

THE INFLUENCE OF PATERNAL ROLE UPON FATHER INVOLVEMENT AMONG
ARMY FATHERS SERVING ON ACTIVE DUTY

by

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B.S., Upper Iowa University, 2005
M.S.W., Washburn University, 2008

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

2016

ABSTRACT

Army fathers are consistently confronting and overcoming unique socio-cultural obstacles involving their paternal role. Due to the dynamic military culture in which Army fathers live, they could serve as powerful examples of resilience for all fathers in diverse communities. Transitions in the work environment such as frequent deployments, relocations, and other related stressors often create competing priorities for Army fathers. The enormous sacrifices, challenges, and demands that these dads face are often juxtaposed with the benefits, rewards, and honors involved with serving one's country.

This research examines the influence of the paternal role on father involvement among fathers currently serving on active-duty in the United States Army. Utilizing a sample of military fathers ($n = 161$) from an Army installation, it was possible to identify various types of paternal roles and the corresponding levels of father involvement. This study provides a comprehensive plan for support programs and services to increase father involvement within families and communities. It also serves as a basis for educational programs and services designed to support fathers in the United States armed services.

The Influence of Paternal Role upon Father Involvement Model integrates conceptual underpinnings from Ecological Systems and Symbolic Interaction perspectives that were operationalized and tested in this research. This research found a positive association between paternal role and father involvement, $F_{(13, 151)} = 10.683, p < .001$. It was determined that approximately 49% of the variance in paternal role could be explained by father involvement. These data revealed that paternal role has a greater impact than originally postulated in addressing issues related to competing environmental factors and father involvement.

The research findings underscore the daunting socio-cultural challenges of being a tough guy and tender father through unparalleled commitment to their Nation and fatherhood displayed

by soldiers serving on active duty. The implications from this investigation are broad in focus and have important ramifications for our society. Military fathers are experiencing complex issues related to father involvement and require structured comprehensive support programs. The sacrifices military fathers volunteer to take on are often more extensive than initially perceived. Therefore, dynamic fathering programs should be implemented to offset some of the challenges of unanticipated expectations and increase paternal involvement among Army fathers.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I am compelled to acknowledge my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for without Him none of this would have ever been fathomable. To my wife Nancy, for all the love, support, encouragement, motivation, and patience you provided during this daunting journey, thank you and I love you. To my three beautiful daughters-Samantha, Adrianna, and Karaya-the primary motivation for me to continue pressing through the adversity and challenges. My girls are my world and I love you all and could never be more proud of who you all are as individuals.

To my mom Anna, and dad “Jimmie”, I thank God for the inheritance of faith in Christ Jesus you have left unto me, unparalleled wisdom, and charity beyond comprehension; you are truly awesome people of God and the epitome of what it means to fear and serve the Lord. To the best big bro in the world, Kirklin Pratt, you have been there for me every step of the way and in every way imaginable; thank you for taking me under your wing and all the advice you have given me over the years. To my first granddaughter Gabriella Jae-“Pa Pa Pratt” loves you, and to my granddaughter-Nova Fay (Novie), you were blessed, loved and prayed over prior to your arrival into this world. Always remember to put God first in everything you do and you will never be disappointed with the outcome.

To my co-major professor, Dr. Farrell J. Webb, thank you for the excellent example you have set personally and professionally. I truly appreciate all of the genuine support and interest you have taken in my family, professional, and academic career over the years. Words cannot adequately convey the gratitude, admiration, and respect I feel toward you. The entire FSHS faculty are truly amazing but, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge my co-major professor, Dr. Schumm for stepping in without hesitation during a very difficult transition period. Your expertise with military families was invaluable. To Dr. Donald Mrozek, thank you for your

understanding, flexibility, and support. Also, I would like to thank Dr. Myers-Bowman for all the kind words and advice given at every opportunity and occasion possible. Special thanks to Connie Fechter and Denise Fangman for all of the administrative support you have provided; your kindness and warm smiles were always the brightest spots in Justin.

To Dr. Be Stoney, thank you for the instrumental role you have played in my academic and professional experience. The example you set on campus and in the community is one to be emulated and you have left an indelible impression on my life. To Dr. Shoup-Olsen, your calming presence and vast knowledge has impacted me tremendously personally and professionally as I have learned creative alternatives to conveying messages that are not easy to deliver. I would also like to acknowledge Dr. Jurich posthumously for the encouragement and support; your absence is still felt across our department, and your memory is never forgotten. To Dr. Shay, thanks for the encouragement and support of my entire family. To Dr. Grable, thank you for sharing portions of your vast knowledge regarding financial issues among military families and the wisdom you have given over the years.

Thanks to Carl Taylor, my pastor, spiritual mentor, brother, and friend, for all of the wisdom and insight you have deposited in me and the compassion with which you were able to do it, for it was you that encouraged me to embark in this direction. To the late Tonia Taylor, my co-worker, sister and dearly beloved friend, the life you lived honored God, so I know I will see you again and for that I am grateful. To Elder Ondre Miles, Elder Benjamin Kimbrough, and the faithful brotherhood of Mount Zion Family Worship Center Church of God in Christ, the prayers alone are more than I could ever repay, but the sense of humor we share in the midst of tribulation is only through the grace of God. You both have truly been “a friend that sticketh closer than a brother” to me and my family.

To all the church mothers and Sisterhood of Mt. Zion, Mother Suggs, mother Weathersby, Mother Sellars, Sister Johnson, and Sister Nell you all have been examples of Proverbs 31 women and have treated me as a son and brother thank you. To all my aunts and uncles---Aunt Mae, Aunt Dorothy, Uncle Harold, Aunt Essie, Mother Wofford, and the saints of old, for holding up the blood stained--banner. To my friends James Wofford, Deen Byrd, Akim & Teco Moody, Shane Wynn, Eric Baker, Brian Holland, Keith K., Ralph M, Larry Quinn, and Lewis Graves, thank you.

To my good friend and Godfather to my youngest daughter, Jeremy McCammant, and to his wife Michell, you both are have been truly wonderful to my entire family, words cannot express how grateful and blessed we are to you have you both in our lives. To Melony Gabbert, thanks for being such a great friend.

To my cousin Delene, thank you for always reaching out and keeping our families connected, my Aunt Gloria, Uncles Theodore, and Alfred, and my cousin Revia, Fatty, Desmen, Frank, Samantha, Fletcher, Jerome, Zephaniah, Marcel, Xavier (T-Bone), Kevin, Devon, Deliaha, Shree, Sydesha, Sly (James), my uncle Bumpty (LaVerne), Aunt Michelle, cousin, Tasha, Pam, Shay, Stephanie, my late aunts Ruth, Elvita, Henrietta, Minnie, Clyde, Mary, Frankie, and late uncle, Sam, the love you have shown toward me will never be forgotten. To Uncle Roosevelt, my first pastor for preaching the unadulterated gospel at all times, thank you. To Elder Mack Major, for speaking life and praying over me. To Elder (Dean) Damper, for pushing me to pursue higher education from my youth.

To Dr. Marche Fleming-Randle, thank you for the support and encouragement you have given me and my family along the journey and for inspiring me with your wit and wisdom to accomplish this lifelong goal. I also want to acknowledge extended family my siblings, nieces

and nephews. Steve, Darrian, Anthony, Samantha, Brenda K., Duane, Theresa, Manuel, Billy, and Ronnie -- you all have shaped my life in ways you will never even imagine. To Lakeisha, my oldest niece, and to my great nephews- Khalil Jerome and Iasiah, I am so proud of you and I love you all more than words can say. To Shannon, Derrion, and my newest great nephew, congratulations, and I cannot wait to see y'all. To my sister-in-law, Kelly, thanks for your support,-Kirklin Jr. and Kalea, keep working hard in school.

Special thanks!!! To LTC Col Timothy Blackwell and family, you all have been a great source of support. Thank you to all the brave soldiers and fathers serving our country. I also want to thank my co-workers and friends, Toiane Taylor and John Hymon, you both are truly amazing and your unwavering support is appreciated. Carolyn, you have provided so much wisdom and inspiration, thank you. Earl, thanks, your professional support and guidance, you are simply a remarkable individual. Joe Kulbiski, thanks for always setting positive examples of how to conduct yourself in a professional way; your leadership has been instrumental. Debbie, thanks for helping me and my daughters -- your example of generosity has enriched our lives.

To Timmie, thanks for all the wisdom and insight and for being there to encourage me along the way. Kay, thanks for the support and professional expertise I could always rely upon. Laurie, your quiet confidence and gentle words were always uplifting. Marvin, thanks for being a friend and for all the encouragement you have given; the conversations we have shared in confidence have truly made me a better man.

To all the great men and women I have served with, especially the ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice, you are my brothers and there is nothing I would not do for you. Jamie Pena, Flott, Graham, Santine White, Chris Rhodes, Williams, and the entire 1/16 infantry band of brothers, thank you for the privilege of serving with you. There are so many individuals that I

would like to acknowledge and that have made an extraordinary impact on my life, while you may feel like it was an insignificant or minimal amount of support, the amazing things God did with it in my life have changed me dramatically.

DEDICATION

To my precious wife, Nancy, and our three wonderful daughters, you are my inspiration, motivation, and love. My parents, Jimmie and Anna, and especially my late brother Jerome Kenneth Pratt, rest in peace -- you were gone way too soon, but you are never forgotten and your memory continues to encourage me to be better each day. Your daughter and grandchildren are phenomenal just as you were and I am so Godly proud of them. To my biological father, the respect, admiration, and love I have for you has endured even death and the memories I have are cherished beyond any other -- thank you Pratt family for keeping his legacy alive.

To my brothers Kirklin, Anthony, Duane, Manuel, Ronnie, Steve and Darrian and along with my sisters, Theresa, Samantha, and Brenda K. The entire Pratt family, in Detroit, Ohio, Texas, and abroad in this country, you are my foundation and the lessons and examples you have provided were always so encouraging. Thank you to "Grandma Pratt", the godly heritage you have left to our family endures and I love you dearly. To the great patriarch of the Pratt family, Bishop Cecil A. Pratt, the example of Godliness continues to impact each generation for Gods glory. Last but, certainly not least, to all the soldiers, families, and fathers currently serving in the armed services, your sacrifices are not in vain as you proudly protect and defend our justice, liberty and freedom. Gratitude, honor, and Thanks!

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The United States Army is the largest service organization under the Department of Defense (Lowe, Hopps, & See, 2007). In 2011, a report from the National Security Staff estimated that over 50% of the men serving on active duty are currently fathers or will become one during their time in service. Many of them are finding it difficult to balance their paternal responsibilities with their oath taken to defend their country. These competing and equally important institutions demanding attention are the source of much consternation (Ender, Campbell, Davis, & Michaelis, 2007). Fathers who are struggling in their homes may not be as well prepared or focused on the important aspects of their duty, which could place overall mission readiness in jeopardy. It is essential to provide Army fathers with specialized resources, education, and support programs to ensure that the most effective soldiers are available physically, mentally, emotionally, socially, and spiritually to perform their mission of protecting our country.

Fatherhood has been characterized as a critical component of identity for most men and may be considered a normative part of the adult male experience (Pasley, Petren, & Fish, 2014; Tichenor, McQuillan, Greil, Contreras, & Shreffler, 2011). The experience of being a father has also been described as, the single most creative, complicated, fulfilling, frustrating, engrossing, enriching, depleting endeavor of a man's adult life (Pruett, 2000). Similar sentiments may also be expressed regarding serving in the military and being a soldier. Correspondingly, the role of the father can also be one of the most exciting, rewarding, and fulfilling experiences any soldier will have during his lifetime (Brott, 2009; Dollahite & Hawkins, 1998; Lavee, & Dollahite,

1991). Fatherhood is an important undertaking that must be navigated carefully and effectively (Tichenor et al., 2011).

These two dynamic roles of soldier and father intersect to create multiple unique and continuous paradoxes for the evaluation of father involvement. In many instances fathering may be even more challenging for Army fathers serving on active-duty as these roles are combined (DeVoe & Ross, 2012). The continuous demands and complexities of their service commitment often takes precedence over other any other role. Conversely, Army fathers are also committed to serving their families (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011). Fathers who are able to effectively differentiate and compartmentalize these roles will experience successful transitions while fathers who are unable to navigate their responsibilities may experience more adverse outcomes at home and work (Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010).

It is apparent that Army fathers who are able to adaptively fulfill their paternal role can be “good soldiers” as well and fulfill their commitment to the United States Army. “Good soldiers” are the backbone of the Army which makes this nation and world a better place for everyone to live. Although these roles are often conflicting and competing, they are not mutually exclusive. These paradoxical difficulties and challenges that Army fathers are experiencing have wide reaching effects on their paternal role and the country on which they are defending (Kelley & Jouriles, 2011).

Furthermore, military cultures have informally emphasized the elimination of negative or abusive interactions as unacceptable behaviors for fathers (Laser & Stephens, 2010). For example, Army fathers may be briefed by chain of command and support professionals on not “beating” their children while less importance is given towards loving and nurturing interactions. This constricted pedagogical approach is very effective in prescribing unacceptable conduct for

some Army fathers, but may exclude many other Army fathers who have more progressive learning styles which may conflict with conventional approaches. Understanding the phenomenon of fathering across multiple contexts may enable appropriate resources and programs to be developed to support father involvement in families.

According to the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense, more than half (55%) of active duty military members are married and approximately 43% have children (Huebner, Mancini, Bowen, & Orthner, 2009; Walsh, Dayton, Erwin, Muzik, Bussuito, & Rosenblum, 2014). In addition, there were more than 450,000 children of active-duty soldiers and most of them were under 7 years of age (51%) (Lowe, Hopps, & See, 2007). The majority of children with parents serving in the Army are both directly and indirectly impacted by the experiences of their fathers. Army fathers are required to navigate many seemingly insurmountable, complex historical and sociocultural obstacles in order to become successful fathers, and children are expected to adapt naturally (Laser & Stephens, 2010). Army fathers face many challenges that nonmilitary families might not experience including mobility, separation, periodic absences of parents, reunification with children, overseas living, high-stress and high-risk jobs, conflicts between the needs of the military family and the military system, and autocratic management approaches. The reverberating impact of multiple deployments on Army fathers will be felt by the family, community, and country (Levin, 2007).

Statement of Problem

While some military fathers primarily focus only the physical aspect of fathering during separation, the psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions are often unintentionally neglected. A by-product of these preconceived beliefs may have harmful consequences on developmental outcomes for their children (Eaton & Fees, 2002; Gewirtz et al.,

2011). Army fathers who are unaware of the scope of their paternal role may not experience close connections with their families.

A limited understanding of paternal roles may contribute to lower levels of involvement that Army fathers have with their children (Fitzsimons & Krause-Parello, 2009). Guiding and caring for children is not only developmentally and psychologically important to the child, but is central to the father's psychological growth and well-being (Johnson, Hoffman, James, Johnson, Lochman, Magee, & Riggs, 2007). Fathers are changed by children as much as children are changed by parents because of the ongoing reciprocal transitions that power them forward in life (Connor & White, 2007). Army fathers who have positive experiences with work and fatherhood are more likely to have enjoyable relationships with their children and families (Morten et al., 2007).

Father involvement may be impeded by a myriad of factors (Cowan, Cowan, Pruett, Pruett, & Wong, 2009; & Walsh et al., 2014). Additionally, unemployment or underemployment has an impact on a father's ability to provide financial resources to the family (Loren & Palkovitz, 2004; McAdoo, 1993; Perry & Langley, 2013; Saleh & Hilton, 2011). It is reasonable to examine demanding occupations to determine if the work environment creates dissonance in the home environment. A common saying in the military is that when one person joins, the whole family serves (Park, 2011).

Although family members are often in the background of public discourse on the military, they are often critical to its success (Park, 2011). Army fathers are a distinct population from nonmilitary fathers and are facing a considerable amount stress related the demands of their career, separations, frequent relocations, and deployments to war zones. Despite these challenges, it is important to recognize that these stressors do not necessarily mean these fathers

are at-risk for adverse outcomes (Seery, Holman, & Silver, 2010; Zhang, Zhao, Ju, & Ma, 2014). Army fathers are a resilient and interestingly diverse population, but are no different from fathers in other population regarding the roles they play within their family (McAdoo, 1986, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the multifaceted paternal role of Army fathers serving on active duty. A broader purpose of this research is to delineate how paternal roles are perceived through psychological, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual domains that impact the level of father involvement. Also, the experiences of military fathers will be studied in terms of sociocultural and environmental aspects that influence paternal responsibilities. Additional considerations will be given to how to develop researched-based educational programs to assist Army fathers in becoming more involved with their children, families, and communities.

Rationale

One of the biggest obstacles to “involved fathering” is the current operational tempo within the military culture including frequent deployments and preparation which create physical distance from families (DeVoe & Ross, 2014; Eaton & Fees, 2002; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2009; Laser & Stephens, 2010). Even when fathers are at home, the intensity of their work can make it seem like they are unavailable (i.e., emotionally detached). Also, the enormous sacrifice Army fathers are making may not seem to be meaningful to their children (Willerton et al., 2011). Fathers have emphasized that the stress of parenting directly influenced their ability to perform their duties. Army fathers have also described the difficulty of prioritizing competing demands of ensuring the safety of their own troops and themselves, children in other countries, and attending to their own children’s needs from afar (Devoe & Ross, 2012).

Theoretical Orientation

The phenomenon of fatherhood for Army fathers presents a uniquely complex and multidimensional concept for family scientists to investigate (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Laser & Stephens, 2010; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Previous theoretical approaches have utilized deficit and pathological orientations that have not adequately encompassed the totality of experiences of Army fathers. This study acknowledges the limitations of previous theoretical underpinnings in the literature while incorporating a holistic bioecological orientation with symbolic interaction theory to expand our current knowledge base.

Due to the dynamic nature and subtlety of nuances related to fatherhood and Army culture comprehensive overlapping theoretical approaches are necessary to thoroughly understand these phenomena. To date, a single unified theory has not been developed that sufficiently elucidates the roles of Army fathers in conjunction with the socio-cultural experiences that may define paternal roles (Bacharach, 1989; Fox, Nordquist, Billen, & Savoca, 2015; Kwok & Li, 2014; Perry & Langley, 2013).

Therefore, a combination of perspectives and conceptual frameworks will be integrated to increase understanding of this complex issue (Corey, 2005; Dilworth-Anderson, Burton, & Klein, 2005; Doherty, Boss, LaRossa, Schumm, & Steinmetz, 1993). Army fathers are influenced by environmental factors on the micro-, mezzo-, and macro-level that have a significant impact on their ability to perform their paternal duties and roles as fathers in addition to the sociocultural, historical, and economical factors. Army fathers who have a thorough understanding of their paternal role will experience closer connection with their children and families despite the challenges they face.

Human Ecological Theory

The phenomenon of the Army fathers' representation in scholarly or military literature is a relatively untapped area of academic research for scholars and family scientists that should be examined from a broad perspective in order to give substance to this large undertaking. The Human Bioecological Theory lends itself to adaptation for the multifaceted roles in which Army fathers are currently engaging in while performing duties as a warrior, husband, and father. One of the most basic concepts in this framework is adapting (White & Klein, 2008).

One cannot underestimate the important role a family plays in a soldier who has left them for a higher cause, "Aside from staying alive, staying connected with your family is the most important part of you well-being during your deployment. When you're in regular contact with your family, you'll feel like you're still valued, needed part of your family. It'll boost your morale and keep your relationships with your wife and kids fresh. It can also help minimize the shock you're going to get when you come home to a family that's been through a lot of changes". (Brott, 2009, p. 149)

Army fathers are constantly adapting or transitioning physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially while adjusting to new roles, responsibilities, and environments (DeVoe & Ross, 2010). Within the regimented and rigid structure of the Army, fathers are expected to adapt, improvise, and overcome obstacles of adversity and hardship in order to be effective soldiers. Fathers who are unable or unwilling to adapt to military culture and way of life need support and are at risk of being discharged from service (Gewirtz et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2009;).

Bioecological Theory also provides a contextual view of human development that can be applied to larger national and transnational organizations to gain understanding of how things function (White & Klein, 2008). A contextual approach is especially important for understanding and dealing with various intricacies related to Army father's paternal behavior and the influence of a structured environment.

The paradoxical relationships between manhood, fathering, and soldiering, and responsibility, rearing children, and duty toward one's country often appear indistinguishable. Differentiating among priorities in these relationships and the hierarchical structure of when each relationship needs to take precedence can be overwhelming. It is paradoxical that, while providing significant opportunities for advancement and upward mobility, the Army also leads to destabilization or disruption of families (Lowe, Hopps, & See, 2007). Although these relationships are not mutually exclusive, for many Army fathers achieving a harmonious balance is often elusive.

Also, Bioecological Theory is easily integrated with other theories and disciplines of directed toward child development and life span development perspectives. This theory is flexible enough to allow for the development of constructive propositions. Using Bioecological Theory is necessary to encompass the breadth of father involvement and to thoroughly examine human behavior from several orientations. The complex paradoxes and perspectives in the roles and experiences of Army fathers cannot be adequately assessed using only one theoretical approach.

From a systemic perspective, stressful experiences affect the whole family and the impact on all members and relationships is mediated by key family processes (Riggs & Riggs, 2011). The enormous responsibilities fathers have for the actions of their children are compounded by the accountability of the fathers' own actions and how their actions impact others is unparalleled by any other profession as reprimands will negatively impact Army father's career progression.

Army culture expands upon paternal (sponsor) responsibility as Army fathers are held directly responsible by the Army for the actions of family member's behavior (dependents/children). The meaning of fatherhood is broadly defined as it is contrasted within

cultural contexts and the ideas of what it means to be a soldier vary as well (Gewirtz et al., 2011). For instance, Army fathers are frequently expected to improvise, adapt, and overcome in new environments and circumstances precisely. The tempo of operations, long deployments, and unduly short time for reintegration are accepted as normative in military communities and are often identifiable marks of valor (Laser & Stephens, 2010). These expectations are similarly placed upon fathers to engage and be involved in the affairs of his households seamlessly.

Current societal perceptions typically portray fathers as being mediocre, uninvolved, and disconnected at best (Saleh & Hilton, 2011; Stublely, Rojas, & McCroy, 2015). Fathers who assimilate these misrepresented images at the individual, social, and institutional levels may personally experience disenchantment with their paternal role. The cultural aspect that strongly influences fathers is related to the societal expectations exacerbated by supposed media interpretations. Fathers are being inundated with messages of uninvolved fathers through reality shows and popular television series. Although these negative depictions of fatherhood are strongly rejected in military circles, Army fathers are still in need of supportive programs that will identify and help implement healthy fathering practices

Symbolic Interaction Framework

Symbolic Interactionism is adaptable to any time and probably has had the greatest impact on the study of the family (White & Klein, 2008). The central tenets of Symbolic Interactionism underscore the importance of symbols in understanding human behavior. Symbolic Interactionism also uses concepts of roles, interaction, and salience to interpret meaning for actors in particular situations. Also, the Symbolic Interaction helps in integrating other perspectives related to understanding sociocultural messages (White & Klein, 2008).

Symbols are created for communication which is an integral function of father involvement and is equally emphasized in military training (White & Klein, 2008). Traditional forms of face-to-face talking or letter writing have now been transformed to emailing photographs and other images to transmit information and ideas. In this current age of information and instant access to data, Army fathers are expected to communicate effectively with their families, which can create additional stress for fathers who may have difficulty with self-expression (Devoe & Ross, 2012; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2009; Laser & Stephens, 2010; Morten, Campbell, Davis, & Patrick, 2007). Army fathers are generally effective communicators, but the focus must be on healthy communication especially with children and family members.

When Army fathers are unable to communicate or choose not to communicate for various personal reasons, the interpretation of the nonverbal patterns becomes even more salient in families. This becomes paramount for program implementation with Army fathers and families because each father's experience is vastly different and requires individualized support. For the average American citizen, understanding the sacrifices Army fathers are making on a daily basis is inconceivable. Special care must be taken if one is to understand what soldier-fathers and active-duty families experience.

Imagine belonging to an organization that takes complete control of your life, where everything that is said or done is guided by rules and regulations. Soldiers are technically considered property of the United States Army (at least privately, hence the term GI government issue), assets to be used to protect and defend our great country on a moment's notice. In addition to restricted liberties, there are contractual obligations that are not removed by quitting or being fired, Army fathers risk not only their livelihood, but also their very lives. In fact, if a

soldier quits or voluntarily voids their contract, it is called Absent without Leave (AWOL) or desertion which makes it nearly impossible to obtain employment in the future and, thereby nullifying any viable means of providing for his family.

In order to thoroughly study fathers in their various family roles in any context an ecological approach is necessary because it allows one to evaluate the relationships between external social systems and internal family functioning simultaneously (Kwok & Li, 2014; McAdoo, 1993; Pleck, 2012; White & Klein, 2008). Since there are only a few studies that directly address the family experiences of Army fathers from a bioecological perspective, further investigations can contribute significantly to the body of literature.

This paucity of studies is highly relevant to understand how perceptions have been shaped through sociocultural processes as some research may be more heavily relied upon simply because other pertinent studies are scarce. The lack of explicit theoretical approaches in scholarly literature on Army fathers, also gives further impetus for research on Army fathers to clearly identify their theoretical orientations.

Focusing on theories as a means for justifying current practices is essential for family scientists, but this process must be continuous. Research, theory, and practice must not be viewed as separate entities, but as coincident components for ensuring families are being supported in the most efficacious ways possible (Chibucos et al., 2005). This research focused on the task of integrating two theoretical perspectives to better understand the roles and experiences of Army fathers in order to provide supportive programs and services.

The theoretical perspective that I have identified to guide my research combines Symbolic Interaction and Human Bioecological frameworks. The integration of these two approaches is the basis for my theoretical model of the influence of paternal role on father

involvement. My model illustrates three general levels of paternal role and the influence of environmental factors on father involvement (see Figure 1.1). Bioecological processes impact the paternal role fulfillment as well as father involvement in several ways. The resiliency continuum indicates that engaged fathers are able to adapt and evolve to become more involved as resilience increases.

In this investigation, the conceptual model for the Influence of Paternal role upon Father Involvement is presented. The Bioecological influences on the father, the family, and the community impact the capacity for father involvement on various levels. As paternal role salience increases, fathers are able to demonstrate their commitment to their children in tangible and observable ways despite environmental obstacles. Correspondingly, as paternal role confusion is experienced, father involvement decreases and may result in abusive or unhealthy interactions. Also, the aspect of resiliency is an important characteristic for Army fathers and plays a large role in their capacity for involvement. The contextual factors related to interacting systems, adaptations, and evolving symbols to interpret roles are predominant concepts in the construction of this model.

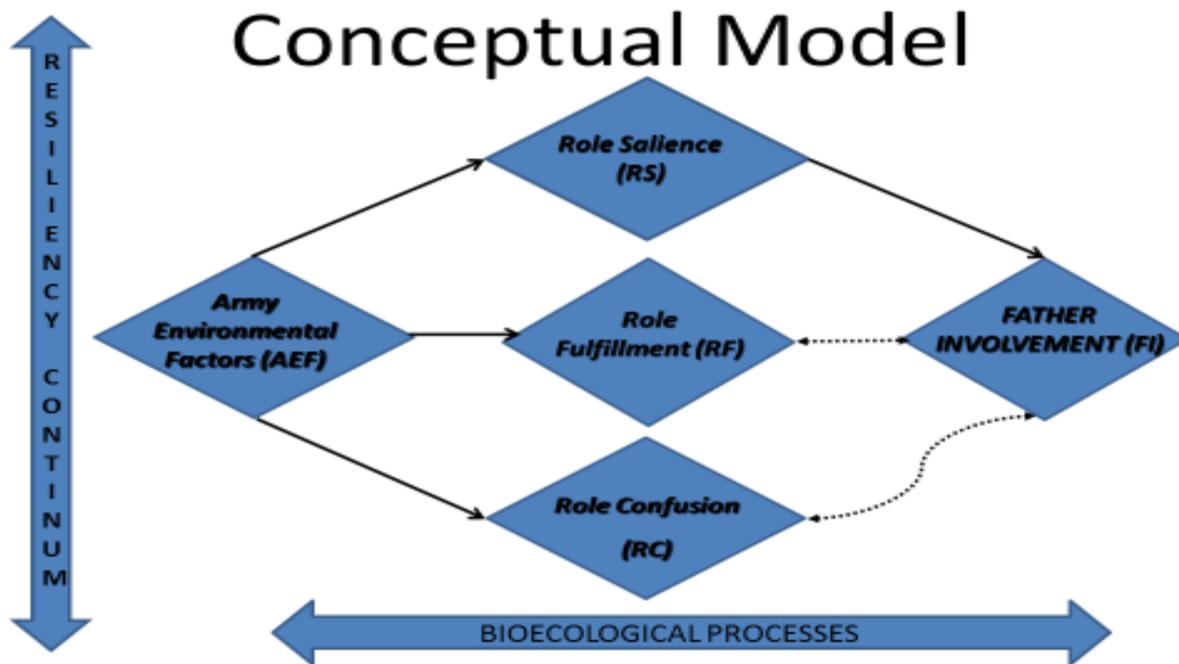


Figure 1.1 Conceptual Model for the Influence of Paternal Role upon Father Involvement with the Appropriate Bio-ecological Overlays

Research Design

Previous research has not provided sufficient evidence regarding the influence of paternal role upon father involvement among Army fathers. Therefore, the following research questions have been constructed to assist in filling the gap in literature concerning the influence of paternal role and father involvement.

Research Questions

1. What factors contribute to healthy involvement with their children for Army fathers?
2. What factors contribute to paternal role saliency for Army fathers?
3. To what extent do environmental factors help determine the level of father involvement for Army fathers?

Hypotheses

- H1. The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the degree of paternal role salience among Army fathers.
- H2. Army environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) will be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers.
- H3. Army fathers who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship with their own father will experience higher levels of father involvement.
- H4. The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the multiple perceptions fathers have of being in the Army.

Conceptual Terms and Definitions

The following concepts and terms will be referred to throughout this study. A brief explanation of each concept will be provided along with a tentative definition for this research to establish continuity between the meanings of the terms in the context of Army fathers serving on active duty in the United States Army.

- *Army Fathers:* This term identifies men in the United States Army who have accepted the responsibility of providing for children. This acceptance can be acknowledged or established through consanguinity (biological paternity), legal steps (marriage, adoption, custodial, or guardianship), or through second marriage (stepfathers).
- *Role:* This concept can refer to the rules to be learned and more broadly conceptualized as the multidimensional interactions fathers engage in to influence development, socialization, and contributions to the life trajectories of children. It includes

traditional functions of breadwinner, disciplinarian, provider, protector, model, and teacher. This also includes the presumptive functions of caregiving, companions, and nurturance -- in addition to biological, psychological, social, emotional, and spiritual components.

- *Role Salience*: This concept implies that the importance of a role is determined by commitment to the role, which includes attitudes and emotions, participation in the role, and knowledge about the role.
- *Role Confusion*: This concept describes an ambiguous or limited understanding of fathering responsibilities that results in hesitancy or creates uncertainty regarding paternal responsibilities.
- *Dependents*: This term refers to spouses, parents, relatives, and children of active duty Army soldiers eligible to receive benefits based upon the relationship status to a sponsor (soldier).
- *Sponsor*: An individual designated by the military to assume full responsibility for another person (such as a dependent spouse or child).
- *Military*: This term broadly refers to any person that has been drafted or enlisted in any branch of the uniformed service in the United States and includes members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, and United States Coast Guard. Further references herein to military will signify active-duty Army.

- *Social Father*: An inclusive term to describe men who assume some or all of the roles fathers are expected to perform in a child's life, although they are not related biologically.

Variables of the Study

The two types of measures that will be examined in this study are predictors and outcomes and more commonly known as independent and dependent variables. Placement of the variables into specific categories is grounded in both theoretical frameworks and previous empirical findings. A more in-depth exploration of variable selection is provided in Chapter Three of this dissertation. The conceptual components of the independent and dependent variables are considered below:

Dependent Variable

The outcome measure is father involvement. In this investigation the impact of paternal role on father involvement among Army fathers is examined. The issues surrounding paternal role for Army fathers and the influence of father involvement will become evident. It is predicted that as paternal role salience increases, father involvement will also increase.

Independent Variables

There are a plethora of important factors which lend support to the proposed conceptual model for father involvement. These predictor variables provide a meaningful context to examine environmental conditions that mediate or moderate levels of father involvement.

- *Paternal Role*: rules conceptualized as multidimensional interactions fathers engage in to influence development and socialization of children to include traditional and contemporary paternal functions and responsibilities. Paternal role consists of responsibility, access, and engagement.
- *Environmental Factors (micro, mezzo, and macro)*: all conditions including physical, emotional, social, psychological or spiritual in nature that have an

influence on paternal involvement. These factors specifically include but are not limited to frequent absences, relocation, and socio-cultural expectations.

- *Satisfaction with Relationship with own Father:* the satisfaction of the Army father with his relationship with his father in childhood and currently. Having a better relationship with his father should increase his resiliency with respect to the challenges of Army fathering.

Importance of the Study

Military life presents children and families both challenges and opportunities to grow (Park, 2011). It is also imperative for family scholars, researchers, and practitioners to understand that difficult life events do not automatically lead to problems in children, and in some cases these challenges provide opportunities for growth. Nonetheless, the stresses impacting the roles of Army fathers can be extremely disruptive and overwhelming experiences.

Lamb (2004) contended that the complex, multidimensional role of fathers should be a prominent area of research. The lack of scholarly literature regarding the role of Army fathers is a primary impetus of this study in order to increase scholarship and understanding in an under researched area. Lamb (2004) reasoned that historical, cultural, and familial ideologies inform the roles fathers play and, undoubtedly, shape the absolute amount of time fathers spend with their children, the activities fathers share with their children, and perhaps even the quality of the father-child relationships. This dissertation will explore the various multidimensional roles of Army fathers and the impact of their work environment on paternal experiences.

The challenges confronting Army fathers are continuous and are a part of the everyday culture in which these fathers live. Both Drummet, Coleman, and Cable (2003) and Willerton et al. (2011) cited previous studies that considered the military and the family to be greedy institutions because they seek priority for exclusive and undivided loyalty from members (Ender, Campbell, Davis, & Michaelis, 2007). Army fathers are subjected to multifaceted stressors such

as repeated relocations that often include international tours of duty, frequent separations of service members from families, and subsequent reorganizations of family life during reunions.

Also, the structured environment increases the Army's expectations and pressure for families to behave in certain ways that reflect positively upon the service member. Another significant challenge comes from combat deployments to war zones, which have a tremendous impact on fathers. Understanding these obstacles can provide Family Life Educators (FLE) with valuable insights that may assist in the development, implementation, and evaluation of programs that support individual fathers and families during the transitions and adjustments (Arcus, Schvaneveldt, & Moss, 1993).

Most Army fathers are strong, resilient, courageous, and diverse individuals that are actively engaged with their families. Family constellations and configurations for Army fathers reflect that of the general population. A major difference is based upon Army father's commitment to the mission first as fathering may not be their number one role. God and Country may take a higher priority, whereas marriage and fatherhood fall somewhere further down the continuum. In contrast, for the non-military fathers, the importance of fatherhood ranks high as an element of normative life fulfillment (Tichenor et al., 2011). For Army fathers, one of the greatest attributes that can be passed on to their children is a heritage of service. Family values are essential and important, but serving others, serving their country has intrinsic value that can fortify a family bond. Patriotism is not merely saying positive things about one's own country, it is a feeling one gets, and involves a life style that must actively be demonstrated in every facet of one's being.

Organizational Overview

This dissertation will be structured into six chapters. Chapter Two examines the literature relevant about father involvement and includes a review of the role of the father, the Army fathers' role, holistic and comprehensive approaches to father involvement and a summary of the information. The theoretical underpinnings are also derived from literature contained in Chapter Two.

Chapter Three focuses on the methodological framework used to guide this study. This chapter consists of a discussion of measures, instruments, and statistical methods employed to summarize and analyze the data. Chapter Four includes the results with particular attention drawn to the statistical analysis, model, and hypothesis testing.

Chapter Five evaluates the qualitative component of this dissertation and includes narrative responses generated and a summation of the methodological approach. The quality of the responses added so much rich data that necessitated the inclusion of an additional chapter for discussion. Chapter Six consists of discussion about and conclusions from the study. Recommendations for future research as well as implications and limitations are presented.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature regarding the role of Army fathers is relatively scarce and to some extent disjointed when it comes to examining the meaning and practice of fatherhood for these men (Huebner et al., 2009; Pleck, 2012; Pruett, 2013). An academic search of literature in peer-reviewed databases on the subjects of fathers' or dads' experiences and paternal involvement produced over six thousand and four thousand sources, respectively. This search resulted in a greater yield of books and articles that were not directly related Army fathers. Therefore, I expanded my search to include primary data sources such as pamphlets provided to soldiers and other popular material pertaining to military fathers. Relevant literature that mostly had a particular emphasis on Army fathers will be reviewed in this chapter.

A global, more in-depth analysis of the literature on Army fathers from various sources resulted in some interesting discoveries, especially when examining theoretical underpinnings that were actually driving the research. In many studies, there were no theoretical frameworks explicitly identified and other studies used deficit models similar to military family syndrome. Many others did not have any theoretical foundation, or used conceptually limited perspectives that were problem-focused on deficits or pathology approaches. Other important findings in the literature were related to many military sources that generally did not differentiate between demographic characteristics such as race or ethnicity. Many military studies explicitly excluded comparative analysis when examining the impact of combat deployments on families or the roles of fathers serving on active duty.

In this chapter, I will evaluate current and previous literature regarding the roles and experiences of Army fathers and the role of fatherhood in general. I will also examine the socio-

cultural contexts, and implications of various paradoxes surrounding fatherhood that impact the roles and experiences of fathers. I intend to illustrate the similarities and differences that this study will contribute understanding and advancing literature on father involvement. There is also a dearth of empirical research about Army fathers' roles and experiences; this review will serve to illuminate the salience of more exploratory studies to be undertaken. Moreover, this review of the literature will present a multi-faceted examination designed to introduce specific concepts, identify limitations, and bridge gaps of previous studies on Army fathers. To accomplish this task I have divided the literature review into five sections.

Part I – Traditional Fatherhood Role

The following section also reviews and discusses what is known about fathers from an empirical and cultural approach, including various impediments to paternal involvement and the environment that soldiers are contending with on a regular basis. Although there are many opinions regarding the role of fathers, not much attention has been given to how the context and cultural influences in today's Army affect Army fathers (Riggs & Riggs, 2011). In order to establish a foundation for examining Army fathers in the absence of scholarly material, I decided to focus primarily on traditional father involvement and more broadly, the conventional role of fathers.

When considering the role of fathers in the United States, the image that typically appears is that of a breadwinner, disciplinarian, or head-of-household (Connor & White, 2006; Lamb, 2004). These traditional roles of father involvement are frequently understood from one dimensional perspectives that fail to account for social, emotional, mental, and spiritual components of the father's role. Depending on the sources examined, a variety of perspectives is presented. An extremely important, but frequently overlooked, positive influence on men and

support for responsible fathering is religion. Religion is a construct defined as a covenant faith community with teachings and narratives that enhance spirituality and encourage morality (Dollahite, 1998). An important goal of fathering is to raise healthy, responsible, and productive members of society, and religion could be instructive in supporting these goals (Guzzo, 2011; Stockall & Dennis, 2013).

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) also asserted that perceptions of fathering were shaped by social change and historical events and their effects on men's economic circumstances. Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda found that the considered standards of good fathering for middle-class men differed from those imposed on slaves and immigrants. These cultural standards were further delineated by the economic and educational constraints precluded slaves and immigrants from being highly involved fathers. Fathers from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be constrained much the same by limited opportunities for engagement with their children. The longstanding stigmatization of fathers has had harmful consequences on paternal responsibilities within the home and community (Laser & Stephens, 2010).

The attention surrounding the role of father has inspired an abundance of literature ranging from scholarly, professional, spiritual, popular psychology, and even personally inspired material specifically designed to support fathers (24/7 Dad Handbook, 2001; Father Facts 6, 2011; Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Fatherhood has also garnered a lot of attention in the news, especially within the contemporary social media outlets. There are always conversations regarding what it means to be a good dad, responsible, ideal, active, and loving father (Furrow, 1998, Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb, 2000). Conversely, there are discussions of the bad dads, the deadbeat, disengaged, absent, or abusive father (Connor & White, 2011).

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) outlined a historical presentation of an intriguing account of the good-dad/bad-dad complex tracing its origins to colonial America and following through to the present day. They revealed that perceptions were shaped by social change, historical events, and the impact of men's economic circumstances. One example mentioned the differing standards imposed on slaves and immigrants than those for middle-class men. The historical impact of slavery is cloaked in generational practices that continue to manifest; therefore it may be feasible to assert the context of time is necessary to achieve equal advantages (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004).

Most contemporary scholars concede that fatherhood may be best understood as a social construction or a set of images, expectations, symbols, and norms that are formed by multidisciplinary societal experts (Loren & Palkovitz, 2004; Pleck, 2012; Stockall & Dennis, 2013). The portrayal of fatherhood in media outlets is largely shared and accepted by the general public. Thus, the social constructivist model assumes that fatherhood largely involves "playing a social role" (Dollahite, 1998; Furrow, 1998). A more appropriate way of understanding the role of fathers may be a spiritual process that is more personal, spiritual, and specific-child responsive, while not ignoring, and to some extent being responsive to broad cultural "scripts" and societal expectations (Dollahite, 1998; Furrow, 1998).

Another important responsibility for fathers found in the literature is the ability to create viable offspring for the future. Generativity refers to an emergent process that accentuates parent's personal growth in relation to their children's well-being (Allen, 2007). Also, generational fatherhood assumes that the primary psychological task of healthy adulthood is to have a genuine commitment to establishing and guiding their offspring. Erikson believed that men can and want to become the kinds of fathers their children need to them to be, and that the

renewal of society calls for non-self-absorbed adults who are prepared to help establish the next generation of adults, products, ideas, and works of art (Connor & White, 2007).

Allen (2007) found a patrifocal interpretation of familial roles for adult males is largely a social construct, and it may be peculiar to the United States. Allen also identified role retention of prior roles for fathers involved in their families and built upon notions of stage models which success at early phases are foundational to predicting success at later stages as well as the converse nature of failure at earlier stages. As males experience success in roles of manhood it may also translate to success in fatherhood and paternal involvement.

Many research projects try to determine how to improve paternal interactions and identify unhealthy involvement among fathers and families. Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) established that father involvement is affected by multiple interacting systems operating at different levels over the life course, including psychological factors (e.g., motivation, skills, self-confidence), the children's individual characteristics (e.g., temperament, gender), social support (e.g., relationships with partners and extended family members), community and cultural influences (e.g., socio-economic opportunity, cultural ideologies), and institutional practices and public policies (e.g., welfare support, child support enforcement).

Father involvement is essential to the healthy development, self-esteem, and well-being of children (Eggebeen & Knoester, 2001; Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004; National Fatherhood Initiative, 2010; Sylvester & Reich, 2002; Volker, 2014). Sylvester and Reich (2002) encouraged researchers to look at fatherhood as a subset of other family and child well-being issues. The authors emphasized conducting smaller-scale and ethnographic studies that draw a fuller picture of the role of fathers in families, with particular attention to cultural and economic differences. Army father involvement fits into this narrow category of studies precisely.

Sylvester and Reich went on to identify a compelling issue regarding the diverse demographics in the United States, and the significance of understanding how communities define the roles of fathers differently. The ideas of fathering within a community, the influence of intergenerational beliefs, and the impact of practices within families of origin have significant implications for Army fathers.

Part II – Role Confusion and Disengagement

Traditional paradigms of father involvement involve deficit perspectives. A focus on the adverse impacts on children discount the positive contributions involved and loving fathers make to their families and society as a whole (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda; Connor & White, 2011). The United States culture is characterized by numerous assumptions and influences which focus on men's failings and would either limit father involvement or use shame or coercion to induce father involvement (Guzzo, 2011; Loren & Palkovitz, 2004). These paradoxical approaches directed toward pathology include radical feminism, which suggests that men are by choice oppressive, abusive, uninvolved or simply unnecessary (Perry & Langley, 2013).

Also, assumptions in law and policy about which custody arrangements will serve the "best interest of the child" often result in arrangements that lead to limited involvement by nonresidential fathers (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Furthermore, the media and entertainment industry, which usually depict men and fathers as absent, uninvolved, abusive, irrelevant, bumbling, or hopelessly flawed continue to perpetuate inaccurate perceptions of fathers (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004).

Even necessary laws that deal with irresponsible fathers, such as paternity establishment and child-support wage-garnishment statutes, carry an implicit message that many men must be legally browbeaten into responsible fathering (Lamb & Tamis-LeMonda, 2004). Some social

commentators and scholars who have highlighted the importance of fathers argue that men have been biologically programmed through evolution toward “paternal waywardness,” and must be coerced and corralled by powerful cultural and legal forces (Lamb & Tamis-Lemonda, 2004).

Allen and Behnke (2007) suggested that existing welfare and child-support legislation still discourage father involvement among ethnic minority fathers (especially in relation to nonresident fathers). The authors also disclosed that many “fragile families” are still in normatively romantic relationships at the time of the child’s birth and could benefit from specific support and thus, a rethinking of current public policy regarding fathers and families may be in order (Allen & Behnke, 2007). Fathers can be involved in many healthy ways emotionally, cognitively, and physically. Many dads, according to the authors, were willing to make sacrifices in providing for and supporting their children and it was a common attitude that many ethnic minority fathers shared.

In research done almost exclusively with abusive mothers, Schaeffer, Alexander, Bethke and Kretz (2005) stated, “abusive fathers comprised only 23% of all perpetrators studied and were rarely compared empirically to abusive mothers.” The authors provide interesting insight into the current practice of using mothers as a means of obtaining data regarding fathering behaviors.

Moreover, the authors illuminate the inconsistencies between deadbeat and abusive fathers. From a statistical perspective, fathers are not the primary abusers of their children. According to national child maltreatment statistics, fathers are the primary perpetrators of child physical abuse in almost as many cases as mothers (45% and 55%, respectively) and comprise a sizeable minority of perpetrators (28%) of child neglect (Schaeffer et al., 2005). However,

despite current findings, the stigmatization of fathers as a whole continues to permeate mainstream media outlets (Laser & Stephens, 2010).

Schaeffer et al. (2005) concluded that the lack of adequate representation of fathers in the child physical abuse and neglect literature has been discussed by other reviewers and calls into question the relevance of abuse theories and treatment approaches for male perpetrators. Schaeffer also found that research regarding abusers was heavily contingent upon comparing both parents. Other correlates such as low family cohesion and high family conflict were characteristic of both abusive parents (Schaeffer et al., 2005). Theoretical perspectives and intervention programs must rely on comprehensive methodological approaches in order to ensure services that are being provided are both effective and efficient for Army fathers.

Furthermore, a history of abuse, low self-esteem, anxiety, and inappropriate parenting expectations were characteristic of abusive mothers (Schaeffer et al., 2005). The authors utilized direct participant responses from the fathers and present a strengths-based perspective to examine the depth of the experiences of fathers. While focusing on one aspect of self-reporting may confirm expectations of researchers, it is not comprehensive in explaining phenomena holistically. The authors suggested that perception of any single report of data should be cross analyzed to ensure the accuracy of data being collected.

Historically, throughout research literature, fathers have been either invisible in the study of child development and family life or characterized in negative terms such as “deadbeat dads” and absent fathers who are financially irresponsible and rarely involved in their children’s lives (Allen, 2007; Connor & White, 2006). The authors suggested that many studies have accepted these underlying assumptions of the military family syndrome as valid and continued these trends without thorough investigation (Connor & White, 2006). However, too often, both the

professional and popular literature characterizes fathers as deadbeat, deficient, lacking, uninvolved, uncaring, and absent (Connor & White, 2011).

Part III - Army Father Absence

Army father absence, father absence, and involuntary father absences related to socioeconomic paradoxical elements (i.e., long hours to make ends meet) are all specific gaps in research literature that, while having been addressed at the individual level, though not extensively still needs further exploration (Caldwell & Reese, 2006; Johnson, 1996; Nock, & Einolf, 2008; Wilson & Butler, 1978). Also, the vast majority of research literature available on Army fathers examined the issue using a clinical perspective (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Laser & Stephens, 2010). It is clear from the scant literature that more research is needed, it is important to take a family perspective because it may be more appropriate for looking at the complexities of these issues. Generally speaking, the majority of literature focusing on the impact of father absence is directed specifically towards individual level data from the adolescent or the father.

Today's military comprises 1.2 million active-duty men, of whom almost 43% have dependent children (Willerton et al., 2011). Active-duty fathers have assumed legal responsibility for parental obligations to minor children and are related through several ways in order to be a sponsor. It has been estimated that half of all military fathers are married with children (Laser & Stephens, 2010). Theoretically, military service constitutes a unique role in the life course. Army fathers are removed from civilian pursuits which minimize the importance of preexisting differences in socioeconomic achievement and class standing, both of which may have implications for marital timing (Teachman, 2007). Instead of entering the workforce or college, Army fathers have launched careers and started families earlier than their non-military counterparts.

However, military families experience considerable stress, periods of long separation, and changes to the family system due to family members planning to enter a war zone, actively living in a war zone, and reuniting after being in a war zone--all which place severe demands on military families (Willerton et al., 2011). Many of the challenges can seem daunting, overwhelming, and often insurmountable as the paradoxes of fatherhood are discovered often incidentally. The dynamic transitions between roles that often characterize Army fathers' experiences have a unique impact on their families, morale, and unit readiness.

Teachman (2007) found no support for the competing roles theoretical approach which posit demanding roles are often incompatible with each other such that individuals who fill one role are less likely to fill the other. He established in every instance, military service is associated with an increased, rather than a decreased, probability of marriage.

Willerton et al. (2011) contended that, despite physical separation from their families and limited opportunities for direct interaction, many deployed military fathers expressed a strong sense of responsibility for what was happening to their children. Army fathers were psychologically present in their children's lives and did not disengage from their parenting responsibilities during deployment (Willerton et al., 2011). Army fathers who recognized the holistic nature of their paternal responsibility exercised regular involvement as they fulfilled their role. Writing letters, tape recording digitally, calling by telephone, sending e-mail, and video chatting are all efforts aimed at communicating and remaining connected for Army fathers (Willerton et al., 2011).

Many military fathers reported that their primary roles were protector and provider (Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Stockall & Dennis, 2013). These roles were filled through technological communication even though fathers were absent; technology enabled them to be involved. For

example, fathers communicate with their children regarding the dangers of strangers, bullying, and drugs. Themes of involvement related to cognitive, affective, and behavioral interactions that military fathers experienced with their children were identified (Willerton et al., 2011). The authors further delineated the themes of cognition, affect, and behavior, into overarching categories to capture fathers' thought processes about involvement and fathering. This comprehensive approach included observable engagements as well as emotional experiences, reactions, and feelings military fathers had with their children.

A self-contradictory dichotomy exists with the absent Army father because he is not absent by choice, rather he is absent out of necessity. The obligation to duty and the commitment he has made to serve his country often takes him away from home. Research shows that military fathers experience a tremendous amount of stress related to involuntary separations, relocations, and transitions that most civilian fathers typically do not confront on a routine basis (Drummett, 2003; Willerton et al., 2011). Drummett (2003) also found that individuals and families in the military move more frequently than nonmilitary families and that the distances which are often greater for military families can also include international travel.

Willerton et al. (2011) examined military fathers' perspectives regarding cognitive, affective, and behavioral involvement and found that involvement with their children was a major concern for fathers, despite, or perhaps because of, the challenges of military careers. The concern Army fathers expressed illuminated many ironies related to their desire to be a "good father & soldier." Similarly, MacDermid-Wadsworth (2010) found that service members also reported uncertainty about the amount and kind of information that should be shared with children during deployment and reintegration. Deployments, field training exercises, and professional development opportunities all create absences in Army families, but fathers who

recognize proximity as only one aspect of their paternal relationship are more inclined to remain engaged, committed, and involved while separated (Willerton et al., 2011).

Military deployments impact the entire family. Spouses of military members have reported that during deployments wives experience loss of emotional support, loneliness, role overload, role shifts, and concerns about the safety and well-being of the deployed military members (Huebner et al., 2009). Many soldiers have reported that it is stressful to have to renegotiate roles, responsibilities, and boundaries with their spouse (Farber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss 2008). Willerton et al. (2011) presented three components for fostering involvement including engagement (direct contact through activities such as playing and caretaking), accessibility (potential availability for interaction resulting from a father's presence whether or not direct interaction is occurring), and responsibility (overseeing the welfare and care of the child, including organizing and arranging children's lives).

MacDermid-Wadsworth (2010) stated, during deployment, challenges for service members are thought to fall into three primary categories: physical, such as duration, workload, ability to rest, and injuries or disease; psychological, such as family worries, exposure to trauma, or boredom; and moral, such as general ambivalence about military operations. There also may be economic challenges, such as rearranging employment or paying for household services usually performed by the deployed family member. MacDermid-Wadsworth (2010) also unexpectedly found that more days of deployment usually decreased the likelihood of divorce, especially for men, younger couples, and parents.

Another interesting facet of military life found in the literature involves frequent absences of military fathers (Di Nola, 2008; Drummet et al., 2003; Hillenbrand, 1976; Laser & Stephens 2010; Levin, 2007; Willerton et al., 2011). The authors suggested that father involvement be

viewed as a multidimensional construct that requires a broader conceptualization to capture the meaning of various forms of involvement. Willerton et al. (2011) asserted that the important aspects of involvement can take place proximally or distally. This is essential in understanding the role of involvement Army father takes in their families.

Willerton et al. (2011) affirms that incorporating components of cognition and affect into the construct of father involvement enriches our thinking about the meanings and contexts of involvement, and the antecedents that lead to observable behaviors. Fathers' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are inextricably interwoven. Cognitive and affective involvement appears to be particularly important in contexts where fathers must be separated from children for extended periods. The conceptualizations of paternal involvement that exclude these components may do a disservice to thousands of fathers whose work regularly takes them away from home (Willerton et al., 2011).

Most research regarding father absences underscores the negative impact or harmful consequences of not having a father present (24/7/ father factor). Existing literature on military father's focuses predominantly on how father's absences affect children's growth and development (Willerton, et al., 2011). Willerton et al. (2011) also identified physical absence as major role in fathers' cognitions since many fathers were aware of current cultural expectations that emphasize the importance of fathers being available for their children.

The Military Task Force Report (2007) also found that some common factors that can put military families at risk for difficult transitions. These common factors include a history of rigid coping styles, a history of family dysfunction, and young families, especially those who are experiencing a first military separation. Also, families having recently moved to a new duty station, foreign-born spouses, families with young children, those with lower pay grades,

families without unit affiliation, and National Guard and Reserve families all have increased potential for problems during transition. Other families were at risk with having a disabled child, a pregnancy, or reduced income. The military task force report also looked at limited resources for mental health available to families. The numbers of stressors impacting fathers and limitations on access to support services also have an impact on fathers' capacity to effectively take care of their children as well as themselves.

Research shows that, on the average, active-duty military families move every two to three years within the United States or overseas (Park, 2011). Similarly, Park expanded the risk factors for exacerbating the negative effects of deployments on military children and families to include families with a history of problems, younger families, less educated families, foreign-born spouses, lower ranking families, single-parent families, and families with mothers also in the military (Park, 2011). Since the characteristics identified above as potential risk factors for manifesting family issues, this study will utilize some of these specific factors to gain a more thorough understanding of Army fathers and thus to be able to provide them with better support.

The struggles experienced by Army families are continuous and do not immediately end upon return from separations of war, deployments, and training (Booth, Segal, & Bell, 2007). MacDermid-Wadsworth (2010) found two particular manifestations of the impact of war, she labeled one the war away, where focus is on families affected by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the second, the war at home, where families around the world who live where mass violence occurs. MacDermid-Wadsworth further clarified the concept of mass violence to include both war and terrorism. As a stressor, mass violence tends to be unexpected, unwelcome, and complex, and therefore very likely to be catastrophic rather than common. Army fathers are confronted with all types of violence and are expected to respond according to

their training. Even for professional soldiers the impact of violence leaves an indelible impression upon fathering priorities, roles, and responsibilities.

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of research about how fathers function during deployment cycles and fathers in the army in general (Park, 2011). In particular, fathers' own perspectives are curiously absent from most studies of military families' deployment experiences (Willerton et al., 2011). Much of the research literature available is focused on a research agenda that is clinically relevant to military members and their families and encourages the Department of Defense to develop such an agenda with input from military psychologists and relevant American Psychological Association (APA) divisions. Even when the fathers are included, the focus is mostly on the logistics of communication during separation as opposed to fathers' goals for and assessments of their experiences during deployment. There is a dire need for more empirical data regarding military fathers, especially fathers in the Army (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

The subject of deployment and separation permeate the literature on general military families from a clinical intervention and treatment perspective. Also, studies that address the statistical significance on soldiers and families among between-group analysis were glaringly absent. Stress, separation, and change are universal to all families (Laser, 2010). However, the obstacles confronting Army fathers on a daily basis have a tremendous impact on their paternal roles, perspectives, and responsibilities. Research shows that military families endure circumstances and demands that are unique (Drummett, 2003; Eaton & Fees, 2002; Levin, 2007).

Part IV- Army Father Resilience

Although paternal absence has significant implications on child development it may be premature to assert that all absences result in harmful effects. Contrasting findings in research

regarding alternative perspectives have not gathered much momentum (Gewirtz et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2009; Hillenbrand 1976; DeVoe & Ross, 2012). The authors contended that for first born boys, cumulative paternal absence related significantly to enhance quantitative ability and perception of the mother as the dominant parent. Despite inconsistent findings in literature regarding absent fathers, it is important to understand that paternal absence does not directly equate to maladjustment or pathology since there are many additional factors that must be considered (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Hillenbrand, 1976; Huebner et al., 2009).

Paternal absence with the appropriate resources and support can produce growth and healthy development in some situations (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Hillenbrand, 1976; Huebner et al., 2009). There are positive effects for father absence, especially when the father may be abusive or violent. Thus, the premise that “a bad father is better than no father” does not hold true. In some instances of a father’s absence, the opportunity for maturation, autonomy, and independence are increased (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010). More importantly, how Army fathers prepare their children for the separations may be a pivotal concern for researchers, professionals, and families (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010).

Despite the vast amount of literature regarding the impact of military deployments, there have not been many theories put forth to understand how military service affects paternal roles and behaviors (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Laser & Stephens 2010; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Walsh et al., 2014). Theories that increase understanding of paternal experiences are necessary and beneficial to the fathers and scholars. Both Bioecological and COR (Context of War and Terrorism) Theories, like Family Stress Theory, also recognize that accumulations or pileups of stressors can compound initial trauma. There are many definitions of resilience, but

the most common is successful adaptation following exposure to adverse or traumatic circumstances (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010).

MacDermid-Wadsworth's (2010) study of resilience in individuals has focused heavily on disposition or personality. In adults, there has been an emphasis on hardiness, or the sense that life is meaningful, we choose our own futures, and change is interesting. The author argued that hardiness is tied to how people interpret what happens to them. MacDermid-Wadsworth describes hardy individuals as interpreting stressful and painful experiences as a normal aspect of existence, part of life that is overall interesting and worthwhile, believing that they have the capacity to cope with difficult circumstances and actively attempting to do so. Posttraumatic growth is a positive psychological change experienced as a result of the struggle (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010).

Resilience also plays a major factor in all phases of deployment and most families' ability to rise to the occasion and adapt successfully to a stressful experience (Dayton et al., 2014; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2009; Park, 2011; Walsh et al., 2014). The Military Task Force Report (2007) found Family readiness to be a key factor in resilience, with family preparedness serving as a protective factor when deployments are announced. The authors also found that spouses who function most effectively during deployments are those who use active coping styles. These include: "make meaning" of the situation, receive community and social support, accept the military life style, are optimistic and self-reliant, and those who adopt flexible gender roles.

There are significant gaps in our understanding of complex psychological and social effects on military personnel exposed war zones. The Global War on Terror also effects the interactions friends, families, and communities have with military personnel as well (Military TF

Report, 2007). This indicates everyone that interacts with military personnel needs to be concerned about supporting our military fathers. Willerton et al. (2011) established that many military fathers worked hard to remain actively involved with their children despite military jobs that required extended absences from home and that these “instrumental” fathers recognized the differences between quality and quantity time as they did not equate physical presence with “good fathering.”

One of the most significant challenges Army fathers face today is not related to the battle field or their combat experiences (Military TF Report, 2007). The difficulty for Army fathers lies in overcoming a constellation of family values forged in their family of origin. Many of the fathers in the Army understand the way they were fathered while growing up may not have been the best method (Military TF Report, 2007). Intuitively, fathers have desired to do better and differently than their predecessors, but may not know what to do.

The idea of “What Right Looks Like” is often used to help Soldiers understand the importance of appropriate modeling skills (Military TF Report, 2007). Unfortunately, many Army fathers are at deficit when it comes to positive male role models to emulate. Among the many stresses which assault today’s American family, father absence is an increasingly frequent phenomenon (Gewirtz et al., 2011). In a military setting, where absences are expected appropriate, and prepared for, the stressors can still present complex issues (Laser & Stephens, 2010). Army fathers contending with unrealistic expectations could benefit from practical skill-based programs that focus on the application of basic principles.

One aspect noticeably missing from Willerton’s et al. (2011) work was the coping mechanisms or methods fathers use to help themselves come to terms with the paradox of being a good father and being absent. While many military fathers express a sense of frustration, it is

important to understand that fathers' intangible contributions to their children's development have long-term positive outcomes (Willerton et al., 2011). Teaching and modeling with consistent love, discipline, loyalty, and integrity will instill values any father would be proud to see in their children.

There is also a growing body of literature suggesting the possibility of deployments military fathers may have a somewhat positive impact on children, spouses, and families (Willerton et al., 2011; Levin, 2007). One of the most salient truths is that fathers and families are forced to take on additional responsibility. Families also may begin to take inventory and evaluate what are the most important aspects of their own lives when a loved one passes away. Aspects such as health, strength, and love that are oftentimes unrealized. The general notion is that risk and resiliency factors interact and influence parent-child relationships and interactions, thereby indirectly influencing child outcomes. Willerton et al. (2011) also looked at molecular family stability as the consistency and predictability of outlines within the family environment as well as activities that occur outside the family, but that require family support (Levin, 2007; Willerton et al., 2011).

Part V – Comprehensive Approaches

Due to major concerns over the impact of deployments on soldiers and families the U.S. Army has developed a comprehensive examination to determine how well personnel are functioning. The U.S. Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) program aims to measure the psychosocial strengths and assets of soldiers as well as their problems, to identify those in need of basic training in a given domain as well as those who would benefit from advanced training, and then to provide that training (Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011; Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011).

Primary goals of the CSF program include the promotion of well-being as well as the prevention of problems (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011; Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). The framework for assessing the psychosocial readiness or fitness of soldiers and family members encompasses four domains which involve family, social, emotional, and spiritual strength. Comprehensive approaches designed to improve the experiences of active-duty fathers are necessary to promote paternal coping abilities and healthy interactions (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011; Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). This study incorporates physical/biological, mental/psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual components in program development for Army fathers.

Today's U.S. Army provides many benefits and opportunities as incentives for enlisting (Huebner et al., 2009). Immediately upon enlistment, fathers begin receiving comprehensive medical and dental benefits for their entire families. In addition, fathers are eligible to receive one hundred percent tuition assistance for academic endeavors. Other benefits include, but are not limited to competitive pay, opportunities to see the world, and the distinct honor of serving ones' country (Huebner et al., 2009). These benefits have added meaning because over forty-five percent of men in the U.S. military are fathers, or will become a father during their time of service (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2010).

Army fathers who are doing well in their careers will increase the likelihood of being more engaged in their paternal roles and vice versa (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011). Identifying a particular role for an Army father can be quite elusive due to the dynamic and ever changing social and physical environment where fathers carry out their duties. Due to the variability of roles and experiences of Army fathers, in addition to the paucity of research regarding these phenomena, more research is warranted (Grinnell & Unrau, 2011).

Morten, Campbell, Davis, and Patrick (2007) proposed a theoretical approach seeing families and the military as competing institutions. It is imperative to understand that these two approaches are not mutually exclusive, but may function collaboratively as the efforts of both are designed to improve fathering, families, and society as a whole. Lowe et al. (2007) found that the response by the military to families during their time of need does affect the level of commitment of male personnel and their spouses to the organization.

Invariably, competition will occur between two demanding systems--the military and the family. Both systems have been called “greedy” because both systems demand and compete for time, loyalty, and commitment (Ender et al., 2007). Increased competition between two institutions has been noted over the past two or more decades owing largely to the movement of women into the labor force and the correlative cultural expectation that men increase their participation in family roles. Although this conflicting approach has generated some support among scholars, a critical supposition that has been excluded is that competition does not always have a negative impact in all institutions (Ender et al., 2007).

A poignant fact uncovered in the literature identified major discrepancies between the negative absent father images of Army fathers who were away or deployed and the picture of men in fathering roles which emerges from structured interviews, narratives, biographical sketches, community-based observations, and ethnographic investigations. There is a tremendous need for more qualitative studies (Connor & White, 2007).

A fundamental component of research that has been absent from the literature are the fathers themselves (Willerton et al., 2011). Research that implements second-hand data or does not appropriately corroborate responses with actual participants fails to fully understand the perceptions of the subject matter experts and cannot accurately assess strengths directly from the

primary source. The paradoxical nature of fatherhood in general becomes more pronounced as Army fathers transition through their life cycle (Gewirtz et al., 2011).

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda (2004) asserted that most researchers have implicitly assumed that variations in the definition of fatherhood are determined by subcultural and cultural factors more than by individual characteristics and that many men set their goals depending on recollections of their own childhood, choosing either to compensate for their fathers' deficiencies or to emulate them. Connor and White found social fatherhood to be a term that included all men who assume some or all of the roles fathers are expected to perform in a child's life, whether or not they are biological fathers. This inclusive term may be consistent with being a sponsor in the U.S. Army, which assumes responsibility for the care and well-being of an individual (Park, 2011).

Willerton et al. (2011) also mentioned another area for further investigation of father identity and father involvement. The impact of their job was not addressed, and since combat and support careers may have completely different impacts on fathering, special consideration may be warranted. Despite these noted limitations found in Willerton's et al. (2011) study, their work makes several useful contributions. The inclusion of several service organizations provides a broad perspective on military fathering to draw from and the diversity of participants in terms of military demographics and marital history lends trustworthiness to the findings. Willerton's et al. (2011) contributions and implications will be expanded upon in this study as the MOS related to combat arms will be heavily considered.

However, to adequately address military families, Army fathers, and socioeconomic issues at the family level, it is imperative to take holistic approaches by collecting data at family level variables which include several perspectives rather than a narrow view (Engle & Schutt,

2005). Individual perspectives often disregard the impact of the social environment on the person and may not be the best source to gather information. This limitation gives credence to family approaches that alternatively take into account other plausible explanations which may help family scientists and educators to assist families (Engle & Schutt, 2005).

The literature on Army fathers is deficient in many areas and one of the most striking deficiencies involves applicable theoretical frameworks.

“The lack of explicit theory is conspicuous, although there is an important exception: the Cycle of Deployment model, which distinguishes different phases through which military families pass when a family member is deployed: (a) pre-deployment (from notification to departure), (b) deployment (from departure to return), (c) reunion (termed redeployment or reintegration in the military), and (d) post-deployment” (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010).

Another glaring absence in the literature is consideration of the brothers and sisters of service members. The siblings of service members are affected by the deployment, injury, or death of those who serve, but virtually nothing is known about challenges siblings may face and how to help support brothers and sisters (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010).

Another gap in the research literature that has been addressed at the individual level, but could be examined more appropriately at the family level is Army father absence (MacDermid-Wadsworth, 2010). Much of what can be said for Army fathers is consistent with what is commonly said about fathers in general. In addition, there is much socio-cultural misrepresentation of socioeconomic issues related to Army fathers who have much impact in the literature.

Furthermore, there is a concern regarding the absence of research examining the unique needs of special populations (e.g., female service members, National Guard members, reservists, and minorities) (Lundquist & Smith, 2005). My endeavor is to understand the experiences of a

subset of fathers in the Army community and to develop programs that will enable them to become more successful with their families, units, and our country as a whole. Expanding the research base about Army fathers, is essential for establishing best practices in evidence-based services that will eliminate inequity and inefficiency across Army service programs (Drummett et al., 2003). This research may help in providing comprehensive care for all military personnel and their families.

There is an urgent need to better understand the impact of deployment on military children and families and to provide appropriate support for them. Although there is a sufficient amount of research involving programs and interventions, the long term success of deployed personnel needs to be examined thoroughly (Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). Moreover, definitive conclusions about what really works are by and large lacking. The Army Comprehensive Soldier Fitness Program uses the premise of focusing greater attention on the strengths and assets of military children and families as an effective method of supporting them (Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). Understanding the effect of military service on fathers and their families is a complex issue. In order for program implementation to be successful, holistic approaches must be integrated.

Fortunately, scholarship and research now surpass the former unidimensional characterizations of fathers as breadwinners, or as persons who are categorically absent or present (Perry & Langley, 2013; Pleck, 2012). Advances in technical research helps to understand the multi-faceted roles that fathers play in their families. Although transformation has taken place in academia, the transition to broader concepts of involvement in Army communities has been relatively slow.

The research findings regarding the emotional and physical toll that relocation takes on military fathers and families are inconsistent. It is important to note that Drummett (2003) also established that nearly seventy-eight percent of fathers could not identify any close friends with whom they felt comfortable sharing their problems. The lack of comprehensive social support networks among Army fathers and families are deficits that Family Life Educators (FLE's) should be aware of when evaluating potential resources for fathers needing assistance. Also, FLE's should not assume that intact families are functioning at a higher level because the father is resides in the home. A common misconception is that the difficulty of separation is instantly overcome upon reintegration. In fact, however, although reunification may be joyously anticipated, it can be just as challenging as the separation (Drummett, 2003).

Summary

Chapter Two consisted of an overview of relevant literature broken down into four sections. These sections integrated the sociocultural and environmental contexts that influence paternal roles among Army fathers and fathers in general. The chapter also examined relevant conceptual and theoretical frameworks to understand the experiences and challenges Army fathers overcome routinely. It also illuminated some of the gaps in current literature and underscored the importance of conducting exploratory studies that provide a foundation for theorizing and discussing programs that support Army fathers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This chapter explains the use of quantitative methods to discuss the status of Army fathers serving on active duty and currently stationed at a military installation. The purpose of my analysis is to understand the complex roles and experiences of Army fathers and the impact of military lifestyle on their paternal responsibilities. I used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and frameworks to examine the problem. Initially, I used a quantitative approach because it would be the most appropriate way to address my research questions. I also employed a qualitative approach to fill any remaining gaps and help me unpack some of the more nuanced and complex issues military dads face.

Research Design

The review of literature illuminated quite a few gaps in understanding regarding the role of Army fathers and the influence of paternal role on father involvement. It is evident that many fathers are not aware of the complete scope of their paternal responsibility and the influence they have over their children. This research is intended to identify factors of father involvement and the multifaceted roles in which Army fathers are currently functioning.

I used questionnaires to obtain data from active-duty Army fathers. The questionnaires were distributed during the duty formation around 9:00 AM to allow soldiers an opportunity to complete the questions prior to reporting to work from October 1, 2015 until April 3, 2016. Each unit in the battalion provided volunteers during this time frame based on their availability prior to training or deployment. All of the Army fathers were given informed consent forms explaining that their participation would be completely voluntary. Commanders were also advised of potential incentives of time off or weekend passes for all participants at the commanders' discretion. Furthermore, mental health counselors were readily available to provide assistance through Military Family Life

Consultants program to address any issues that might arise. The questionnaires were immediately collected upon their completion. The primary sampling method employed was non-random and involved approximately 160 Army fathers.

All respondents had to meet the following criteria: They had to be on active-duty and have at least one child for whom they had some responsibility. The fathers could also have joint residential custody of a child that provided liberal parenting time. These specific criteria were selected to generate a homogenous sample could be examined in order to capture the experiences during paradoxical role transitions and duty changes.

In order to identify which Army program resources are most effective and supportive, I evaluated these programs using the confirming and disconfirming cases approach. The confirming/disconfirming approach will be reflective of each father's experience. All the data was drawn from the experiences of fathers serving in the Army to identify the most supportive resources and cost effective programs available. Army fathers are the hardest hit, and yet remain one of the most under-researched and underserved populations. The future services and programs that will support Army fathers must be sensitive to the needs of fathers to be effective.

The methods undertaken for recruiting participants required me to enlist the support of my supervisor and director. In addition, I requested the support of a commanding officer in charge of troops. I then discussed with them the criteria I would be looking at, and in addition I informed them of my overall research purposes and how these data would be used.

Our conversation was then followed up with an email to confirm expectations, and access was granted to these fathers. All documentation was submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University since my research dealt with human subjects (See Appendix B). Also, informed consent explicitly stating my intent was given to commanders and participants to ensure that data were protected and used only for the specified purpose. The

interview guide consisted of demographic and open ended questions to aid in the qualitative data collection process.

Research Questions

1. What factors contribute to healthy involvement with their children for Army fathers?
2. What factors contribute to paternal role salience for Army fathers?
3. To what extent do environmental factors help determine the level of father involvement for Army fathers?

Research Hypotheses

In order to answer my research questions, I developed four hypotheses from the literature on Army fathers and involvement in parenting. Each hypothesis predicts the effects of understanding the paternal role on father involvement among Army fathers. My hypotheses are based upon the data analysis and measurement tools that were developed. They are as follows:

- H1.** The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the degree of role salience among Army fathers.
- H2.** Army environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) will be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers.
- H3.** Army fathers who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship with their own father will experience higher levels of father involvement.
- H4.** The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the multiple perceptions fathers have of being in the Army, as well as critical demographic factors.

Operational Terms and Definitions

A thorough examination of the proposed research questions and hypotheses required operational definitions for each of the elements in this study. Conceptual and operational

definitions are directly related to the variables used in the Army Father Involvement Questionnaire. The following definitions are related to demographic, environmental, family of origin, and paternal role conditions. Figure 3.1 provides a schematic representation of the relationships theorized in the Army father involvement model. The operational terms I developed are to support further explanations regarding the influence of paternal role upon father involvement.

- *Paternal Role*—rules conceptualized as multidimensional interactions fathers engage in to influence development and socialization of children to include traditional and contemporary paternal functions and responsibilities.
- *Environmental Factors (micro, mezzo, and macro)*—are all conditions including physical, emotional, social, psychological or spiritual in nature that have an influence on paternal involvement.
- *Family of Origin Conditions*—satisfaction of the Army father with his relationship with his own father (family of origin) as a child and at present.

Data Source

An Army father involvement questionnaire was distributed to each participant in the study to understand their paternal experiences. All of the respondents in this investigation were Army fathers currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Army. Commanding Officers identified potential soldiers with children to support this study.

Army fathers were given up to an hour to complete the questionnaire. However, most respondents finished in approximately half an hour. All data and information collected were held in the highest confidence and secured in containers with multi-locking capabilities.

Participants were also made aware of the purposes, benefits, drawbacks, and limitations of this

study. Army commanders were helpful in identifying participants, and they filled out questionnaires along with their soldiers.

Initially, there were approximately 500 potential fathers identified in the organization to participate in this study. However, due to deployments and conflicts with soldier training schedules, they were not all readily available. I attempted to correct for the unexpected absence by recruiting the remaining Army fathers who were available and willing to participate. Also, several units from the same battalion were contacted and agreed to having a central location in their vicinity to conduct the study. The data collection window was extended with the intention of obtaining a larger sample size. Altogether, 161 respondents completed questionnaires and 157 (97.5%) fit proposed criteria, approximately 31.4% of the original sample estimate.

Instrument Design

The questionnaire consisted of 78 items gradually increasing from the innocuous to more complex questions and concluded with demographic information that may be sensitive in nature. Open- and closed- ended questions were intermixed about environmental conditions Army father have while serving on active duty. The questionnaire was divided into the following categories:

- Paternal Role
- Physical Conditions
- Spiritual Influences
- Emotional Connections
- Psychological Conditions
- Sociological Influences
- Support Conditions
- Demographic Information

Plan of Analysis

My statistical investigation consisted of univariate analysis to ensure a thorough examination of these all data. The preliminary descriptive analysis conducted identified any issues related to skewness or kurtosis that arose within the data that could impact the integrity of the findings before I proceeded with other more advanced statistical measures. Detailed explanations are provided for the data involving measures of central tendency. The scale variables that were created and tested via appropriate statistical procedures [e.g., reliability tests using the Cronbach's alpha (α) measure] (Field, 2009). After initiating the analysis to identify other issues in the data that could reduce variability, create dispersion, or generate outliers unrelated to family level influences more advanced analysis were conducted.

Bivariate Analysis

The nature of this study and its hypotheses required that the mean differences between the groups be examined thoroughly. Simple correlation analyses were also employed for each condition of the model and the outcome measure of father involvement. Factorial Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) were also conducted (Field, 2009).

Multivariate Analysis

Additional multivariate exploratory analysis conducted revealed potential differences associated with the outcome measure of father involvement (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). A thorough examination of the restrictions and limitations of individual measurements was somewhat difficult, because each statistical measurement test has a particular purpose. An advantage of using individual approaches is that they can be completed relatively quickly (Field, 2009). These individual measurement approaches clearly have statistical value, but using them

as stand-alone procedures to comprehensively answer sophisticated and complex research questions was not the most appropriate methods for interpreting my father involvement data. Therefore, I employed a hierarchical multiple-regression analysis to explain the model and test the efficacy of the overall model. The details of my findings are in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this study.

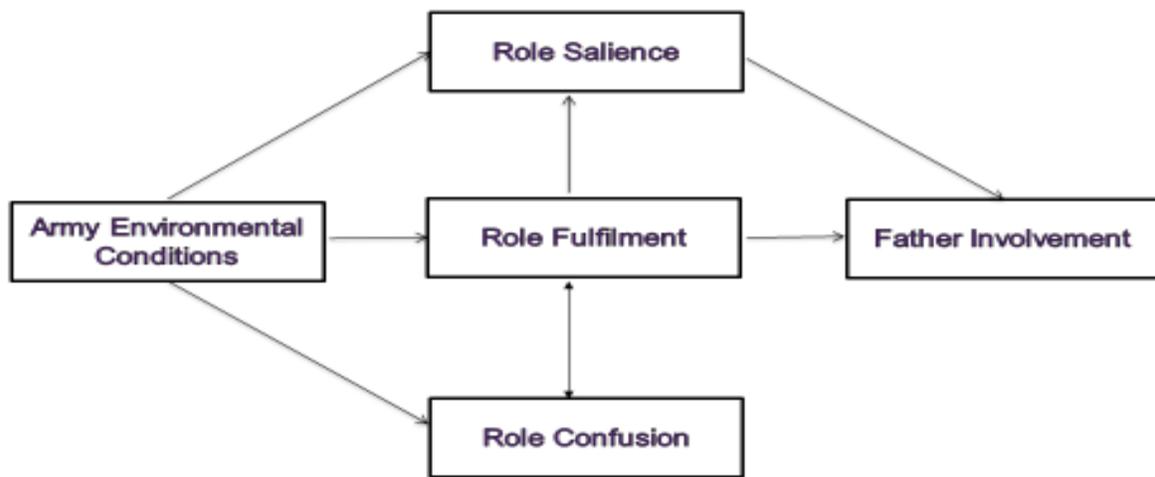


Figure 3.1 Theoretical Model of the influence of Paternal Role upon Father Involvement among Army Fathers with Environmental Conditions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter explains the findings of the current research investigation involving the influence of paternal role on father involvement among Army fathers as they relate to the proposed predictor, mediating, and outcome variables and the relationships postulated to exist between environmental factors. The theoretical model of paternal role and father involvement is analyzed with the basic concepts of Army environmental factors. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section provides information on the sample population through simple descriptive statistical measures. The second section focuses on the construction of the scale and the reliability associated with each new variable created. The final two sections test the hypotheses, using bivariate and multivariate analyses in order to draw conclusions and make inferences.

Descriptive Statistics

A summary of the basic descriptive statistics involved analyzing the data for univariate trends. This included providing simple frequency distributions and appropriate measures of central tendency and dispersions as vital study components for analysis. The initial sample for this investigation consisted of 161 respondents ($n = 161$) prior to the final study criteria being applied. However, some fathers did not include complete responses or offered unsolicited feedback on questions which could not be quantified and caused fluctuation in the total number and thus, disregarded.

The sample was primarily comprised of Army fathers with children 97.5% ($n = 157$) and 2.5% ($n = 4$) without any children. Fathers without children may be indicative of soldiers' interpretation of social fathers which encompass mentors, coaches, teachers, or boyfriends which

contribute to filling some component of the paternal role. The type of fathers included in this study biological 77.1% (n = 121), step-fathers 5.8% (n = 9), social/adoptive or a combination of two or more father types 16.6% (n = 26). There was an increase in social/combination fathers, which reflect the increasing number of homes with blended families including both stepchildren and biological children and emerging awareness of the paternal role.

The majority of fathers in this study believed that they had been ready to become fathers when this happened -- some 75.6% (n = 118) – while 24.4% (n = 38) did not believe they had been ready to become fathers. Preparation for becoming fathers involved a holistic perspective that Army fathers took into account and included environmental factors such as spiritual, emotional, psychological, sociological, and not just the obvious physical capability of fatherhood. Approximately 90% (89.1%, n = 156) of the father's in the study were married, and only 6.4% (n = 10) of the fathers were divorced. This was interesting considering the large number of fathers who were in multiple categories, which may be obscured somewhat by more than one marriage. Fewer than 5% of the fathers were separated, divorced or otherwise, or never married (1.9% n = 3 and 2.6% n = 4) respectively. Overall, the number of married fathers suggested a trend towards the traditional two-parent homes.

Although most fathers were married, 20.3% (n = 32) indicated that they were single and did not have a romantic partner to provide support to them in their role as a father. Also, 68.1% (n = 98) reported that their romantic significant others were very supportive, while 6.9% (n = 10) indicated that their significant others were somewhat supportive of their fathering role, while only 3.5% (n = 2) were not sure or had mixed feelings about how their significant others contributed to their role as a father. The importance of support for Army fathers cannot be

emphasized enough in military environments where fathers and families reside long distances away from family support networks.

Race and ethnicity of respondents reflected that of the general population as 63.5% (n = 99) marked White non-Hispanic, 16.7% (n = 26) Black or African American, and 9.6% (n = 15) marked Hispanic or Latino. The only inconsistency occurred in the race category of Mixed/Other where 10.3% (n = 16) were Asian or other. However, this was partly due to the fact that the category Mixed/Other also included multiple or mixed races.

The sample of E4 and below was 29.1% (n = 45). This was somewhat surprising when compared to the whole military population, where lower enlisted-service members are usually the largest demographic as the main work force. Army fathers of the rank E-5 and E-6 made up the majority of the respondents at 47.8% (n = 74). Senior enlisted fathers represented 14.2% (n = 22) of the sample followed by officers which represented 8.8% (n = 14). Grouping military populations in terms of lower enlisted, non-commissioned officers (NCO'S), senior NCO's and officers is the most commonly recognized method among Army professionals.

Additional characteristics of the sample include the location of their residence compared to their work. The majority of fathers in this study lived on Post/Base -- 63.5% (n = 99). Fathers who reside within 5 miles of the Post/Base made up 16.7% (n = 15), while fathers living within 6 - 10 miles of the Post/Base represented 9.3% of the study, followed by fathers living in other locations greater than at 9.9% (n = 16) with some fathers traveling distances daily as much as a hundred miles. This becomes important when considering that fathers who reside off-base will effectively add anywhere from 1 to 3 hours to their commuting time daily, which could extend a normal 10-hour work day to 12+ hours. See Table 4.1 for a complete analysis of all demographic statistics.

The general sample population had an average age of 31 years ($M = 30.51$, $SD = 6.38$, range of 18 to 45 years) and a median age of 30 years ($Mdn = 30.00$). See Table 4.2. The average age of a soldier would be expected to fall between the ages 18 and 25, and the increased age from the expected age may show the impact of deployments upon fatherhood delaying

Table 4.1

Descriptive Statistics for Army Fathers on Selected Demographic Variables and Influence on Paternal Involvement.

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>F</i>
Children	Yes	157	97.5
	No	4	2.5
Father type	Biological	121	77.1
	Step-father	9	5.8
	Social/Adoptive/Other combination	26	16.6
Ready to be a father	Yes	118	75.6
	No	38	24.4
Marital status	Married	139	89.1
	Divorced	10	6.4
	Separated (L/O)	3	1.9
	Never married	4	2.6
Partner support	Have not had a romantic partner	32	20.3
	Very supportive	98	68.1
	Somewhat supportive	10	6.9
	Not supportive	1	0.7
	Made fathering harder not supportive	1	0.7
Rank	E-1 to E-4	45	29.1
	E-5 to E-6	74	47.8
	E-7 to E-9	22	14.2
	Officer W-1 to O-5	14	8.8
City	Base	99	63.5
	< 5 miles	26	16.7
	6 - 10 miles	15	9.3
	> 10 miles	16	9.9

family formation. The average income was exceptionally high and may be explained by increased tax-free income from deployments or higher ranks (Mdn = \$39,000; M = \$45,111). This could also reflect additional income received during combat deployments for hazardous duty bonuses. Fathers served on active duty an average of 13 years (M = 12.52, SD = 19.96, range from 0.5 to 22 years), which is reflective of the median income and pay grade.

After identifying the missing data, the number of respondents fluctuated between n = 161 and n = 116 during the analysis. The remaining data analysis conducted on father involvement is based upon this fluctuating sample. Table 4.2 also illustrates numerous environmental impediments that potentially could affect the paternal role on physical involvement and the average number of deployments along with the frequency of deployments for Army fathers.

Table 4.2

Reported Means, Standard Deviations, and Median Scores for Age, Income, Years of Service, the Number of Deployments, Most Recent Deployment and Next Deployment.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>N</i>
Age	30.51	6.375	30.00	154
Income	45111.35	24001.675	39000.00	156
Years of service	8.40	5.962	8.00	152
Deployments	1.96	1.616	0.7	148
Most recent	2.86	2.519	3.00	119
Next deployment	4.18	1.145	5.00	157
Family meals/wk	8.09	5.267	7.00	151
Quality time	895.72	835.310	420.00	161
Parenting time	836.08	881.661	600.00	130

The physical component of paternal involvement can affect psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual connections children and fathers experience. Army fathers reported that on average they were able to eat at least one meal per day with their children (M = 8.09, Mdn = 7.0, SD = 5.267) out of a total of 21 meals possible each week. With regard to the amount of time

each week being there for children, Army fathers reported that on average they spent one hour of quality time ($M = 895.72$, $Mdn = 420.00$) with their children per day and one and a half hours of parenting time ($M = 836.08$, $Mdn = 600.00$) being involved with daily activities per week.

Quality time was one-on-one time spent with children that did not include discipline or daily parenting activities, while parenting time included bathing, dressing, reading books to the children, and daily parenting routines. Emphasizing quality time over quantity is critical, but it is equally important to recognize that quality time focuses on connecting with children and often occur simultaneously with parenting time.

I also asked fathers how often they praised their children simply for being who they are--, not including task-oriented chores, homework, or behavior-- to focus specifically on building self-esteem based upon personhood. About 71% (70.8) of the Army fathers reported that praise for simply being was given much of the time (see Table 4.3). When asked how often fathers felt emotionally connected to their children, 57.1% ($n = 89$) of Army fathers reported that much of the time they felt emotionally connected to their children.

In addition, 25.0% ($n = 39$) indicated that sometimes they felt emotionally connected to their children and less than 1.0% ($n = .6$) acknowledged that they felt no emotional connection to their children. Balancing emotional connection among Army fathers can be particularly challenging at times due to the nature of being a soldier and being on duty (as “on-call” professionals) 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and being prepared to confront life-altering circumstances at a moment’s notice. Hypervigilance can also present issues for Army fathers when paternal protective instincts remain on high alert.

Traditional ideologies such as “children are to be seen and not heard” are somewhat antiquated in contemporary approaches to paternal involvement. Listening to children talk about

their feelings is indicative of paternal role salience; and 52.7% of the fathers said they spent much of the time engaged in listening to children's feelings. Almost another 30.0% reported sometimes listening to children expressing their feelings while no fathers reported that they seldom listen to children's feelings. Only 7.5% reported that they did not spend any time at all listening to their children's feelings, such as listening to what they enjoyed and disliked.

Table 4.3

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Emotional Conditions Influencing Father Involvement.

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
How often praise kids for being	Not at all	1	.6
	Seldom	5	3.2
	Occasionally	13	8.4
	Sometimes	26	16.9
	Much of the time	109	70.8
Feel emotionally connected to kids	Not at all	1	.6
	Seldom	5	3.2
	Occasionally	22	14.1
	Sometimes	39	25.0
	Much of the time	89	57.1
Listen to children's feelings	Not at All	11	7.5
	Seldom	0	0.0
	Occasionally	19	13.0
	Sometimes	39	26.7
	Much of the time	77	52.7
Feel you are doing good job fathering	Not at all	1	.6
	Seldom	5	3.2
	Occasionally	22	14.4
	Sometimes	62	40.0
	Much of the time	65	41.9
Army father satisfaction	Very dissatisfied	0	0.0
	Dissatisfied	6	3.9
	Neutral	22	14.2
	Satisfied	61	39.4
	Very satisfied	66	42.6

The amount of scrutiny fathers undergo on a social media, communal, and personal levels is quite substantial and directly impacts the self-worth of fathers. Only 41.9% of Army fathers felt that they were doing a good job as a father much of the time. The expectations of being the “perfect” dad are challenged by the reality of what it means to be an involved dad may be indicative of Army fathers feelings’ on how well they were doing at fathering. Nearly an equal number (41.0%) of fathers felt they were doing a good job as a father sometimes. The remaining 18.0% (combined) felt they were doing a good job as a father occasionally (14.2%), seldom (3.2%), or not at all (0.6%).

Fathers who were satisfied with their relationships with their children tended to experience more positive interactions within their family. Over 80.0% of the fathers reported that they were at least satisfied or very satisfied with their current relationships with their children. Only 3.9% reported being dissatisfied with the current relationships they had with their children, and absolutely no fathers reported themselves very dissatisfied with their current relationships with their children. Although some fathers were neutral regarding their satisfaction (14.2%), this ambiguity should not be automatically be viewed negatively nor positively.

Sociological influence is another central component in this investigation. Some of the indicators that were used to measure this construct were variables that examined paternal relationships across generations that could impact paternal involvement among Army fathers. Approximately one-half of the sample reported being raised by both parents (51.6%), and fewer than one-fifth 17.4% reported being raised by their mother. On the other hand, 20.6% said they were raised by someone other than their parents as a child (see Table 4.4).

The quality of familial relationships are often shows itself in the development of pro-social behaviors as appropriate interactions are modeled in the family system. Just over 70% of

Army fathers reported that they had at least a good relationship or better with their father figure while growing up. Some fathers rated the paternal relationship with their fathers as fair (12.7%), and the remainder indicated that their relationships with their fathers while growing up was poor (16.2%).

Table 4.4

Descriptive Statistics for Selected Sociological Conditions of Father Involvement.

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Who raised You as a Child	My father	8	5.2
	My mother	27	17.4
	Both	80	51.6
	Myself	3	1.9
	Grandparents	5	3.2
	Other	32	20.6
How would you describe relationship with your father now	Poor	32	21.2
	Fair	27	17.9
	Good	41	27.2
	Great	26	17.1
	Excellent	25	16.6
Quality of relationship with father as a child growing up	Poor	23	16.2
	Fair	18	12.7
	Good	27	19.0
	Great	30	21.1
	Excellent	44	31.0
Quality of relationship currently with your children	Poor	1	0.6
	Fair	9	5.8
	Good	25	16.2
	Great	54	35.1
	Excellent	65	42.2

Although relationships between fathers and children, especially teenagers, often tend to have some turbulent stretches, the dynamic often improves as children enter adulthood. Army

fathers reported that 60.5% currently describe their relationship with their own fathers as adults as at least good. Fathers who described their relationships as fair yielded the lowest response rate at 17.9%, and 21.2% stated that their current relationships with their fathers were poor as adults which represented a decline in their relationship with their father. Although roughly 20% may seem a particularly alarming figure, most Army fathers understand the principle of learning from poor examples and excelling under adverse circumstances.

An overwhelming majority (94.4%) of Army fathers rated the quality of the relationship as at least good with their children. Despite having unfavorable relationships with their own fathers, Army fathers choose to improve the quality of their relationships with their children. Some Army fathers indicated their relationships with their children were not as they had desired. In fact, 6.4% rated their relationships as fair to poor.

The theoretical model presented in Chapter Three suggested that it was necessary to create measures to analyze constructs of the environmental factors, paternal role, and father involvement. These constructs were central to determining the influence bioecological conditions have on paternal involvement. Since the variables were specifically designed to measure these constructs in an independent manner. These constructs were based on previously used measures and were used and tested in prior investigation of Army families (Schaeffer et al., 2005). These measures were then summed and then tested to calculate their usefulness.

Moreover, due to the sensitive nature of these issues and preconceived ideas surrounding fatherhood, it was necessary to create a social desirability bias scale. Expressing vulnerabilities may be challenging for men in general, and the cultural climate for Army fathers magnifies this challenge exponentially. Two of the items that made up the social desirability measure were reverse coded to ensure continuity of the measures listed in Table 4.5. I also gave special

consideration to Army cultural norms and values that could potentially confound measurements.

The typical Army father was deployed at least two times during his military career ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.418$). Deploying to combat zones present both opportunities and challenges for fathers and families and depending on how they are navigated.

Scale Variables

Table 4.5

Descriptive Statistics for Social Desirability Bias Measures.

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>f</i>
Would you smile at people every time you meet them	Not at all	8	5.3
	Seldom	8	5.3
	Occasionally	24	15.9
	Sometimes	44	29.1
	Much of the time	67	44.4
Do you practice what you preach	Not at all	2	1.3
	Seldom	0	0.0
	Occasionally	20	13.3
	Sometimes	46	31.1
	Much of the time	93	54.0
Do you always keep promises	Not at all	0	0.0
	Seldom	1	.7
	Occasionally	11	7.3
	Sometimes	47	30.5
	Much of the time	81	61.6
Would you ever lie to people	Not at all	40	26.7
	Seldom	66	44.0
	Occasionally	22	14.7
	Sometimes	17	11.3
	Much of the time	5	3.3
Would you ever laugh at a dirty joke	Not at all	11	7.3
	Seldom	14	9.3
	Occasionally	28	18.5
	Sometimes	39	25.8
	Much of the time	59	39.1

The most recent deployment for fathers was within the last three years ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.74$) with an expectation of deploying to a combat zone again within three years ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.32$). This placed the majority of fathers right in the center of the deployment process where they were still readjusting to being home (reintegration) and yet already preparing for the next time they would leave again. Deployment cycles are dynamic, and they impact the physical aspect of father involvement because fathers are physically absent from children and families. Despite the obvious physical challenges to involvement, the opportunities for creativity, growth, and salience as an

Table 4.6

Descriptive Statistics for Outcome Measure of How Father Involvement was affected by the Physical Army cultural related factors.

Variable	Coding Scheme	<i>n</i>	<i>F</i>
Deployment cycle	Deploying (leaving loved ones)	49	31.8
	Redeploying (handling expectations)	25	16.2
	Deployment (being physically away)	43	27.9
	Reintegration (adjusting to new life)	7	4.5
	Uncertainty	30	19.5
Work family balance	Very dissatisfied	3	1.9
	Dissatisfied	4	2.6
	Neutral	29	18.6
	Satisfied	45	28.8
	Very satisfied	75	48.1
Family work conflict	Not at all	9	5.8
	Seldom	28	18.2
	Occasionally	32	20.8
	Sometimes	45	29.2
	Much of the time	40	26.0
Military career	Not at all	6	3.9
	Seldom	16	10.3
	Occasionally	35	22.6
	Sometimes	59	38.1
	Much of the time	39	25.2

Army father may not be diminished at all. In fact, bonds are often strengthened during adversity as more independence is achieved.

Reliability Tests

The reliability tests were conducted using Cronbach's alpha (α) as the standard measure of internal consistency used in reliability testing in order to make stronger inferences with multi-scaled items and to avoid errors in data analysis (Field, 2009; Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Responses for all items were based on Likert-type scales and then summed. Scores ranged from 1 to 5 on most measures; and only measures with the same scales were used to determine the overall measure for the constructs. The social desirability scale items needed to be reverse-coded to ensure accuracy. The results from the reliability testing along with their respective scores are listed in Table 4.7. The constructs that were tested corresponded to the variables that were predicted in the study model with the exception of paternal involvement and role salience, which involved disparate measures that were not appropriate for reliability testing. The scale EMOTION2 consisted of items Q41 and Q44. The scale SPIRITUAL3 consisted of items Q32, Q33, and Q34. The scale for Paternal Role Salience (FATHERROLES5) consisted of the items Q20 through Q24. The scale WFConflicts2 consisted of the items Q45 and Q46. The scale CommPraise3 consisted of the items Q37, Q38, and Q39. A scale for fathering satisfaction, consisting of items Q42, Q52, Q55, and Q56 was developed but was not used for the analyses reported here. Demographic variables consisted of age (Q68), number of deployments (Q74), and rank (Q71, split into four levels). Father involvement was measured by Q30, meals eaten per week on average with the father's children, which correlated moderately with Q31 and Q32 but had less missing data; hence, it was used as the dependent variable rather than Q31 or Q32 or some combination of those three items.

Hypothesis Testing and ANOVA

The reliability tests were conducted using Cronbach’s alpha (α) as the criteria measure of internal consistency in order to make stronger inferences with multi-scaled items and avoid errors in data analysis (Field, 2009; Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Responses for all items were based on Likert-type scales and then summed. Scores ranged from 1 to 5 on most measures and only measures with the same scales were used to determine the overall measure for the constructs. Some items needed to be reverse coded. The results from the reliability testing 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 paternal involvement and role salience which consisted of disparate measures that were not appropriate for reliability testing.

Table 4.7

Reported Means, Standard Deviations and Cronbach’s Alpha Scores for Selected Scaled and Sub-scaled Variables used in the influence of Paternal Role on Father Involvement Model.

Construct	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	α	<i>N</i>
Emotional (EMOTION2)	8.47	1.739	.805	156
Psychological (CommPraise3)	13.47	2.301	.880	154
WorkFamilyConflict2	7.69	1.904	.668	154
Spiritual3	6.97	3.777	.879	155
Satisfaction with Father	6.28	2.602	.827	142
Paternal Role	21.90	3.083	.876	155
Paternal Involvement	8.08	5.245	N/A	151

In general, the reliability scores ranged from a low of $\alpha = .805$ (Emotional Conditions) to a high of $\alpha = .88$ (Psychological and Spiritual Conditions). The range of alpha scores corresponded to the general headings from questionable to excellent-each measure was well within acceptable parameters (Field, 2009; Fox et al., 2015).

Bivariate Analyses

The components of the Army Father Involvement model were tested together with each other using simple zero-order correlations in order to ensure that the model elements were appropriately identified as measured in this investigation. During the model construction, it was essential to identify theoretical components that have some connection to each other. Simple bivariate analysis were conducted for components used to construct the study's model. Father involvement measures were examined in terms of relationship with Army environmental factors. The correlation matrices reported here consist of the elements used in the scaled variables of the model. The relationships under investigation were generally found to be significantly correlated ($p < .05$) with the outcome measure of Father Involvement.

Correlation Analyses

The following section examines the zero-order correlation among the variables associated with each model element. In this section, I initially focused on how the specific model elements correlate with the outcome measure of father involvement to verify the relevance of the model.

Results for emotional conditions yielded three significant correlations, with CommPraise3 ($r = .576, p < .01$), Paternal Role ($r = .339, p < .01$), and with Paternal Involvement ($r = .237, p < .01$). Results for CommPraise yielded two additional significant correlations, with Paternal Role ($r = .328, p < .01$) and Paternal Involvement ($r = .198, p < .05$). Results for the spiritual conditions variable produced only one significant correlation, with Satisfaction with Relationship with Father ($r = .201, p < .05$). Satisfaction with Relationship with Father and Father Roles were not associated with any other variables other than those already mentioned. It would appear that spiritual conditions may not be the most appropriate measure for father involvement in this model (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8

Zero Order Correlation Coefficients for the Influence of Environmental Conditions on the Father Involvement Model.

Variable	Environmental Conditions					
	A	B	C	D	E	F
Emotion2	----					
CommPraise3	.576**	----				
WFConflicts2	-.058	.030	----			
Spiritual3	.144	.111	-.048	----		
Satis w/Father	-.034	.041	-.115	.201*	----	
Paternal Role	.339**	.328**	-.186*	.106	.156	----
Involvement	.237**	.198*	-.066	.105	-.004	.003

** $p < 0.01$, * $p < .05$ NOTE: Column variables A through F represent Emotion2 through Satisfaction with Father.

Multivariate Analyses

The general nature of this investigation required that the components of the study to be first tested with reliability and zero-order correlation statistical methods. The viability of the measures confirmed the following hypothesis to be used in this investigation. In order to properly investigate the hypotheses, the appropriate multivariate tests were conducted including analysis of variance (ANOVA) and hierarchical regression. The following section addresses each of the outcomes regarding the study's hypotheses.

Hypothesis Testing with ANOVA

A total of four hypotheses were generated for this investigation. They were based upon a review of the current literature and measures of the study model used in this dissertation. Each

hypothesis was structured to address a specific aspect of the influence of Paternal Role on Father Involvement. The initial hypothesis stated:

H₁ The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the degree of role salience among Army fathers.

The initial hypothesis posited that the level of father involvement among Army fathers would be directly related to their degree of role salience. This means that, as the fathers' knowledge and awareness of their paternal responsibilities increase, their involvement with their children will also increase. An underlying assumption of ANOVA requires measures to be categorical or ordinal to lend themselves to appropriate analysis (Engel & Schutt, 2005).

The ANOVA test revealed no significant main effects for paternal role, which did not support Hypothesis One (see Table 4.9). The paternal role measures were not positively correlated with the measure of father involvement; therefore, the results did not support my hypothesis that as fathers' reports of their fathering role salience increased, father involvement would also increase.

Table 4.9

Factorial ANOVA Results for the Influence of Paternal Role Salience upon Father Involvement

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Corrected Model	299.91	13	23.07	.822
Intercept	2673.58	1	2673.58	95.22***
Paternal Role Salience	299.91	13	23.07	.822
Error	388.55	136	28.08	
Total	13863.00	150		

*** $p < .001$

The second hypothesis examined multidimensional influences that impact paternal involvement. The hypothesis states:

H₂ Army environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) will be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers.

This hypothesis predicts that, though environmental factors including physical, emotional, social, psychological, and spiritual conditions will be directly related to the level of involvement a father has with his children the relationship must be explored.

A factorial ANOVA test was conducted showing that there were no significant main effects for environmental conditions and father involvement (see Table 4.10). This means that we failed to reject the null hypothesis. Furthermore, there were no significant interaction effects identified. Therefore, it was determined that Hypothesis Two was not supported as a result of this analysis. Also, post-hoc testing did not indicate any significant differences.

Table 4.10

Factorial ANOVA Results for Selected Environmental Conditions and Father Involvement.

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Corrected Model	1206.908	36	33.525	1.302
Intercept	928.552	1	928.552	36.055***
Spiritual 3	426.160	12	35.513	1.379
WFConflict2	205.649	8	25.706	.998
Commpraise3	217.052	9	24.117	.936
Emotion2	154.373	6	25.729	.999
Error	2832.888	110	25.754	
Total	13738.000	147		

*** $p < .001$

An additional factorial ANOVA was conducted examining only the environmental factors with the highest reliability scores including physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions influencing father involvement. All two-way interactions were included for physical, emotional, and spiritual conditions impacting father involvement.

The factorial ANOVA exploring environmental conditions yielded no significant main effects. Furthermore, there were no significant effects or interaction effects between

environmental conditions and father involvement. The environmental factors were not significant in determining father involvement in this analysis.

The third hypothesis examines the direct influence on relationship satisfaction with own father on father involvement. The hypothesis is stated as follows:

H₃. Army fathers who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship with their own father will experience higher levels of father involvement.

Hypothesis three suggests fathers who have better relationships with their own fathers will be more involved with their children. A factorial ANOVA was conducted with father involvement as the outcome measure (see Table. 4.11). The main effects of satisfaction with their own fathers included no significant differences for the main effect of satisfaction with their own father. Therefore, Hypothesis Three was not supported as a result.

Table 4.11

Factorial ANOVA Results for Satisfaction with Relationship with Own Father Influencing Father Involvement.

<i>Source</i>	<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F</i>
Corrected Model	176.442	8	22.055	.791
Intercept	8115.355	1	8115.355	291.066***
SatisRelOwnFather	176.442	8	22.055	.791
Error	3568.828	128	27.881	
Total	12354.000	137		

Hierarchical Regression Analyses

A hierarchical regression was conducted to examine the ability of the independent variable of paternal role to predict variation in the dependent variable of father involvement, while controlling for the effects of the demographic variables, the environmental variables, and the satisfaction with relationship with own father variable. Each of the first three blocks corresponds to a particular set of variables mentioned above. The fourth block contains all of the

variables and the independent variable of paternal role. The analysis was performed using the regression functions available in IBM-SPSS (Version 23).

The final hypothesis is a direct statement about the father involvement model. The constructs used in the model are all observed factors and are appropriate for the use of an ordinary least squares regression procedure to explain the overall outcome of the model. The equation is based upon the scale variables in the model and they are identified by standard regression nomenclature.

H4. The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the perceptions fathers have of being in the Army.

Equation 4.1

$$Y = b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + b_3X_3 + b_4X_4 + b_5X_5 + b_6X_6 + b_7X_7 + b_8X_8 + b_9X_9 + b_{10}X_{10} + e_i$$

Where, Y = Father Involvement

X₁ = Age

X₂ = Service Time

X₃ = Number of Deployments

X₄ = Rank

X₅ = Emotion2

X₆ = Spiritual3

X₇ = Commpraise3

X₈ = WFConflict2

X₉ = Satisfaction with Relationship with Own Father

X₁₀ = Paternal Role

e_i = error

The sequence for regression involved four steps with ten independent variables. At each step the variables within the sequence were regressed onto the dependent variable of father involvement. At each subsequent step the other sequences were then added until all seven variables were included in the model.

The first step of the regression analysis used the demographic components of father involvement. The four variables age, service time, deployments, and rank explained approximately 4% of the variance in the father involvement model.

The second step of the analysis added the measures for some of the social scales. The measures include emotion2 ($\beta = .095$), spiritual conditions ($\beta = .059$), commpraise3 ($\beta = .202$), and workfamilyconflicts ($\beta = -.066$). The amount of variance explained by these environmental variables was approximately 9% ($R^2_{\text{adj}} = .087$).

Table 4.12

Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Influence of Paternal Role on Father Involvement Model Predicting Father Involvement from Model Components Age, Service Time, Deployments, Rank, Environmental Conditions, Spiritual Conditions, and Paternal Role.

Model	β	R^2_{adj}	ΔR^2
Block 1 ^a			
Age	-.063	.043*	.043
Service Time	-.149		
Deployments	-.120		
Rank	.211*		
Block 2 ^b			
Age	-.137	.087*	.044
Service Time	-.035		
Deployments	-.142		
Rank	.175+		
Emotion2	.095		
Spiritual3	.059		
CommPraise3	.202+		
WFconflict2	-.066		
Block 3 ^c			
Age	-.177	.097*	.010
Service Time	.038		
Deployments	-.207		
Rank	.192+		
Emotion2	.080		
Spiritual3	.047		
CommPraise3	.239*		
WFconflict2	-.094		
SatRelOwnFather	.008		
Block 4 ^d			
Age	-.180	.093*	-.004
Service Time	.032		
Deployments	-.206		
Rank	.195+		
Emotion2	.098		
Spiritual3	.046		
CommPraise3	.257*		
WFconflict2	-.104		
SatRelOwnFather	.027		
Paternal Role	-.092		

^aPredictors: (Constant), rRank, Army Years, Age, Deployments_b

^bPredictors: (Constant), rRank, Army Years, Age, Deployments, Emotion2, Spiritual3, CommPraise3, WFconflict2,

^cPredictors: (Constant), rRank, Army Years, Age, Deployments, Emotion2, Spiritual3, CommPraise3, WFconflict2, SatRelOwnFather

^dPredictors: (Constant), rRank, Army Years, Age, Deployments, Emotion2, Spiritual3, CommPraise3, WFconflict2, SatRelOwnFather, Paternal Role

p < .10 *p < .05

The final step of the model added the independent measure paternal role ($\beta = -.092$ $p >.05$) to the variables that were already entered.

The overall amount of variance explained by the current model was 9.3%. This means that nearly ten percent of father involvement reported among Army fathers in this investigation can be explained by the elements contained in the father involvement model, further attesting to its viability and efficacy as a model for explaining the impact of paternal role upon father involvement. It is also evident that the results support the hypothesis. The father involvement model can be used to help explain father involvement in Army families experiencing challenges related to their current environmental conditions.

Summary of Results

This chapter examined the individual and scale elements used in the father involvement model in effort to both test and explore the efficacy of this model among Army families. The overall results for the final model revealed that there was certainly a valuable role that this model could play in addressing issues concerning father involvement among fathers currently serving on active duty.

There were three hypotheses related to this model. Each was examined and the results discussed. Table 4.13 provides a summary of these results. There was evidence to support one out of the four hypotheses. Three hypotheses were rejected due to the lack of conclusive evidence displayed by the statistical analysis.

Table 4.13***Summary Results for Hypotheses Influencing Paternal Role and Father Involvement Model.***

Hypothesis	Text of Hypothesis	Results	Action
H ₁	The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the degree of role salience among Army fathers.	Inconclusive	Reject
H ₂	Environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) will be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers.	Inconclusive	Reject
H ₃	Army fathers who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship with their own father will experience higher levels of father involvement.	Inconclusive	Reject
H ₄	The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the perceptions fathers have of their relationship with their own fathers.	Partially Supported	Accept

The conclusions drawn from these data along various limitations and implications of this study are presented. Furthermore, there are substantive narrative comments from respondents that are discussed in the following chapter. Policy and practical recommendations are also made to facilitate understanding in working with Army fathers and families.

CHAPTER FIVE

NARRATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESULTS

In this chapter, I explain my rationale for the supplementary use of qualitative methods to inform and enhance my inquiry on the influence of paternal role among Army fathers actively serving in the United States military. The intended purpose of qualitative applications in my analysis is to understand the multifaceted and complex roles related to socio-cultural lived experiences of Army fathers and the impact these perceptions have upon paternal role involvement. Qualitative approaches are also required for phenomena where little research has been conducted and the literature review suggested a paucity of studies.

After careful consideration, I determined that qualitative methods were the most appropriate for understanding the breadth of experiences military fathers are exposed systematically (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Also, it was imperative to apply a purposive methodological approach that focused specifically on military populations. I also followed a naturalistic and emergent design to intuitively guide my study and enhance the integrity of this investigation. Therefore, a qualitative methodological framework that would be conducive for accomplishing my objective of understanding was implemented (Richards & Morse, 2007).

Although there are various approaches to qualitative analysis, I decided to use strategies from a combination of sources that would enhance my analysis and give me the broadest lens to observe the phenomenon of Army fathers in depth (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morse, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this chapter, I describe my methodological framework, recruitment process, sampling methods, and data collection measures, in addition to the strategies selected for enhancing credibility, integrity, and trustworthiness of my analyses.

Selecting a Qualitative Methodological Framework

A thorough appraisal of my research topic revealed qualitative techniques were deemed to be the most appropriate for this study, I began to refine my approach to take on a phenomenological orientation. Patton (2002) asserted that the foundational question for phenomenology is to understand the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of a phenomenon for the person or group experiencing it. In order to discover the meaning of father involvement for Army fathers, it was apparent that open-ended questions would provide deeper responses to be evaluated.

The existing professional literature says little about Army fathers. To help fill this gap, I used qualitative inquiry, which gave an abundance of information. Since there was relatively little known about Army father involvement, I utilized qualitative inquiry which provided a voluminous amount of information to be analyzed. Strauss and Corbin (1998), contended that qualitative methods were especially useful for exploring substantive areas about which little is known or for gaining a new understanding of something about which much is already known. Richards and Morse (2007) posit much the same thing.

Content Analyses

Analysis of the responses of Army fathers suggested using several categories into which paternal roles and experiences could be sorted. Consequently, I decided to incorporate a qualitative theoretical framework in which to organize and examine these patterns (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002; Richards & Morse, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Some of the quotations from Army fathers are intentionally left grammatically incorrect to maintain the integrity of their responses.

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) bio-ecological perspective was the most appropriate because it could generate a holistic picture to qualitatively process my evaluation and was conducive to all five domains of experiences. The responses elicited general ideas for overarching themes based upon theoretical model as follows:

- Physical responses (Provide/Protect) related to behavior, actions, or material
- Psychological processes focusing on thoughts
- Social responses related to interactions within family and community
- Biopsychosocial protective responses combined with multidimensional spiritual, conflicting analogies and provisions processes related to familial challenges or conflicts with higher values
- Biopsychosocial provisional responses addressing father. involvement
- Other noteworthy responses including ambiguous combinations or expressive analogies along with spiritual components

The first qualitative question posed to respondents asked the Army fathers for their feelings about how being in the Army affected their paternal role. This question was important to understanding the overall perception of fathers serving in the army and the various sociocultural challenges, barriers, and transitions associated exclusively with the military environments. Fathers who responded optimistically about their paternal role in the Army would have positive experiences in their paternal role thereby increasing involvement was tested.

Physical Responses

The vast majority of the fathers listed mostly physical challenges and sacrifices that competed for their attention such as being physically tired, not getting enough time with family, having too little money, missing holidays and birthdays or class/school events, and overall

having too little quality time. This may reflect how physically demanding serving in the Army can be.

Balancing work and family was also an important theme as “greedy institutions” compete for attention (Ender et al., 2007). “Overwhelming,” “extremely demanding,” and “stressful” were terms often used in responses. There were also Army fathers struggling with compound dilemmas such as children with special needs, serious medical issues, several reintegration periods (coming home from war), mental health issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), depression, and anger. These physical challenges had a tremendous effect on the children which also created additional stress emotionally for the fathers which cannot be minimized.

Psychological Responses

The vast majority of fathers identified psychological responses to their frequent absences from children. One insight in working with fathers in general is that there are socially acceptable answers that reinforce ideas of masculinity especially within Army culture. The following responses reflect similar sentiments:

It is challenging to prioritize. Another father summed his feelings up by stating its A delicate balance of time spent at work with family and personnel time, and another father stated The hardest thing is to find that balance of time between when you're at home with your family or when you at home but mentally still at work.

...Leave for work one day and come home 365 days or more later can be tough on kids. Another father similarly addressed the psychological toll as Extremely demanding! Not enough time in my day to spend quality time with family. Typical day is 12+ hours. Another father stated “I am a father for 2hours @ night and during the weekend.

To be a father in the army not difficult but stress at times cause of money.

It is tough because of the possibility of so much time away. Simply implying there will be time away, looming over one's head, and uncertainty may

create additional sources of anxiety and the reality that you may never return home to your children is evident each time you leave your home.

In some occasions is overwhelming and stressful. For example, when we have long days, after waking up early, exercising, doing physical tasks, getting off work late, etc. is hard to arrive home and also preform your roles as a father.

Detached always at work for long hours, ...come home kids are in bed. Then you deploy, so it's almost like you were never there in the first place and ...I feel like I do not have enough time at home with my family let alone my children. ... it's also frustrating, sad, and depressing when I have to drop my children off at daycare for 12 hours a day. All in all, it's very difficult.

One father uniquely identified a concept all soldiers are familiar with as it may be considered a motto or mantra, Mission First. He stated Mission first, family second. I want my family first always.

Sociological Responses

Many fathers understand the balance between competing priorities, but where some other fast-paced environments may strongly encourage commitment, the Army culture often demands first priority because life and death is at the core of Army service. The responsibility for the life of fellow-soldiers can be a continuous source of stress for Army fathers. Army fathers also expressed difficulty balancing the emotional vulnerabilities they were experiencing with others.

Very few fathers solely identified social concerns regarding fathering in the Army, but many of the responses addressed social components in conjunction with other factors. Others social concerns related to adjusting to new environments, new schools, new communities, and even new countries. Establishing new social networks of friends and neighbors is difficult as families separate from old surroundings and embrace new ones. The Army recognizes how overwhelming transitions may be on some families and uses a comprehensive sponsoring network to help families adjust to new locations. In addition there is a host of other community service organizations including Army Community Service (ACS) under the umbrella of the

Directorate of Family Morale Welfare and Recreation (DFMWR). Army fathers also identified a lack of immediate family support:

It's difficult being away from child's grandparents for support.

Continually having to redevelop relationships, makes being a father in the Army difficult.

Biopsychosocial Responses

Biopsychological responses impacted fathers on multiple levels and were comprehensive in representing the totality of their feelings about fathering in the Army. Several fathers said:

Being a father in the army is a tough job. Having to leave the ones you love and being away from them is really hard. Even more so when they are really young with how much they grow and learn while you are away. It is hard to come back to a child that hardly knows you.

I feel like my children do not understand what I do, relating my work to what they see on TV or movies and another described his feeling by stating.

I feel that I only have time to spend with my on the weekends having to split time between wife/kids is sometimes challenging.

Conflicting Biopsychosocial and Analogical Responses

Difficult and rewarding, Stressful but worth it.

Proud and honor, but lonely at times. While the sacrifice of time is often a heavy burden, and one that can't be gotten back, it also serves a shining example to my children of meeting one's obligation to duty and is a part of being an honorable man.

There is a sense of pride knowing that you are able to provide for you family. It is tough at times because you don't get to spend as much time with your family and miss some major moments.

It is hard to be able to get the time needed to be a substantial part of children life's, but the time spent can be some of the most beautiful parts of life.

Fathering in various contexts presents a myriad of challenges to paternal involvement, and the Army culture has certainly had its fair share of both obstacles and rewards. Army fathers shared role-salient sentiments that enabled fathers to remain involved and connected to their children despite challenging circumstances.

It can be difficult at times, my girls love knowing I'm a soldier.

Being able to take care of my family and they are proud of what I do and who I am I have to be a leader at work and father at home and learning how to be both helps at both.

It is so difficult and rewarding. Nothing in life that is easy worth doing, so I expect it to be hard and work hard at being the best I can with what I have been given. Bringing work home is not a bad thing unless you do it in a negative way. At the same time being an Army dad is something to be proud of in both your kids eyes and yours.

It is hard to be able to get the time needed to be a substantial part of children's lives, but the time spent can be some of the most beautiful parts of life.

Overwhelming is a start. You miss things that normal parents don't miss for example holidays and birthdays. Not to mention sporting and class/school events.

It is like pedaling a bike while someone else controls the handlebars, or it's like turning a light switch off and on between work and home.

It's like watching a movie leaving to get popcorn and returning when half the movie is over and trying to explain to someone else what the movie was about.

It feels like just buying time with loved ones until you deploy.

Detached always at work for long hours, and come home to kids in bed, then you deploy, so it's almost like you were never there in the first place.

This is by far the toughest job I had for me and my family.

Expressing challenges can be difficult and some Army fathers used analogies as a way to convey their experiences. Family disruptions from separation are frequent occurrences among

military populations, and Army fathers are well versed in adapting to these changes and are resilient in the face of adversity. These responses conveyed commonly held feelings regarding the struggle for normalcy many Army fathers face and warranted further investigation.

Other unique circumstances that challenged Army fathers included being single-parent fathers, non-custodial fathers, divorced fathers, geographical bachelors (those with children residing in another location), and being a dual-military family (both parents serving on active duty). Family support was another critical theme that fit under biopsychosocial challenges, such as not having extended family around to help out with the children that was emotionally taxing as well.

Layered Optimism Perspectives

While many Army fathers identified challenges or conflicting feelings, there were also many other Army fathers who were able to recognize positive feelings associated with the benefits of their roles. When these feelings are communicated in healthy and loving ways to children and wives, the impact can create indelible memories for the entire family unit.

Optimistic sentiments were sometimes clearly expressed:

It is rewarding because it has enable to provide a good life for my family.

It's a wonderful experience that I enjoy. Plus there's many places I can go for help if needed also many benefits. (medical, education).

It feels great when I spend time with my children knowing I make the world safer for them.

Multidimensional Layered Overlapping Perspectives

The emotional responses that were noteworthy involved intense feelings of detachment, such as being physically at home but mentally at work, being physically absent, stressful, frustrating, sad, and depressing. These responses are particularly interesting since they come

from some of the physically, emotionally, mentally, socially, and spiritually toughest individuals on the planet. Soldiers are often trained, and expected, to control every emotion, action, and instinct. Maintaining one's military bearing connotes being composed under any conditions. Therefore, the willingness to express vulnerabilities or inadequacies regarding their paternal role and families was challenging, conflicting, and counterintuitive to their training. Disclosing this information expresses courage in a different way than what is required during war.

Being good at one makes me good at the other. Another Army father similarly expressed.

Being able to take care of my family and they are proud of what I do and who I am I have to be a leader at work and father at home and learning how to be both helps at both.

I have a lot of pride. My kids look up to and admire that I did this for them.

Prideful, shows leadership and set standards, standards and actions for your kids to look up to and go by

Proud that my career is something that my kids can look at and say my dad something every day that helps his country.

It feel as if I am a leader no matter where I'm at or what I'm doing.

Leader of soldiers and example/role model to children.

One of the best in the world I am blessed and highly favored. It is good thing I show my sons what is a hard work and take care of our family.

There are fundamental ideas that need to be conveyed across the Armed Forces.

Frequently, Army fathers are commended for excelling at work, but not for excelling while at home. These affirmations can reveal outdated paradigms which do not support mission readiness or father involvement. Army fathers' accomplishments in the home must be equally affirmed or else the false dichotomy of work versus family is perpetuated. Antiquated ways of thinking only hinder efforts at reinforcing resiliency on the home front and abroad.

A salient fact regarding fathering is that the principles of fathering are the same across various contexts of employment and careers. However, it should be underscored that physical barriers for Army fathers present several obstacles. Although many fathers may feel like “your job owns you,” as a member of the Army, it is absolutely true. Soldiers are for all intents and purposes are considered property of the Army. Hence the term “G.I.,” or “government issued,” which sets the playing field on an entirely different level.

Qualitative questions started off innocuously and progressed to more complex toward the end. The next research question asked if they felt they had the role of protector or provider for their children. I decided to categorize responses that corresponded to provider and protector roles to better understand how Army fathers thought about their paternal responsibility. Many fathers defined their paternal role in traditional ways that included breadwinner and disciplinarian. Therefore, it made sense to establish classifications related to physical perceptions, combined, and other categories which would capture ambiguous or abstruse responses from fathers who did not specifically address the physical aspects.

Physical Protection

Over half the responses strongly emphasized the role of physical protection. This interesting development may be related to the protective nature of Army fathers’ careers. Many fathers were even willing to use deadly force to protect their children from external threats, and these cases constitute another category altogether. Unconsciously, the majority of fathers have these same paternal instincts, but they were just more evident in the responses of fathers during this study. Army fathers described their protective role as a high priority:

protect them from outside violence in the world all the way to I would take a bullet or give a bullet to protect or seek revenge for them.

sickness, worldly influences such as drugs, immoral behavior, and bullying as perceived concerns fathers needed to protect and defend their children against.

To protect the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being of my children by any means, necessary to include the use of deadly force.

...I will fight all the way till my dying breath in order to protect my family.

It's my job to ensure that they are taken care of and safe.

... do my best to provide her with a safe environment to grow and learn without fear for as long as I can.

protect my son from unnecessary worries he does not need to be worrying about yet.

I am the firewall to any "Virus" that want to hurt or infect my children.

These physical responses are part of an emerging classification of responsibility and ownership. Army fathers phrased their responses in ways that indicated their priority on physical protection of their children. "Protection" has many connotations in the contexts of families, and the term protector generated varying themes to be examined.

Army fathers may interpret protection in terms of defending the country from its enemies. Providing emotional protection was rarely mentioned, especially without comment on other risks to be mitigated. Emotional protection was not specifically addressed in reference to protecting children from negative feelings, disparaging, insults, abuse, verbal attacks, and name calling/bullying online or otherwise.

Biopsychosocial and Analogical Protection

Another glaring omission from the responses was the absence of internal threats and developmental threats that could impact children as a result of fathers' physical absences.

Although bullying has become an epidemic in our society whether online or in person, few fathers identified bullying as an area in which they could become involved. Some fathers acknowledged this on their questionnaires subsequently or indirectly, but social concerns were prioritized as major areas of focus. Fathers also mentioned ideas of protecting children from “[c]orruption, evil in the world, crisis, risks, and problems.

Safety may be best understood as a provision that allow for the protection from and prevention of harm. Military Task Force Report (2007) noted the implementation of protective measures that ensure a loving and peaceful environment in which to raise children as an important aspect of providing. Ensuring the absence of harm is only one facet of protection, but fathers were keenly aware of this responsibility (Bogenschneider, 1998). Many of the responses regarding the role of protector involved a combination of concerns held by fathers in the Army. Army fathers listed concerns with children’s safety, health, well-being, and security, and with not being there to teach and guide them.

The vast majority of fathers offered ambiguous responses that were difficult to categorize and did not specifically underscore a single concern about physical safety. Father’s used words such as “preventing” harm, or “guarding,” “defending,” and “securing” their children’s safety or well-being. Other fathers described the role of protecting by identifying similar Army values and responsibilities. Roles such as teacher, role model, and provider of guidance were all examples multi-dimensional paternal responsibilities.

Many fathers included providing physically as part of their role as protector, which could have been a result of how the question was interpreted. Although these roles may be inherently different, there appears to be a common theme linking both roles from the fathers’ responses. Protection, too, can be considered a form of providing, in as much as shelter is technically

considered protective in nature. Conversely, providing a loving environment free from hurt, harm, or violence may be seen as keeping a child protected in safe atmosphere. The relationship can be viewed as complementary; however protecting a child with provisions is more challenging.

Furthermore, many fathers readily recognized only physical roles of protection, rather than emotional roles as well, which may be reflect their role as soldiers protecting our country. There may be an inherent or innate motivation for Army fathers to offer physical protection. Conversely, in some instances of role confusion, fathers may harm their children unintentionally. This could be through disengagement, through lack of affection, love, or support, through rigid or corporal styles of discipline, through passivity, or, in worst case scenarios, through abuse or deprivation of physical needs.

Biopsychosocial Provision

Many fathers focused on providing such necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, which correspond with traditional roles of bread winning. Other physical aspects of providing for the family revolved around managing finances. Army fathers revealed their moral beliefs with responses that were congruent with Army cultural values of selfless service.

Getting up for PT (Physical Training) every morning because I know my job puts food on the table and a roof over our heads.

One father expressed personal sacrifice One father stated ...I would give them the clothes off my own body.

To provide my ear if they need me to listen, to provide my chest if they need to cry, to provide my heart if they feel down.

For me as a father there are no limits to being a provider or shouldn't be. A father should always place his needs on the back burner for his kids.

Giving my children a better life than I had.

Many fathers also accepted roles related to nurturance, not always considered traditional for meals, as provisions for which they were responsible, such as love, care, nurturing emotional needs. Other responses from fathers included providing hope, educating, role modeling, providing health insurance, and giving guidance and providing supervision. This category of providing for children accounted for the largest number of responses, and they were mainly focused on needs and wants. Emotional provisions also included but were not limited to general themes of supporting, encouraging, complementing, and praising children. A selfless service theme also emerged that noted many of the sacrifices soldier-fathers made routinely.

Biopsychosocial Provision

Parallel linkages between meeting needs corresponded to survival, while fulfilling wants corresponded to wants. Unfortunately, differentiating needs and wants is sometimes difficult, but role-salient Army fathers were able comprehend and address these issues consistently. Army fathers emphatically stated that they did not want to spoil their children by lavishing them with unnecessary material possessions. Role-salient fathers understand the delicate balance and strive to maintain it through several different ways:

Help with all his needs and development mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional.

...It's my 2nd Job!!! Other fathers emphasized the importance of role modeling and providing positive examples for their children.

Give opportunities to enjoy life as a provision for his family. Provide love, leadership, and an example as a god fearing father. This represents a spiritual aspect.

Give and prepare your children with the tools and knowledge to walk through life for the things that really matter. Taking care of their needs for life, health, and education. Support, ...successful in life .. ensure my children have everything that they need to be successful and happy, Needs to grow, Needs for survival, Survive and be happy, Survive in this world, Healthy and happy.

Make sure children's needs are met to me it means to be the go to person in times of need or unexpectances.

When there are problems that arise that are unexpected. I am the one with the means to solve it..., Needs to comfortably live, Provide uncomfortable lifestyle.

Luxury needs, Some luxury items.

Give the life they deserve, Do what it takes to take care of the family, Give my family everything they need to survive but not so much that they feel they are entitled, Insure that your family has everything that is needed to live above poverty.

It would mean to be able to provide for my family not just financially but with any matter really. Other responses identified uncommon ideas of providing support, opportunities, healthy.

Give my children tools to grow, Give them morals they need.

Teach them to value exchange and currency.

Many fathers saw their fatherly role as “same as protector,” and this response emerged as one of the most thought-provoking. At first, I did not agree with this assertion, but later I arrived at a similar conclusion. Moreover, it was unclear if the respondent meant the responses to be interpreted this way.

These Army fathers who participated in this study are truly dedicated and committed individuals. They are already sacrificing so much for their country that it is ironic that they think of similar sacrifices for the benefit of their children as almost natural. Another pattern that was evident involved ambiguous responses such as “anything and everything needed.” This may be a result of role confusion. Some fathers may have been unsure of their specific role or how their role is being fulfilled in ways that are not physical. Fathers are often considered the first teachers of their children (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2010). Teaching is an important role for Army fathers to understand their paternal responsibility.

Spirituality is an essential component to fatherhood, and there are many different ways to define what spirituality means (Guzzo, 2011; Stockall & Dennis, 2013). An important underlying assumption to consider is that spirituality can exist apart from religion with the primary focus on Army father's connection to his family (National Fatherhood Initiative, 2010). Due to the broad scope of spirituality, the Army definition is taken from the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness (CSF) (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011; Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). Spirituality is included as "one's purpose, core values, beliefs, identity, and life vision define the essence of a person, enabling, one to build inner strength, make meaning of experiences, behave ethically, persevere through challenges, and be resilient when faced with adversity" (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011; Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011).

An individual's spirituality draws upon personal, philosophical, psychological, and/or religious teachings and forms the basis of his or her character (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011; Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). Army fathers also described the meaning of spirituality as their relationship with God, a higher power, Jesus being and Lord as well. Army fathers expressed their sense of spirituality several ways:

Spiritual Responses

Belief in a higher power, having a sense of belonging, being in touch with inner being, being a person of character, having faith in sacred things, moral guide, beliefs, living a Christian life, connection to universe, religion, reincarnation, life after death.

Being true authentic being, believing in heaven, believing in the bible, peace and love for God, going to church with my family. Family prayer.

Being thankful about what I do have and not worrying about what I don't have.

The "Belief that non-scientifically provable aspects to reality exist, leading my family even when I'm not physically around.

These responses validate the centrality of spiritual connection for most Army fathers although there a variety of ways in which spirituality is observed. Also, spirituality among Army families is often conflated with religious ideas that may minimize the importance of healthy connections with their children.

Conclusion

Other insights emerged from layered data pertained to protecting and providing themes. Providing in a paternal role involved the presence of biopsychosocial supports as well as the absence of detrimental factors that cause poor development. For example, role-salient fathers understood that protection of children not only involves ensuring that negative verbal abuse does not occur but also involves ensuring the presence of a loving and encouraging environment for building healthy self-esteem. It is also imperative to understand father involvement in terms of varying levels. On the lowest level, fathers may be abusive, uninvolved, or only intermittently fulfilling their paternal role, and at the highest levels role-salient fathers who are connected, engaged, and involved with their children and families. Thus, the role-salient fathers understand the valuable contributions only they are able to bring to their families.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the purpose of the study and presents a discussion of the research findings. It includes the definition of fatherhood, study design, conclusions, and implications for policy, practice, and future research. Also noted are the general limitations and recommendations derived from this study. The intent of the study was to examine the relationship between the factors that influenced father involvement among Army fathers currently serving on active duty by investigating bioecological conditions that impact fathers. Although there is a growing body of research on the impact of paternal involvement, the literature specifically regarding Army father involvement is relatively scarce. Therefore, an explicit objective of this investigation was to serve as a preliminary catalyst to produce more professional study of paternal involvement among Army fathers.

The definition of fatherhood has proven to be somewhat elusive in part due to the dynamic nature of this phenomenon (Koray & Mott, 1997). Various stakeholders (including academia, policymakers, the judiciary, and women's and men's advocacy groups) based their different understanding of fatherhood on rules for constructing and portraying different types and images of fatherhood primarily on biological relatedness. Not only has the definition of who are properly considered to be "fathers" changed; there is also growing disagreement among experts on the primary role of fathers in America (Connor & White, 2006).

A comprehensive explanation of fatherhood involves a 360-degree perspective that includes the physical, emotional, mental, social, and spiritual domains. This holistic approach privileges the role of provider, as fathers first and foremost provide for the children's physical needs, while continuing to develop an emotional relationship with their children. Maslow

pointed out that physical needs must be met in a hierarchical sense before more complex needs are addressed. This also reflects the ecological systems perspective in that development is connected to each of the domains.

Study Design and Method

The purpose of this study is to examine multi-dimensional biopsychosocial factors that contribute to father involvement in Army families. To that end, this study examined how Army fathers perceive their paternal role and the ways in which they interact with their children. In summation, the overall design of this study was constructed to understand the experiences of Army fathers and the environmental conditions that impact father involvement and incorporated multi-faceted methods.

The questionnaire afforded some Army fathers an opportunity to candidly express concerns regarding their frequent absences and opportunities for father involvement. This study also gives voice to Army father's perceptions about their roles of provider/protector, nurturer, encourager, disciplinarian, and role model in their families. Furthermore, Army fathers also offered feedback about services that they felt were beneficial and provided the most support. The qualitative results produced some salient insights drawn from Army father's individual experiences which underscored the perceptions conveyed. Most Army fathers were keenly aware of their physical role, but did not acknowledge the emotional, social, spiritual, or psychological aspects of paternal involvement as often in their responses. These comments were recorded in Chapter Five to expand the discussion about how Army fathers are involved with their children.

Paternal resources available to Army fathers for support focused on individual resiliency support, family support systems, and other supportive systems. A fundamental long-term

objective of this study was to show how professional Army Community Service organizations (ACS) might better assist fathers and implement sustained and successful fatherhood initiatives. Another objective of this study was to illuminate the challenges Army fathers experience and to show the healthy ways in which resilient fathers navigate these obstacles. Another underlying goal to elicit feedback regarding paternal perceptions in order to understand how Army fathers overcome vulnerabilities and fulfil their paternal roles. A final objective was to identify successful approaches to fatherhood involvement and equip family scientists, practitioners, and professionals to effectively support Army fathers.

This chapter also integrates findings, outcomes, and overall implications for policymakers and practitioners. Recommendations for future research are also set forth as well as the general limitations of this study. Also, the findings address research and program issues for various stakeholders with specific recommendations for policy makers, analysts, educators, and family scientists. The strategies and approaches discussed in this section can be developed into applied initiatives or programs with measurable objectives to support Army fathers.

The sample for this study comprised 161 Army fathers from a mid-western installation. The final sample produced 157 respondents that met criteria sufficient for examination. The data were collected using questionnaires that were handed out individually and consisted of both qualitative and quantitative questions. Army fathers were given an hour to complete the questionnaires and were given general instructions about the purposes of this study.

Research Questions

In order to understand the experiences of Army fathers and the impact of paternal role upon father involvement, two research questions were postulated along with six sub-questions. Other factors emerged as the data was analyzed and are presented in this chapter as well.

The research questions were:

1. 1. What factors contribute to healthy involvement with their children for Army fathers?
2. What factors contribute to paternal role salience for Army fathers?
3. To what extent do environmental factors help determine the level of father involvement for Army fathers?

Hypotheses

The research questions mainly address three hypotheses that were developed using the existing literature to construct a theoretical framework for examining father involvement. The three hypotheses were deduced from two primary research questions and six secondary questions for understanding paternal involvement. Each hypothesis took specific aim at one of the elements impacting involvement – paternal role, environmental influences, and other conditions impacting involvement. Each hypothesis formulated were statements designed to directly address each research question individually.

The hypotheses were:

- H1.** The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the degree of role salience among Army fathers.
- H2.** Environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) will be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers.
- H3.** Army fathers who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship with their own father will experience higher levels of father involvement.
- H4.** The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the perceptions fathers have of being in the Army.

The hypotheses were deduced mainly from a review of the current literature on father involvement. In addition, my personal experiences as an Army dad and practical knowledge from supporting Army fathers in professional capacities were also taken into consideration.

Incorporating diverging viewpoints provide a unique integrative lens for understanding the reality (Private Army) Army fathers are experiencing on a daily basis and external perceptions (Public Army) in general.

Summary of Study Findings

The first hypothesis postulated that the degree of father involvement would be positively associated with the degree of role salience among Army fathers. The second hypothesis proposed that environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) would be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers. The third hypothesis three surmised that Army fathers that have positive relationships with their own father would experience lower levels of distress with physical absences that impact father involvement. Finally, the fourth hypothesis stated the degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the perceptions fathers have of being in the Army.

Hypothesis one is based on the assumption that fathers who have more knowledge about their paternal responsibilities will interact more frequently with their children. Thus:

H₁: The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the degree of role salience among Army fathers.

Essentially this meant that fathers who grasp the totality of their paternal role would be more likely to be engaged in fulfilling it. When the paternal role is misunderstood or is not communicated effectively to their children through healthy interactions, opportunities for quality time are missed. Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda postulated that negative identification with fatherhood serves to limit male involvement in child care at least as much as do the constraints imposed by actual work time.

However, hypothesis one was not supported. Further research should look at each of the role salience measures versus father involvement because of the possibility that role salience is

not a unified construct. It is also possible that joining a child with meals was not a good measure of father involvement; perhaps some fathers do eat meals with their children but are not involved in much else. Some fathers may share meals but not communicate much during mealtimes. Some fathers may not be able to share many meals with their family due to non-traditional work hours or being away from home but may be more involved in other ways, such as communicating by electronic means. It is still possible that as Army fathers become more aware of their paternal responsibilities and the influence they have on their children, their interactions with their children will also increase. Army fathers who were able to positively identify their paternal role also may be less likely to become disengaged. Recognizing the importance of paternal contributions to family life reinforces healthy family interactions in important ways. For example, some respondents observed:

I will protect this house and the people that live in it, I will always be there even for the smallest things.

Keep my step son physically and emotionally safe. As well as cared for.

To be a protector as a father means to support any need my son or wife need whether it means money, time, or emotions.

Keep them from both physical and mental harm. Provide them with food shelter love and emotional support.

Although the ability to articulate paternal responsibilities does not necessarily equate to increased father involvement and vice versa, as traditional or conservative language does not necessarily equate to misogyny and disengagement with children. However, the way in which an Army father communicates does provide some insight into paternal areas potentially requiring support to increase father involvement. The following responses support this assertion:

Ensuring family is taken care of (spiritual, financial, mental, physical) and safe with a place to live, food, clothes, necessities to be successful.

To protect family from emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial harm.

Physically/emotionally handling situations that my child is not ready to handle.

Although this study is primarily quantitative in nature, the qualitative data were used to supplement the findings. Integrative methods provide a comprehensive approach for understanding complex phenomena such as Army father involvement. Since the research literature regarding Army fathers is relatively limited, it is essential to use flexible approaches that lend themselves to the appropriate analysis. In addition, the narrative comments often supported findings and introduced ideas clarifying potential contradictions that arose in the findings. Hypothesis two is stated:

H₂: Environmental factors (micro, mezzo, and macro) will be positively associated with the degree of father involvement for Army fathers.

The environmental factors that confront Army fathers on a regular basis are challenging. Contemplating the uncertainty of absences is often the source of much consternation for most Army fathers. Although their training and experience help them to compartmentalize and prioritize the needs of the Army and those of their family, many Army fathers are concerned about the impact frequent absences have on their paternal role. It was difficult to assess the physiological, emotional, social, psychological, and spiritual demands placed upon Army fathers. The responses below illustrate the nature of competing biopsychosocial conditions:

Extremely demanding! Not enough time in my day to spend quality time with family. Typical day is 12+hours

Challenging, especially with deployment. That takes away from the physical father appearance that all children need

Overwhelming is a start. You miss things that normal parents don't miss for example holidays and birthdays. Not to mention sporting and class/school events.

I feel that I only have time to spend with my family on the weekends having to split time between wife/kids is sometimes challenging.

I am only a father for 2 hours @ night and during the weekend This is not enough time to develop a life long relationship.

Never ending and at times on the back burner w/family and home life. As a leader/squad leader job demands much time and much personal time not at work.

The personal nature of these responses reveal vulnerabilities often found to be in conflict with a culture where strength is valued. As stated previously, a paradigm shift is desperately needed. Army fathers who have good insight can recognize when they are not functioning at optimal levels. This trait of self-awareness is essential for Army fathers to thrive at home and in the work environment. It is imperative to understand early identification of a problem as a proactive and initiative-oriented skill that will ultimately improve overall mission-readiness.

Hypothesis Three examined the relationship between resiliency and engagement in the father involvement model. It states:

H₃: Army fathers who demonstrate higher levels of satisfaction with their relationship with their own father will experience higher levels of father involvement.

Most men want to be good fathers, yet they face significant challenges stemming from increasing economic, societal, and familial changes, demands, and complexities (Dollahite, 1998). Hypothesis three postulated that a history of a strong relationship with one's father from one's family of origin could bridge the gap between father's commitment and actual involvement. Fathers with such a strong background might not be deterred by physical or other

impediments to paternal involvement. Two respondents epitomized what this intestinal fortitude means in their families:

I will protect my family no matter what. I would take a bullet or give a bullet to protect them.

Being completely involved as a father, living for your children, and having the will to let nothing ahead of raising/being part of your children life.

Although the statistical data did not bear out Hypothesis three, my recommendation is that further research be conducted to examine the relationship in greater depth to ascertain potential discrepancies.

Marsiglio, Day, & Lamb (2000) reported that some modes of father involvement are not observable and thus may go unnoticed, leading others to assume that these fathers are relatively uninvolved even though fathers' anticipatory planning and worrying about their children may significantly affect interactions with them. These non-observable and behind-the-scenes activities of planning and worrying about the well-being of their children may be viewed as part of paternal responsibility.

Overall, the findings were thought-provoking and revealing. The findings did not support the first three hypotheses directly but were corroborated through some of the fathers narrative responses and related responses. An unmistakable finding was that Army fathers need more comprehensive resources and support services to facilitate healthy interaction with their children. It is also obvious that these concerns cannot be thoroughly addressed without a collective effort from the fathers, families, chain of commands, various sub-communities, and policy makers alike.

One explanation for these findings may be that fathers believed, since their comments were to be kept anonymous, they could be more candid. It could also indicate that fathers

believed they were ultimately helping their fellow-soldiers by sharing information honestly. Also, many fathers knew about the resources available to them as fathers but were reluctant to seek services for themselves. As indicated previously, a paradigm shift is needed, and commanders must undertake it as a collaborative effort to increase mission readiness. In order to close this gap in programs and participation completely, leaders must convey more contemporary approaches to support their troops by modeling the appropriate help-seeking behaviors.

The final hypothesis examined focused on the efficacy of the influence of paternal perceptions of Army service on father involvement model. It is stated as follows:

H4. The degree of father involvement will be positively associated with the perceptions fathers have of being in the Army.

Willerton's et al. (2011) seminal work about military fathers using comprehensive domains of father functioning reveals that fathers maintain involvement with their children through unobservable methods as well. Although deployments and separations may frequently limit physical involvement, Army fathers use other methods for staying connected through psychological, spiritual, emotional, and social avenues. Willerton's et al. (2011) work was a foundational block in constructing Hypothesis Four. The results in my investigation also supported Hypothesis Four. Army fathers who experienced higher levels of involvement with their children also experienced higher levels of satisfaction with their Army careers. Many Army fathers affirmed their roles as soldiers as a positive example to teach their children morals and values they believed were important.

It is a challenge but not too stressful. I love my job and I love my work so it doesn't too much bother me. I mean sometimes it gets a little hard when I don't have time to take care of everything in time.

Makes me feel good to know my children are taken care of and that I am setting an example that hard work pays off and be the best role model for them.

It feels great to be a good example for my kids and being able to represent something for them.

It's a wonderful experience that I enjoy. One of the best in the world, plus there's many places that I can go for help if needed.

Overall, the findings were thought-provoking and revealing as one of the four hypotheses were supported and corroborated. Additional support of the hypotheses was provided in the responses given by Army fathers and specifically in their explanations of father involvement. It is clear that impediments for Army fathers exist and that a collaborative effort on the part of fathers, professionals, and the community is necessary to bridge their respective gaps for program implementation. Some resources for Army fathers are readily available; there is an impressive human-service delivery system designed to support families (Huebner et al., 2009). Although excellent programs are available, access is often limited by absences and work conflicts. One explanation for limited access may be the stigmatization associated with seeking help in military cultures – seeking help may be taken as a sign of weakness (Laser & Stephens, 2010). Another explanation may be that professionals and educators alone are not strong enough to promote help seeking behaviors that resonate with military populations. These two dynamic concepts of access and availability are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they are complementary and may produce tremendous benefits for fathers and the Army. Although the specific issue may not be pinpointed in this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods have exposed some glaring gaps in understanding.

Implications of this Study

The present study identified some implications that should be further explored. I believe the implications can be categorized effectively in terms of policy implications, practice implications, and future research implications. These implications are delineated as such, but will clearly have some overlap as stakeholders share similar interest. The fact that families are fluid makes it imperative to consider the reciprocal nature within systems designed to provide assistance.

Policy Implications

Policymakers are up against some daunting challenges from political opponents and social activists and from miscellaneous stakeholders. The opposition in the upper echelon of the political arena can be fierce at times. Research findings should guide policy implementation. For roughly forty years, social service systems have been developed by the military to enhance the family life of armed services personnel (Lowe, Hopps, & See, 2007). This trend needs to continue and focus on national policies for fatherhood initiatives to be supported diverse contexts including military and faith-based communities especially. As traditional families are becoming less common, the need for more comprehensive fathering approaches should remain a priority nationally.

Since Army families are not prone to actively seek services, strategies need to be developed to address the unique needs of this population (Lowe, Hopps, & See, 2007). Administrative and governmental bodies responsible for developing policies impacting fatherhood programs must also be adequately funded to provide a presence in underserved communities. The efforts aimed at policy advocacy should be directed toward awareness of the significant contributions fathers are making in communities and families. Furthermore,

government agencies could dictate policies that encourage the efficient use of available resources by creating partnerships with public and private organizations that support fatherhood initiatives.

Although a wide range of policy implications are put forth based upon the hypotheses, priority should be given to direct support for Army fathers. All stakeholders need to come together with possible solutions. The rationale for this investigation was to understand paternal involvement in Army communities by examining the paternal role, environmental conditions, historical perspectives, and specific challenges confronting Army fathers. Policy makers are an important part of the equation establishing comprehensive programs.

The ideas for future policy, research, and practice were derived from the literature, and from personal experiences as a member of the Army community, which were also reinforced by the findings in this study. Table 6.1 provides a few key points in these areas. While these ideas should not be construed as concrete solutions, they can provide some general guidelines for serving Army fathers effectively.

In order to build successful programs for Army fathers, it is important to understand several key policy issues. Successful family support is grounded in the actions of small-unit leaders and sustained in the policies and program activities generated by leaders throughout the army. It is also crucial for the well-being of soldiers, their families, and the Army to encourage the use of existing family support programs. Effective policies ensure that implementation issues are addressed adequately.

Moreover, there is a long-standing cultural stigma often attributed to the use of any helping agency or of any social-service professional who is embedded in Army communities (Laser & Stephens, 2010). There must be policies addressing and regulations against ostracizing

Army fathers for using social services. Also, formal support policy is necessary, but by itself it is not sufficient to sustain the well-being of army families.

The primary objective of these policy implications is to improve quality of life for Army fathers, families, and communities. Ultimately there must be a combination of both informal and formal policies encouraging the use of social support programs to help fathers adapt and thrive in the face of the challenges of army life in the 21st century. Also, committees that systematically review outcomes are necessary. The effectiveness of the current fatherhood programs need to be evaluated systematically as well.

Table 6.1

Summary of Potential Ideas, Policy Recommendations, Research and Program Development for Addressing Issues Related to Paternal Involvement Among Army Fathers.

<i>IDEAS</i>	<i>POLICY</i>	<i>RESEARCH</i>	<i>PROGRAM DEV.</i>
Family Support Networks	Awareness that programs are not being accessed.	Focus on program utilization outcomes.	Design programs to address individual needs that can be applied in home setting
Community Resource Support	Educators and Specialist to facilitate initiatives.	Encourage research at practice levels beneficial to the population served.	Create adaptive and engaging programs offered electronically media.
National Support Resources	National conferences equipping administrators with best practices	Support various methods of research to inform and increase knowledge base	Ensure funding available for collaborative efforts to increase participation

Practice-Related Implications

The practice arena is probably where the vast majority of implications can be made and also require the most support. One advantage in the practice arena is that public agencies often have the more latitude and flexibility on programming. For this study, the findings present a number of recommendations for practice professionals and researchers alike. Individuals working with Army families in any capacity should concentrate their efforts first toward understanding the Army culture in which fathers must operate.

Also, services must be structured to accommodate the population being served. Social service organizations must also ensure that fathers are familiar with resources and have sufficient

access to programs that could help them. Educators play a significant role in making fatherhood programs appealing to fathers and to the commands in which educators support.

Correspondingly, comprehensive programs to address the needs of Army father are necessary to maintain interest and participation (Park, 2011).

Dollahite (1998) suggested that today's context of high expectations of fathers, and fathers' high expectations of themselves, puts greater challenges on their ability to father as they would like. Fathering initiatives must balance the challenges and expectations by providing programs that enable Army fathers to increase their involvement. The resources are available, but opportunities to take advantage of these resources are disproportionately sought.

Practitioners must employ creative strategies to overcome individual, cultural, and societal biases that are impediments to service delivery.

Drummett (2003) outlined implications for Family Life Educators (FLE's) based upon literature about military family relocation, separation, deployment, and reunion; and these recommendations are consistent for supporting Army fathers. Drummett emphasized the importance of culture, diversity in family structure, methods of communication, spouses' employment, programs for children, and reintegration processes, which will be combined with components of the comprehensive soldier fitness model to create a holistic foundation in which FLE's are able to work. This must certainly include collaboration with the Army fathers' chain of command, which is probably the most powerful influence on an Army father.

Army culture is comprised of ideologies, which may be interpreted as contradictory to Army father's internal and public perceptions. FLE's working with Army fathers must be keenly aware of the impact of the many cultures that are operating simultaneously. Also, educators must see the core issues are where the greatest emphasis must be placed. For example, a

comprehensive hierarchical approach is necessary when dealing with complex issues related to father involvement beginning with the macro culture at large. Initially, external influences may have the most beneficial impact because they create a synergistic effect for combining support resources. The micro level issues may impact individuals in unique direct ways that could require more intensive strategies than macro level issues and are equally important for sustained changes with Army father's involvement with their children.

Furthermore, Army culture can also help illustrate principles of fathering in ways that are easily recognizable for Army fathers. For example, Army leaders are responsible for their soldiers and Army fathers have a similar responsibility for their children. Ultimately, if FLE's understand the influence of Army culture, they can play an instrumental role in achieving the desired outcomes for Army fathers and for everyone connected with these individuals who protect our greatest resources, our country and children.

Other practical circumstances for FLE's to consider are related to the diversity in family structure and in the composition of families among Army fathers. For example, there are single fathers, same-sex Army fathers, dual-military fathers, and military fathers with civilian mothers, all with different experiences with father involvement. Furthermore, Army fathers represent a wide range of statuses that include biological, adoptive, step, single, social, non-custodial, and non-geographical fathers (due to separation involving deployment, relocation, schools, training, or duty assignments). Although many of these fathers may not be physically present for their children, their commitment to parenting remains intact, and they are proud to function in that capacity. During times of absence, Army fathers could benefit from the support of social fathers in the capacities of coaches, teachers, mentors, uncles, pastors, and community leaders.

Practitioners must also focus on methods of communication that promote family cohesion, and FLE's must communicate with the chain of command to create workshops that will help facilitate communication. For FLE's working with Army fathers, it is imperative to understand that some communication can be harmful, such as that which is unintentionally condescending or patronizing, can be harmful and create situations that keep fathers from fully concentrating on their missions. Honest and upfront communication is essential, and professionals must model appropriate interaction even when Army fathers are not willing to talk.

It is important for FLE's to understand that some subjects and issues may be off limits for discussion until an appropriate time can be negotiated. FLE's should focus on the characteristics of healthy communication, because Army fathers are trained and well versed in effective styles of communication, but those styles may not be helpful when dealing with complex family issues.

Another practical concern for Army fathers who must be addressed is the need spouses have for employment, whether for income or self-efficacy or both, in the civilian employment sector. Career-related concerns are diverse among Army families and should be approached delicately as each father and family may have different needs and ideas. Army fathers' roles are further constrained by balancing responsibilities at home and work and sufficiently assessed. FLE's should also understand that spouses' satisfaction has a significant impact on retention of Army personnel, especially for military fathers, and the economic benefits that come along with spouses' employment may also have a positive effect.

Another practice implication for FLE's involves assisting with relocation decisions, such as living on base or off, choosing schools, and maintaining family boundaries. Providing information and guidance well before decisions must be made may reduce stress responses for Army fathers and may be especially useful to families transitioning to foreign countries. FLE's

can advise Army personnel of how to search the web for information on their new duty location. FLE's assisting fathers to get this information may help them to decide whether they want their families to join them immediately or after they have established residences. The needs of children are often not a top priority in relocations, but FLE's can help advocate on behalf of children during transitions.

The last practical implication I will discuss in this section is related to the complex reintegration, readjustment, and reorganization experiences of Army fathers during the reunion period. FLE's should bring attention to the potentially tumultuous nature of reunion and determine the availability of programs in the community to assist fathers coming home. Moreover, FLE's should provide education on ways children may be affected by parent's emotions during transition. One objective for FLE's is to help fathers understand the impact of their absence and presence on the development of their children. Although many soldiers are adversely impacted by military life, studies generally show that the majority of soldiers do okay (Peterson, Park, & Castro, 2011). Army fathers who are connected, engaged, and involved understand their valuable role as fathers, and they should be consulted regarding their ability to prioritize the need of their children.

Implications for Future Research

Although the research recommendations about Army fathers form only a small part of the section on implications, the overall impact for father involvement should not be minimized as the findings regarding paternal role influence may be the primary instigator of policy and practice implementation. This section addresses the research that is needed to add to the existing body of literature and to provide insights to support Army fathers as well as initiatives designed to

strengthen paternal involvement. It is evident that much more qualitative and quantitative inquiries are need to be conducted with Army families.

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda also articulated the need for more research in which fathers and children are studied in developmental and cultural contexts to specifically examine how fathers' roles in peer relationships change as children move from the dependencies of early childhood to the autonomous friendships of adolescence. I would support this recommendation that more research is needed in Army environments especially as opportunities for growth are often overlooked, misunderstood, or minimized in the midst of adverse circumstances that Army fathers are experiencing.

The changing context of fatherhood and the impact of the environmental influences on father involvement demand further attention as well as research-based efforts to facilitate change on the provider, practice, program, and policy levels. Although efforts are underway within both the military and civilian communities to provide resources and services to families, the efforts do not appear to be well coordinated or widely disseminated. In addition, evidence-based programs for family members are quite limited at evaluating effectiveness, and further research and improved coordination are warranted (Military TF Report, 2007).

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda also concluded that, over the last three decades, fathers have embraced much broader and more diverse definitions of their roles and have been increasingly willing to engage in a broad array of activities often in the past viewed as components of mothering. This aspect of transition to a broader definition of father involvement is never more evident with Army fathers while they have learned to adapt and overcome obstacles on private, personal, institutional, social, and cultural levels. Research efforts that pinpoint these conditions are desperately needed.

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda observed that parenting programs for fathers were quite primitive and that they had been developed and implemented at a local, grassroots level without well-articulated conceptual frameworks guiding their interventions. They also found a dearth of theory and evidence link factors in the workplace to the quality of parenting. This study embarked on a study of the bioecological conditions impacting involvement. Future research could advance this study by examining how the workplace implements benefits to enhance father involvement especially since Army fathers are faced with some of the most demanding and extreme working environments coupled with tremendous responsibility.

Lamb and Tamis-Lemonda further elaborated that, by showing ties among different aspects of fathering and recognizing how and when father's attention to certain areas of involvement limits their potential involvement in other ways, researchers will come closer to understanding the unique confluence of factors that affect the course of children's development, as well as the multitude of patterns for positive father involvement. My study also focused on similar aspects but was not able to fully ascertain and delineate these conditions for analysis. Subsequent studies should employ methods that allow for a narrower focus to extract principal concerns related to father involvement.

McAdoo (1993) said that future research needs to focus on how some fathers are able to successfully reduce provider role strain while maintaining positive self-esteem and positive family relationships in the face of adversity. The emphasis on strength-based models to generate supportive relationships conducive for modeling appropriate interactions among Army fathers. Although this research identified multifaceted environmental conditions, future research projects are warranted to determine the effectiveness of organizations such as Army Community Service and supportive networks with interventions aimed at addressing fathers support programs.

Another interesting paradox to be further studied in the field of father involvement specifically addresses the progression from traditional to more contemporary father roles. Studies that are abandoning antiquated deficit approaches are using best-practice models and need to be emulated. O'Brien (2005) asserted that future research is needed on how successful fathers, families, chain of commands, and Army organizations are operating. Although this research appears to be gaining momentum and despite dynamic changes in societal perspectives, there is still much work to be done in the area paternal involvement among Army fathers (O'Brien, 2005).

Limitations of the Study

This section describes the limitations of this research. The study shows the effects of limitations common to research in general to this investigation. The limitations are outlined as follows:

- The paucity of literature available about Army fathers made it more difficult to conduct comparative analysis or to make generalizations with wider implications.
- Face-to-face interviews were not conducted. This limitation did not allow the researcher to elaborate on questions or to provide clarification to respondents. Also, some of the questions that asked for specific responses were misinterpreted, and results from these questions could not be used in the analysis. Interviews would have provided opportunities for recording, transcribing, and discussing responses thereby increasing authenticity of narratives.
- The final sample produced 161 responses of which 157 were appropriate for analysis.

- The role of U.S. Army regulations played a significant role in the types of data that were to be collected.
- The lack of incentives available to participants impacted the sample. The expense of incentives for respondents getting time off from work for completing the questionnaires were minimal. Participants were given time off for participation which is more valuable considering frequent absences to fathers interested in spending quality time with their families. In the future, data could be collected in a central location, fathers might be allowed to spend the remaining portion of the day with family.
- Limited sample size was another drawback. The inability to generate a larger sample size may have influenced some of the multivariate analysis. A larger sample would have been more conducive to advanced statistical procedures.
- Strauss & Corbin (1998) argued for multifaceted techniques for gaining distance and objectivity by obtaining multiple viewpoints of an event to see how actors in a situation view it or gather data about the same event in different ways. Therefore, it would have been beneficial to obtain responses from spouses and commanders on the fathers' family involvement and work performance.

Conclusions

Although the principles of fathering remain relatively static across all contexts, it is evident that the obstacles facing Army fathers are indeed profound. Army fathers are expected to be able to go to war and kill at any given time and also be able to come home and love, nurture and potty-train children seamlessly. These dynamic role transitions can be difficult to adjust to effectively. Although both roles require a significant amount of training, they are vastly

different in terms of the type of training needed. The Army recognizes the need for both and has implemented programs to achieve both. The primary difference is that one training program is mandated and widely accepted, and the other is not mandated or widely accepted. Although I do not encourage mandating fatherhood initiatives across the Army because it inhibits help seeking behaviors that may undermine unit readiness. However, I do propose that prevention, education, and awareness programs be widely accepted in Army communities.

Although Army dads may not understand the importance of engaging with their children emotionally when they are physically absent, the benefits apparent (Willerton et. al, 2011). It should also be noted that many fathers are unable to make emotional connections while they are absent due to a mission or due to emotional, intellectual, or psychological barriers, fathers are keenly aware of what their families experience and the pejorative effects their absences. Army fathers may also experience reticence or a reluctance to get involved, or they may not know exactly what to do. This mentality of mission first is ingrained in soldiers, but it may be detrimental to the ways in which fathers are involved in their families.

The approaches to increasing Army father involvement include building on the resilience of military families, addressing family stress within the context of the deployment cycle, and managing emotional regulation as a key to effective parenting (Gewirtz, et. al, 2011). These strategies are more successful with less distressed parents, but they will also be helpful in identifying and supporting those who are dealing with more complex stressors.

I have been a part of a military community for over 20 years in various capacities. I was an enlisted member in active service for eight years, a dependent for an additional three years while being married to an active-duty soldier, a veteran for twelve years thus far, and as a family specialist in the Army for eight more years. Beyond that, my father and brother both served in

the Army. This professional experience combined with my academic background enabled me to build a rapport with respondents. These previous experiences with military fathers have made me cognizant of the potential for bias. Therefore, I recruited four neutral observers to help analyze data by identifying patterns and related themes in responses.

The neutral observers were responsible for collecting the qualitative responses of Army fathers and categorizing into themes related to environmental factors. Observers also transcribed data and developed the coding system. The observers were not affiliated with Army and provided objective feedback throughout the data analysis portion of this study.

Despite the apparent changing paradigms and dynamism in fatherhood roles, including the economic provider role, which is widely claimed to have been dominant throughout Euro-American history, remains central to most definitions of fatherhood (Connor & White, 2006). Researchers, policy makers, and practitioners have made limited progress in attempts to design programs that address the explicit and unspoken needs of many diverse populations of fathers.

Lamb and Tamis-LeMonda also concluded that, there is no single paternal role to which all fathers should aspire; rather, a successful father is one who successfully fosters his children's development. It is going to take a collaborative effort from multi-disciplinary teams to make an investment in fathers and programs they may benefit from.

If we are to understand more clearly the influence of paternal role on father involvement and the implications for children, families and society, we must challenge our perception of what it means to be a father and the complex ways in which the paternal involvement is accomplished (Report from National Security Staff, 2011).

Ultimately, addressing the complex concerns surrounding the involvement of Army fathers in the lives of their children is a matter of mission readiness, but, even before that, it is

first and foremost a matter of the “Army taking care of its own.” In order for soldiers to be prepared to face obstacles confronting the nation on a global level, they must be equipped to care for the issues confronting their families each day. Although, historically, the Army has not done a good job supporting the family, the current strides that are being made have improved the quality of life exponentially for Army families. In order to keep up with the progress that has already been made, a paradigm shift must occur. Formal support programs were not always available to army fathers and families, but the current concern is for ensuring these programs are being used by those in need. The evidence of the results of this study produced a wide range of recommendations for public policy, practice, and research. Embracing these recommendations for increasing father involvement across Army installations worldwide would be a step in the right direction.

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APPENDIX A

ARMY FATHER INVOLVEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Army Father Needs Questionnaire

Please answer all questions as directed. All individual information will be kept strictly confidential and will be used in efforts to enhance services provided to Army fathers.

PART A. INTRODUCTION/ROLE

Thank you for taking part in this study. There are series of questions that involve your role as a parent, in particular as a father. Please indicate how you fulfill your paternal role as an active duty Army father.

1. Do you have any children?
 - Yes
 - No → (If NO, then please go to Question No.67 on page 12)

2. Which type of father would you say are you?
 - _____ Biological father
 - _____ Adoptive father
 - _____ Step-father
 - _____ Social father (i.e., father figure such as mentor/relative)

3. Do you believe you were ready to become a father when you did?
 - Yes
 - No

4. Please rank the following options from 1 to 5 with 1 being the **least challenging** and 5 being the **most challenging** part of fatherhood for you.
 - _____ Disciplining children
 - _____ Education (not knowing how to be a father)
 - _____ Limited income (not enough money)
 - _____ Time (not enough time)
 - _____ Showing affection (nurturing)

For the following questions, please read each statement and circle the best response.

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (neutral) 4 (agree) 5 (strongly agree)

5. Being a father is very stressful for me at times. 1 2 3 4 5

6. I have a good relationship with the mother of my child. 1 2 3 4 5

7. I sometimes feel isolated from my child. 1 2 3 4 5

8. I sometimes drink enough to feel really high or drunk. 1 2 3 4 5

9. It is sometimes necessary to discipline a child with a good hard spanking. 1 2 3 4 5

1 (strongly disagree) 2 (disagree) 3 (neutral) 4 (agree) 5 (strongly agree)

10. When I was a child, I was spanked or hit a lot by my mother or father. 1 2 3 4 5

11. When I was growing up, I saw my mother or father hit or throw something at their partner. 1 2 3 4 5

12. I have happy memories of my childhood. 1 2 3 4 5

13. My parents helped me when I had problems. 1 2 3 4 5

14. My income is often adequate for basic needs (rent, food, clothing, transportation, etc). 1 2 3 4 5

15. I feel I have a number of good qualities as a father. 1 2 3 4 5

16. I feel I have much to be proud of as a father. 1 2 3 4 5

17. There is someone I can talk to openly about anything. 1 2 3 4 5

18. I have someone I can borrow money from in an emergency. 1 2 3 4 5

19. I have someone I can count on in times of need. 1 2 3 4 5

20. I view myself as a **supportive/nurturing/communicative** father. 1 2 3 4 5

21. I view myself as a **disciplinarian/teacher/guide** type of father. 1 2 3 4 5

22. I view myself as a **protector/provider/breadwinner** type of father. 1 2 3 4 5

23. I view myself as a **role model/mentor/coach** type of father. 1 2 3 4 5

24. I view myself as an **encourager (build self-worth)** type of father. 1 2 3 4 5

25. Looking at the descriptors below, rank your top three choices that you believe **best** describes your role as a father.

_____ Supportive/nurturing/communicative

_____ Disciplinarian/teacher/guide

_____ Protector/provider/breadwinner

_____ Role model/mentor/coach

_____ Encourager/build self-worth

26. Please rank the following aspects of Army life to describe which aspects are **most difficult** for you to handle as a father with 1 being the least difficult and 5 being the most difficult.

- _____ Deploying (leaving loved ones)
- _____ Redeploying (handling/meeting expectations)
- _____ Deployment (being physically away from loved ones)
- _____ Reintegration (adjusting to new life)
- _____ Uncertainty (mental/emotional issues of not knowing)

27. Please rank the following choices about what is **most important** to you as a father in the Army from 1 to 5 with 1 being the least important and 5 being the most important.

- _____ Educational benefits
- _____ Job security/Career potential
- _____ Medical/Dental/Health benefits
- _____ Serving Country (Pride/Patriotism)
- _____ Steady income (The paycheck)

28. Describe what it feels like to be a father in the Army. (Please use the back of questionnaire if more space is needed for any questions or comments)

29. Please rank the following options from 1 to 5 with 1 being the **least important** and 5 being the **most important** reason you joined the Army.

- _____ Educational Opportunity
- _____ Travel the world/See different places
- _____ Provide for the family
- _____ Jail/Trouble with the law
- _____ Patriotic/Civil response

Thank you for completing the questions concerning aspects of fatherhood. We appreciate your participation in this research.

The following set of questions is regarding physical presence and involvement as a father.

PART B. PHYSICAL PRESENCE/INVOLVEMENT

For the following questions, please indicate your response.

30. On average, how many meals do you eat with your children per week? (e.g. 0 6)

31. On average, how much quality time (one on one basis) do you spend with your children per week? *Not including discipline or daily parenting activities.*

_____ **minutes per week (e.g., 93)**
_____ **hours per week (e.g., 3)**

32. Overall, how often are you involved with your children in their daily activities per week? *This includes bathing, reading books, bed time routines, dressing, etc.*

_____ **minutes per week**
_____ **hours per week**

Thank you for completing the questions regarding physical presence and involvement as a father. The next set of questions concern spirituality and connection as an aspect of fatherhood.

PART C. SPIRITUAL/CONNECTION

33. What does being spiritual mean to you?

34. How often do you attend church?

- _____ Not at all
- _____ Seldom
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Sometimes
- _____ Much of the time

35. How often do you read the bible?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

36. How often do you pray?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

37. How often do you praise your children for doing a great job? *This includes chores, homework, behavior, performance, etc.*

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

38. How often do you praise your children for being who they are? For example, for being a great kid, making you a proud father, etc.

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

39. How often do you communicate with your children? Other than topics such as discipline, chores, or daily responsibilities, etc.

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally

- Sometimes
- Much of the time

40. What beliefs/morals/values do you want to teach your children?

You have just completed the set of questions concerning spirituality and connectedness as an aspect of fatherhood. We appreciate your participation and continued dedication to the questionnaire.

The next set of questions is regarding emotional involvement and closeness as an aspect of a father's role.

PART D. EMOTIONAL INVOLVEMENT/CLOSENESS

41. How often do you feel emotionally connected to your children?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

42. How often do you feel you are doing a good job as a father?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

43. How often do you worry about being a good father?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes

- _____ Much of the time
44. How often do you feel that you provide emotional support to your children?
- _____ Not at all
- _____ Seldom
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Sometimes
- _____ Much of the time
45. How often do you feel that your work interferes with the amount of time you are able to spend with your children?
- _____ Not at all
- _____ Seldom
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Sometimes
- _____ Much of the time
46. How often do you feel that the needs of your children for attention and support seem to create a conflict with your military duties and responsibilities?
- _____ Not at all
- _____ Seldom
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Sometimes
- _____ Much of the time
47. How often do you listen to your children talk about their feelings (e.g. likes and dislikes)?
- _____ Not at all
- _____ Seldom
- _____ Occasionally
- _____ Sometimes
- _____ Much of the time

We appreciate your involvement with this research and would now like to ask you just a few more questions. The following questions concern your feelings about fatherhood.

PART E. PSYCHOLOGICAL/SELF-WORTH

48. How do you spend the majority of your leisure time as an Army father? (**Select One**)

_____ Career/Work/Job

_____ Family/Family
activities

_____ TV/Computer

_____ Gym/Exercise

_____ Friends/Socializing

Other _____

49. What does it mean to you to be a Protector as a father?

50. What does it mean to you to be a Provider as a father?

PART F. SOCIOLOGICAL/LESSONS

51. Who raised you as a child when you were growing up?

_____ My father

_____ My mother

_____ Both parents

_____ Myself

_____ Grandparents

_____ Other (please specify):

52. How satisfied are you with the current relationship that you have with your children?

_____ Very dissatisfied

_____ Dissatisfied

_____ Neutral

_____ Satisfied

_____ Very Satisfied

53. How would you describe the quality of your relationship, now as an adult with your father figure?

_____ Poor

- Fair
- Good
- Great
- Excellent

54. Please rate the quality of the relationship you had with your father figure while growing up.

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Great
- Excellent

55. Please rate the quality of the relationship you currently have with your children.

- Poor
- Fair
- Good
- Great
- Excellent

56. How satisfied do you feel as a father?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

57. How satisfied do you feel as a man?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

58. How satisfied do you feel about your military career?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied

- _____ Neutral
- _____ Satisfied
- _____ Very Satisfied

PART G. SUPPORT

59. What resources are available to you as an Army father?

60. Has any organization on or off post been helpful to you? If yes, who are they and what did they help you with?

61. Please rank the following places you would go to for help in being a father?

- _____ ACS/Family Advocacy Program
- _____ Family/Relatives
- _____ Friends/Battle buddy
- _____ Internet/Social media
- _____ Chain of command
- _____ Other (please specify):

Listed below are statements concerning personal attitudes and traits. Read each item and decide whether the statement is true or false as it pertains to you personally. Please circle “Yes” (for true) and “No” (for false) beside each item to indicate your response.

62. Would you smile at people every time you meet them?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

63. Do you always practice what you preach?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

64. If you say to people that you will do something, do you always keep your promise no matter how convenient it might be?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

65. Would you ever lie to people?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes
- Much of the time

66. Would you ever laugh at a dirty joke?

- Not at all
- Seldom
- Occasionally
- Sometimes

_____ Much of the time

Almost done, please complete the following demographic/personal information. We couldn't do this project without you.

PART H. DEMOGRAPHICS/PERSONAL

67. In which city do you currently live?

_____ Ft. Riley

_____ Junction City

_____ Manhattan

_____ Other (please specify):

68. What was your age at your last birthday?

69. How would you describe your ethnicity?

_____ White

_____ Black/African American

_____ Hispanic/Latino (e.g. Puerto Rican)

_____ Asian, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander

_____ Other (please specify):

70. What is your current rank/paygrade? (e.g. E/O/W-04)

_____ -- _____

71. What is your current marital status?

_____ Married

_____ Legally separated

_____ Divorced

_____ Never married

_____ Separated

72. What is your annual household income? (Please estimate to nearest dollar e.g. **\$19,824**)

\$ _____, _____ .00

73. How many years have you served in the Army?

74. How many separate times have you been deployed to a combat zone (Iraq/Afghanistan, etc.)?

75. What was the most recent year in which you were deployed to a combat zone? (Circle most recent year you were deployed or write in the year if not listed below.

2014 2013 2012 2011 2010 2009 2008 2007 2006 Fill in year if before 2006 - _____

76. How soon are you expecting to be deployed to a possible combat zone in the future?

- _____ Never again (retiring, ETS, getting out of Army, have a profile, etc.)
- _____ This year (2014)
- _____ Next Year (2015)
- _____ In two years or more (after 2015)
- _____ Do not know at all

77. If you have had a romantic significant other while you have been a father, how supportive have they been of you as a father?

- _____ Have not had a romantic significant other
- _____ Very supportive
- _____ Somewhat supportive
- _____ Not sure or mixed feelings about it
- _____ Not supportive but did not make things much worse
- _____ Made my life as a father much worse, not at all supportive.

78. Are there other obstacles for Army fathers in which most people are not aware?

Thank you for your service and taking your time to complete this questionnaire. We appreciate your participation and could not do it without you.

APPENDIX B
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

TO: Walter Schumm Protocol Number: 7237
School of Family Studies and Human Services
Justin Hall

FROM: Rick Scheidt, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: July 31/2015

RE: Approval of Your Proposal Entitled, "The Influence of Paternal Role upon Involvement
Among Army Fathers."

Federal regulations stipulate that human subjects protocols can be approved by IRB's for only one year, and require "continuing review" and approval to continue past the expiration date.

On the basis of the IRB "continuing review," your project is classified as follows:

Active. The activity is pending or in progress, and there have been no changes that have occurred or are contemplated that would affect the status of human subjects.

EXPIRATION DATE: 7/31/2016

If the activity persists, it will be eligible for continuing review several months prior to the new expiration date.