements, military deployments, institutionalization in criminal justice and mental health facilities (Briggs & Atkinson, 2006; Census, 2004; Lester et al., 2010). Obviously, children living in stressful environments fare less well than their peers (Fritsch & Burkhead, 2005). Family interruptions produce stress and discomfort for both children and their parents. Parental absences were associated with lower than average test scores (Lyle, 2006). Consequently, the mechanisms through which families are affected as a result of the interruption process has only recently come to light in the literature because the early research emphasized outcomes and not the process that influenced the outcome.

Several recent social changes (e.g., major changes in the U.S. Congress, and increasing concern about the continued military inclusions and the promises by the President to reconsider our military deployments) have contributed to a much more

broader policy perceptions and renewed interests in interruptions and parental absences in families. Over the last decade there has been some theoretical foundation for the dynamics of family interruptions. Also, there has been some research on the most common issues faced by service members and their families in managing the task of integration after deployments (APA Presidential Task Force on Military Deployments, 2007). However, research suggests that several risk and protective factors impact the ability of families to deal with the stressors associated with military service (Bowling & Sherman, 2008).

This investigation will examine the factors influencing military families during deployment by investigating the support systems that help them maintain equilibrium during deployments. These familial, community and spiritual support systems coupled with military and environmental factors play a significant role for military life stability during deployments. The dynamics of these factors will make this study useful for understanding the changing demographics for future military families experiencing deployment.

<div align="center">

Statement of Problem

</div>

The deployment process disturbs the equilibrium of families and this can and does lead to problems for family members. Children who are separated from a parent suffer multiple problems associated with their loss (Johnston, 1994; Lester, et al., 2010). Problem areas and behaviors shown by children who are separated from their parents include physical health problems, hostile and aggressive behavior, use of drugs or alcohol, truancy, running away from home, withdrawal, disciplinary problems, poor school performance, anxiety, depression and attention problems (Burrrell, Adams,

Durand, & Castro, 2006; Dressel & Barnhill, 1994; Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009; Fuller, 1993; Gabel, 1992; Kelly 2001; Korbin, 1989; Lowenstein, 1986; McClellen, Farabee & Crouch, 1997). Although these ideas demonstrate problems when children are separated from parents, there are no conclusive investigations focused on separations generated by deployments. This dissertation takes this issue to task as it attempts to explore the effects of deployment and family separation-on family well-being.

Several social changes have contributed to the broader perceptions and renewed interests in interruptions and parental absences in families. Until very recently there has been little theoretical foundation for the dynamics of family interruptions, but the topic has recently stimulated interests in both the scholarly and popular arenas.

Family stress associated with parental absence is described in the family boundary ambiguity literature where individuals are able to experience and balance these two extremes of "present, but not present" in the family system (Boss & Greenberg, 1984). Boss (2006) also advanced a theoretical framework for helping families deal with ambiguous loss that focuses on fostering resilience. This framework includes: a) finding meaning; b) tempering mastery; c) reconstructing identity; d) normalizing ambivalence; e) revising attachment; and f) discovering hope.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine factors that contribute to the well-being of families affected by anticipated and repeated deployments and family interruptions. This study will seek to examine how the military families function during the deployment process when the parent/soldier is not present in the home. In other words, the purpose is

to understand how the military families sustain equilibrium during the deployment process.

Rationale

Despite the myriad of studies on military deployment, the previous research has not fully examined the influence of family and community networks on the military family nor have they been driven by any clear theoretical foundations. Additionally, there has been little focus on the spouse and children that relates to their resilience during the deployment process.

When a parent is deployed, it is important for the remaining parent to help preserve the relationship between the active duty parent and the child. The custodial parent must make the child aware that the absent parent is still an important part of his/her life and continues to care for and love the child. Keeping the child connected with the deployed parent will not only help the child, but it will benefit the active duty parent who is dealing with the separation from the family as well. Staying connected during deployment will benefit the parent-child relationship during the deployment and will also help ease the family's transition during post deployment (Zero to Three, 2007). If the parents have been successful in keeping their child connected with the deployed parent, the child will be aware that the deployed parent is still an active part of their life, despite the deployment. This will be very helpful while the redeployed parent tries to regain the child's trust after reintegration and during post deployment (Zero to Three, 2007).

Theoretical Frameworks

The concept of deployment must be discussed within theoretical constructs that are broad in nature and can be applied across family and sociological disciplines. While

there are various theories that could be used to explain military deployments, both

Human Ecological Theory and Boundary Ambiguity perspectives are frameworks with

the greatest utility. By combining these two constructs, this study will address the issues

facing military families during deployment on a personal level.

Human Ecological Theory

Human Ecological Theory's primary emphasis is on systems and interactions

between individuals as reactors to the system (White & Klein, 2008). Human Ecological

Theory allows one to explain and predict what will happen to an individual based on

his/her interactions with the other systems. Basic premises of Human Ecological Theory

include: a) people are connected to each other and to systems that are vital to their

experience; b) individuals and groups are biological and social in nature; c) humans

depend on other human beings; d) humans are dependent on their environment for

survival; and e) human behavior can be understood on several levels. The premises

expressed here can be used in this study to explore the effects of long-term interruptions

and to explain how deployments affect military family well-being. An examination of

how family systems are influenced by the military system is an example of how this

theory can be directly applied to the concepts deemed important in this investigation.

Boundary Ambiguity Framework

Another perspective that will be used in this dissertation can be found in the work

of Boundary Ambiguity (Boss, 2004) as it relates to children and their environments.

Parental deployment among military families has substantial effects on the family system.

Among them are ambiguity and uncertainty (Heubner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass & Grass,

2007). Both the Human Ecological and Boundary Ambiguity Frameworks emphasize

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interactions between individuals and subsystems. On the one hand, both propose links between the environment and the individual. In both perspectives the environment serves as a powerful influence. On the other hand, in Human Ecological Theory the primary emphasis is on systems and the way these systems interact. Conversely, the Boundary Ambiguity Framework focuses mainly on an individual's behavior mediated by their forced interaction with a system and a subsequent link to it (e.g., family, school, or church). The overall limitation is that both of these approaches are seen as too global. This means that they are too broad and can find almost anything to fit within their theoretical propositions. However, after careful review of various theories and perspectives, I propose that these frameworks, both Human Ecological and Boundary Ambiguity, will help me explain the environmental factors influencing family interruptions and their relationship to the well-being of children and families, because families who are aware of the influences of family interruptions may be able to find ways of coping and improving their family life.

Additionally, Boundary Ambiguity is used in this study to focus on the ambiguous loss (i.e., perceptions of uncertainty and loss) and ambiguous inclusion that occurs when an individual is no longer present in the family for whatever reason. This work suggests that when working with children with parental absence and interruptions, it is important for family scientists and social science researchers to acknowledge the vast areas of physical, cognitive and emotional development that occur during the period of family interruptions (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002). As a result of a family interruption, the ability of the family to perform normally as a family unit can be compromised.

The development of these ideas has led me to develop a theoretical model that I believe offers an integration of these ideas into a model that is both dynamic and recursive - two traits essential to conceptual model development. The Model of Family Interruptions (see Figure 1.1) utilizes an overarching ecological framework as a way to contextualize the issues while the boundary ambiguity framework allows for the integration of ecological constructs and a reinterpretation of these ideas into an outcome measure that can be understood and reabsorbed back into an ecological framework. In this investigation, below is presented the Conceptual Model for Influence of Interruptions on Military Family Well-Being to describe the adaption of military families during repeated, planned and emergency deployments. These family interruptions consists of multiple relationships existing at three system levels (e.g., military assistance, community networks and family connectedness, each of which has rules and attributes that are distinct and do not exist at other levels. Additionally, within the family system, each relationship is unique for military families and constitutes a series of events and stressors that begin and end at the point when service members are notified that they will be deployed. The underlying factors of resilience, adaptation, coping, self-efficacy and psychological and emotional well-being were prevalent in the developing of the "internal working and development of this model.
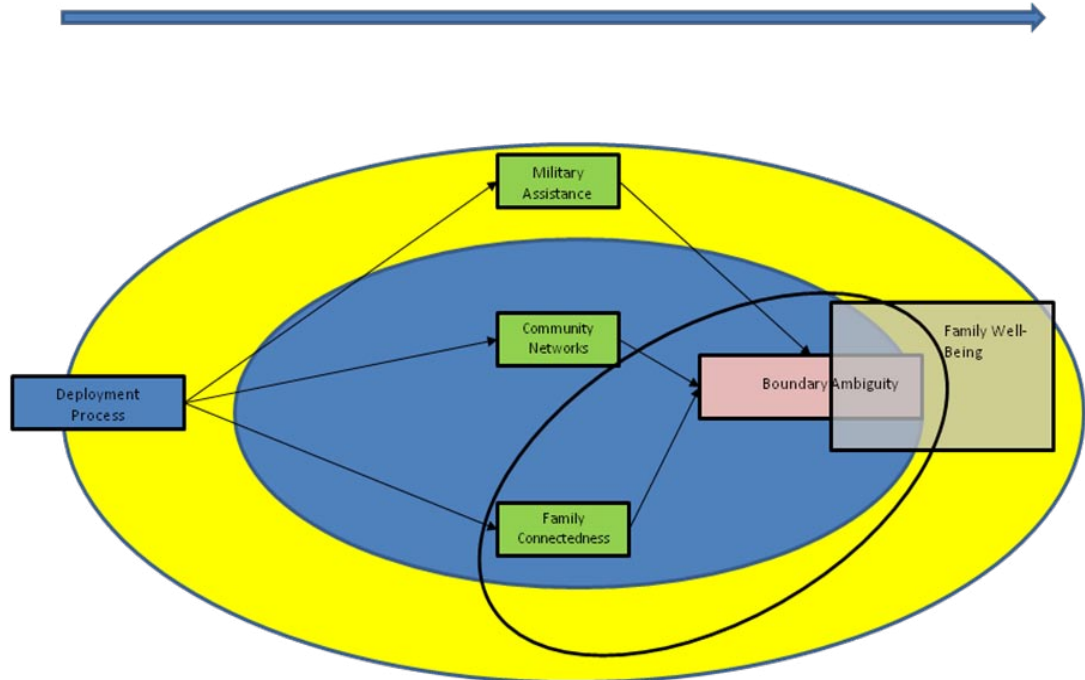
Figure 1.1. Conceptual Model for the Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model with Appropriate Ecological Overlays.

Research Design

Previous research has not provided conclusive evidence of deployment's impact on boundary ambiguity among military families. Therefore, the following research questions have been developed to assist in filling in the void regarding the impact of deployment and boundary ambiguity on military families.

Research Questions

1. What factors contribute to the support of military families faced with interruptions?

2. What factors contribute to the well-being of families affected by interruptions?

3. To what extent does boundary ambiguity help to determine family sustainability during an interruption?

Hypotheses

To address the research questions four hypotheses were developed. Each hypothesis examines an important aspect of the current research questions and is supported from the literature and the theoretical framework that I have created for this study. They are as follows:

H₁: The level and stage of deployment will have a negative effect on boundary ambiguity and well-being.

H₂: Families with more positive community environment will exhibit a greater sense of well-being no matter the length of family interruption.

H₃: Parents who are highly involved in their families are likely to have a higher degree of family well-being with their children no matter the stage of family interruption.

H₄: The well-being of families who experience interruptions will be strongly influenced and supported by the general preparedness for deployment, perceived military assistance, perceived community support family connectedness and amount of boundary ambiguity displayed within a family.

Conceptual Terms and Definitions

In order to examine the proposed research questions, it is vital to clearly define the terms that will be used in this investigation. To strengthen the examination of these concepts, the definitions and conceptual terms used in this study are highlighted below. These concepts and definitions provide useful information about the elements contained in the conceptual model (see Figure 1.1) and offer greater clarity as to how these elements contribute to the outcome measures.

- *Well-being*—is defined as the state or condition of happiness and satisfaction in a family unit.

- *Intermediate Environmental Family Interruption*—is defined as the impact of an event or multiple events that cause the absence of one

or more family members as a result of internal or external environmental factors.

- *Parental absence*—is defined as an extended period of time in which one or more parent(s) are not present or living in the home because of internal or external environmental factors.

- *Family interruptions*— the occurrence of a deployment event that will result in a separation of parent(s) from biological child(ren) for an extended period of time.

- *Deployment Process*—an event of family interruption that is characterized by war or phases to include: pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment and reunification.

  - *Pre- deployment*—is the phase from the time of notification of deployment to the actual departure.

  - *Deployment*—is the phase from the time of departure through the first month of deployment.

  - *Sustainment*—is the phase that spans from the first month of deployment to the last month prior to return.

  - *Reunification*—is the phase that spans from one-month prior to return to the actual physical return of the service member to the family.

Variables of the Study

There are two types of measures that will be examined in this study, predictors and outcome, more commonly referred to as independent and dependent variables. The determination of the placement of variables into specific categories is based on both theoretical considerations and previous empirical findings. A more detailed exploration of variable selection is provided in Chapter Three of this document. The conceptual aspects of the independent and dependent variables are considered below.

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Dependent Variable

The outcome measure is Family Well-Being. This may vary among and between military families. The purpose of this study is to determine what coping mechanisms (factors) military spouses, children and families use during deployment and how these factors contribute to their overall family well-being. By examining the issues related to deployment and boundary ambiguity (parental absence) the interests in what sustains families during the deployment will become evident. It is predicted that the more military assistance, community networks and family connectedness a family experiences during deployment, the greater family well-being is experienced during deployment.

Independent Variables

There are a number of important factors which lend support to the conceptual model as proposed. These predictor variables provide a meaningful context whereby the roles of these elements are integrated into a working model designed to provide an explanation of how well-being is affected.

- *Military Assistance—*all services and programs provided by the U.S. Armed Services to assist families during the deployment process including the level of access, type of access and ability to access these service/programs.

- *Community Networks—*groups, organizations, and individuals who assist military families during the deployment process, e.g., church groups, recreation groups and other family support groups available in the current social environment.

- *Family Connectedness—*the level of closeness to others experienced by the family during deployment. This may include biologically related family, extended family networks, kinships, and closely related friendships. This may also as a sense of how close the family feels toward each other during deployment.

- *Boundary Ambiguity—*the functioning of a military family during the deployment process when at least one parent is not physically

present in the home and separated from the child(ren) as a result of the deployment process.

Relevance of Study

Military families, especially children affected by the deployment process, have been instrumental in creating a national dialogue among social scientists, policy makers, educators and the military on strategic and innovative measures to support the families of soldiers. The recent focus on military families serves as a starting point for the discussion within the context of policy implications and the changing demographics within the U.S. Armed Services and throughout America.

Military men and women and their families face a myriad of stressful situations and face varied tasks before, during and after deployment. The current study is derived from a theoretical examination of military family literature and how the factors influencing the family interruption affects boundary ambiguity (parental absence) during deployments. This study focused on social scientists' examination of innovative approaches to improve and support policies and programs for modern, ever-changing military families. A new policy-driven theoretical model allows for discussion among, legislators, educators, psychologists, medical professionals, clergy, social services providers, and military personnel in the quest to strengthen the core of family life and well-being among members of our armed services.

My experiences as a career public servant, a social scientist and a family and community advocate have challenged me to bring these issues of family well-being into the national dialogue, particularly for military families. The timing of this exchange among various segments of our general population drives me to act promptly to engage a debate among the government officials who have traditionally supported the military at-

large. The state of military families today requires new and innovative strategies that can be applied across several disciplines and in the military alike. The United States Armed Services and its leadership can serve as a model to provide a broader perspective that includes the entire family unit (Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006).

Military families adapt to the deployment process when a sense of normalcy can be maintained by all family members. The stages of the deployment process and its influences on boundary ambiguity are relevant constructs that aid in the discussion on what it means to be a military family experiencing deployment. Ultimately, this dissertation examines the factors influencing the decision process of military families affected by the deployment process and explores how significant influences of environmental factors, feelings and behaviors affect their well-being.

Organizational Overview

This dissertation will be organized into five chapters. Chapter Two examines relevant literature that includes a review of the history of military deployments, factors influencing the deployment process, the unique characteristics of military families, the influence and impact of deployment on families, explore parental deployment among military families during war time, and the effects of family interruption on the children and the family unit.

Chapter Three centers on the methodological approaches used to guide the study. This chapter will include a discussion of measures, instruments, and statistical methods used to summarize and analyze the data. Chapter Four focuses on the results with specific attention to statistical analysis, model and hypothesis testing. Chapter Five examines the themes generated from the narrative comments made by the respondents.

The quality of the comments and the ideas expressed by the respondents necessitated a separate chapter to discuss these remarks. The final section of the dissertation, Chapter Six, will consist of discussion and conclusions of the study. Recommendations for future research as well as limitations and implications of the findings will be-included.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the Problem

Children who experience some form of family interruption, based on their living

patterns, form what appears to be the largest single-issue group of at-risk children to date.

These children are at greater risk than other children in all areas of their lives from basic

health and emotional needs to the completion of their education (Park, 2011; Padden,

Connors, & Agazio, 2011). When family's structure is disrupted suddenly through a

form of long-term separation, the family's ability to cope with both major and minor

issues is reduced significantly (Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Family and friends often react to

the disruption in ways similar to an unexpected death, however painful or disturbing

(Mansfield, et al., 2010; Verdeli, et al., 2011). Given the long-term, protracted wars in

Iraq and now, Afghanistan, in combination with sporadic conflicts across the globe,

social scientists and others are now studying the comprehensive impact of family

interruptions like never before. This is a very positive move, especially on the part of

academia, because there is a pressing and urgent need for reliable data and information to

guide the way in which issues concerning the impact of long-term interruptions on family

psychological well-being are addressed (Kelly & Jouriles, 2011).

The effects of long-term interruptions can be readily seen in families where long

term interruptions are a standard part of parents' occupational choices. Some classical

occupations that often involve deployment or relocation are military service, merchant

marine, and foreign-service. Many military families are faced with long-term and

multiple deployments which exact a toll on those left behind (Saltzman, et al., 2011).

Many spouses left behind experience feelings of depression, uncertainty, and instability (Verdeli, Baily, et al., 2011). The idea of living a life of happiness and fulfillment is sometimes overwhelming for the spouse remaining at home and ultimately for the children and their well-being. When soldiers are deployed, their military assignments are in places around the world where there is much danger and war, thus causing spouses and family members to wonder if the soldiers will ever return home alive. This reality is one that military families are confronted with on a daily basis, which impacts their family's well-being (Crow & Myers-Bowman, 2011).

Most research on the impact of deployment has focused on the spouses and children of service members deployed during Operation Desert Storm or earlier war conflicts (Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005). Deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan are quite different characteristically from previous deployments in the U.S. military. Previous military conflicts did not have an all-volunteer force (Belasco, 2007). Today, deployments are longer, redeployment occurs often, and breaks between deployments are short and infrequent (Hosek, Kavanaugh, & Miller, 2006). As a result, previous studies on the impact of deployment on military families in the context of other deployments may have limited relevance for the families of deployed personnel today. More information about previous deployments is contained in the following sections.

Some important factors associated with family interruptions are parental absence, the parent-child relationship, and environmental factors related to children's well-being. To provide a consistent and clear explanation of the interconnections among these constructs, this literature review will be divided into four parts. Part One will examine general knowledge about the effects of parental separation/absence as a consequence of

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military action. Part Two will discuss how separation occurs in military families with emphasis on what is known about this group; one caveat is that most of the literature focuses on the soldier and not on those left behind. Part Three explores parental deployment among military families during war time and the effects of the family interruption on the children and the family unit. Part Four examines the literature of ambiguity and loss and how these issues can be linked to overall well-being of military families who have experienced a long-term family interruption. Additionally, this literature review will attempt to describe military life, note the gaps in the literature, and address issues related to the outcomes of deployment among military families and children left behind after the soldier is gone.

Part I—Parental Absence and Separation

Today, there are an estimated 1.85 million children with one or both parents in the military. Approximately 1.2 million children with parents are on active duty and at least 650,000 children with parents in the reserve component (MEAC Military Child Facts, 2007). In 1997, over 160,000 children five years of age and younger were dependents of junior enlisted service members who are affiliated with the armed forces (Wolpert, Martin, Doughtery, Ruden, & Kerner-Hoeg, 2000). The Army had the highest percentage of dependents with 11% for married and single parent junior enlisted soldiers, compared to 5% for Navy, 4% for Air Force, and 3% for Marine Corps members.

Since the escalation of the Iraq and Afghanistan military actions the numbers have increased dramatically. Currently, an estimated 152,000 military members are deployed to the Middle East fighting two wars with approximately 80,000 National Guard troops and reservists deployed to over 40 nations (US Department of Defense, 2007). Since

September 11, 2001, more than 1.2 million American service men and women have been deployed in support of the "Global War on Terrorism." These military actions have resulted in over 378,000 reservists being deployed comprising 31% of the total military force (U.S. Department of Treasury, 2008). With over 600,000 active duty Army enlisted dependents, the Selected Manpower Statistics (US Department of Labor, 2009) report indicated that there is an average of 1.76 dependents per male soldier. Based on the Population Representation profile percentage of junior enlisted personnel in the Army at 56%, it is reasonable to assume there are approximately 333,750 dependents of junior enlisted soldiers.

Impact of Deployment on Families

To date, there is no study specifically focused on the impact of deployments on families. However, prior research has examined the experience of deployment on U.S. service members and families in other contexts focused on spouses/partners and their children. I will outline relevant findings from current literature on the impact of deployment on children and families, while highlighting the gaps in the literature about the well-being of families during the deployment cycle.

Deployment can be a stressful time for families (Padden et al., 2011; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Sheppard et al., 2010). For example, the soldier member is separated from his/her family for an extended period of time. Often spouses of deployed soldiers fear their marriage will fail due to the lack of companionship and support to the remaining spouse and children throughout the deployment. Armed forces personnel serving in the military for the first time experience financial concerns. Many families have experienced financial difficulties that arise as a result of the soldier being deployed (Bell & Schumm,

2000). Although deployment is highly stressful and taxing, many service members find that deployments have beneficial qualities as well (Hosek, Kavanaugh, & Miller, 2006). There are financial incentives to deploy, such as family separation pay, hostile fire pay, and tax exemptions; some service members have suggested that the financial gain helps to offset many of the negative aspects of the deployment (Hosek, Kavanaugh, & Miller, 2006).

Young junior enlisted soldiers and their families may be inexperienced with moving and setting up their households. These activities could lead to stress and/or financial hardships when the military moving allowance does not cover all of the moving expenses and there are delays with new housing, school transfers, employment and reconstitution of the family network (Wolpert, et al., 2000). Limited fixed incomes and potential lack of financial managerial skills causes these families to live in poor housing conditions throughout America while their service member spouses or significant others are deployed. Government quarters-are often available; however, waiting lists and the demand for housing, coupled with an extended wait time, vary by rank and number of bedrooms required (Department of Defense, 2004).

Supplemental jobs for spouses and partners, to support military families, are often the norm for non-military spouses. The jobs for military spouses often reflect their educational level or work experience. Today, more than ever, first-time service members' spouses are young with limited job skills, thus limiting their job outlook and qualifications. The jobs they are qualified to do are usually low pay and provide few benefits (Kidd, 2007). For some families, the amount of pay may not cover expenses such

as childcare or transportation (Wolpert, et al., 2000); therefore, it would not be cost effective for the spouse to work.

The downsizing of the active duty military in the 1990's has played a role in the increase in frequency and length of deployments (Faber, Wilberton, Clymer, MacDermid & Weiss, 2008). Deployment-related separations and reunions have been identified as major stressful events for military families (Bell & Schumm, 2000; Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995).

Part II—Sustaining Military Families During Deployment

Sustainment among Military Families

Parental deployment among military families has substantial effects on the family system (Chawla & Solinas-Saunders, 2011; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). The time leading up to deployment can be difficult for everyone in military families, even babies and toddlers. Although children may not understand the specifics of the deployment, they can sense increased stress in their homes. Young children have to learn how to cope, because they may not have the necessary skills to show or tell how they are feeling. From the day children are born they are seeking close relationships with their parent, whether it is feeding, bathing, changing, or communicating to the child, a relationship is building. It would appear that military families have major challenge when a parent is deployed.

No one knows the feelings of separation and loss better than the families of the soldiers who are engaged in war. The current military incursions have generated the need for major adjustments within many military families. As a result, after deployment occurs

many families find themselves unprepared for the hardships that it brings (Laser & Stephens, 2011).

Military families face a major challenge when a parent is deployed. It often causes the custodial parent to fill both parent roles much like that which is done by single parents. The structure of the family is drastically changed. The child who may have been used to having two parents around now has to adjust to living in a single parent household for an extended period of time. This has been found to lead to more psychosocial symptoms in the children and to more psychological distress in the parenting spouses (Catherine, Middleton, Flake, & Davis, 2011; Lester et al., 2011). In the cases where there are multiple children the problem can take on multiple dimensions. Families dealing with deployment often struggle to find support that will help them get through this difficult time. While there are many programs available, they are somewhat generic and often fail to address the personal dynamics that the family experiences. In a considerable number of cases, families do not know about programs and organizations that are available and could be of benefit to them.

Deployment and Children

In this section, I will provide more detailed analysis on the impact of deployment on child behavior, academic performance and social integration. I will introduce studies of children with parents who deployed before Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in Afghanistan / Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Iraq and those that focus on family members of those who deployed with these two military operations. This is significant because there are conflicting findings in the literature addressing the well-being of children and adolescents from military families in general. One investigation focused on

problematic outcomes found that the incidence of behavior disorders was higher in a sample of children and adolescents seen at a military health care clinic relative to children and adolescents seen at a health care clinic as civilians (LaGrone, 1978). These findings suggested that the military life contributed to the "military family syndrome." More recent research has disputed these claims and has indicated that children in military families have similar, if not better, mental health outcomes than their civilian counterparts (Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2006; Karney & Crown, 2007). However, there is little research on the impact of family stress during deployment, and on the stress of deployment for military children compared to civilian children who may be exposed to general stress. Another author suggested that when military families have stress from deployment, they may also have a higher risk of marital dissolution, and the stress may impact other aspects of marriage, such as level of satisfaction with marriage, and child outcomes (Karney & Crown, 2007). This research is based on the early years of OIF/OEF and we may not know how the stress of multiple and extended deployments may have an impact on marriage and family life. With no longitudinal data, it is difficult to identify the impact of long-term deployments on children from contemporary military families.

Having a parent deployed can be hard on both the spouse and child, but parents need to make sure that their child stays connected with the one deployed. Research findings revealed that children will react to deployment differently depending on their age (Applewhite & Mays, 2007).

Several studies of children of deployed parents have indicated that deployment is associated with higher levels of internalizing behaviors (e.g., feeling sad, fearful, or over-

controlled), than children from non-military families. One investigation showed that

primary parental caregivers during the Army's Operation Desert Storm had higher levels

of internalizing behavior relative to their children than children from non-military

families (Rosen, Durand, & Martin, 2000). Similarly, among deployed Navy mothers

there were higher, but not problematic, levels of internalizing behavior among children

reported (Kelly, 2001). In general, children with mothers serving in the Air Force were

more likely to exhibit symptoms of anxiety and depression than children from non-

military families (Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998). The problem was exacerbated when

the mothers had difficulty locating childcare because of deployment to a war zone, and

this led to high degrees of change in the children's lives, when compared to children from

non-military families (Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998). Research has also documented

increases in child maltreatment at times when caregivers are deployed. Rates have

increased among military families since 2002, despite remaining stable among civilian

families (Campbell, Brown, & Okwara, 2011).

Another, yet very compelling finding is that there is not enough research and

information to distinguish if parental views on child behavior differ between genders of

the child or their own military experience including rank, service branch or support

services (Medway, Davis, Cafferty, Chappell, & O'Hearn, 1995). This lack of conclusive

data must be addressed especially considering the gender imbalance in military

deployments.

The effects of deployment on children have been reported in studies focused on

academic performance and behavior associated with test scores. For example, there had

been some research findings about specific changes in classroom behaviors, attendance

patterns, attitudes about performance, completion of tasks assigned, and their overall attitude about school in general held by students whose parents were deployed (Esposito-Smythers, et al., 2011; Rosen & Martin, 1993). There have also been some investigations of overall test scores. Two studies regarding deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated modest decreases in test scores. The investigations suggested that these effects may be long-term (Engel, Gallagher, & Lyle 2006; Rosen & Martin, 1993). The largest adverse effects were discovered among younger children, boys from African-American and Latino-American families, children whose parents were married, children whose parents have lower Armed Forces Qualification Test scores, and children whose parents have lower education (Lyle, 2006). In effect, those children whose parents were less well suited to the military also suffered low test scores. Whether or not this was directly due to deployment is not certain since the situation was only uncovered after the parent was deployed (Engle, Gallaher, & Lyle, 2006; Lyle, 2006).

It is consistently reported that school age children frequently experience sadness and grief with the separation of their parent. Fearing for the safety and well-being of a deployed parent, many school age children find difficulty in sleeping, which impairs their academic performance. Other signs included feeling deprived of attention and needing increased support from the parent or caregiver at home. A manifestation of anger towards the parent who is left behind may be exhibited by school age children (Kelley, 1994). Davis (2010) documents increased outpatient visits for anxiety, behavioral, and stress disorders in 3 - 8 year old children of deployed parents compared with children of non-deployed parents. Youth and adolescents are especially affected by parental deployment because their coping skills are limited and their developmental demands are often

overwhelming during this time of uncertainty. In a study by Mmari, Bradshaw,

Sudhinavaset and Blum (2010), findings revealed that youth were most worried about

making frequent moves and having a parent deployed. Young children have to learn to

cope, because they may not have the necessary skills to show or tell how they are feeling

about the deployment. Adolescents can understand the reason for the deployment, but do

not always have the coping skills for handling the situation. Most often adolescents will

distance themselves or become resentful, they may take on more responsibilities and

provide support for other family members (Murray, 2002).

Experiences of loss vary among military families. A feeling of uncertainty may

begin when families begin to wonder about if-or-when-their husband/father's or

wife/mother's unit will be mobilized and then deployed (Pincus, House, Christenson, &

Adler, 2004). A sense of ambiguity is often experienced by family members when the

service member actually deploys or leaves the family for duty in a war zone. Practically,

families must reorganize their daily routines so they can function without the physical

presence of the family member. Additionally, family members of deployed military

servicemen and servicewomen often feel pride and guilt about being able to maintain

normalcy in the absence of the deployed spouse (Pincus, et al., 2004).

<p align="center">**Part III—Adjustment to Deployment, Family Stress and Stability**</p>

Adjustment to Deployment

Military families are more likely to adjust to the separation of deployment than

civilian families (US Census, 2004). However, a spouse of a deployed soldier is often

expected to assume roles in the family that once were the responsibility of the parent who

is deployed. The new time commitments and newly added responsibilities coupled with

the spouse's personal well-being add to family stress, and the parent may feel that their feelings are overlooked.

Historically, the United States Military Service has not been especially accommodating to families (Rostker, 2006). The Army Community Services Organization, established in 1965, was the Army's first attempt to provide comprehensive support for family members of soldiers. Since that time, several programs and policies have been developed to promote the slogan, "The Army takes care of its own" (Rostker, 2006). A recent survey of active duty families revealed the perception that there is insufficient support for children during deployment (MacDermid, 2006). Given the long and frequent deployments in Iraq and Afghan the need for military families is growing and there are a myriad of organizations and institutions calling for revamping the Service's response to military families.

Family Stress and Deployment

Living with a family member who is constantly anxious and adjusting to reunification can create stress for the entire family (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011). Recent investigations have found that Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms can be transmitted intergenerationally through families (Cozza, et al., 2006) and adapted by spouses. Recent research suggests that many returning service members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan face a range of stressful situations. A survey of 894 Army service members who returned from Iraq found that 95% observed dead bodies or human remains, were shot at, or received small-arms fire; 89% were attacked or ambushed; 65% observed an injured or dead American; and 48% were responsible for the death of an enemy combatant (Hoge, Messa, McGurk, Cotting, & Coffman, 2004). Also,

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many returning service members experience a range of mental health problems. Most recently, a study of returning veterans who had received care at a Veterans Facility between 2001 and 2005 found that almost one-third received a mental health or psychological diagnosis at their healthcare appointments (Seal, Bertenthal, Miner, Sen, & Marmar, 2007).

Woods and others (1995) found that social and community connectedness of family and friends were essential to the adjustment of families with U.S. Army soldiers who were deployed for six months. U.S. Navy aviators' children showed acceptance of the life-style, optimism, and development of self-reliance and self-esteem after an eight-month deployment of their parents (Patterson & McCubbin, 1984). In a related investigation, Raschmann, Patterson, and Schofield (1989) found that poor communication was the primary source of marital conflict, suggesting that efforts to facilitate and improve communication within the marriage and family may be important interventions during deployment. While these studies have highlighted the need for social and community support for military families, there is a lack of research to identify the most beneficial programs and interventions for the military population (Park, 2011). Furthermore, there has been relatively little attention regarding the need for more services for military children as well as military spouses during deployment in an effort to sustain their overall well-being as direct result deployment.

Deployment and Family Stability

Military families adjusting to deployment is an issue that is being discussed throughout the U.S. Armed Services and will continue to become a priority. Hutchinson and Banks-Williams (2006) described, "a traumatized soldier is greeting a traumatized

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family, and neither is recognizing the other" (p.67). While it is believed that the problems resolve on their own, the reunions and re-negotiation of the family roles and responsibilities of the returning service member and his or her family can be stressful. Although most service members navigate the course of the deployment and reunion task effectively, some develop longer lasting or more serious problems (Hutchinson & Banks-Williams, 2006).

Military members and spouses, as well as the children, have to readjust after deployment to the changes in the home life, and many recognize that it is difficult to resume life as it was prior to the deployment. The roles, responsibilities and boundaries with their spouse are often difficult (Caliber Associates, 1992; Drummet, Coleman & Cable, 2003; Riggs, 1990). Many military spouses have acknowledged that deployment results in loss of emotional support, role shifts, role overload, loneliness, safety concerns, mental stability, and overall concerns for the well-being of the deployed members (Bell & Schumm, 1999). After deployment, young veterans face adolescence and stress upon their return as they try to resume the family role, and they have to renegotiate boundaries in the family life cycle (Yerkes & Holloway, 1996).

The stress associated with a military life style, including the difficulties of deployments and long separations, has been documented. On a daily basis, military families are confronted with typical issues that most families have to deal with such as child care and career choices. Additionally, problems of parental absence associated with deployments remain a concern for military families. Military families are confronted with coping and adapting to new environments when the soldier member gets assigned to

a new duty station. In some cases, the families have to adapt to cultural differences if the soldier is assigned overseas (Drummet, et al., 2003).

Overall, family adjustment and the impact of overseas deployments on marital satisfaction remain controversial. Karney and Crown (2007) found that deployments lowered divorce rates, although female and junior enlisted soldiers showed increased risks of divorce in general. Wood, Scarville, and Gravine, (1995) found that 20% of spouses reported marital problems and only 3% considered divorce. However, an analysis of data from 1979 –1984 indicated that newly enlisted personnel had a 49% higher chance of divorce over five years than their civilian counterparts (Linquist, 2007). In a two-year study Schumm, Bell, and Gade (2000) found dissolution rates of 21%, 46%, and 62% respectively for marriages, engagements and dating relationships. These appear to be at least twice as high as expected among a 1995 peacekeeping deployment. Adler-Baeder and others (2005) compared two 1990's Department of Defense (DoD) comprehensive surveys to 1996 Census data and found higher divorce rates for female service members and for male service men under 30 years old.

Deployments appear to have an indirect effect on both marital quality and marital satisfaction; however, there has been little research on the impact of children with respect to marital satisfaction as it relates to deployment. It is not clear to what extent deployment has a direct impact on children as it relates to marital satisfaction. More research is needed on the overall evidence of greater stress and less effective parenting with respect to children while a parent is deployed. There is little research on longer term effects of deployment (Chandra, et.al, 2008).

In a classic study, Black (1993) recommended that military readiness groups should be formed to help families before, during and after deployments, led by spouses with previous success at coping with separation. He argued that interventions should focus primarily on junior enlisted families. In addition he recommended telephone chains be designed to pass along valid information. Black also noted that prior to deployment, wives may feel angry about being left behind and during reunion adjustment may take weeks and will be more difficult than the separation itself (Black, 1993). In a related study, the Army is described as "greedy institutions" where military life competes with family needs with five characteristics: a) separation; b) risk of injury of death; c) geographic mobility; d), residence in foreign countries and e) normative constraints (Flake, et al, 2009). Wiens and Boss (2006) agree that deployments are challenging for families, especially for younger families coupled with stressors.   It was also true family adjustments were the strongest predictor of morale for junior enlisted soldiers (Segal, Rohall & Segal, 1999) and that these young soldiers were more likely to assign great meaning to deployments of greater risk, as a way of adjusting the greater risk (Schok, Kleber, Elands, & Weerts, 2008).   These findings, when coupled with those of Wiser and Freeman (2006), underscore the fact that deployment was more difficult for Reserve Component personnel and underscore the potential for family disruption deployments can and do present to parents and children.

Well-Being and Military Families

The issue of well-being has been investigated by social scientists for more than six decades. Well-being has many names and has been referred to as quality of life, satisfaction and happiness. From a sociological perspective, well-being is defined as an

assessment of the conditions of life and the manner by which one functions in the presence of life's state of affairs (Keyes, 1998). Psychological well-being has been the most discussed using differences in sex and family roles (Broman, 1991).

For purposes of this dissertation, I will look at those studies that primarily focus on those factors that are related to the overall measures of well-being in military families. Well-being is often explored in terms of its perception in the areas of marital status, gender and social roles of the family. This construct of well-being is something that is both understood and reacted to by individuals (Campbell, Converse, & Rogers, 1978; Deiner, Sapyta, & Suh, 1998; Frey & Stutzer, 2002). Well-being is also a subjective trait that is measured by the general feelings people hold regarding their overall satisfaction with life, in this case military life and that these military families are well aware of their own sense of well-being.

A greater sense of well-being is incorporated in the macro perspective of social integration that evaluates the relationship that an individual has with society (Keys, 1998). There is an assumption that it is beneficial for individuals to take on more than one role (Thoits, 1986). In the case of military families during deployments, it is beneficial for a female to be a wife, mother, employee, and member of a church congregation. From this perspective, more involvement and more responsibility equates to an increase in the number of resources, amount of power and level of prestige (Moen, Robinson, & Dempster-McClain, 1995), and a greater sense of well-being. Blake and Darling (2000) address the relationship between family interactions and well-being.

Well-Being and Deployment

The stressors associated with a military lifestyle include the difficulties of deployments and long separations and have been well documented. However, there is still much research that is needed to, especially address the effects on parent caregivers during deployment, deployment characteristics, and how the parental absence during deployment affects the overall well-being of military families.

Military members and spouses both, as well as their children, have to readjust to the changes in the home life and many recognize that it is difficult to resume life as it was prior to the deployment. The roles, responsibilities and boundaries with their spouse are often difficult causing families to look inwardly at their overall happiness (Caliber Associates, 1992; Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003; Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

Many military spouses have acknowledged that deployment results in loss of emotional support, role shifts, role overload, loneliness, safety concerns, mental stability along with overall well-being of the deployed members (Bell & Schumm, 1999). Historically, family interruptions have been a part of military family life (Solomon, 1998). Deployments appear to have an indirect effect on marital quality and satisfaction; however, there has been little research on the impact of deployments with respect to family happiness as it relates to the deployment process. More research is needed on the overall evidence of greater stress and less effective parenting with respect to well-being while a parent is deployed and experiencing a family interruption. There is also little research on longer term effects of deployment and family well-being (Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008).

Part IV – Ambiguous Absence and Ambiguous Presence

Ambiguous Absence: Ambiguous Presence

Ambiguity among military families is experienced initially when a soldier who is also a parent begins to explore feelings that are often unexplainable to their spouses and children (Huebner, et al., 2007). The roles in military families automatically begin to change once the deployment process begins causing family members to mentally and physically prepare for the family interruption. Whiting and Moody (2009) argue that the inherent nature of deployment is best noted as an ambiguous loss character that is overwhelmingly uncertain, vague and, unclear by nature. Ambiguous loss is defined as a state of being that occurs when a person is psychologically absent but physically present (Boss, 1999).

This section is the final stage in filling the research gap on military families by examining the literature of ambiguity and loss and how these issues are linked to overall well-being and long-term family interruptions associated with military life-style. According to McCubbin and colleagues (1983), the adaptation to stressful events for military families is dependent upon their family resources, strengths and the demands "pileup" on the family system along with their perceptions of the situation (Boss, 1986; Lavee, McCubbin, & Patterson, 1985; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

The concept of ambiguous loss goes beyond the event, taking into account the adjustment of the deployment "that is mediated by internal and external contexts that determines whether the family will cope or fall in to crisis" (p. 270). She also identified two types of ambiguous loss: ambiguous absence and ambiguous presence (Boss, 2007). Ambiguous absence occurs when a parent is perceived by his or her family members as

being physically absent but psychologically present. In the case of deployment this is represented by the fact the deployed parent is away, his/her exact location is not known, and there is no idea as to the parent's health or well-being. Despite this knowledge the family consistently speaks of the absent parent, while keeping photos and other electronic means of communication open. All of this is done to establish the presence of the absent family member. Drummet, Coleman and Cable (2003) stated that family members must stretch the family boundary enough both to psychologically retain the service member as a viable family member and to temporarily reassign his or her duties. This is often done by reassigning important tasks basically done by the absent member to a family member other than the parent in the case where children are older.

Ambiguous presence on the other hand, occurs when a family member is perceived as being physically present but psychologically absent. During a reunion of the family, the trauma from past experiences as well as the stress or distress from immediately resuming role and responsibilities may cause ambiguous presence. In the case where the returning service member is suffering from some form of mental or physical health problems there may be a tendency to be withdrawn and despondent adding to the perceptions that he or she is psychologically absent. Ultimately, various deployments and reunions may cause military families to experience either or both ambiguous absence and ambiguous presence simultaneously or consecutively (Pfefferbaum, Houston, Sherman, & Melson, 2011).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This study investigates factors related to parental absence and family interruptions and their impact on family well-being among military families. Both qualitative and quantitative data will be collected for the purpose of exploring the relationship between the influence of parents, the perception of the family interruption, strong family bond and parent child bond within the context of the Environmental Ecological Theory and Boundary Ambiguity Framework.

The central focus of this study explores the factors surrounding the importance of family well-being during family absence and interruptions precipitated by deployments. While the well-being of American children has generated a nationwide debate and concern among social scientists, policymakers, educators and parent-child advocates, there has been a dearth of literature and research focused on explaining how parental absence and interruptions impact family well-being specifically among military families. This study will examine these issues.

Research Questions

The exploratory literature review, along with my current interests, led me to develop the three research questions (first discussed in Chapter One). These are as follows:

1. What factors contribute to support military families faced with interruptions?

2. What factors contribute to the well-being of families affected by interruptions?

3. To what extent does boundary ambiguity help to determine family sustainability during an interruption?

Research Hypotheses

In order to address the research questions, four hypotheses were developed. Each

hypothesis examines an important aspect of the current research questions and is

supported from the literature and the theoretical framework that I have created for this

study. They are as follows:

> **H$_1$:** The level and stage of deployment will have an effect on boundary ambiguity and well-being.
>
> **H$_2$:** Families with more positive community environments will exhibit a greater sense of well-being no matter the length of the family interruption.
>
> **H$_3$:** Parents who are highly involved in their families are likely to have a higher degree of family well-being with their children no matter what stage of family interruption.
>
> **H$_4$:** The well-being of families who experience interruptions will be strongly influenced and supported by the general preparedness for deployment, perceived military assistance, perceived community support, family connectedness and amount of boundary ambiguity displayed within a family.

Operational Terms and Definitions

Examination of the proposed research questions and hypotheses require that

elements explored in this study will be operationally defined. Conceptual and operational

definitions are directly related to the variables used in the Family Interruption Survey.

The following definitions relate t demographics, deployment, community

networks, family connectedness, military assistance, boundary ambiguity and well-being

of the family. Figure 3.1 provides a schematic representation of the relationships

involved in the transition and transformation that strengthen the explanation of parental

absence. I have also developed operational terms to further explain how parental absence

and family interruptions affect the overall well-being of the family. They are:

- o *Well-being*—as measured in this investigation was based on the respondents being asked to describe the satisfaction level of their current relationship. The scores range from 1 to 6.

- o *Deployment*—was measured by a scale variable composed of a 13 independent measures indicating the time away from the home due to military requirements. The mean score will be assigned to the individual to derive their final score.

- o *Boundary Ambiguity*—the perception of being present and non-present consisting of a scale item composed of 9 independent items that capture the essence of parental absence and the impact on the family relationships.

- o *Community Networks* —was measured by a scale of 6 independent measures that will be scored from 1 to 5 describing the support offered to deployed families from the community at-large.

- o *Family Connectedness*—was measured by 7 independent measures that are comprised of the basic beliefs and behaviors of family members during a deployment. The scale was summed and the mean score utilized.

- o *Military Assistance—*referred to as the ability to access military support provided during the deployment process consisting of a scale item composed of 5 specific items focused on knowledge of family support. The items were scored from 1 to 5.

Data Source

An online survey was administered to obtain data that will be useful in examining

the various groups to explore the impact of interruptions on military families. The

population of this study consists of families with at least one parent in the U.S. Military

Service whose obligations require them to be away from their families for an extended

period of at least three months. An online survey was made available to parents who were

be identified via prescreening conducted with the cooperation of the local school district that helps us to identify families with military dependents.

The survey was administered via the Kansas State University AXIO Survey System. All information was used for the purpose of research and the results of this survey will be used for future planning and research to address the needs of children and families.

The final sample for this investigation was based on the completed questionnaires. There were sampling issues with this investigation that I believe influenced the overall number of final cases. Initially I gathered a series of e-mail addresses from a variety of family readiness resource groups, church support groups, and a few officers who forwarded me e-mail addresses of potential contacts who had expressed an interest in my investigation.

These e-mail addresses totaled approximately 350 people. These were entered into a data base that was uploaded and used by the AXIO survey system to send out e-mail invitations. The invitations were sent every other day for twelve days after the original e-mail invitation was sent—this equaled to two weeks. Because of the nature of e-mail systems and the need to protect itself against virus and harmful "phishing" a considerable number of the e-mails were deposited into the spam or junk folders of most recipients. In addition, those who had a ".mil" or ".gov" designation on their e-mail addresses reported never receiving the e-mail sent from the AXIO survey system.

I discovered this problem and attempted to compensate for it by sending personal e-mails as well. However, after numerous solicitations from the AXIO system most e-mail systems saw my "ksu.edu" designation as possible spam as well. To counteract this

problem a brochure was designed explaining the study and then sent to several military

instillations around the country. Individuals were contacted by phone and told of the

dilemma. Some responded within the designated time frame. I expanded the data

collection window in the hopes of expanding the sample pool. When the data collection

effort ended, some four weeks beyond its original projected date, there were

approximately 224 questionnaires that were returned over a period of twelve months, 185

(82.59%) that had complete data and could be considered as viable but only 153

(68.30%) respondents who met the inclusion criteria for of having at least one child and

having experienced a deployment while this child was in their lives. These are the

respondents who were included in this study.   The return rate of 68.30% was well within

acceptable range for surveys and yielded a reasonable number of responses from which to

begin data analysis based on the sample size.

Instrument Design

An on-line survey of comprehensive questions were developed targeting families

experiencing interruptions as a result of a repeated, planned or emergency deployment.

The questionnaire included items that were designed with the following areas of

concentration:

- Deployment
- Military Assistance
- Community Networks
- Family Connectedness
- Preparedness for Parental Absence
- Boundary ambiguity associated with the parental absence
- Overall Family Well-Being

Pilot Test of Survey Instrument

A pilot survey was conducted among a sample of families who have experienced some form of family interruption. These families offered important insights into some issues that they felt were not well covered—most notably what is the effect of constant moving on children. Much of the feedback from these families is incorporated into the narrative section in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Analysis Plan

The analysis used a simple process model that allowed me to go from the more general ideas to the more specific notions related to the model. To that end, I used measures that help to explain the basic elements, such as simple descriptive statistics. I used univariate, bivariate, and multivariate statistics in order to examine the research hypotheses. Advanced statistical analysis in the form of hierarchical regression was employed to determine the variables that most likely influence the factors involved with parental absence and family interruptions and their relationship to family well-being.

Univariate Statistics

In this study, simple descriptive analyses of the sample consisted of basic frequency distributions and measures of dispersion (means, medians, modes, standard deviations, and variances). There were some scale variables that were developed and were tested via appropriate statistical procedures [e.g., reliability tests for Cronbach's alpha (α)] and the standard measures of dispersion.

Bivariate Statistics

The nature of this study and its hypotheses required that the mean differences between the groups be examined in detail. Additional multivariate exploratory analysis

was conducted to see if there will be any differences associated with the outcome measure. Simple correlation analyses were conducted with each domain of the model and the outcome measures—well-being. When two or more groups are examined, it will be necessary to use Factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) along with appropriate Post-Hoc tests and data plots to explain the mean difference.

Multivariate Statistics

Social science requires that researchers use more sophisticated techniques that answer complex research questions, test hypotheses and explain the research model. In this investigation I used a hierarchical multiple regression analysis procedure to help explain how the model worked as well as to test model's overall efficacy. The results demonstrated that the *Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model* did have practical applicability. The details of findings are in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this document.
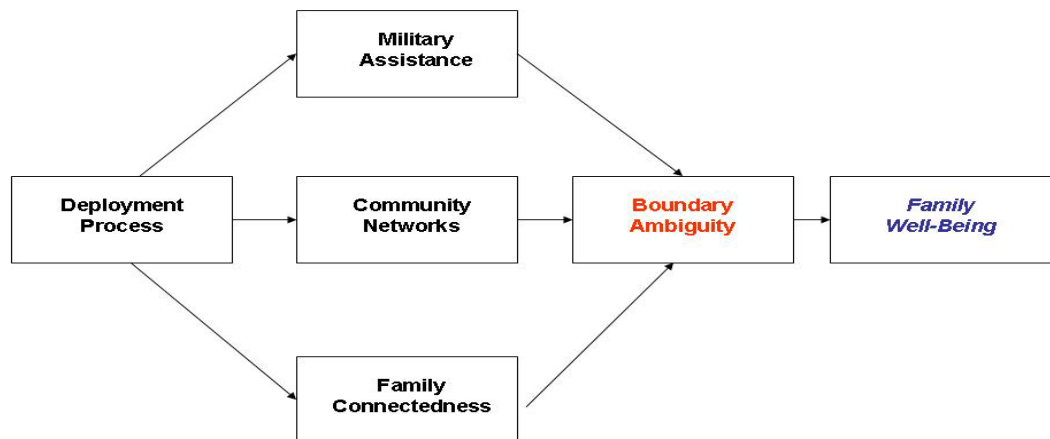
Figure 3.2. Theoretical Model of Influence of Interruptions on Family Well Being Model with Boundary Ambiguity as an Intermediate Factor.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter explains the findings of the current investigation as they relate to the proposed predictor, mediating and outcome variables and the relationships postulated to exist between the deployment process and boundary ambiguity as it influences well-being. In short, the theoretical model and its various components are explored and analyzed. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides information on the sample population through simple descriptive statistics. The second section focuses on the scale construction and the reliability associated with each new variable. The final two sections consist of the hypotheses testing via bivariate and multivariate analyses.

Descriptive Statistics

Basic descriptive statistics involved examining the data for univariate trends. This involved providing simple frequency distributions and appropriate measures of central tendency and dispersions for vital study components.   The initial sample available for this investigation was n = 185 respondents—this number is based on all respondents before the final study criteria were applied. The sample consisted of persons who have a child(ren) with a member of the Armed Services and has experienced or is experiencing a deployment. The breakdown for these data revealed that there were 91.4% (n = 169) female and 8.6% (n = 16) male respondents.   This was expected considering that the criteria for acceptance was that there had to be children and that at least one partner had experienced a military deployment. Given the sex imbalance found throughout US military service it was expected that a majority of the respondents would

be female—it turns out that the original speculation was supported by these findings. The

race and ethnic composition reflected that typically found in military services. For

example, 64.9% (n =120) are White, more than a quarter (28.6%) are Black (n = 53),

while the remainder represent other race and ethnic groups Hispanics (4.9%), and all

others (1.6%). See Table 4.1 for a complete breakdown of these demographics.

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for Basic Family Composition on Selected Demographic Variables
and Influence of Deployment on Location.

Variable	Coding Scheme	*n*	*f*
Sex	Male	16	8.6
	Female	169	91.4
Race	White non-Hispanic	120	64.9
	Black/African Americans	53	28.6
	Hispanic Americans	9	4.9
	Asian Americans	2	1.1
	Not a US Citizen	1	0.5
Religion	Catholic	41	22.2
	Protestant	76	41.1
	Other	47	25.4
	None	21	11.4
Marital Status	Single (Never Married)	4	2.2
	Single (in Relationship)	5	2.7
	Cohabitating (Living with Partner	2	1.1
	Married	156	84.3
	Separated	5	2.7
	Divorced	9	4.9
	Widowed	4	2.2
Relocated in Deployment?	Yes	85	55.6
	No	68	44.4
Does R Have Children?	Yes	153	97.4
	No	4	2.6

A majority of the respondents were married (84.3%). More than one-half (55.6%)

relocated their families during the deployment.

Table 4.2

Reported Means, Standard Deviations and Median Scores for Age, Social, and Economic Predictor Variables used in the Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being.

	M	SD	Mdn	n
Age	37.62	10.386	36.00	185
Education in Years	15.72	2.392	16.00	185
N of Children	2.22	1.186	2.00	153
Age Joined Military Forces	21.04	3.967	20.00	153
N of Deployments	3.24	2.198	3.00	153
Length of Deployment in Months	14.00	8.539	12.00	153
Length of Deployment in Years	1.17	1.000	0.06	153

The general sample population had an average age of 38 years ($M = 37.62$, $sd =$

10.386) and a median age of 36 years ($Mdn = 36.00$). The average level of education (M

$= 15.72$, $sd = 2.392$) was much higher than the general population and that found among

other studies conducted using military families. One half of the sample had at least a

baccalaureate degree ($Mdn = 16.00$). In many ways this had to do with some of the

sampling issues and the self selection of respondents.

After applying the study inclusion criteria, the number of respondents who were

eligible to participate was n= 153 or approximately 83.0% (82.7%) of the total. The

remaining data analysis is based on this sample. As can be seen in Table 4.2, the average

age when the respondents spouse or significant other joined the military was in line with

the data found in other studies ($M = 21.04$, $sd = 3.969$, $Mdn = 20.00$) suggesting that

many of the respondents probably finished their undergraduate degrees while their

significant other or partner was in service.

In terms of deployment issues, the average number of separations reported by families was just over three ($M = 3.24$, $sd = 2.198$). The median number of deployments was also noteworthy ($Mdn = 3.00$) because that meant that one half of all families experienced three or more deployments across the length of a military career. Of greater importance was the length of time in deployments reported by the respondents. On average the length of deployments was 14 months ($M = 14.00$, $sd = 8.539$) or over one year ($M = 1.17$ years, $sd = 1.000$).

I also asked how families perceived community and military support during the deployment. A considerable majority (57.7%) found the military was somewhat to not supportive at all (see Table 4.3). The trend continued when community support was examined. Approximately 60% (59.5%) reported feeling somewhat to barely supported. This trend was in contrast to the way respondents reported about being prepared for the deployment of their partner. Just about two-thirds (66.6%) indicated that they were mostly to very well prepared for the deployment. Only 3.9% stated that they were not prepared at all. Despite the hardships that deployments may cause, only 30.1% reported experiencing any financial difficulties related directly to the absence of their partner. The idea that stress was induced by military life seemed to be displayed by this sample. One-third (34.4%) indicated that they were stressed or very stressed while another third (36.6%) were somewhat stressed. These data show that stress is a common part of family lives, especially those where military service is in the family's culture, and that stress is not necessarily financially induced as it is for a number of non-military families in the United States.

Family connectedness is another central component of this investigation. Among

the indicators that were used to measure this construct were variables that examined

relationship roles, relationship status, and overall attitude toward deployment.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Support and Deployment Related Stress Measures.

Variable	Coding Scheme	n	f
Was Military Supportive	Very Supportive	12	7.8
	Supportive	53	34.6
	Somewhat Supportive	60	39.2
	Barely Supportive	20	13.1
	Not Supportive at All	8	5.2
Was Community Supportive	Very Supportive	13	8.5
	Supportive	49	32.0
	Somewhat Supportive	62	40.5
	Barely Supportive	20	13.1
	Not Supportive at All	9	5.9
Was R Prepared for Deployment	Very Prepared	34	22.2
	Mostly Prepared	68	44.4
	Generally Prepared	32	20.9
	Somewhat Prepared	13	8.5
	Not Prepared at All	6	3.9
Ever Experienced Financial Stress	Yes	55	35.9
	No	98	64.1
Recent Deployment Financial Stress	Yes	46	30.1
	No	107	69.9
Overall Stress Level	Not Stressed at All	9	5.9
	Slightly Stressed	35	22.9
	Somewhat Stressed	56	36.6
	Stressed	34	22.2
	Very Stressed	19	12.2

Respondents who reported a great amount of change in their family roles

accounted for almost one-fifth (22.9%) of the sample. Another 43.1% indicated that they

experienced a good amount of change in their family roles, while only 3.3% reported no

change of any kind in their family roles (See Table 4.4).

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Family Connectedness Measures.

Variable	Coding Scheme	*n*	*f*
Change in Family Roles?	A Great Amount	35	22.9
	A Good Amount	66	43.1
	Some Amount	35	22.9
	Slight Amount	12	7.8
	No Changes of Any kind	5	3.3
Current Relationship Status	Very Serious	130	85.0
	Fairly Serious	11	7.2
	Somewhat Serious	4	2.6
	Getting to Know Each Other	3	2.0
	Not Serious at All	2	1.3
	Not in a Relationship	3	2.0
How Satisfied with Relationship?	Very Satisfied	56	36.6
	Satisfied	74	48.4
	Somewhat Satisfied	15	9.8
	Dissatisfied	5	3.3
	Very Dissatisfied	3	2.0
Child Relationship with Deployed Parent	Very Good	64	41.8
	Good	68	44.4
	Fair	16	10.5
	Poor	4	2.6
	Very Poor	1	0.7
Child Attitude Toward Deployed Parent	Very Good	58	37.9
	Good	71	46.4
	Fair	19	12.4
	Poor	3	2.0
	Very Poor	2	1.3

An overwhelming majority (85.0%) reported the relationship status as very

serious but only 36.6% reported being very satisfied with their relationship.

Nevertheless, almost one-half (48.4%) said that they were satisfied with their

relationship. When respondents were asked about the relationship and attitude of their children with the deployed parent most reported that the relationship (86.2%) and attitude toward the parent (84.3%) were overwhelmingly positive.

The Boundary Ambiguity indicator variables (see Table 4.5) revealed that most respondents believed that they coped well (43.8%) but that both the spouse or significant other (48.4%) and children (46.4%) coped normally. In fact, 17.7% reported that their children barely coped or did not cope well with the separations. Another important indicator was stress level related to deployment status. Over one-third reported being stressed or very stressed for themselves (34.6%) and their spouse or significant other (35.3%). Additionally, one-fifth (20.9%) reported similar levels of stress for their children. Only 15.0% reported no stress at all among the children but equal amounts (5.9%) were reported for themselves and their partners.

The descriptive data for well-being revealed that at least four out of every ten persons (40.0%) had their well-being somewhat affected by deployment for all indicators (see Table 4.6). Those whose overall well-being was strongly affected or affected by deployment represented 27.4%. When these measures were examined for partner (31.4%), family (32.7%) or children (34.0%), it was clear that deployment does seem to have a meaningful effect on families who experience it.

Scale Variables

The theoretical model present in Chapter Three suggested that there was a need for a measure of constructs of stress, coping, and well-being. Because the variables were specifically designed to measure these constructs in an independent fashion, it was not necessary to conduct initial factor analysis to discern which variables contributed to the

final design of the measures used in this category. Instead, the measures were summed

and then tested to determine their usefulness with established procedures.

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Boundary Ambiguity Measures.

Variable	Coding Scheme	*n*	*f*
Did you Cope Well?	Coped Very Well	23	15.0
	Coped Well	67	43.8
	Coped Normally	43	28.1
	Barely Coped	18	11.8
	Did not Cope Well	2	1.3
Spouse or SO Cope Well?	Coped Very Well	18	11.8
	Coped Well	46	30.1
	Coped Normally	74	48.4
	Barely Coped	10	6.5
	Did not Cope Well	5	3.3
Children Coped Well?	Coped Very Well	16	10.5
	Coped Well	39	25.5
	Coped Normally	71	46.4
	Barely Coped	20	13.1
	Did not Cope Well	7	4.6
Your Stress Level	Not Stressed at All	9	5.9
	Slightly Stressed	35	22.9
	Somewhat Stressed	56	36.6
	Stressed	34	22.2
	Very Stressed	19	12.4
Spouse or SO Stress Level	Not Stressed at All	9	5.9
	Slightly Stressed	30	19.6
	Somewhat Stressed	60	39.2
	Stressed	29	19.0
	Very Stressed	25	16.3
Child Stress Level	Not Stressed at All	23	15.0
	Slightly Stressed	61	39.9
	Somewhat Stressed	37	24.2
	Stressed	22	14.4
	Very Stressed	10	6.5

Table 4.6

Descriptive Statistics for Outcome Measure of How Well-Being Status was Affected During Deployment.

Variable	Coding Scheme	n	f
Overall Well-Being	Strongly Affected	19	12.4
	Affected	23	15.0
	Somewhat Affected	73	47.7
	Barely Affected	29	19.0
	Not Strongly Affected	9	5.9
Spouse or SO Well-Being	Strongly Affected	17	11.1
	Affected	31	20.3
	Somewhat Affected	71	46.4
	Barely Affected	18	11.8
	Not Strongly Affected	16	10.5
Family's Well-Being	Strongly Affected	14	9.2
	Affected	36	23.5
	Somewhat Affected	70	45.8
	Barely Affected	20	13.1
	Not Strongly Affected	13	8.5
Child's Well-Being	Strongly Affected	13	8.5
	Affected	39	25.5
	Somewhat Affected	63	41.2
	Barely Affected	18	11.8
	Not Strongly Affected	10	13.1

Reliability Tests

The reliability tests were conducted using Cronbach's alpha (α) as criteria measure as is standard in reliability testing. Responses for all items were on Likert-type scales were summed. The scores ranged from 1 to 5 on most measures. Only measures with the same scales were used to determine the overall measure for the constructs. The results from the reliability tests along with their appropriate scores are listed in Table 4.7. The constructs tested corresponded to the variables that were predicted in the study model with the exception of the deployment process which consisted of disparate

measures and therefore not appropriate for reliability testing. There were two sub-scaled

variables that were also examined. They were Coping and Stress, the two elements that

represented the mediating variable of Boundary Ambiguity. Each of these constructs

presented alpha scores in the acceptable range, suggesting that each construct on its face

was reliable and could be used as an independent measure within the model. These

constructs appear below the parent construct as italics and off-center from the main

element. These data for the sub-scales (stress and coping) are presented here for

informational purposes and were not used as independent constructs in the final model;

however, they were used in the simple bivariate analysis that follows this section in an

effort to show how the sub-scales related to families and their well-being.

Table 4.7

*Reported Means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach's Alpha Scores for Selected Scaled
and Sub-scaled Variables used in the Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being
Model.*

Construct	*M*	*SD*	α	*n*
Military Assistance	2.66	0.963	.904	153
Community Networks	3.65	1.102	.796	153
Family Connectedness	1.80	0.912	.623	153
Boundary Ambiguity	2.78	1.020	.813	153
Coping	*2.59*	*0.931*	*.719*	*153*
Stress	*2.97*	*1.103*	*.769*	*153*
Well-Being	2.91	1.067	.872	153

Note. The sub-scales for Boundary Ambiguity consisted of the concepts of Coping and Stress. Each revealed a fairly sizable and important alpha coefficient; however, the combined effect of these measures was substantial producing a meritorious reliability score.

In general, the reliability scores ranged from a low of α = .623 (Family

Connectedness) to a high of α = .904 (Military Assistance). The range of alpha scores

corresponded to the general headings from *questionable* to *excellent*—each measure was

well within accepted parameters. These scores demonstrated that it is possible to have

confidence in the study measures as conceptualized here.

Bivariate Analyses

All elements of the Family Interruptions model were tested with each other using simple zero-order correlations in an effort to insure that the model elements were appropriately identified as measured in this investigation. In model building it is essential that theoretical elements have some connection to each other; and yet it is important that these elements not be too highly or inconsequentially correlated. Simple correlations were run for elements used to compose the study's model along with the outcome measure Well-Being in order to explore the relationships between variables. The correlation matrices reported here consist of the elements used in the scaled variables. The relationships under investigation were generally found to be significantly correlated ($p < .05$) with the outcome measure well-being.

Correlation Analysis

The following section examines the zero-order correlation among the variables associated with each model element. In this section I focused first on the how the specific model elements correlate with the outcome measure of well-being in an attempt to verify the relevance of the model.

The correlations that represent the deployment process and well-being are presented in Table 4.8. In general, the measures for deployment revealed the expected pattern. For example, the total number of deployments was related to length of deployment ($r = .158$, $p < .05$) and negatively related to whether or not a family was prepared for deployment ($r = -.213$, $p < .001$). Another negative and significant correlation was reported for well-being and length of deployment ($r = -.207$, $p < .01$).

Type of deployment revealed no significant relationships with any of the deployment measures or with well-being.

Table 4.8

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for the "Deployment Process" Component of the Influence of Interruptions on Family Model with Well-Being.

			Deployment Process		
Variables	Deploy1	Deploy2	Deploy3	Deploy4	Well-Being
Deploy1	----				
Deploy2	.102	----			
Deploy3	.158*	-.066	----		
Deploy4	-.213***	-.023	.151	----	
Well-Being	-.142	.045	-.207**	.089	----

Note. Deploy1 = Total number of deployments; Deploy2 = Type of deployment; Deploy3 = Length of deployment; Deploy4 = Prepared for deployment.
*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

Military Assistance. Data for the military assistance variables reported significant and large correlations for all measures, although those for well-being were in the moderate range. Some of the correlations, especially those focused on satisfaction with military services during deployment reflected very positive attitudes toward the military service; however, those attitudes dropped significantly when well-being is considered. It appears that the military assistance measure is cohesive and can serve as a good indicator with the model (see Table 4.9).

Community Networks. The community network measures present themselves as almost an anomaly. The correlations between the community network measures range from moderate to excellent. However, among well-being only the measure that examined how much a respondent felt connected to religious and faith-based organizations and

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well-being ($r = .174$, $p < .05$) was significant. All other measures of community network

did not have strong or significant correlations. Table 4.10 highlights these relationships.

Table 4.9

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for the "Military Assistance" Component of the Influence of Interruptions on Family Model with Well-Being.

			Military Assistance			
Variables	Assist1	Assist2	Assist3	Assist4	Assist5	Well-Being
Assist1	----					
Assist2	.801***	----				
Assist3	.737***	.754***	----			
Assist4	.679***	.682***	.694***	----		
Assist5	.525***	.580***	.510***	.580***	----	
Well-Being	.297***	.293***	.213**	.217**	.217**	----

Note. Assist1 = R Satisfied with military services during deployment; Assist2 = How satisfied was R with military services during deployments; Assist3 =Military was helpful to R during deployment; Assist4 = Military was supportive to R; Assist5 = Community-at-large was supportive to R.
 *** = $p <.001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

Table 4.10

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for the "Community Networks" Component of the Influence of Interruptions on Family Model with Well-Being.

		Community Networks			
Variables	Comm1	Comm2	Comm3	Comm4	Well-Being
Comm1	----				
Comm2	.464***	----			
Comm3	.523***	.348***	----		
Comm4	.339***	.761***	.515***	----	
Well-Being	.080	.174*	.015	.046	----

Note. Comm1 = Did R feel connected to the community based organization (CBO) during deployment; Comm2 = Did R feel connected to religious or faith based organization (F/FBO) during deployment; Comm3 = Frequency of contact by CBO during deployment; Comm4 = Frequency of contact by R/FBO during deployment.
*** = $p <.001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

Family Connectedness. The family connectedness construct highlights the

importance of the personal relationship and its effect on well-being (see Table 4.11). The

measures for the belief that traditional family roles have changed were moderately

correlated and in the expected direction. How much family roles changed with children

relationship with the deployed parent ($r = -.194, p < .05$) and attitude toward deployed

parent ($r = -.209, p < .01$) were significant.

Table 4.11

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for the "Family Connectedness" Component of the Family Interruptions Model with Well-Being.

Variables	Connect1	Connect2	Connect3	Connect4	Connect5	Well-Being
Family Connectedness						
Connect1	----					
Connect2	. 007	----				
Connect3	-.052	.524***	----			
Connect4	-.194*	.334***	.531***	----		
Connect5	-.209**	.321***	.463***	.762***	----	
Well-Being	-.271***	.093	.283***	.199*	.196*	----

Note. Connect1 = How much have traditional roles in the family changed; Connect2 = How would you describe your relationship; Connect3 = Satisfied with your current relationship; Connect4 = R children relationship with deployed parent; Connect5 = Attitude of children toward deployed parent.
*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$, * = $p < .05$.

In addition the reported well-being and belief in how traditional family roles have

changed were also significant ($r = -.271, p < .001$) suggesting that families experienced

changes in their family roles directly related to the periodic absence of one parent. The

measures of family connectedness show positive and significant correlations with each

other. In terms of well-being four variables for family connectedness: satisfied with

current relationship ($r = .283, p < .001$); children's relationship with deployed parent ($r =$

.199, $p < .05$); and children's attitude toward deployed parent ($r = .196$, $p < .05$) were significant. The exception was the respondents own relationship with deployed spouse or significant other ($r = .093$, $p < .44$) were the correlation was small and not significant.

Boundary Ambiguity. The final component tested is boundary ambiguity. As expected from the reliability analysis the variables were related to each other and to the well-being measure. The only variable for which there was no significant relationship was for the respondent's belief about how well their spouse or significant other coped with deployment and the reported stress level of the children ($r = .130$, $p < .45$). Table 4.12 contains the correlations for these measures. The strength and size of these zero-order correlations indicated that boundary ambiguity played an important role in well-being among military families.

Table 4.12

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for the "Boundary Ambiguity" Component of the Family Interruptions Model with Well-Being.

	Boundary Ambiguity						
Variables	Cope1	Cope2	Cope3	Stress1	Stress2	Stress3	Well-Being
Cope1	----						
Cope2	.466***	----					
Cope3	.491***	.424***	----				
Stress1	.512***	.281***	.512***	----			
Stress2	.206**	.496***	.345***	.480***	----		
Stress3	.360***	.130	.498***	.623***	.474***	----	
Well-Being	.438***	.323***	.460***	.535***	.463***	.508***	----

Note. Cope1 = Coped well with deployment; Cope2 = Significant other coped well with deployment; Cope3 = Children cope well with deployment; Stress1 = R stress level; Stress2 = Stress level of significant other; Stress3 = Stress level of children.
*** = $p < .001$, ** = $p < .01$.

Multivariate Analyses

The general nature of this investigation required that the components of the study first be tested as was done with both the reliability and simple zero-order correlation statistics. With the viability of the measures confirmed the subsequent hypothesis used in this investigation can now be tested. In order to adequately investigate the hypotheses, some appropriate multivariable measures were used, these included ANalysis Of VAriance (ANOVA) and hierarchical regression. The following section focuses on each of the hypotheses and their outcomes. The appropriate statistic will be reported along with the finding regarding the study's hypotheses.

Hypothesis Testing with ANOVA Analysis

There were four hypotheses developed for this investigation. They were based on a review of the current literature and as measures of the study model used in this dissertation. Each hypothesis was aimed at highlighting some aspect of the Family Interruption and Well-Being model. The initial hypothesis stated:

H_1 *The level and stage of deployment and boundary ambiguity will be strongly related to well-being*.

In other words, the length of time one is deployed is related to a poor sense of belonging to the family and a general less supportive affect among family members. The specific nature of ANOVA requires that measures tested by either categorical or ordinal. To achieve this the variable, length of time deployed, was recoded into five groups to correspond to the following: (1) less than one year; (2) one year; (3) one and a half years (1.00-1.49); (4) one and a half to two years (1.50-2.00); (5) two or more years (2.01 and greater). In order to test this hypothesis a Factorial ANOVA was constructed that examined the presence of deployment time and boundary ambiguity within the family

with the outcome measure of well-being. A two-way interaction was also conducted for the length of time deployed and boundary ambiguity.

The ANOVA test concluded that there were significant main effects of deployment time, $F_{(4,153)} = 2.572$, $p < .043$, and boundary ambiguity, $F_{(21, 153)} = 6.931$, $p < .001$, as well as a significant interaction between deployment time and boundary ambiguity, $F_{(33, 153)} = 1.577$, $p < .046$ (see Table 4.13). A significant interaction suggested that deployment time and boundary ambiguity played an important role in well-being but it was not as easily defined as it was hypothesized. Overall, hypothesis one was supported but the general direction of how deployment and boundary ambiguity influenced well-being was supported from the ANOVA results. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there was supported, however there was a significant interaction between deployment time and boundary ambiguity. Post-hoc testing revealed significant differences for the key elements of well-being and deployment time lending support to the hypothesis.

Table 4.13

Factorial ANOVA Results for Deployment Time, Boundary Ambiguity and Well-Being.

Source	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	1396.913	58	24.085	3.773***
Intercept	8232.192	1	8232.192	1289.650***
Boundary Ambiguity	929.089	21	44.242	6.931***
Deployment Time	65.669	4	16.417	2.572*
Boundary Ambiguity* Deployment Time	332.108	33	10.064	1.577*
Error	600.028	94	6.383	
Total	25,344.000	153		

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

In an effort to provide greater clarity, the type of deployment was examined as a possible explanation for hypothesis one. An additional factorial ANOVA was conducted using deployment type, boundary ambiguity and well-being. The main effects for type of deployment, $F_{(4, 153)} = 1.467$, $p = .218$, was not significant, however, there was a significant main effect for boundary ambiguity, $F_{(21,153)} = 4.881$, $p < .001$. There was no significant interaction effect between the factors (see Table 4.14). The results demonstrated that the type of deployment was not a critical factor in determining well-being when considered in conjunction with boundary ambiguity as stated in the hypothesis.

Table 4.14

Factorial ANOVA Results for Deployment Type, Boundary Ambiguity and Well-Being.

Source	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	1202.158	58	20.727	2.451***
Intercept	8478.450	1	8478.450	1003.821***
Boundary Ambiguity	866.730	21	41.273	4.881***
Deployment Type	49.612	4	12.403	1.467
Boundary Ambiguity* Deployment Type	158.804	33	4.812	0.569
Error	794.783	94	8.455	
Total	25344.000	153		

*** $p < .001$.

When considering the results for the second hypothesis, the focus turns to the community relationship to the family during deployment.

H₂ *Families with more positive community environments will exhibit a greater sense of well-being no matter the length of the family interruption.*

In this hypothesis the influence of community and level of deployment are considered as factors in well-being apart from the other elements in the model. A factorial ANOVA examining the components for hypothesis two (see Table 4.15)

revealed no significant differences for the main effects of community networks, $F_{(16,153)} =$ 1.569, $p < .091$, and deployment time $F_{(4,153)} = 2.081$, $p < .089$, and no significance for the interaction effect as well ($F_{(29,153)} = 1.341$, $p < .143$). These results indicated that we must reject the notion that community networks are strongly related to family well-being no matter what the deployment time and conclude that there is no effect as revealed by the ANOVA results. In other words, community support, although important, does not differ significantly among families no matter what the overall effect of deployment when well-being is being considered.

Table 4.15

Factorial ANOVA Results for Deployment Time, Community Networks and Well-Being.

Source	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	781.850	49	15.956	1.353
Intercept	7683.625	1	7683.625	651.320***
Community Networks	296.127	16	18.508	1.569
Deployment Time	98.194	4	24.548	2.081
Community Networks* Deployment Time	458.875	29	15.823	1.341
Error	1215.091	103	11.797	
Total	25344.000	153		

*** $p < .001$.

The third hypothesis examines the direct influence of the family on overall well-being when family interruptions are considered. The hypothesis is stated as follows:

H$_3$ *Parents who are highly involved in their families are likely to have a higher degree of family well-being with their children no matter the stage of family interruption.*

Hypothesis three examines the role family cohesion or connectedness plays in keeping a family stable and happy during family interruptions. To examine this more closely a factorial ANOVA for family connectedness and deployment time was constructed with well-being as the outcome measure (see Table 4.16). The main effect of

family connectedness was an important element, $F_{(13,153)} = 1.818$, $p < .050$, along with the main effect of deployment time, $F_{(4,153)} = 2.420$, $p < .053$. The interaction effect was not significant ($F_{(28,153)} = 1.445$, $p < .093$). A post-hoc comparison, using Scheffé test statistic revealed significant differences by family involvement just as originally hypothesized. In other words, those families that revealed greater connectedness also had higher levels of well-being. Therefore, it is plausible to accept the null hypothesis that families who are more involved and connected to each other have greater well-being no matter what the stage of family interruption.

Table 4.16

Factorial ANOVA Results for Deployment Time, Family Connectedness and Well-Being.

Source	Sums of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
Corrected Model	824.768	45	18.328	1.673*
Intercept	7902.827	1	7902.827	721.397***
Family Connectedness	258.117	13	19.855	1.812*
Deployment Time	106.022	4	26.506	2.420*
Family Connectedness* Deployment Time	443.326	28	15.883	1.445
Error	1172.173	107	10.955	
Total	25344.000	153		

*** $p < .001$. * $p < .05$.

The final hypothesis for this investigation contains several elements that would best be served by using another more advanced technique, in this case, regression analysis. In addition to its strength and robust nature, the ability to partial out variance in stages would be most useful in understanding the final model proposed for this study. The final hypothesis is:

H$_4$ *The well-being of families who experience interruptions will be strongly influenced by the general preparedness for deployment, perceived military assistance, perceived community support, family connectedness, and amount boundary ambiguity displayed within a family.*

This hypothesis serves as an explanation of the theoretical model proposed in the earlier chapters of this dissertation. Hierarchical regression analysis will be used to delineate the important features of the model as it is developed component by component.

Hierarchical Regression Analyses

A hierarchical regression was conducted to determine the predictors of interruptions effect on Well-Being. Each block corresponds to a particular element of the Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model. These groups helped to establish the relative usefulness and veracity of the model. Analysis was performed using the regression procedure available in IBM-SPSS (Version 19).

The final hypothesis is a direct measurement statement about the family interruptions model. The constructs used in the model are all observed factors as such it is possible to use an ordinary least squares regression procedure to explain the overall outcome of the model. The general equation used for the model is measured hierarchically instead of causally as found in traditional model testing relying on path analysis. The equation is based on the scale variables and is identified by standard regression nomenclature.

Equation 4.1

$$Y = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + e_i$$

Where, Y = Well-Being
X_1 = Age Joined Military
X_2 = Length of Recent Deployment
X_3 = Military Assistance
X_4 = Community Networks
X_5 = Family Connectedness
X_6 = Boundary Ambiguity
e_i = error

The sequence for regression involved four stages with six independent variables. At each stage the variables within the sequence were regressed on to the outcome measure—well-being. At each subsequent stage the other sequences were then added until all six variables were included in the model. Each time a sequence is completed the amount of variance explained, the improvement made because of the additional elements was measured, and the difference between each stage was assessed and its significance level discussed (see Table 4.17).

The first stage of the regression analysis used the elements of the deployment process and well-being. The two variables of *age joined military* ($\beta = -.159$, $p < .05$) and *length of recent deployment* ($\beta = -.222$, $p < .01$) were able to explain about 7% ($R^2_{adj} = .068$) of the variance in well-being among the families.

The second stage of the analysis used the measures for deployment (*age joined military, $\beta = -.190$, $p < .05$, and length of recent deployment, $\beta = -.208$, $p < .01$), military assistance* ($\beta = .317$, $p < .001$) and *community networks* ($\beta = -.053$, $p < .523$). The amount of variance explained once these variables were added to the model was 13% ($R^2_{adj} = .133$) and the amount of change in variance explained was approximately 9% ($\Delta R^2 = .088$, $p < .001$).

During the third stage the element *family connectedness* was added to the model. The deployment process variables (*age joined military, $\beta = -.203$, $p < .01$ and length of deployment, $\beta = -.239$, $p < .01$) military assistance* ($\beta = -.285$, $p < .001$), *community networks* ($\beta = -.046$, $p < .56$) and *family connectedness* ($\beta = .154$, $p < .05$) accounted for 15% ($R^2_{adj} = .150$) of the variance explained in well-being. The amount of change was approximately 2% ($\Delta R^2 = .022$, $p < .05$).

Table 4.17

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Influence of Interruptions of Family Well-Being Model Predicting Well-Being from Model Components Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, Community Network, Family Connectedness, and Boundary Ambiguity.

Model	B	SE	β	R^2_{adj}	ΔR^2
Block1[a]					
Age Joined Military	-.147	.073	-.159*	.068	.068
Length of Recent Deployment	-.030	.011	-.222**		
Block2[b]					
Age Joined Military	-.175	.071	-.190*	.133	.088***
Length of Recent Deployment	-.028	.010	-.208**		
Military Assistance	.280	.074	.317***		
Community Networks	-.056	.087	-.053		
Block3[c]					
Age Joined Military	-.187	.070	-.203**	.150	.022*
Length of Recent Deployment	-.033	.010	-.239**		
Military Assistance	.252	.074	.285***		
Community Networks	-.048	.086	-.046		
Family Connectedness	.199	.100	.154*		
Block4[d]					
Age Joined Military	-.123	.057	-.134*	.452	.296***
Length of Recent Deployment	-.029	.008	-.210***		
Military Assistance	.056	.064	.063		
Community Networks	-.165	.070	-.158*		
Family Connectedness	.058	.082	.045		
Boundary Ambiguity	.521	.058	.633***		

[a]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, and Length of Deployment (Deployment Process).
[b]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, and Community Networks.
[c]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, Community Networks, and Family Connectedness.
[d]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, Community Networks, Family Connectedness, and Boundary Ambiguity.

The final stage of the model included the measure of *boundary ambiguity*. The

deployment process variables (*age joined military, β* = -.134, *p* < .05 and *length of recent*

deployment, β = -.210, *p* < .001) *military assistance* (*β* = .063, *p* < .38), *community*

networks (*β* = -.158, *p* < .05), *family connectedness* (*β* = .045, *p* < .48) and *boundary*

ambiguity (*β* = .633, *p* < .01) accounted for 45% (R^2_{adj} = .452) of the variance in well

being. The addition of *boundary ambiguity* changed the amount of variance by

approximately 30% (ΔR^2 = .296, *p* < .001).

The overall amount of variance explained by the current model is 45%. In other

words, almost one-half of well-being reported among military families in this

investigation can be explained by the elements contained in the family interruptions

model further attesting to its viability and efficacy as a model for explaining the impact

of family interruptions. It is also clear that the results support the hypothesis. The family

interruptions model can be used to help explain well-being in military families who

experience periodic family interruptions due to duty related issues. Table 4.18 reveals the

summary statistics for the R, R^2, R^2_{adj}, F Change, and ΔR^2 for the four models.

Table 4.18

R Squared, Adjusted R Squared, and R Squared Change Results for Hierarchical
Regression for Family Interruptions Model.

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F Change	ΔR^2 Change
1	.261[a]	.068	.056	5.466	.068**
2	.395[b]	.156	.133	7.739	.088***
3	.422[c]	.178	.150	3.918	.022*
4	.688[d]	.474	.452	82.068	.296***

[a]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, and Length of Deployment (Deployment Process).
[b]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, and Community Networks.
[c]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, Community Networks, and Family
Connectedness.
[d]Predictors: (Constant), Age Joined Military, Length of Deployment, Military Assistance, Community Networks, Family
Connectedness, and Boundary Ambiguity.

Overview of Results

This chapter examined the individual and scaled elements used in the Family

Interruptions model in an effort to both test and explore the efficacy of this model with

military families. The overall results for the final model revealed that there was indeed

some role that this model could play in addressing issues concerning well-being for those

families that have experienced deployments, of any duration.

There were four hypotheses related to this model. Each was examined and the

results discussed. Table 4.19 provides a summary of these results. Although there was

evidence to support three of the four hypotheses, only two are designated as clearly

acceptable while the other two are rejected because of lack of conclusive evidence

displayed by the findings.

Table 4.19

*Summary Results for Hypotheses for Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being
Model.*

Hypothesis	Text of Hypothesis	Results	Action
H_1	The level and stage of deployment and boundary ambiguity will be strongly related to well-being.	Inconclusive	Reject
H_2	Families with more positive community environments will exhibit a greater sense of well-being no matter the length of the family interruption.	Inconclusive	Reject
H_3	Parents who are highly involved in their families are likely to have a higher degree of family well-being with their children no matter the stage of family interruption.	Supported	Accept
H_4	The well-being of families who experience interruptions will be strongly influenced by the generally preparedness for deployment, perceived military assistance, perceived community support, family connectedness, and amount boundary ambiguity displayed within a family.	Supported	Accept

The conclusions drawn from these data, some of the limitations as well as some

implications of this study, along with a host of narrative comments made by the

respondents are discussed in the next chapter. There are some policy recommendations that are also made, as well as suggestions for future research issues and constructs.

The final model used in this study is presented below with the appropriate regression scores for each stage of the hierarchical analysis.   Each block of the model corresponded to a particular hypothesis (H_1, H_2, H_3) with the final hypothesis (H_4) focused on the overall model. The design for Figure 4.1 reports the R-squared for the specific block with the outcome measure being considered.
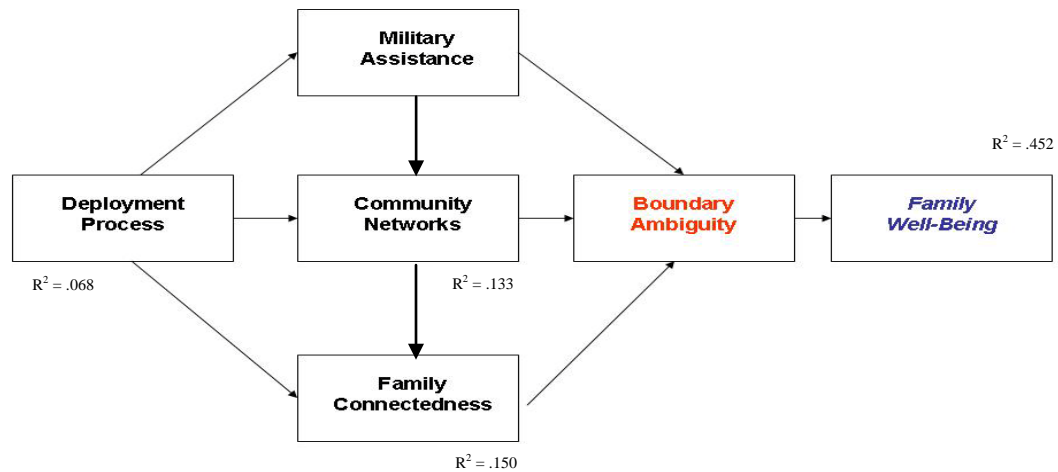
Figure 4.1. Final Model of Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being with Regression Scores for Each Stage of the Hierarchical Regression.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

The proposed project was designed as a quantitative study designed to explore the utility of the Influence of Interruptions of Military Family Well-Being Model. The results in Chapter Four confirmed and supported the model's explanatory power. In fact, it was possible to determine what factors influenced well-being of military families in an empirical sense. There was no shortage of data to support that position. What struck me however as I proceeded through this analysis was the uncommonly strong voice of the respondents who alluded to some other ideas other than those contained in the direct questions from the survey instrument. Without much expectation I had asked three questions that permitted the respondents to offer their opinions and feelings about some of the issues that taking the survey engendered for them. The respondents used this opportunity to express themselves and offer additional insights that I believed further underscored the value and utility of the initial results about the importance well-being previously unveiled in the quantitative results.

The initial questions of this investigation focused on changes that occurred during deployment, how supported families felt and to what extend families felt disconnected from their partner/spouse who had been deployed. These questions were addressed directly within the survey and yielded responses used to help explain the study's theoretical model. The additional questions that allowed respondents to offer their thoughts and feelings that were indirectly related to the model were: (1) If you could change anything about your relationship with your absent partner during deployment or tours, what would that be, please explain; (2) How did parenting change during the

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deployments or tours, please explain; and (3) How did the household dynamics change during the deployments or tours? Each of these questions ultimately acted as ancillary or proxy measures. Because it was not my intent or expectation that these data would be able to be mined it was a pleasant surprise to me when the data yielded some important themes and added a meaningful voice to the quantitative data. These three questions revealed an exciting source of new information, some confirmatory, some contradictory, and some just insightful regarding the lives of those left at home during an interruption.

Selecting a Qualitative Methodological Approach

In order to work with these data I had to select an appropriate qualitative approach *post*-hoc. In other words, since the analyses of these data were not part of my original research design I had to find an approach that would make the examination of these qualitative data both appropriate and meaningful. To address these comments I borrowed some concepts and ideas from the works on qualitative research, more specifically, that of the analytic macroethnographic approach which describes the way a group defines its existence within a given culture (Berg, 2001). In this case, how military spouses and partners feel about being separated, and what it means to their families ultimate well-being. The use of multiple methodologies in an effort to uncover the aspects of how the families negotiated their sense of well-being in the context of a family interruption seemed to be a natural occurrence in this investigation—one that seem to develop through my conversations with families, the narrative comments offered, and the objective data that I gathered from the respondents.

Lofland (1996) provided a description of what he refers to as analytic ethnography. He indicated that analytic macroethnography refers to "the research

process and products in which, to a greater or lesser degree, an investigator (a) attempts

to provide generic propositional answers to questions about social life and organization;

(b) strives to pursue such an attempt in a spirit of unfettered or naturalistic inquiry; (c)

utilizes data based on deep familiarity with a social setting or situation that is gained by

personal participation or an approximation of it; (d) develops the generic propositional

analysis over the course of doing research; (e) strives to present data and analyses that are

true; (f) seeks to provide data and/or analyses that are new; and (g) presents an analysis

that is developed in the senses of being conceptually elaborated, descriptively detailed,

and concept-data interpenetrated (p30)." I would like to argue that I have a somewhat

hybrid- or pseudo- macroethnographic approach tempered by the phenomenological

component generated by the respondents themselves.

The present study inadvertently generated a pseudo-ethnographic approach that is

reflected both the social-ecological and boundary ambiguity theories. It was revealed

through the comments made about the influence of interruptions on the families by the

families. According to the social ecological and boundary ambiguity theories, elements

of culture and social structure largely shape the forms one's life takes, this is perhaps

more true for military families who must often live within very closed and circumscribed

social communities.

The general model for qualitative research often permits an *ad hoc* combination of

methods—allowing for a more eclectic mixture of theories. By using a qualitative

approach one is able to draw upon diverse methods in order to explicate the data (Patton,

2003). The use of qualitative methodologies, even inadvertently, has been well

established throughout social sciences, especially when attempting to explore complex

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relationships across families—no example is better than that for families who have experienced interruptions that are beyond their personal control such as a deployment.

Overarching Themes

A preliminary examination of spousal comments revealed some overarching themes. I used Quarles (2001) and Patton (2003) strategies for identifying themes, concepts, and emergent patterns using the blurring of traditional boundaries of qualitative research. Quarles (2001) stated that over the years the original vision of qualitative and quantitative research has been complimentary and has steady loss ground.

The major premise of blurring traditional boundaries is that structured surveys cannot give you the right answers if you do not ask the right questions Quarles (2001. The increasing pressures to get good results and make good decisions caused researchers in the past to use qualitative research to strengthen the results.

Hybrid design allows researchers to give respondents the rich texture that qualitative research can provide, but also allows us to view qualitative findings in a quantitative perspective. By using a more hybrid like design I hope to provide more use and understandable data.

The qualitative data revealed six over-arching themes which I believe will help us to gain better insight into these familiar. These six overarching themes evolved from the respondents of the survey when asked about the research questions and their feelings about deployments. In addition, some of comments reflected the idea of boundary ambiguity although it was not explicitly stated, therefore, I did not highlight it specifically I did make note of its presence. The observed themes were as follows:

- How things can be changed
- Attitudes about deployments and tours

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- Communication issues
- Parenting changes
- Household dynamics and changes; Community based services and community networks
- Coping with stress during deployments and tours (psychological, emotional and financial)

This narrative section also seeks to provide a brief look into how military families are able to function during separations. Additionally, these themes were not used as a primary section in this investigation, but as supplemental support data in the interpretation of findings, i.e., additional data describing the day-to-day lives of military families today and the impact of the deployments and tours as an important part of their lives.

In this spirit, the following qualitative data provide themes and comments that support the quantitative data for this investigation. Each respondent was asked to answer freely and honestly about the deployments and tours and listed below are their responses with the following prompt: *Share any thoughts you might have about the deployments or tours that may not have been covered in the questionnaire.* Responses to this question led to the development of the first theme.

Theme 1: *How Things Changed.*

> *"There is nothing you can change, it is part of our life and we have accepted it. We know how to do this. We trust each other, and we know the other is doing the best we can for our family. We have a strong relationship, and I don't think I would change anything."*

> *"I would like more consistency in his schedule, although, I understand that part of being a soldier is that you may have to be ready at a moment's notice. My husband has been on four different schedules and this impacts our communication and can be frightening when the change is unexpected."*

"I don't think I would change anything. We have constant, open communication through emails, telephone and letter writing. I would like if the deployment were shorter."

"The only thing I would like to suggest is for the community to provide more recreational events for families to attend together with other families who have a family member that is deployed."

"More when he comes back. That is hard. You are a single parent for the deployment and you have to give back a lot of that and have that other parent back in the mix. That is hard."

"We've had difficult time, but I think we finally have it figured out and we know how to do this and actually prosper as a couple rather than falter. So, there is nothing I'd change right now."

"I think I would have done more for him. I allowed my busy schedule to be the excuse to not be as supportive as I think I should have been through regular mail and packages."

"I would want him to understand how hard it is. How dealing with children, a fulltime job, a household and everything else is difficult and sometimes I have feelings of resentment because he does not have to deal with any of it. He goes to work when he wants watches movies when he wants sleeps through the whole night without kids interrupting that sleep."

It is clear that while change in the deployment process is something that the respondents would like to change, they also see it as something that is a necessary part of military life. However, they also realize that it has profound effects on their personal relationships. The complex nature of the influence of these interruptions is something that families recognize but feel confused, conflicted, and powerless as to how to make things better. This is noted by how the overall sense of well-being was influenced by interruptions as was demonstrated in the statistical analysis.

Theme 2: *Military Spouses Attitudes about Deployments and Tours*

In an attempt to gain a better understanding of the importance of feedback on how separations (due to repeated, planned or emergency deployments or tours) affect military

spouses and their families and the changes in the relationship during this time, the

following question was asked of all military spouse respondents: *If you could change*

anything about the relationship with your absent partner what would it be?

> *"Deployments make my family life difficult. I wish I had a say in how often, how long, and where I was to go, at least some time."*

> *"We had a strong marriage through the deployment."*

> *"Next time I am not going to not set my heart on return dates."*

Here the military spouse respondents stress their resilience to the deployments by

supporting no changes in the process as it relates to their family life suggesting that they

are satisfied and happy. Issues of support are underlined in their responses of strong

marital relationships although the separation from their spouses is noted. These

comments support the investigation's model of family well-being overlaid with boundary

ambiguity indicating a relationship that is prevalent among well-being.

Theme 3: Communication Issues

The way families are able to communicate with each other during a deployment

has certainly changed the complexion of their relationships. This is borne out by the

theme communication styles. Here respondents describe how the internet has led to some

unique situations in their homes.

> *"This time we communicated via SKYPE almost daily and I was able to let him see what the kids were doing via loading up pics on Facebook and updating my status so he knew what was going on day-to-day."*

> *"We also made sure that he talked to the children on SKYPE at least once during the weekends. He even SKYPE on their birthdays and Christmas."*

"My relationship with my spouse is the best thing I have going. We talked before he left about how importing keeping our lines of communication were."

"While internet communication on SKYPE is great, I would like him to still write to me."

"Skype isn't the same as "talking" and sometimes, with managing odd time schedules, and children, it isn't always easy to talk about things, a real response would be appreciated."

"Connectivity has been poor all three tours."

"Now that technology has advanced so, I believe there is no reason for non-communication in a relationship, when my spouse is gone."

"Our first deployment, he was very distant and did not take time to communicate with us. I thought it was because he didn't have phone access or time, but when he came home I learned he had plenty of time and access, he just spent his free time doing other things (video games, porn, etc.) I was devastated. He was also devastated to realize how much he hurt me. He is now on his second deployment and everything is better. He emails every day and avoids porn—our relationship is now really strong."

"I would get him to write more letters, talking is good, but nothing beats getter a letter in the mail from the one you love. It would be great if my husband was allowed to use Skype number or some other option to do video calls."

"Also the mail system is horrible on his ship and even then I send him things most times they aren't on time."

"It seems that most communication is negative in that most conversations involving discussing problems that arise with finances, children, illnesses, the house, and extended family."

"I need to be able to actually talk to him when we are able to talk."

The connection between marital satisfaction, happiness and communication among military families is critical and it appears that most spouses are well aware of the limitations on time and workload of their spouse in the Armed Services. So much so, that

other military spouses offered solutions to keeping the marital relationship strong and

happy:

> *"More openness between us."*
>
> *"Hard to communicate for a whole year with only patchy conversations at best."*
>
> *"We engage in processes together (we both journal, we do the same daily devotional, etc.) that helps us stay connected."*
>
> *"I needed to arrange our schedule at home to be more flexible to allow for speaking with my husband down range more often."*
>
> *"I would get him to write more letters….talking on the phone and talking on SKYPE #is always a good time, but nothing beats getting a letter in the mail form the one you love."*
>
> *"More communication with my mate. The children would have more time to communicate with their dad."*

On the other hand, one respondent who is also in the military offered a sincere

recommendation for other spouses for future policy implications regarding

communications styles, include:

> *"Now that technology has advanced so, I believe there is no reason for non-communication in a relationship, when my spouse was gone, it was not that far and the military had not embraced in them due to worry with security breaches etc., also with the FRSAs on board who are more outgoing and energetic these days there should be positive turn around in an effort to help relationships to grow closer together."*

On the issue of ambiguous absence which occurs when a parent is perceived by

his or her family members as being physically absent but psychologically present. In the

case of deployment this is represented by the fact that the deployed parent is away, the

exact location is not known and there is no indication of the well-being of the parent's

health or well-being even when parent is in constant communication with the family.

Listed below are some emerging themes that reflect this ambiguous loss in two ways below when asked:

How did the household dynamics change during the deployments or tours?

> *"It is basically is what it is. Because he is not full time military he has to change his frame of mind and it is difficult but necessary when his frame of mind shifts to what we refer to as being home but not being home."*

> *"Having the feeling that we never had a very meaningful conversation while he was there. We talked but it just seemed harder to get very deep while talking over the internet."*

> *"I wish I had more patience and he has a better understanding."*

> *"My husband is the head of the household and makes final decisions on my family matters. I had to "step up" and take on that role."*

> *"My wife had to be a single parent for months on end with no help or support from friends and family. The stress level went through the roof at my home while I was gone. When I returned home and informed my first sergeant about the lack of support from my unit he told me it was my key spouse's fault."*

> *"Parenting didn't have much of an impact during his tour because they are all grown now, but I the past it was a matter of teaching the kids that they had different responsibilities now that Dad was deployed and that they had more chores to do. I also had to become Mom and Dad at times, but let him have his time when he was on the computer or phone to talk to them when they did something wrong or praise them when they did good too!"*

This Ambiguous Absence occurs when a parent is perceived by his or her family members as being physically absent but psychologically present. Boss (2007), identified two types of ambiguous loss: Ambiguous absence and ambiguous presence. Above military spouses respondents expressed signed of ambiguous absence in the statements above about parenting styles and family roles during their spouse's deployments. Below, another military spouse sums up the changes in family roles in a unique manner.

> *Our roles changed. I became the rule-maker and enforcer. It sounds so simple; but I was also the shoulder to cry on, the daily problem solver, and during the deployments we had an infant. I know I can safely add "multitasking" to any resume in the future! Dad took on an almost mythical role, the kids jumped to the phone, computer, or mailbox as if they were waiting for Santa.*

Theme 4: *Parenting Changes during Deployments and Tours*

In looking at the factors that influence parenting the literature is consistent that deployments are challenging for families, especially for younger families coupled with stressors (Weins & Boss, 2006). Military spouses are affected and their parenting styles change, as seen by the comments concerning work load, added responsibilities, dual parenting roles and reintegration, single parenting and stressors related to the family separation. Military spouse respondents were asked: *How did parenting change during the deployments and tours? Please explain.* Listed below are the responses in three categories: a) Military Spouse Well-Being Role Reversal and Added Duties; b) Parenting Children and Well-Being; and c) Parenting Role Reversals and Reintegration.

Military Spouse Well-Being: Role Reversals, Added Duties and Relationship Changes

> *"As a parent at home I have had to assume more authority and discipline than before."*

> *"I was the only person in charge and that has caused issues upon return."*

> *"As with any difficulty you learn to pick and choose your battles. I became a single parent and was required to be both a Mommy and a Daddy to our children."*

> *"I had less of a mental break during the deployments."*

Military spouses explained how their parenting styles were sustained through the challenges of family separations they experienced their regular activities of providing

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support to their children in their military environments. What is known and consistently

reported is that military families are more likely to adjust to the separation in the family

than civilian families (US Census, 2004). However, a spouse of a deployed soldier is

often expected to assume roles in the family that once were the responsibility of the other

parent who is deployed. This section highlights as does this study the new time

commitments, newly added duties and the military spouse's personal well-being that need

more attention and research.

Parenting, Children and Well-Being

In some cases there was a sense that only one parent existed and this idea was

known and felt by the children and their parents. The quotes that follow illustrate this.

> *"I became the only parent for better or for worse. It was up to me and only me."*

> *"From two-parent to single parenthood. Daughter barely knows her Dad, and hard to let him back in after deployment."*

> *"Being a "single" parent during deployments is very DIFFICULT. I become all things to my child. I have to be both mother and father, the planner of fun and also the disciplinarian. Because there is only one person in the home on a day to day basis, there isn't enough time to get it all done. We don't have as much fun nor do all the chores get completed as quickly. The stress of making your child happy and keep the house in order is very exhausting."*

> *"The kids miss their Dad, that's all there is to it. I have to compensate for that and keep them busier and do extra things so they have something to look forward to."*

> *"Parenting is difficult. Kids begin to see the parent at home as the 'bad parent'."*

> *"Our first child was born about a month and a half after my husband deployed. So, parenting didn't change, it just began. It began with my husband oversees and me raising our infant alone. I was thankful for the baby to keep me occupied during the deployment."*

> *"We had a baby placed with us for adoption a couple of weeks before my husband returned from his deployment so everything changed! I had to make preparations for the baby, bring the baby home from the hospital, and take care of the newborn without my husband."*

Other times it led to behavioral problems that had not been present when both parents were present. The mother below expressed her frustration, anger, and despair over the situation of not having both parents in the home at a critical stage of her child's development.

> *"Parenting changed a lot. My 19 year old has been through 4 deployments of Iraq and has not done well in school and he did not graduate. The sole parent has to work and cope with a teenager and a boy teenager will try what he can when dad is gone and he has from stealing my credit cards to lying where he is at and then blames the mom for everything. The sole parent has to and must set ground rules and stick to them, but it would be a lot easier if husband did not deploy so much."*

> *"My wife just gave up on parenting and my son seemed to have recognized it. His performance at school declined and he became very disrespectful. I know part of it is being a teenager but he is out of line."*

> *"Parenting was a great challenge especially when you become a single parent overnight. The kids are so used to having both parents around and the older they get the more they understand the dangers and it really is very stressful for them. Grades in school drop and their emotional state becomes somewhat a roller coaster."*

> *"Our son was born in September of this year while my husband was home on R&R. He had to leave when our son was only a week old. I then became a single parent who was working and going to school and trying to keep our finances in order. It was been a struggle just because I have my good days and my bad days and it would be nice to have someone to help me out when I get frustrated."*

As can be seen from these quotes, parents often struggled to find the right balance and blend of discipline to support their children through difficult times. They clearly acknowledged the need for both parents.

Parenting Changes

Parenting changes fostered a shift in duties and created a sense that not all that needed to be done could be done by a single parent. Many just indicated simple workarounds or letting go of what they decided just could not be done.

> *"The dynamics change a great deal instead of two people working out issues one person is left to do it all alone. It always helps when you have more minds to solve problems."*
>
> *"I became the rule-maker and enforcer."*
>
> *"There doesn't appear to be any authority in the home when I am gone. My wife just lets things go."*
>
> *"I was left to assume not only all the parenting duties, but also both workloads as well…the outside yard work was difficult to handle with a small child in tow."*
>
> *"I was on my own. A spouse can only do so much over SKYPE. Homework, social, discipline, physical, emotional, spiritual, etc….I alone had to meet all if their needs."*

In some cases, the sole parent acknowledged that they had not fully exerted their parental duties. In other cases, parents shared the role with the older children.

> *"Well umm, I was alone with no family so the children didn't get taken care of nearly as well as when their Father was home to help out."*
>
> *"My older children take on more responsibility."*
>
> *"It was easy to give-in more to the children."*

Black (1993) recommended that military readiness groups should be formed to help families before, during and after deployments, led by spouses with previous success

at coping with separations it is also one of the recommendations of this investigation. Indicated below are some themes that emerged from this investigation of how military spouse respondents' parenting styles changed during deployments and tours and highlights examples of how their family lives were sustained and their tactics and strategies for maintaining family stability during these difficult times. While there is little research on long-term effects of deployments on military families (Chandra, et.al, 2008) below are some suggestions offered from the respondents:

> *"My husband is a great dad and is missed very much. Things do change when he is not home, but I just carry on as if he were here helping me. I have found the most important thing about parenting during a deployment is that the children only handle the absence of dad as well as both parents handle it. If the parents treat the deployment as being no big deal the kids feel the same which makes single parenting much easier."*

> *"Father becomes just another person in the house."*

> *"I parent differently than my husband so when he leaves my children have to adjust to only one parenting and that adjustment is difficult."*

> *"We live day-by-day. You have to be the sole parent and try to keep your kids happy and healthy during the deployment."*

> *"Things often broke down, I just better at making and just fixing things and getting them fixed. Children got sick then, too, but not more so than when he was home."*

While this section of provides researchers with a rationale for increasing services to military families, these qualitative data also suggest that these families are experiencing some other important issues that must be addressed to help them cope when their spouse or significant other is absent.

Theme 5

: Household Dynamics, Community Services and Community Networks

Sadly, the effects of deployments and tours are far reaching beyond the battlefield

and are often felt prior to, after and during the deployment process by those left at home.

These far reaching implications are often found in the lives of those whom the soldiers

themselves love the most. Many military spouses have acknowledged that deployments

results in loss of emotional support, role shifts, loneliness, safety concerns and mental

stability along with overall well-being of the deployed members (Bell & Schumm, 1999).

> *"The only thing I would like to suggest is for the community to provide more events for families to attend together with other families who have a recreational family member that is deployed."*

> *"I lived with other friends. During the whole deployment the support I received came from family and friends other than the military community."*

> *"It is difficult going from a 2 parent household to a single parent house hold. It affects the children, the spouse who was left as well as the deployed member; all the base does is to try to help and send out a newsletter, which isn't much help."*

> *"Playing both roles of mom and dad was extremely difficult with ZERO time off, no family nearby and no additional help.
> I have no sounding board, no one to go to for ideas for problem solving. I have to be the fun parent, the disciplinarian and struggle to find balance."*

> *"It can be hard to be the "only one" and to be forced to make decisions alone that you would normally consult your partner on. I try to avoid dumping on my service member, and unless it is critical, make these decisions and move forward. That can be stressful. There are few parenting groups/resources dedicated to the military service member."*

Despite the fact that there are multiple programs around the country that are

working to support military families, the findings in this section revealed that there was a

perception of shallow picture of support from community and faith-based organizations

in support of the respondents in this study.

Theme 6: *Coping and Stress during Deployments and Tours*

Hutchinson and Banks-Williams (2006) described stressful military family

reunions as, "a traumatized soldier is greeting a traumatized family, and neither is

recognizing the other." Military members, spouses and the children have to readjust to

the changes and stressors in home life and may recognize that it is difficult to resume life

as it was prior to the deployment. The findings in this study reveal a myriad of stressors

associated with military families' well-being and listed below are some over-arching

themes of military spouse respondents:

> *"Having to take on the role of Mother and Father when you have a
> teenage son was very stressful without strong male figure and
> other fathers away who weren't supportive made it difficult to keep
> the household intact, in addition to having a much younger sibling
> it was a disaster with no means of communication, only constant
> trouble kept arising."*
>
> *"Parenting is difficult. Having to be both parents, being the loving
> mom, but also willing to wrestle with a little boy. Having a
> screaming child wanting his daddy, but only being mommy.
> Dealing with the behavior issues that occur, tantrums and such
> because that is the coping mechanism for a small child with a
> break. It is difficult enough parenting on a good day, but
> immersing the family dynamic into a combat situation is stressful.
> Having to have more patience, even when you are stressed."*
>
> *"As the mother I had to take on all parenting and after 4 yearlong
> repeated deployments, my son and his father's relationship is still
> strained and will remain so for some time."*
>
> *"I went from being part of a team to being the only player. 100%
> of the burden of parenting falls on me."*
>
> *"The parent at home HAS to be in charge… the parent way can
> NOT try to parent from afar…they just have to choose to support
> their spouse."*

"I feel less positive about my abilities to parent well and effectively without my spouse here. I feel less patient and more agitated and that my kids suffer because of it. However, when my spouse is present to help with the parenting, I feel much better about how I am parenting and how my children respond to me."

Stress and coping are major issues that come to the forefront when one parent is deployed. As can be seen in the narrative comments, it is one that that must be addressed more carefully by military and policy personnel.

Summary

The narrative themes expressed by respondents tend to underscore and support the quantitative data. The belief that deployments influence family well-being was found in the narratives and quantitative information. Additionally, families recognized and acknowledged how deployments can and do erode the overall quality of their relationships and introduce stress into their lives that is not accounted for by those who have particular influence or control over their quality of life.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the purpose of the study, and offers a discussion of the research findings. In addition, the conclusion, limitations, policy implications and recommendations for future research are presented. The study sought to examine the relationships between and among factors that influenced well-being among military families by investigating the support systems that help them maintain equilibrium. The survey instrument allowed military spouses to objectively answer specific narrative questions designed to elicit some useful feedback on a myriad of life situations faced by military families affected by the service that their family members provide to the United States during war and peacetime. One interesting result was the unintended but rich narrative voices that arose from the respondents. These comments were included in Chapter Five as an enhancement of the discussion.

Study Design and Method

The purpose of this study is to examine factors that contribute to the well-being of families affected by anticipated and repeated deployments and interruptions. This study examined how military families function during the deployment process when the parent/soldier is not present in the home. In summary, the purpose was to understand how military families sustain equilibrium during the deployment process.

Familial, community and spiritual support systems coupled with military and environmental factors were examined closely to determine military family life stability during deployments. One of the long-term goals of this study was to uncover how resources and programs can be better allocated and redesigned to assist families who face

long-term and sporadic interruptions in their day-to-day lives where undue stressors (worry about war and death) are an important part of their lives. Another goal of the study was to provide important feedback on how separations (due to repeated, planned or emergency deployments or tours) affect military spouses and their children. A final goal explored how duly induced separations directly impacted the spouses and children left behind. Military families are not immune to the stresses of deployment. There is a growing body of research on the impact of prolonged deployment and trauma-related stress on military families, particularly spouses and children (Flake, 2009; Gibbs, Martin, Kupper & Johnson, 2007; Lesser, et al., 2010; Mansfred, Kaufman, Marshall, et al., 2010). The intent of this investigation is to add to this growing body of research on military families.

In this chapter the results, integration of findings, implications of findings to include limitations, and future directions for research are discussed. Also, the findings are framed within a policy context with research and programmatic issues displayed along with specific recommendations from which policy makers, analysts, educators and family scientists can benefit. Various strategies discussed in this section also can be developed into applied initiatives and programs with measurable assessments to support military families.

The sample for this study consisted of 185 military spouses selected from various local communities, faith-based, educational and military family support groups throughout the United States. The final sample yielded 185 full responses of which 153 were eligible by meeting the study's criteria which made the collection of the data efficient and easy to examine. Data were collected using an online survey which made

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the collection of the data efficient and easy to examine. Three questions in the online questionnaire which simply read "This section allows you to share any thoughts you might have about the deployments or tours that may not have been covered in the questions above. Feel free to answer freely and honestly." A block was provided (up to 1,500 characters) which allowed respondents the opportunity to write comments and to express their personal feelings openly on the impact of the induced separations during deployments and tours. Responses to these questions by respondents provided 16 pages of single spaced comments in 12 point font just as is used in this document.

Research Questions

To understand the factors that influence military families, three research questions were asked so that associations and relationships could be predicted among the independent and outcome variables and hypotheses tested. In addition, evidence of deployment's impact on boundary ambiguity among military families was also gathered. The research questions were:

1. What factors contribute to support military families faced with interruptions?

2. What factors contribute to the well-being of families affected by interruptions?

3. To what extent does boundary ambiguity help to determine family sustainability during an interruption?

Hypotheses

To address the research questions four hypotheses were developed examining the

important aspects of the literature and supported by the theoretical framework. Four

hypotheses were developed from the three research questions to determine the military

spouse's attitudes and issues affecting military families as result of deployments and

tours. Each hypothesis had a specific aim to measure the level or degree of impact of the

deployment or tour within the sample of the military spouses as they relate to boundary

ambiguity, environmental factors, military, community and family support, parenting

changes and family well-being. In effect, the hypotheses were statements that were

specifically addressed in the research questions.

The hypotheses were:

H$_1$: The level and stage of deployment will have an effect on boundary ambiguity and well-being.

H$_2$: Families with more positive community environments will exhibit a greater sense of well-being no matter the length of the family interruption.

H$_3$: Parents who are highly involved in their families are likely to have a higher degree of family well-being with their children no matter what stage of family interruption.

H$_4$: The well-being of families who experience interruptions will be strongly influenced and supported by the general preparedness for deployment, perceived military assistance, perceived community support, family connectedness and amount of boundary ambiguity displayed within a family.

The hypotheses development was based on the review of current literature on

military families and the myriad of personal conversations with military families over

two years related to emotional, psychological, financial, social and family resilience of

military families during deployments and tours. Although military families live

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throughout communities in the United States daily, their struggles and challenges are hidden and they are safe-guarded from the general community at-large.

Summary of Study Findings

The first hypothesis suggested that the level and stage of deployment had a negative effect on boundary ambiguity and well-being of military families. The second hypothesis suggested that military families with positive internal environments have greater well-being no matter how long the family interruption occurred. The third hypothesis suggested that parents who were highly involved with their children lives will have a higher degree of family well-being no matter the stage or length of the family interruption. Finally, hypothesis four assumed that military families with low levels of boundary ambiguity had an increase in family well-being.

Hypothesis one is based on an assumption that during the deployment process the functioning of military families interact in a negative way when at least one parent is not physically present in the home and separated from the child(ren).

H_1:   The level and stage of deployment will have an effect on boundary ambiguity and well-being.

The findings in this investigation found quite the contrary. Military spouses reported that they accept and understand the deployment process and will support the military spouse if they are open with communications during the deployment process, despite the hardships and challenges they face on a daily basis. In some cases, military spouses actually were proud of their spouses and spoke of the family interruption as a badge of honor. Several military spouses comments' below support their feelings about deployments and tours:

"We do the best we can under the circumstances (separation that is unavoidable).

"We had a strong marriage through the deployment. Next time I am not going to set my heart on return dates."

"I wouldn't change anything about the relationship, I wish my husband wasn't so stressed and overloaded while deployed."

In some cases, the negative effect on military family well-being and boundary ambiguity may be the result of the work load and demands of the soldier deployed. Two of the military spouses' comments below match the basic assumption behind the first hypothesis:

"Our first deployment, he was very distant and did not take time to communicate with us"

"As with any difficulty you learn to pick and choose your battles. I became a single parent and was required to be both a Mommy and a Daddy to our children."

Although this study is quantitative in nature the importance of qualitative data is not overlooked or dismissed. In fact, in order to gain further insight into the importance of military families active duty personnel and their spouses/significant other's comments were used to give a voice to those who are often silent in the national discourse about the military families. It appears that military spouses are not substantiating a negative opinion of deployments and tours, but rather they display resilience toward military life which includes deployments and tours as a way of life. These narrative comments underscore the inconclusive nature of the statistical data used to investigate this hypothesis. My recommendation is that further research is needed to examine hypothesis one in more detail and to make generalizations regarding the negative effect on boundary ambiguity and well-being as they relate to the level and stage of the deployments.

The second hypothesis is based on the Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) notion that environmental factors influence families and the reciprocal nature between the two.

H₂: Families with more positive community environments will exhibit a greater sense of well-being no matter the length of the family interruption.

Military spouses adapt easily to military life and are positioned to assume the dominant family role when the deployment occurs. In some cases, military family's adaptation and adjustments in the family occur before the soldier is deployed given family members time to adjust the family interruption prior to the separation. In other cases military spouses, their spouses and the children begin to process the deployment prior to the soldier's departure making it easier to adjust to the family interruption. Overwhelmingly, the military spouses supported this hypothesis by indicating that the more positive the community network environments, the greater the well-being of the military family, despite the length of the family interruption. However, the spouses reported a need to reduce the lengths of deployments and tours, thus helping their military families' well-being. It is the strong belief about length of deployment which may account for the inconclusive result shown in the statistical data used to explore this hypothesis. Many of the spouses indicated that the demand on them is overwhelming and they are extremely exhausted physically, emotionally, psychologically and thus their overall family and individual well-being is being challenged as a result of multiple deployments and tours. Some spouses indicated their feelings about the positive network community environments during deployments below:

> *"My husband and I have enjoyed a solid relationship throughout our 10 years of marriage and deployments"*

"This past deployment (2009-2010) was much better than in 2003"

Two spouses summed up their feelings about the length of deployments, thus showing

further support for hypothesis two

"I would change the length of the tour.

"Deployments make my family life difficult."

For military spouses to admit openly in an online survey environment that their

well-being is favorable or non-favorable may not be the best method to secure this type

of data. The internal pressure of military life along with the pressure of responding to

personal questions about the family may have slightly altered the answers that support

hypothesis two. Further inquiry into this question may be needed to strengthen the

findings in this section, perhaps by using focus groups of military spouses as a means of

getting better data as it relates to military spouse internal environments and the effects of

well-being. Nevertheless, there is substantial support to the idea that well-being must be

assessed constantly in families where deployments now seem almost routine.

The third hypothesis was based on assumptions of a healthy child that state that a

child can grow up to be healthy if at least one parent loves and adores that child

(Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

H₃: Parents who are highly involved in their families are likely to have a
higher degree of family well-being with their children no matter what
stage of family interruption.

In other words, military children can be healthy if at least one parent is highly

involved in the family regardless of the family interruption or deployment. Active

parental involvement is important in the development of the child(ren) and thus the

family well-being. Two spouses summed up the need for increased parental involvement and how military spouses cope with parenting during deployments and tours:

> *"I feel less positive about my abilities to parent well and effectively without my spouse. I feel less patient and more agitated and that my kids may suffer because of it. However, my spouse is present to help with the parenting, I feel much better about how I am parenting and how my children respond to me."*

> *"I went from being part of a team to being the only player. 100% of the burden of parenting falls on me."*

The statistical data results supported hypothesis three. The military spouses' responses support their involvement with their families and thus a higher degree of family well-being. However, there are some underlying issues affecting family well-being that were not clearly noted in the responses and warrant further investigation. Parenting challenges were highlighted throughout the responses and leave further questions about the demands on military parents and the issues affecting children as a result of repeated deployments and tours. The reality of demands placed on military spouses is challenging and further research is needed to address these demands in order to assist these families in the immediate future.

The final hypothesis examined the overall question related to testing the efficacy of the *Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model*. It is stated as follows:

H₄: The well-being of families who experience interruptions will be strongly influenced and supported by the general preparedness for deployment, perceived military assistance, perceived community support, family connectedness and amount of boundary ambiguity displayed within a family.

Boss' work (2004) suggests that when working with children with parental absence and interruptions, it important to note the physical, cognitive and emotional development that occurs during the period of family interruptions. During this time, it is

difficult for the family to perform normally as a family unit and the family unit is often

compromised. As a result of Boss's work, Hypothesis Four was developed. The results in

this investigation also supported hypothesis four. Conversely, the military spouses who

experienced low levels of boundary ambiguity demonstrated an increase in family well-

being. Some spouses expressed their feelings about boundary ambiguity in a direct

manner while also expressing their feelings about repeated deployments and tours and

their family roles.

> *"As the mother I had to take on all parenting and after 4 year-long repeated deployments, my son and his father's relationship is still strained and will remain so for some time."*

> *"Parenting changed dramatically. Playing both roles of mom and dad was extremely difficult with ZERO time off, no family nearby and no additional help."*

> *"I was on my own. A spouse can only do some much over SKYPE. Homework, social, discipline, physical, emotional, spiritual, etc....I alone had to meet all of their needs."*

> *"Parenting during deployments/tours fell on me. I had to take on the job of both parents. I was much more stressful."*

> *"The kids miss their Dad, that is all there is to it. I have to compensate for that and keep them busier and do extra things so they have something to look forward to."*

> *"I was the one doing EVERYTHING!"*

> *"It caused me to express to my children how much I love them and that life can be enjoyable while separated."*

Overall, the findings were interesting and revealing. Three of the hypotheses

findings were supported and collaborated through some the spouse's discussions and

related questions. However, the results of this investigation suggest that military spouses

are in need of a more comprehensive approach by the Armed Services, the community at-

large and educational and family science practitioners. One explanation may be that this investigation was conducted online and face-to-face interviews may reveal other data that cannot be captured online. Another explanation may be that the Armed Services and community groups as well as educational organizations are not working comprehensively on the issue of assistance to military families from a holistic viewpoint. Instead each institution and organization works independently and their approaches are not overlapping and collaborative in support of military families. Lastly, the national policy may not be as coordinated or at least the families are not able to experience the support programs as originally envision. Whatever the case, there remains a gap as unveiled by both the quantitative and narrative data reported in this study.

Implications of this Study

The present study has generated some implications that should be addressed. I believe that these fall under three different categories, policy, practice, and future research. As such, I have divided this section into those three arenas. Clearly there will be some overlap, but it is necessary since when talking about families there is always a transactive nature across systems.

Policy Implications

It is clear that a national policy embracing incentives for support may need to be incorporated into educational institutions and among community, faith-based and family service providers to assist in this systematic approach in helping military families domestically and abroad. To this end a national debate should include young scholars at the college and graduate levels to yield new ways to approach this massive challenge of supporting military families.

Government agencies are now working in this realm and soon will be implementing new programs across all government agencies. Therefore, educational institutions, community groups and businesses should follow suit in partnering with the Armed Services and family science researchers/ practitioners to help military families in the immediate future.

Although there is a wide range of implications in the research outcomes based on the hypotheses, there is the need for military families to garner support from various groups in the community at-large. The rationale for this investigation was to understand how military families are coping with deployments and tours and to investigate their resilience during deployments and tours.

Some of the ideas for potential policy, research, and programs that should be considered were generated from some of the narrative comments as well as some of my own ideas as to how the issue of family interruptions could be addressed. The information provided in Table 6.1 highlights some of these potential areas. Each of these suggestions has the potential for improving the overall quality of life for military families who experience interruptions.

All of these ideas are designed to enhance the lives of families who have to be exposed to interruptions in their day to day existences. It is clear that in order for any of these programs to be viable there needs to be a strong commitment from the Federal Government—and there appears to be that emphasis already—along with more cooperation from military leaders, community based groups, and potential research partners such as many of the major research universities and historically Black colleges and universities located near some of our larger military facilities.

Table 6.1

Summary of Potential Ideas, Policy Recommendation, Research and Program Development for Addressing Issues with Families who have Experienced Periodic and Long-term Interruptions Due to Professional Obligations.

IDEAS	POLICY	RESEARCH	PROGRAM DEV.
Proactive support for military families	Awareness needed at government/ community level.	More qualitative research & theory development.	More programs and better Support Groups.
	Teachers on military installations need training and staff development about military families.	Incentives need to be developed to foster research and more qualitative research and theory development.	Develop support groups at schools and colleges/universities for military families.
Better Response to Family Interruptions	More Family based focus in policy.	More focus on direct Impact on Families.	Better Integrated Programs at the state, regional, local and community levels.
	Engage families in adopting military families during deployments.	Engage schools, faith-based and community groups to do research on military families.	
Improved Community Networks	More social input from institutions, Build coalitions Across the community.	Job Training and Family based research	Collaboration between and among existing and new programs. Seek ideas from various military spouses and children.
Re-integration into the family and community during and after the interruption	Support for military spouses, children and teachers with addressing issues	More qualitative and ethnographic research	More non-profit, faith based community training; Engage teachers in the support of military families and children.
Public Arena	Bi-Annual National Summit	More university based research & programs	Enhancement of Community Based Program support

Practice Implications

As with any investigation there are implications as to how data findings should be used. In this case, the findings suggest some important implications for practice. Those working with military based families should focus on reinforcing the roles that their organizations or work units play in the lives of these families. For example, public

schools can play a crucial role in providing military families support when a child's parent is deployed. More specifically, public schools should examine their policies, programs and practices to support children of military personnel deployed. In the policy arena, public schools should explore or develop policies and programs related to providing military families who have members' deployed services to enhance the academic, personal and social adjustment of students. Programs should: 1) provide staff development for principals, teachers and support personnel regarding the challenges faced by military families and how public schools can assist with family life transition; 2) provide individual and group support for children of military families deployed; 3) assist new military families moving into school districts by pairing them with a family and child mentor who lives in the community to provide transitional support; 4) provide awareness sessions for principals, teachers and parents to hear the military family's perspective; 5) provide structured opportunities for military families to discuss their stories; 6) assist with Welcome Home Ceremonies and weekly coffee meetings inviting military parents and families to share their stories with the school during assemblies; 7) develop creative, technological strategies to communicate with the military student's parents who are deployed (i.e., email, skype, facebook, twitter, ooovoo, and other social media outlets). In the area of research, family educators should help 1) schools to develop assessment systems that accurately monitor and track students' academic achievement while family members are deployed. It is important that schools describe the psychological profile of school-age children during parental deployment utilizing standardized psychological health and stress measures, and to identify predictors of children at "high risk" for psychosocial morbidity during wartime deployment; and 2)

schools should monitor how effective school intervention techniques have been in enhancing students' academic, personal and social adjustment. Programs designed to work with families with potential problems should be in place and well-trained family practice personnel should be made available to assist families at such times. The potential for synergy and growth among these institutions as well as the value it could add to the lives of these families is untapped and without limits. The desire to have overall improvements in the quality of life and the well-being of its personnel and their families is critical to the military institution. The leaders are well aware that something must be done to maintain a well-balanced and harmonious workforce. Throughout history, military children and families have shown great capacity for adaptation and resilience. However, recently, multiple and lengthy combat deployments of service members have posed multiple challenges for U.S. military spouses, children and families. Military families deserve support and attention from family scientists, educators and policymakers. Just how this can be accomplished will be one of the potential goals for future researchers to ponder. This investigation only offers a glimpse at what needs to be done.

Future Research Implications

The compounding effects of deployments, occasional emotional and financial stress, especially with regards to housing and home ownership , substance abuse, and incarceration, have caused excessive stress for certain military families. This section examines areas of concern for future research with families who experience interruptions due to work related circumstances. It is clear that there needs to be more qualitative and quantitative work done on military families. It is not enough to know that a parent is

deployed, one must understand the deeper implications that such deployments have on family functioning besides the cursory look at performance indicators. A deeper understanding of family functioning and adjustments must be developed. Research centered on family adaptability and resilience would help to establish what works and does not work when service members are separated from their families. Another area where research should take place is around the meaning of loss within the families. This investigation touched on this topic, but it is clear from the narrative responses that there is much more feelings of despair and sorrow than originally believed. It is also apparent that these feeling vary across groups; however, without more concrete data focused on this issue it is not possible to clearly identify the pattern.

As can be seen in the feedback from a sub-sample of military spouses about their perceptions and thoughts regarding how military families, deployments and tours have meaning for these families beyond just being left without a spouse or partner. Below is listed some recommendations and implications for future research as provided to me by military families. The comments provided underscore the need for further research into an array of areas that impact the military families. When looking to the future the respondents indicated that:

> *"I believe there should be questions asked as the length of the deployments and if families feel they receive more support from their hometown rather than other military families."*

> *"How to solve financial problems. There should be a study about how to get more money to families and how to straighten out financial messes when the partner who controls the money is deployed."*

> *"Survey should focus on children and spouses more than soldier, the impact at least in my experience is more difficult for them, as a soldier we have a job and understand that but they are caught."*

"Kids like to travel to new places, but miss family."

"Ask if miss families (grandparents, aunts, cousins, even older siblings) when there is a move to a new duty station."

"We do the best we can when he's away. Not ideal, but we do the best we can under the circumstances (separation that is unavoidable). Not much we can change."

Future research is needed to address some of the pertinent issues mentioned in this investigation that addresses the challenges faced on a daily basis by children, spouses and other families affecting by repeated deployments and tours. It is my hope that research concerning military families begin to focus more on those left behind and what it means as well as a movement toward more mixed methods approaches to this complex problem.

Limitations of the Study

In any investigation, there is always a need to address the limitations of the research. There are common limitations and limitations directly related to this exploratory study that are noted in this section. The limitations are as follows:

- Limited literature available specific to Military Spouse and Children's perceptions about deployments and tours, their resilience during the deployment process and the influence of family and community networks on the military family made it difficult to compare the findings of this investigation.

- I did not conduct face-to-face interviews. By conducting fact-to-face interviews, the researcher can expound and explain questions. The online instrument versus personal interviews did not allow the

respondent the opportunity to talk about their responses in more detail and ask questions that would allow them to better understand the questions they may not have understood. Using a face-to-face interview approach may provide more revealing and detailed responses.

- There were only three qualitative questions in the online instrument that allowed respondents to answer questions by sharing any thoughts that they might have about deployments and tours that may not have been covered in the other quantitative questions.

- The study could have benefitted from a mixed methods approach. This was made clear by the overwhelming response to the narrative questions. Future research should consider using such a methodological approach.

- The final sample yielded 185 full responses of which 153 were eligible by meeting the study's criteria which made the collection of the data efficient and easy to examine. U.S. Military regulations on military spouses regarding surveys changed during the period of the proposal process and data collection causing restraints on the proposed sample thus causing repeated delays during the data collection period.

- Lack of financial incentives. The expense of incentives for respondents completing the online survey could have had favorable increased and impacted the overall sample in this study. It is recommended in the future that an incentive be given to participants included in the data collection phase.

- The inability to increase the sample size. Although the participants

  were randomly selected from community, school and military groups

  that help to prescreen and identify parents with military dependents I

  believe that this was too limiting terms of a sample. A broader base

  sample would have been more beneficial to examine the impact of

  induced separations and deployments on family well-being. This also

  delayed the data collection period.

- Expand and focus on the measurement instrument to include children's

  perceptions about deployments and tours in order observe and explain

  the long-term effects of family separations on family well-being.

- The sample included limited variations with demographic data, e.g.,

  race and sex, and age to a certain extent.

Conclusions

There are three main issues that are important with the outcomes of this study.

Family interruptions are common in our society, but often overlooked, especially among

military families. First, military families need more support in order to maintain

sustainability and overall well-being during deployments and tours. Second, the impact of

deployment stretches further than the soldier in combat and definitely affects the entire

military family as a unit, thus requiring further in-depth research on this issue. Third, the

applicability of the significant findings about the military spouses' response to

community networks, and family connectedness, or lack thereof, points to a real need to

be addressed by our policymakers now. These issues need to be explored more in the

context of the military spouses' perceptions of the lack of support in these two areas and

their relationship to boundary ambiguity and well-being. Each of these points is supported by the data and certainly confirmed and supported the Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model that this study sought to investigate. Clearly, the ability of the model to explain 45% of the variance by simply acknowledging the role that the deployment culture, military assistance, community networks, family connectedness, and boundary ambiguity played in the lives of the families is critical.

There is no model of military families to date that has examined these ideas in this way and as such been able to offer a comprehensive or meaningful view of what seems to be at the core of well-being for military families, particularly those who are left behind to care for the children, parents, and family related issues such as finances, health-care, and housing. This is underscored by the narrative comments and is further supported by the correlation scores reported by the respondents on the stress and coping mechanisms that were used to measure boundary ambiguity within the families.

The issue of boundary ambiguity and its perception of being present and non-present at the same time within the family revealed the dilemma that many military families face. The narrative comments pointed out this confusion felt by families very well. The essence of parental absence and the impact it has on the family relationships cannot be overstated. Although the participants in this study did not mention it by the term "*Boundary Ambiguity*" by name, their various comments and references to concepts related to the construct in their discussions of parenting styles and changes, communications and household dynamics during their deployments all showed an intrinsic understanding of a concept that was to this sample unnamed. It would be of great value if these findings taken by family scientists, early childhood, elementary and

high school educators, counselors, psychologists and mental health providers and used to develop programs aimed at addressing some of the issues indicated by this research; however, just helping military children and spouses cope and relieve stress during deployments would be sufficient.

Prior to becoming a student in Family Studies, I worked in Washington, D.C. on Capitol Hill for over 25 years. I would propose to my former colleagues there that we need to develop a National Support Group of Military Families (NSGMF) to be coordinated through The National Association of Military Families in Washington, D.C. This NSGMF will be in each state made up of educators, researchers, family scientists, community and faith-based advocates, students and military spouses and military family support personnel who meet bi-monthly on college campuses and nearby military bases. This support group would provide a climate that fosters collaboration and cohesiveness among all interested parties. The goal is to address the needs of military family and get college students to become engaged as volunteers and advocates for Military Families worldwide.

An annual national conference will be planned to discuss issues of concern and to share best practices for military family support. An electronic newsletter, email blasts, a blog, Facebook and Twitter accounts will be used to help foster communication among the families, advocates, supporters and volunteers. This model could be piloted in the immediate future to assist military families in need in a local community near the researcher of this study. This program is in keeping in line with the ideas of President Barack Obama who stated:

> *"I have made the care and support of military families a top national security policy priority. The well-being of military families is an important indicator of the well-being of the overall Armed Services forces. The importance of family, home and community challenges facing our all-volunteer force will for years to come be at the forefront of policy makers, educators, military and government officials as well for family and social scientists. Our national discourse should be focused on challenges and the far reaching effects of wartime on our troops, their families and the communities in which they live."*

The military family is an essential unit within our Armed Services and more research, theory and practice need to be developed to assist in these families in their efforts to combat the influence of interruptions on their family lives due to military duties that often lead to separation of the adult members of the family unit. Military families adjusting to deployment should be an issue on the national agenda. The fate of these families will and must continue to be a priority in the future, no matter what the current budgetary constraints.

Addressing the needs of military families is a security and family issue and will require our nation's best and brightest researchers to tackle these problems. Historically, the US military was not formed with families as one of its priorities however its evolution has now made the existence of a military family a reality. How the military industrial complex engages this topic and meets the challenges that face our country will serve as an indicator of the value of the military itself. The evidence of the results of this study yielded a wide range of public policy issues that need to be studied further. It is my hope that the *Influence of Interruptions on Family Well-Being Model* is embraced and tested in future research so that our most precious cargo—Military Families—can once again

achieve a balance that they so richly deserve for their unnoticed yet extremely important

service.

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APPENDIX A

FAMILY INTERRUPTIONS STUDY RECRUITMENT FLYER

What is the impact of military separations on your family? How have you coped with these family interruptions? How has a military family separation affected you, your children, your spouse/significant other or family members well-being? We too would like to know. Join us in providing possible answers to these and other questions about the influence of military separations on family well-being.

Your opinion is important to us here at the School of Family Studies and Human Services here at Kansas State University. We would like to know what you, the spouse who is left behind, think about the how military separations influence your life, your children's lives, and your overall family life. Help us by clicking on or copying the link below and sharing your opinion with us. We have provided brief description of the survey and what we are trying to explore as it relates to your lives. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Farrell J. Webb at 785-532-1478 or email him at fwebb@k-state.edu

Survey Description:

This survey is designed to provide important feedback on how *separations* (due to repeated, planned or emergency deployments or tours) affect you and your family. This survey is ***anonymous*** and does not require you to reveal any identifying information. The results of this survey will be used for future planning and research to address the needs of children and families. We are interested in your experiences. Please take the time to fill out this survey. Thank you for your participation and for taking your time to answer these questions.

Survey Link: https://surveys.ksu.edu/TS?offeringid=174502

By agreeing to fill out this instrument you are *automatically covered* by the **Kansas State University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board** against being compelled to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with or to continuing to participate in this survey at all. If you have any problems or questions with issues raised by this survey you may contact Research Compliance Office at 785-532-3224 or e-mail them at comply@k-state.edu

APPENDIX B

FAMILY INTERRUPTIONS QUESTIONNAIRE

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FAMILY INTERRUPTION SURVEY Version I

Survey Description

This survey is designed to provide important feedback on how *separations* (due to repeated, planned or emergency deployments or tours) affect you and your family. This survey is **anonymous** and does not require you to reveal identifying information. The results of this survey will be used for future planning and research to address the needs of children and families. I am interested in your experiences. Please take the time to fill out this survey. Thank you for your participation and for taking your time to answer these questions.

By agreeing to fill out this instrument you are automatically covered by the Kansas State University Human Subjects Institutional Review Board against being compelled to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with or to continuing to participate in this survey at all. If you have any problems or questions with issues raised by this survey you may contact Research Compliance Office at 785-532-3224 or e-mail them at comply@k-state.edu.

Opening Instructions
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Your help is greatly appreciated. Please understand that your participation is **voluntary** and that you always have the **option of discontinuing** at any time. Of course, it is my hope that you will complete the inventory. Your responses are very important to me and all families who are faced with similar circumstances. It is only through work such as this can we know begin to design and retool programs, policies, and procedures for other families faced with repeated, planned or emergency interruptions. Your participation will serve as a guiding factor that will lead to greater achievements in helping to address this issue more thoroughly. Once again, you should know that your answers cannot be linked you in any way, this is an **anonymous** survey. Thank you for your cooperation and participation.   I will ask questions about your family. We shall begin by asking you some basic descriptive questions. Answer the questions only if you feel comfortable.

Page 1

Question 1

‒‒‒

As of your most recent birthday, how old are you?

[   ]

Characters Remaining: [2]

Question 2

‒‒‒

Are you

🔘 Male

Female

Question 3

‒‒‒

What is your race/ethnic background?

White (non-Hispanic)/European American

African American/Black (non-Hispanic)

Hispanic/Latino

Asian American

Native American

Not US Citizen

Page 2

‒‒‒

Question 4

‒‒‒

What is the number of years of formal education that you completed? *(e.g., 12 = High School Graduate)*

[   ]

Characters Remaining: [2]

Question 5

What is your religious preference?

- ☪ Catholic
- Protestant (e.g. Baptist)
- Jewish
- Muslim
- Other
- None

Question 6

How would you describe your current relationship status?

- Single (not Married)
- Single but in a Relationship
- Not Married Living w Partner (Cohabitating)
- Married
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

Question 7 *** required ***

Do you have any children (*In your response, please include all biological, step, adopted and foster children in your care or receive support from you)*?

- Yes
- No

Page 3

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .

Question 8 *** required ***

Has your family (*you, your spouse, significant other, or children*) **ever experienced** a deployment or tour associated with armed force services?

⬜ Yes

> No

Page 4

___

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 9

___

How many children are in your family? *(Please include all biological, step, adopted, and foster children in your care)*

⬜

Characters Remaining: ⬚ 2

Page 5

___

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 10 *** required ***

___

What is (*your, or your spouse or significant other*) current rank/pay-grade? Please enter the official military designation (e.g., *E-5, or O-2, W-3*).

⬚

Characters Remaining: ⬚ 3

Question 11 *** required ***

___

If married or in a committed relationship or have children with someone in military service, at what age did your spouse/significant other join the military?

Characters Remaining: ⬚ 2

Page 6

___

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 12 *** required ***

___

Taken all together, how many military deployments or tours would you say that you and your family have experienced?

Characters Remaining: 2

Question 13 *** required ***

___

Was the *most recent deployment or tour* a *repeated* (done before. e.g., second tour), *planned* (one where there was at least four months notice), or *emergency* (short term notification from one-day to three months) one or a combination of at least two types?

C Repeated

Planned

Emergency

Repeated and Planned

Repeated and Emergency

Question 14 *** required ***

___

Have you and your family ever been relocated due to military deployments or tours?

Yes

No

Question 15 *** required ***

___

Were you married during the time that your family experienced military deployments or tours?

Yes

No

Question 16 *** required ***

___

Were there children in your family during your military deployment or tours?

☐ Yes

No

Question 17 *** required ***

___

Where was your last deployment or tour? *Please list the location of your deployment or tour.*

[   ]

Characters Remaining: [30]

Question 18 *** required ***

___

How long was the most recent deployment or tour? Indicate time in months. Round up when necessary, for example (17.5 months = 18 months). (**To get the number of months multiply the number of years by 12, for example** *7 years * 12 = 84 months or 11 years * 12 = 132 months*)

[   ]

Characters Remaining: [3]

Page 7

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 19 *** required ***

During the deployment(s) or tour(s) you noted above, how did you feel about the support your family
received from the **military**?

Very supportive

Supportive

Somewhat supported

C Barely supportive

Not supportive at all

Question 20 *** required ***

During the deployment(s) or tour(s) you noted above, how did you feel about the support your family
received from the **community-at-large**?

Very supportive

Supportive

Somewhat supported

Barely supportive

Not supportive at all

Question 21 *** required ***

How prepared were you for the deployment(s)or tour(s)?

Very prepared

Mostly prepared

Generally prepared

Somewhat prepared

Not prepared at all

Question 22 *** required ***

Have you ever experienced *financial stress or problems* because of a deployment or tour?

Yes

No

Question 23 *** required ***

Has the *most recent* deployment or tour caused you any *financial stress or problems*?

Yes

No

Page 8

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 24 *** required ***

Were you aware of any military support with the day-to-day realities of deployments or tours?

⬜ Yes

No

Question 25 *** required ***

Did you connect with the military support services?

Yes

No

Question 26 *** required ***

How helpful was the military to you during deployments or tours?

Very helpful

Helpful

Somewhat helpful

Unhelpful

Very unhelpful

Question 27 *** required ***

To what extent do you *feel satisfied* that you have the necessary military resources to help you during this deployment or tour?

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

Question 28 *** required ***

Generally, how *satisfied have you been* with the support for military families during this deployment or tour?

C Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

Page 9

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 29 *** required ***

In general, *how satisfied* are you with the Military Way of Life?

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

Question 30 *** required ***

In general, *how satisfied* are you with your *family's well-being* with the Military Life?

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very Dissatisfied

Page 10

Fill out this page only if you answered:

135

Question 31 *** required ***

In general, how would you rate your **stress level**?

☐ Not stressed at all

Slightly stressed

Somewhat stressed

Stressed

Very stressed

Question 32 *** required ***

In general, how would you rate the **stress level** of your spouse or significant other?

Not stressed at all

Slightly stressed

Somewhat Stressed

Stressed

Very stressed

Question 33 *** required ***

Again, in general, how would you rate your child(ren)'s **level of stress**?

Not stressed at all

Slightly stressed

Somewhat stressed

Stressed

Very stressed

Page 11

Fill out this page only if you answered:

136

- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 34 *** required ***

How has the **recent** deployment or tour affected *your overall well-being*?

- Strongly Affected my Well-being
- Affected my Well-being
- Somewhat Affected my Well-being
- Barely Affected my Well-being
- Not Strongly Affected my Well-Being

Question 35 *** required ***

How has the **recent** deployment or tour affected *your spouse's or significant other's well-being*?

- Strongly Affected
- Affected
- Somewhat Affected
- Barely Affected
- Not Strongly Affected

Question 36 *** required ***

To what extent has the **recent** deployment or tour affected *your family's well-being*?

- Strongly Affected
- Affected
- Somewhat Affected
- Barely Affected
- Not Strongly Affected

Question 37 *** required ***

To what extent has the **recent** deployment or tour affected your *child(ren)'s well-being*?

- Strongly Affected
- Affected
- Somewhat affected
- Barely Affected

☐ Not Strongly Affected

Page 12

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 38 *** required ***

Were you offered any services by *community based organizations* to assist you and your family prior to the recent deployment or tour?

Yes

No

Question 39 *** required ***

Were you offered any services by *religious or faith based* organizations to assist you and your family prior to the recent deployment or tour?

Yes

No

Question 40 *** required ***

Did any *community organizations or groups* help you cope during the recent deployment or tour?

Yes

No

Question 41 *** required ***

Did any *religious or faith based organizations or groups* help you cope during the recent deployment or tour?

Yes

No

Question 42 *** required ***

How connected did you feel to the any *community organizations or groups* during the recent deployment or tour?

☒ Extremely Well Connected

Well Connected

Connected

Not Well Connected

Poorly Connected

Question 43 *** required ***

How well connected did you feel to the any *religious or faith based organizations or groups* during the recent deployment or tour?

Extremely Well Connected

Well Connected

Connected

Not Well Connected

Poorly Connected

Page 13

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 44 *** required ***

Please indicate the *community resources* that you *utilized* during deployment(s) or tour(s)?

☐ Church groups

☐ Recreation

☐ School Programs

☐ Mentoring Programs

☐ YWCA/YMCA

☐ Boy/Girl Scouts

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☐ Play Groups

☐ Other

☐ None

Question 45 *** required ***

Please indicated which of the *community resources* that you found the *most helpful* during deployments or tours.

☐ Church groups

☐ Recreation

☐ School Programs

☐ Mentoring Programs

☐ YMCA/YWCA

☐ Boy/Girl Scouts

☐ Play Groups

☐ Other

☐ None

Question 46 *** required ***

How frequently did any *community organizations* contact you to *provide assistance* during deployment or tour?

◉ Very frequently

Frequently

Somewhat Frequently

Infrequently

Not at all

Question 47 *** required ***

How frequently did any *religious or faith based organizations* contact you to *provide assistance* during deployment?

Very frequently

Frequently

Somewhat Frequently

Infrequently

Not at all

Page 14

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 48 *** required ***

How well would you say that *you coped* with the most recent *deployment or tour*?

☐ Coped Very Well

Coped Well

Coped Normally

Barely Coped

Did Not Cope Well

Question 49 *** required ***

How well would you say that your *spouse or significant other* coped with the most recent *deployment or tour*?

Coped Very Well

Coped Well

Coped Normally

Barely Coped

Did Not Cope Well

Question 50 *** required ***

How well would you say that *your children* coped with the most recent *deployment or tour*?

Coped Very Well

Coped Well

Coped Normally

Barely Coped

Did Not Cope Well

Page 15

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 51 *** required ***

How would you describe your child(ren's) *relationship* with their parent who is either deployed or on tour?

☐ Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Very Poor

Question 52 *** required ***

How would you describe your child(ren's) *attitude toward* their parent who is either deployed or on tour?

Very Good

Good

Fair

Poor

Very Poor

Question 53 *** required ***

What do your children like *least* about deployments or tours?

The Military overall

Community Support

Friends being so far away

Family economic situation

Communication styles of family

Improved Family dynamics

Nothing

Question 54 *** required ***

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What did your children like *most* about deployments or tours?

☐ The Military overall

Community Support

Friends being so far away

Family economic status

Communication styles of family

Improved Family dynamics

Nothing

Question 55 *** required ***

How much have the traditional roles in the family changed during deployments or tours?

A great amount of changes have occurred

A good amount of changes have occurred

Some amount of changes have occurred

Slight amount of changes have occurred

No changes of any importance

Question 56 *** required ***

How would you describe your current relationship with your spouse or significant other?

Very serious

Fairly serious

Somewhat serious

Just getting to know each other

Not serious

Not in a relationship

Question 57 *** required ***

How *satisfied* are you with your *current* relationship?

Very satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat satisfied

Dissatisfied

☐ Very dissatisfied

Page 16

Question 58 *** required ***

In general, how *satisfied* has *your spouse or significant* other been when you communicate on a regular basis?

Very Satisfied

Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Dissatisfied

Very dissatisfied

Question 59 *** required ***

How has the quality of communication between you and your spouse or significant other influenced your relationship. It has made it . . . .

Not difficult at all

Somewhat Difficult

Difficult

Extremely Difficult

Nearly unbearably difficult

Page 17

Question 60 *** required ***

144

Do you have *internet communication in your home* with which you *communicate directly* with your spouse or significant other who is deployed or on tour?

🔘 Yes

No

Question 61 *** required ***

How do you feel about having *internet communication* with your spouse or significant other?

I enjoy it a great deal

It is okay

It its more work than help

It is a burden

I don't enjoy it

Question 62 *** required ***

How often do you have *direct communication* (e.g., internet chat) with your spouse or significant other during deployments or tours?

Very Often

Often

Somewhat Often

Not Often

Not Often at all

Page 18

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 63 *** required ***

How often has the new direct communication systems (e.g., Internet chat; SKYPE, and TWITTER) *created a problem* for you in terms of . . . .

1 - Very Often | 2 - Often | 3 - Somewhat Often | 4 - Not Often
5 - Not at All

	1	2	3	4	5
63.1 Time Schedules	☼				
63.2 Solving Problems with Children					
63.3 Solving Problems with Finances					
63.4 Personal Events					
63.5 Relationship Issues					

Page 19

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 64 *** required ***

How often has the new direct communication (e.g., Internet Chat, SKYPE, and TWITTER) *enhanced* your life in terms of . . .

1 - Very Often | 2 - Often | 3 - Somewhat Often | 4 - Not Often
5 - Not at All

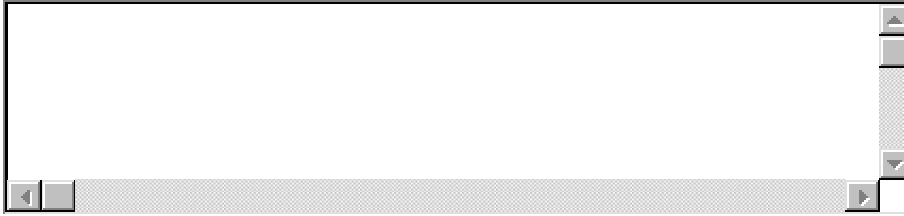|	1	2	3	4	5
64.1 Time Schedules					
64.2 Solving Problems with Children					
64.3 Solving Problems with Finances					
64.4 Personal Events					
64.5 Relationship Issues					

Page 20

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 65 *** required ***

This section allows you to share any thoughts you might have about the *deployments or tours* that may not have been covered in the questions above. Feel free to answer freely and honestly. Thank you for your time in answering these questions.

If you could change anything about your relationship with your absent partner during *deployments or tours*, what would it be? Please explain.

Characters Remaining: 500

Question 66 *** required ***

How did parenting change during the *deployments or tours*? Please explain.

Characters Remaining: 500

Question 67 *** required ***

How did the household dynamics change during the *deployments or tours*?

Characters Remaining: 500

Page 21

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* OR *No* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *No* OR *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 68 *** required ***

In general I would say that *religion* is alright for others, but it is not very important to me.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree/Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Question 69 *** required ***

Thinking about your life in general, would you say that you have a *strong sense of spiritual presence*.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree/Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Question 70 *** required ***

Thinking about your life in general, would you say that your *faith is important* to you because it answers many questions about life's meaning.

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree/Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Question 71 *** required ***

Thinking about your life in general would you say that *your spirituality* is an important and vital part of my life.

☐ Strongly Agree

Agree

Neither Agree/Disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

Page 22

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* OR *No* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *No* OR *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

Question 72 *** required ***

In general, how would you rate the overall Well-Being of *your family*?

Very Good

Good

Not Good/Not Bad

Not Good

Not Very Good

Question 73 *** required ***

Thinking about your *spouse or significant other*, in general how would you rate their overall Well-Being?

Very Good

Good

Not Good/Not Bad

Not Good

Not Very Good

Question 74 *** required ***

In general, how would you rate *your* overall Well-Being?

Very Good

C Good

Not Good/Not Bad

Not Good

Not Very Good

Page 23

Fill out this page only if you answered:

- *Yes* OR *No* on question *7. Do you have any children (In you...* on *page 2* .
- AND *No* OR *Yes* on question *8. Has your family (you, your spous...* on *page 3* .

We are almost done, just a few questions about how your general sense of self and your happiness.

Question 75 *** required ***

Now thinking about *your family*, in general, how happy would you say they are?

Very Happy

Happy

Somewhat Happy

Not Happy

Very Unhappy

I am single and do not have a family at this time

Question 76 *** required ***

Thinking about *your spouse or significant other*, what would you guess their happiness to be?

Very Happy

Happy

Somewhat Happy

Not Happy

Very Unhappy

150

⬡ No Spouse or Significant Other in my life at this time

Question 77 *** required ***

All things considered, how would you rate *your* overall happiness?

Very happy

Happy

Somewhat happy

Not Happy

Very Unhappy

Closing Message

Thank you so much for your *very valuable* input. The responses that you have given will be used to help promote enhancements of programs, policies, and procedures aimed at and centered on families who face repeated, planned or emergency interruptions. It is because of your willingness to offer your assistance families and policy makers alike will be poised to make better decisions about the future of how to address issues of family interruptions. Once again, I am deeply grateful for your support in this effort.

- End of Survey -