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PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECTS OF
MILITARY PARENTAL DEPLOYMENT ON SCHOOL AGED CHILDREN AND
ADOLESCENTS

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Education
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study used an exploratory phenomenological approach to examine professional school counselors' perspectives on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. The voices of school counselors who work with military connected children are absent from the literature. The research site was a professional counseling conference in Germany in the fall of 2010. Participants consisted of 12 professional school counselors who work with school-aged children and adolescents who have experienced parental military deployment. Participants adopted pseudonyms though several indicated an affiliation with Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS) and therefore offered their unique perspectives as school counselors living in military communities and working almost exclusively with military connected children and families. Data collection consisted of individual interviews with counselor participants. Data analysis consisted of coding meaningful words and phrases and yielded 33 preliminary categories that became new codes. Analysis of relationships between codes resulted in the emergence of four distinct themes: *Military Life, Stages of Deployment, Role of the Counselor, and Children and Adolescents*. Themes were supported by quotations of meaningful statements, thus participant voices provide thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon. Validity strategies included peer debriefing, researcher positionality, and multiple examinations of the data set.

I dedicate this study to all military service members and their families
on the front lines and elsewhere.

I dedicate this study to the school counselors on the front lines on behalf of military children.

I dedicate this study to my grandmother, Mrs. Mary Pinckney, and my parents, Frank and
Barbara McCloud for always encouraging me to study my lessons and get an education.

Thank you for everything!

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Military service members and their families face unique stressors and challenges, including recurring separations, relocations, reunions, and the constant threat of danger, physical harm, or death of their loved ones. The possibility of deployment of one or both parents is a frequent and distinctive burden shared by many military families (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). Deployment represents assignment to a war or danger zone, and is generally a complicated and devastating process for military families. In addition to the service member who faces potential harm, the children and remaining family members are the most vulnerable. Research suggests that military connected children do feel the effects of war and increasing levels of deployment (Costello & Phelps, 1994; Murray, 2002). The increase in multiple deployments has resulted in growing concern for the mental health of military children and families. Research indicates that numerous separations may result in parents being gone for significant portions of children's lives, and at key stages of development (Lester, Peterson, Reeves, Knauss, Glover, Mogil, et al., 2010); thus, having a parent sent to an active combat zone may rate as one of the most stressful events of childhood. As the remaining parent copes with feelings of loss, anxiety, anger, sadness, depression, fear of the unknown, grief, loss of control, and concern for the safety of the deployed parent (Kelley, 1994), children may withdraw or develop emotional coping techniques (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). Whereas military children are known to be very resilient and adaptable (Ternus, 2010), parental deployment has considerable effects on the family system and especially on children and adolescents. These children suffer ambiguous loss and uncertainty, the consequences of which are experienced in ways that

potentially hinder successful adolescent development (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007).

Teachers and schools play a vital role in supporting children and families during a military deployment. Chandra, et al., (2010) found that students seek school staff for social and emotional support at extraordinary levels, and it appears that schools are providing sanctuary for students. Burnham and Hooper (2008) encourage professional school counselors to develop knowledge and competency related to how the effects of war sway the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning of school-aged children. Chibbaro and Jackson (2006) noted that actions taken by school counselors are critical to the student's long-term well-being. Although school counselors are uniquely trained and situated to assist children and families during difficult periods, they should be aware that students of all ages may experience changes in behavior, academic, social or emotional responses (Chibbaro & Jackson, 2006). Mitchum (1991) noted that while school counselors are in a unique position for initial identification and support, they also have access to data that can alert them to the needs of students with a deployed parent. Classroom observations, grade fluctuations, discipline referrals, and attendance records can be particularly helpful in identifying students in need, given that children's reactions may not be obvious (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996). School counselors are often the first professional whom students and families encounter immediately following a crisis or traumatic event. School counselors advocate for students and connect families to community resources, and they often provide direct service to students by establishing deployment support groups for children with deployed parents (Rush & Akos, 2007). School counselors interact with military connected families experiencing parental deployment, yet their voices are absent from the counseling

literature. This study provides insight into the exceptional experiences of professional school counselors working in military communities with military connected children and families facing multiple deployment cycles.

In the past few years, comprehensive developmental school counseling programs have been incorporated into the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2005) and adopted nationwide to address the needs of children. The 2009 CACREP Standards provide competencies for crisis, disaster, and trauma response that are infused in both core counseling and program specific curricula (CACREP, 2009). These standards represent a fundamental adjustment from basic counselor training requirements to a combination of disaster and trauma competencies across counselor preparation (Webber & Mascari, 2009).

Understanding the psychological impact of multiple deployments on military children during deployment and reintegration is important to evaluate the emotional risk to families, and the development of appropriate interventions (Lester, Peterson, et al., 2010).

The range of issues with which military families are faced as a result of deployments is too massive for the scope of this study. Thus, the focus will be on professional school counselors' perspectives on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Given the growing number of military service members with families, the impact of deployments on military children requires investigation (Lester, Peterson, et al., 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The effects of parental deployment on families and children are of growing concern as combat tours lengthen and multiple deployments increase (Lincoln-Swift, et al., 2008). Military leaders recognize that supporting families and children is vital to the readiness and retention of

service members, and there are extensive acknowledgements that, in their own way, families also serve (APA Task Force, 2007). As the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan continue, mental health professionals recognize the potential stresses that military families undergo because of deployment, or the possible injury or death of family members (Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005). The 2007 APA Presidential Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families and Service Members reported that more than 1.2 million children have an active duty military parent, with more than 700,000 children experiencing one or more parental deployments since September 11, 2001. The Task Force reported a scarcity of professionals specifically trained in the nuances of military life, and observed that the most qualified frequently experience burn out due to the increased demand for services (APA Task Force, 2007).

In general, research on parental deployment and the mental health of children and adolescents indicates that while a parent's deployment is clearly taxing, children and adolescents demonstrate a range of coping skills (Lester, Peterson, et al., 2010). Younger children may encounter more somatic symptoms, changes in mood, and a regression in school performance. Adolescents may be angry and apathetic; or they may act out behaviorally. Often they lose interest or enjoyment in their usual activities or encounter school problems (APA Task Force, 2007). Little is understood about the effect of parental deployment on the welfare of children, and few studies have explored the perspectives of school staff to understand the behavioral, social, academic and emotional consequences on children in school settings (Chandra et al., 2010). Di Nola (2008) noted that a study conducted by members of the National Military Family Association (NMFA) concluded that 62% of remaining family members experienced great depression and stress during the deployment of a military family member to a war zone.

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment: A Military Family Perspective by Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler, (2005) provides a framework for understanding one of the major challenges facing military families. Pincus, et al. describe the emotional cycle of an extended deployment (six months or greater) as divided into five distinct stages: 1) Pre-deployment; 2) Deployment; 3) Sustainment; 4) Re-deployment, and 5) Post-deployment. A clear understanding of these stages is essential for counselors to develop to support their clients through this process. The uncertainty of deployment extensions and the likelihood of multiple deployments intensify the stress facing family members throughout the cycle of deployment (Lincoln–Swift, et al. 2008). Parental deployment has substantial effects on the family system and particularly on adolescents. Kelly’s (1994) findings support the importance of counseling programs that realistically depict the difficulties associated with deployment and offer practical coping strategies for family members.

Overview of Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of professional school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Chandra, Martin, Hawkins & Richardson (2010) suggested an examination from the perspectives of school personnel to understand how parental deployment effects the emotions and behaviors of children in the school setting. Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research question: *How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?*

This qualitative study used an exploratory phenomenological approach to examine the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents from the

perspectives of professional school counselors who work with children and adolescents of deployed military service members. Exploratory phenomenological research seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Glesne, 2006) and is often the chosen method used to explore the lived experience or meaning individuals attach to issues or circumstances (Creswell, 2007).

Study participants consisted of 12 professional school counselors who work with school-aged children and adolescents who have one or more deployed military parent. Each interview participant adopted a pseudonym to aid in transcriptions and data analysis. No personal identifying information was gathered, although many of the participants indicated that they worked for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS). DoDDS-Europe operates 82 schools within five districts throughout Europe, and serves over 35,000 school-age children of active duty military and civilian employees (DoDEA, 2009). DoDDS recognizes military connected families as undergoing frequent relocations, extended deployments, and a variety of unique characteristics that result in students needing additional counseling services. Therefore, the school counselor is in a crucial position as the most appropriate person in the school setting to provide the necessary support to students of deployed military personnel (Mitchum, 1991; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Fenell, Fenell, & Williams, 2005). Keim (2009) found that 59.0% of school counselors who worked with children of deployed military parents reported that they relied on other school counselors or other professionals within the educational setting (school psychologists, social workers, administrators) for guidance in working with these children. Parents, teachers, students, and even administrators most likely look to the school counselor for leadership in helping students cope with difficult situations; especially parental deployment.

Certain aspects of life are unique to the military culture, thus many of these aspects are routine in the lives of people associated with the military. Study participants framed discussions of their experiences in the context of living in military environments. Therefore, counselor perceptions and comments regarding children's responses to military parental deployment are offered in the context of counselors who work with military families living in Europe, primarily in Germany. Military Life was one of the major themes to emerge from comprehensive data analysis. An understanding of military culture appears to be essential to the exploration of the phenomenon of professional school counselors who work with children of deployed military parents. Given that the perspectives of school counselors who spend a significant amount of time interacting with military connected students have not been the focus of research, more studies are needed on the effects of military parental deployment on children and youth. Very little has been written about the experience of school counselors who work with military children who have a parent deployed. Thus, this study exploring the voices of professional school counselors is necessary to contribute to research aimed at addressing the current gap in literature. This study builds on the research of Chandra, et al., (2010) who advocated for an examination from the perspectives of front line responders, such as school counselors, to explore the effect of parental deployment on the emotional and behavioral outcomes of children and youth in the school setting. Many counselors lack exposure to military life and culture, therefore, this study contributes to an overall introduction and understanding of the challenges faced by military children and families during multiple cycles of deployments. The voices of the participants in this study offer a front line perspective into the lived experiences of professional school counselors who work with military children of deployed service members. Findings from this

study yields implications for further research, training, and practice; and highlight the need for specialized training to prepare counselors to meet the mental health needs of this unique population. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature concerning the effects of deployment on military children and families.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Persian Gulf War

Congress abolished the military draft in 1973, with the all-volunteer military transitioning in by 1975. The invasion of Kuwait by Iraqi troops on in August, 1990, eventually led to the United States involvement in war in the Persian Gulf region. The first of three Gulf wars was the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988. The second was the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, often mistakenly referred to as Operation Desert Storm. With more than 500,000 American troops arriving in Saudi Arabia by January 1991, the Bush administration officially termed the defense of Saudi Arabia "Operation Desert Shield." In January 1991, Operation Desert Shield became Operation Desert Storm, which comprised the bulk of the fighting and consisted largely of bombings, massive air strikes, and a final ground attack that culminated in an Iraqi retreat and the liberation of Kuwait city. For the purpose of this study, the literature on the effects of deployment on children is reviewed through the periods of two Gulf wars: Operation Desert Storm, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, which from 2003 to present, is considered as the third Gulf War.

Parameters of Literature Review

This review of relevant literature spanning over the last 20 years, was conducted through accessing several websites, databases, and search terms. Included in the search were Academic Search Premier, EBSCO Host, Medline, Wilson Web, PsychINFO, JStore, ERIC, and Dissertations and Theses. The search parameters included the terms: School Counselors; Children, Adolescents, Children of Military Personnel; Deployment; Military, Deployment and Military Families, Student Counselors, and Effects of Deployment. Searches that were limited to

counselor education journals yielded very few results, and much more literature was available through medical and psychiatric journals. Although much attention has been devoted to the effects of deployment and combat on service members, little research has been conducted on the effects of deployment on children. In a preliminary report on the psychological needs of United States military service members and their families, the APA Task Force on the psychological needs of military service members and their families (2007) noted that research concerning military children and families has been limited to clinical samples that were conducted during very different war contexts such as Vietnam or Israel. While research tends to focus on the negative impact of separation and deployment on youth Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, & Blum (2009) suggested that it is critical to identify both the negative and positive consequences of deployment. The APA Task Force (2007) recommended additional research to determine the long-term effects of being a military child exposed to parental separations due to multiple wartime deployments. Little is identified about the effect of parental deployment on the development and mental health of children, and few studies have concentrated on school staff to understand how parental deployments affect the behavioral, social, and emotional outcomes of children in school settings (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2009; Chandra, Martin, Hawkins and Richardson, 2010). The limited number of studies that do exist have acknowledged parental deployment as positively associated with higher levels of adolescent depression (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996), lower academic performance (Hiew, 1992), increased irritability and impulsiveness (Hillenbrand, 1976), and greater demands for attention (Rosen, Teitelbaum, & Westhuis, 1993). As noted by Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox, Tanielian, Burns, Ruder, and

Han (2010), school counselors who deliver comprehensive counseling programs have a duty to offer appropriate services to students who are in need of counseling interventions.

Military Culture

In *Military Brats: Legacies of childhood inside the fortress*, Wertsch (1991) describes military life and culture as a “warrior society” symbolized by an authoritarian structure and strict class system. Wertsch (1991) details the mobility and parental absence as contributing factors to family feelings of isolation and alienation from the civilian community. Military families endorse military values while living with the constant threat of war and deployment. Military culture provides a context within which families live with the fear that on a moment’s notice the service member may be sent war, perhaps never to return.

Ternus (2010) accentuates the idea that military families reflect today’s society and are composed of varying types of relationships, including single parents, grandparents, blended families with step/half siblings, extended family, homosexual relationships, adoptions, and countless multicultural differences. Drummet, Coleman, & Cable (2003) suggest that mental health professionals understand that military culture demands equal commitment from the service member and the family of the service member. Fenell (2008) recommends that counselors strengthen their ability to help military clients by regarding the military as a distinct culture and developing interventions based on the multicultural counseling competencies developed by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development and endorsed by the American Counseling Association.

War and Deployment on Families

Military families are relatively unique considering the assortment of factors that influence them (Palmer, 2008). They face extraordinary stressors associated with the culture of the military and the anguishes of combat experienced in an active war zone (Basham, 2008). Common challenges related to military families include relocation, separation, deployment, and post-deployment reintegration (Ternus, 2010). As male and female members of the Armed Services deploy to foreign locations for long periods of time, these deployments disrupt family life and place additional weight on the adults and children in the family. There is growing evidence that the emotional burden of war extends beyond the military service member's combat time and results in damage to the spouse and children that could possibly surface years after the combat exposures (Di Nola, 2008; Davis, 2010). The process of secondary traumatization and patterns of disrupted relationships highlight how the sphere of combat extends beyond the soldier to the entire family (Basham, 2008). Elevated levels of traumatic symptoms lessen the ability for service members to be emotionally available to their partners, thereby diminishing the levels of marital/relationship satisfaction (Nelson Goff, Crow, Reisbig, & Hamilton, 2007). Traditionally, the mother of the military family functions as the caregiver during the deployment of the husband/father. However, (Fitzsimons & Krause-Parello, 2009) today, mothers, fathers, and extended family members are asked to serve as caregivers for dependent children of deployed servicemen and women.

Although military families are known to demonstrate high levels of resilience (Gibbs, Martin, Kupper & Johnson, 2007) multiple deployments distress the children, the soldier parent

preparing for (or returning from) deployment, and the parent remaining at home during deployment. Furthermore, military families cope with these challenges within a structured framework that compels families to adopt particular behaviors (Drummet, et al, 2003). Although military families experience routine parental absence for training, temporary duty, and overseas deployments, (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996) many military families learn to cope with countless stressors aside from war. Rentz, Marshall, Loomis, Casteel, Martin & Gibbs (2007) found that military families have resources aimed at reducing negative aspects of the military lifestyle, including family support services that are available in each branch of military service to assist families in coping with family separations

Parental Absence

A unique aspect of military life is the inescapable possibility of deployment of one or both adults from the family (Drummet, et al., 2003). While military parents leave to undergo the trauma of combat, the families they leave behind experience their own complications (Palmer, 2008). Although military life may be stressful for a family even without the presence of the military parent, Hillenbrand (1976) reported that many children mature and intensify their responsibility during the military father's absence. Blount, Curry & Lubin (1992) conducted a study on family separations in the military. The authors note that military families experience unique stressors throughout the pre-deployment, deployment, and reunion stages. Although most families adapt well to these stressors, in families without adequate coping skills, these stresses can lead to problems which require the assistance of medical or mental health professionals (Blount, Curry & Lubin, 1992). The authors suggest that mental health care providers make

themselves aware of stressors faced by military families, and develop techniques for treating high-risk families.

Jensen, Grogan, Xenakis & Bain (1989) studied the effects of father absence on the psychopathology of children and their mothers. The sample included 213 military children who had experienced a father's absence for more than one month during the 12 months preceding the study. As indicated via self-reports, the results showed that these children experienced significantly high levels of depression and anxiety, although these symptoms were not readily visible to the children's parents and teachers. Jensen, et al. (1989) speculated that clinical referrals of children during times of father absence may partly stem from the additional stressors impacting the mother during the absence of the father. Hiew (1992) studied the effects of families living apart in Canadian military families. During father absence, this study assessed mother's perceived measures of social support and elementary school-age children's self-reported coping mechanisms. Data collection consisted of mother and teacher ratings of the children's adjustment and academic performance. Results indicated that father absence and the subsequent loss of perceived social support by mothers was negatively associated with behavioral adjustment and academic performance of children (Hiew, 1992). The children reported that they generally adopted emotion-focused coping during the father's actual absence; which they described as the most stressful time. Further, children who used more social support seeking to cope with father absence exhibited fewer acting-out behaviors in the classroom (Hiew, 1992). Although men may equally demonstrate symptoms when their wives are deployed, (Ryan-Wenger, 2001) noted that despite the increased presence of women in the armed services, the consequence of maternal separation on children and families has received minimal attention.

War, Deployment and Children

Research suggests that military children do feel the effects of war and multiple deployments (Costello & Phelps, 1994; Murray, 2002), especially given the magnitude of dual military families (Schumm, Bell, Rice, & Sanders, 1996). Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser (2008) classified the experience of having a parent sent to an active combat zone with an uncertain date to return as one of the most traumatic events of childhood. In general, research on parental deployment and the mental health of children and adolescents suggests that although a parent's deployment is undoubtedly traumatic, the range of reactions expressed by children and adolescents should be considered within their own context (APA Task Force, 2007). Overall military children are regarded as being extremely resilient and adaptable (Ternus, 2010) although school-aged children may exhibit more somatic conditions, mood changes, and decline in academic performance. Adolescents may demonstrate more defiance and acting out behaviors or experience school problems. Often adolescents become aloof, angry, and apathetic and lose interest in their typical activities (APA Task Force, 2007).

In their survey of Army families, Rosen, Teitelbaum & Westhuis (1993) obtained psychological symptom profiles on 1,601 children of soldiers deployed during Operation Desert Storm. The profiles were developed through the reports of the remaining parent. Although sadness was a common symptom, few parents considered their children's problems serious enough to require counseling. In fact, Rosen, et al., (1993) found a previous history of counseling for emotional problems as the strongest predictor of children seeking and receiving counseling during parental deployment during Operation Desert Storm. Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger (1994) considered wartime deployment as a "catastrophic" ordeal for children and families, although

wartime deployment would be traumatic under any circumstance. Levai, Kaplan, Ackermann & Hammock (1995) examined children and adolescents from Navy and civilian families who were admitted to a private psychiatric hospital. Results indicated that parental deployment adds to the distress of families that may already be vulnerable. For example, in families where stepparents or single parents were present, deployment of the father placed Navy children and adolescents at higher risk for psychiatric hospitalization (Levai, et al., 1995).

In one of the most comprehensive efforts to determine the effects of Operation Desert Storm on military children and their parents, Jensen, Martin & Watanabe (1996) compared 383 children and families with and without a deployed parent prior to and during Operation Desert Storm. Remaining parents completed self-report questionnaires concerning life stressors and child and family functioning. Using data collected prior to Operation Desert Storm, children of deployed and non-deployed military personnel were compared cross-sectionally and longitudinally. The results indicated that although deployment alone rarely provoked pathological symptoms in children who were healthy, children of deployed military personnel reported higher levels of depression, as did their parents (Jensen, et al., 1996). Further, compared with children and families of non-deployed military personnel, families of deployed military personnel reported extensive stressors occurring in their families during the past year. Jensen, et al., (1996) noted that higher levels of life stressors are to be expected because deployment often creates a number of family challenges, including loss of income, family relocation, marital tensions, and increased dependence on the remaining parent for all family responsibilities. The authors noted that boys and younger children appeared to be especially vulnerable to deployment effects, suggesting continuous monitoring of these children. According to Jensen, et al., (1996)

one possible explanation for boys' greater vulnerability could be that the great majority of deployed parents were fathers. In addition to gender, these findings demonstrate a slightly increased risk for depressive symptoms in the deployed group depending on age, with younger children showing the most symptoms (Jensen, et al. 1996) also suggesting increased monitoring of these children.

Huebner & Mancini (2005) investigated the effect of parental separation due to war on adolescents and found that adolescents characterized deployment as a horrible period in their lives, coupled with feelings of depression and stress. Some of the unexpressed feelings resulted in more acting out at school. Similarly, Huebner & Mancini (2005) discovered that while the adolescents demonstrated high levels of resiliency, they also understood the need to take on more responsibilities at home. Barker and Berry (2009) examined developmental issues impacting military families with young children during single and multiple deployments. Results indicated that young children with a deployed parent showed increased behavior problems during deployment and increased attachment behaviors at reunion compared with children whose parents had not experienced a recent deployment. Further, the authors found a relationship between child attachment behaviors and the number of stressors faced by the parent and the length and number of deployments. Child behavior problems related to individual child and family characteristics, such as child age and temperament, length of the deployment, number of moves, and number of stressors reported by parent (Barker & Berry, 2009).

The strength and resiliency within military children and families are evident, and most families of deployed service members adjust successfully (Weins & Boss, 2006). However, Lincoln et al.,(2008) reported a scarcity of rigorous empirical research documenting these

strengths. Harrison & Vannest (2008) described adjustment to parental military deployments and children's resiliency as a function of three issues: "(a) the ability of the remaining parent to cope with the deployment, (b) the length of deployment, and (c) the type of deployment, either peacetime or wartime." (p. 34). Children in such situations may be emotionally exhausted, especially as the coping skills of the remaining parent become compromised by his or her own despondency (Lincoln et al., 2008). Flake, Davis & Johnson (2009) suggested that a longitudinal study intended to clarify the impact of deployment on military children including child, parent, and teacher participation throughout the cycle of deployment (pre, deployment, and reintegration) would be valuable.

Academic and Behavioral Outcomes

A limited number of studies have discussed parental deployment and academic outcomes. By examining the California Achievement Test scores of 157 sixth-grade children, Pisano (1992) sought to determine whether differences in academic functioning existed between children with parents deployed for Operation Desert Storm and children with non-deployed parents. Findings from Pisano (1992) indicated that although daughters of deployed service members displayed a significant decrease in reading comprehension scores from 1990 to 1991 (the year of Operation Desert Storm), none of the other California Achievement Test scores showed statistically significant differences, either between gender or between the subgroups of deployed and non-deployed children. To examine the relationship between military deployments and children's achievement across academic subjects, Engel, Gallagher & Lyle (2010) combined the standardized test scores of children enrolled in Department of Defense Dependent schools (DoDDS) with their military parent's personnel data and evaluated the effect of a soldier's

deployment on the academic achievement of his or her children. Engle et al., (2010) found that deployments had moderately negative effects in most academic subjects, with the most substantial effects demonstrated during prolonged deployments and deployments during the month of testing showing. This study offers evidence that deployments could potentially disturb the academic achievement of children whose parents serve in the military.

Research suggests that the timing and length of a parent's deployment has damaging results that may remain for a number of years (Engle et al., 2010). Overall, Engle et al., (2010) correlated military parental absences with lower academic achievement for children, underscoring the need for schools serving military connected children to establish programs to minimize the impact of deployment on children's educational achievement. A study conducted with Navy families (Kelley, Hock, Smith, Jarvis, Bonney, & Gaffney, 2001) found that Navy children with deployed mothers exhibited higher levels of internalizing behavior than children with non-deployed Navy mothers. However, the findings of Kelley et al., (2001) do not necessarily imply increased pathology in children of Navy mothers. More research in this area is warranted, but is outside the scope of this particular study.

To describe the effect of wartime military deployments on the behavior of young children in military families, (Chartrand, Frank, White, & Shope, 2008) conducted a cross-sectional study of parents and childcare providers of children aged 1 ½ to 5 years enrolled in on-base childcare centers. The sample included 169 of 233 consenting families (73%). The authors compared mean externalizing, internalizing, and total symptom scores on the Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach, 1991, as cited in Butz & Pulsifer, 2002) a standardized measure designed to assess behavioral and emotional problems in children ages 4 to 18 years. Findings indicated that parents

with children aged 3 years or older and a deployed spouse had significantly higher depression scores than those without a deployed spouse. Further, Chartrand, et al., (2008) found an age by deployment interaction: children aged 3 years or older with a deployed parent had significantly higher externalizing scores and total teacher reported scores compared with same-aged children without a deployed parent. This is one of the first studies to confirm that after controlling for caregiver's stress and depressive symptoms, children aged 3 years or older with a deployed parent demonstrate increased behavioral indicators compared with children without a deployed parent.

In a study of the psychosocial effects of deployment on military children aged 5–12 years, Flake, Davis & Johnson (2009) found that children with deployed parents displayed mental health and behavior problems at vastly higher rates than the national average. Parents who reported high levels of personal stress were more apt to categorize their children as having elevated psychological complications. In this study, parents identified 1 in every 3 school-aged child as at risk for psychosocial morbidity during a wartime deployment, with parental stress as the most substantial factor contributing to children's psychosocial functioning. Lester, Peterson, Reeves, Knauss, Glover, & Mogil (2010) examined the behavioral and emotional adjustment to war and deployment on at-home spouses and children (aged 6 through 12) of active duty Army and Marine Corps parents currently deployed or recently returned from Afghanistan or Iraq. Child adjustment outcomes were examined in relation to parental psychological distress and months of combat deployment. The results indicated that the cumulative extent of parental deployments during the child's lifetime correlated with increased risk for child depression; thus, the impact of combat deployment on school-aged children appears to intensify with repeated

incidences (Lester, et al., 2010). The results of a related study of the experiences of children from military families (Chandra, et al., 2010) indicated higher anxiety, anger and defiance in adolescents of deployed parents, with risk increasing as length of deployment extends. Further, Chandra et al. (2010) found children who were able to handle the first deployment fairly well have become less involved in schoolwork, suggesting decreased resiliency with the occurrence of multiple deployments.

Caregiver Mental Health

Declining caregiver mental health may intensify children's reactions during the deployment and reintegration period (Chandra, et al., 2010). Even short separations account for a major percentage of a young child's life, and parents do experience the emotional stress of the requirement to place military commitments ahead of spending time with their children (Kelley, et al., 2001). Most children likely have decreased communication with the deployed parent, and the remaining parent may experience their own levels of decline during this period of magnified stress. According to Palmer (2008) this exaggerated parental stress in the non-deployed spouse, together with the absence of the deployed military parent, is likely to have a negative impact on the remaining parent-child connections, as well as on the ability to provide appropriate care for the children (Gibbs, Martin, Kupper & Johnson, 2007; Palmer, 2008). During deployment, the remaining parent is likely to tackle the strain of separation, loneliness, emotional overload, role shifts, financial concerns, lack of community support, intensified parenting demands, and frustration with the military system (Vormbrock, 1993). Children often incorporate detachment or emotional complaints as coping techniques (Harrison & Vannest, 2008) as the remaining parent struggles with multiple role expectations associated with unexpectedly heading a single-

parent household. When the remaining spouse's reaction to deployment is depression or parental neglect and indifference, children often reflect those depressive symptoms or behaviors (Drummet, et al., 2003).

In a study of the psychological well being of Army wives during an extended military separation, Knapp and Newman (1993) examined the relationship between self-esteem, locus of control, accumulated stressors, perceived military stress, and the psychological well-being of 74 Army wives whose husbands were stationed in the Persian Gulf. The results indicated that during an extended separation, the lower the collection of stressors and perceived military stress, the greater the psychological well-being of Army wives (Knapp and Newman, 1993). This is one of the earliest studies to point out that the well-being of the non-deployed parent has a significant effect on the coping ability of the children. Kelly (1994) examined data from 61 mothers of school-age children before, during, and after the military deployment of their husbands. The wives in the study indicated that the separations disrupted the family's ability to maintain supportive relationships. The wives reported less family cohesiveness in addition to their children demonstrating more internalizing and externalizing behaviors than children whose father's deployed frequently (as in the Navy).

In an examination of the impact of military deployment on children and family adjustment, McFarlane (2009) points out that posttraumatic stress disorder and its resulting effects on intimacy creates many of the adverse changes in the families of returning veterans, and is often demonstrated through withdrawal, numbing and irritability. Further, McFarlane (2009) found that mothers' anxiety had the greatest impact on the children of deployed fathers, although absence of posttraumatic stress disorder in mothers could ease the effects of their fathers'

posttraumatic stress disorder. Through the lens of both the child and caregiver, Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo et al., (2010) examined how children from military families manage across social, emotional, and academic domains. Results showed that children in this study had more emotional difficulties compared with national samples; and that older youth and girls of all ages reported significantly more school, family, and peer-related difficulties during parental deployment (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2010). The authors noted length of parental deployment and deficient non-deployed caregiver mental health as significantly connected with greater challenges for children during both deployment and post-deployment reintegration. These findings suggest that families who experience more total months of parental deployment may benefit from targeted support to deal with stressors that emerge over time. A substantial advantage of focusing on family adjustment (McFarlane, 2009; Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2010) is that it can facilitate access to mental health care for veterans while assisting families' positive adaptation. Moreover, families in which caregivers experience poorer mental health may benefit from programs that support the caregiver and child. As a result, at least some military families in which caregivers are struggling with their own mental health may need more support for both the caregiver and child, (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2010) and may require more assistance in addressing their children's needs, via school programming, mental health services, or resources that can be used in the home. Findings linking caregiver mental health with child well-being and deployment-related difficulties highlights a need to examine the emotional health of non-deployed caregivers and the stressors they experience (McFarlane, 2009; Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo et al., 2010).

The growing number of single parents in the military indicates that many of these parents may be unable to serve as primary caregivers to their children during work-related separations or deployments (Bunch, Eastman & Moore, 2007). Depending on the service member's Family Care Plan, grandparents may be asked to become caregivers to their grandchildren (Kelly, Hock, Jarvis, et al., 2002). A comprehensive Family Care Plan includes provisions for financial, legal, medical and social care of minor children during parental deployment and separation (Bunch, Eastman & Moore, 2007). Absence of a comprehensive plan creates a bounty of problems for grandparents by requiring them to negotiate legal, educational and military systems that may be unfamiliar to them (Kelly et al., 2002; Bunch, Eastman & Moore, 2007). Consequently, the mental health of grandparent caregivers is placed at risk because of the added distress of coping with the safety and security of two generations of family members while enduring the possibility of losing their own child (Pinson- Millburn, Fabian, Schlossberg, & Pyle, 2001; Bunch, Eastman & Moore, 2007).

Risk of Maltreatment and Use of Medical Services

Although parental stress is believed to play a critical role in child maltreatment, particularly child neglect (Gibbs, et al., 2007) little is known about how this stress impacts family dysfunction and the occurrence of child maltreatment in military families. With the understanding that parental stress plays a critical role in child maltreatment, and the increase in stress that accompanies deployment, Gibbs et al., (2007) examined the association between combat-related deployment and rates of child maltreatment in families of enlisted soldiers in the United States Army who had one or more substantiated reports of child maltreatment. According to Gibbs, et al., (2007) the Army Family Advocacy Program (FAP) defines child maltreatment as

“mistreatment of a child by acts of omission or commission by a parent, guardian, foster parent, or caregiver in a way that the child’s welfare is threatened or harmed.” Incidents are classified as: a) neglect (failure to provide necessary care, inadequate supervision, medical or educational neglect, and abandonment), b) physical abuse (physical harm, mistreatment, or injury), emotional abuse (acts or omissions with adverse effects on the child’s psychological well-being) and c) sexual abuse (sexual activity with a child for the sexual gratification of an adult” (Gibbs, et al. 2007, p. 27).

Using a total of 1985 families of active duty Army soldiers who experienced at least one combat-related deployment during the 40-month study period and who had records documenting substantiated child maltreatment by a parent (biological, step, or adoptive), Gibbs, et al. (2007) found that a total of 1858 parents in 1771 different families maltreated their children. Data analysis demonstrated that the overall rate of child maltreatment was higher during times when the soldier-parents were deployed compared with the times when they were not deployed; rates of child neglect were nearly twice as great during deployment; however, the rate of physical abuse was less during deployments.

A growing body of research (Clark & Messer, 2006; Gibbs, et al. 2007; Gorman, et al., 2010) suggests that military deployment is associated with increased rates of domestic violence and child maltreatment during both the deployment and reintegration periods, as compared to the pre-deployment period. Although the authors found that the rate of maltreatment during deployment was more than 3 times greater among female civilian spouses, Gibbs, et al. (2007) urge caution in interpreting these findings due to certain methodological limitations of this research. On the other hand, these findings are consistent with those of Rentz, Marshall, Loomis,

Martin, Casteel, & Gibbs (2007) who found that child maltreatment among military families in a single state doubled during periods of massive deployments within the state, with the majority of increases being due to civilian family members engaging in behaviors consistent with child maltreatment. Rentz et al., (2007) conducted a time-series analysis of Texas child maltreatment data from 2000 to 2003 to examine changes in the occurrence of child maltreatment and the impact of parental deployments on the incidence of child maltreatment in military and nonmilitary families over time. Although there is no consensus in the literature on how military rates of child maltreatment compare with nonmilitary rates, this study implies that the rate of incident of substantiated child maltreatment is generally lower in military families but may increase as military families experience multiple deployments. The findings suggest that both leaving and returning to and from deployments increases stress on military families and potentially heighten the rate of child maltreatment. Consistent with Gibbs, et al., (2007), Rentz, et al., (2007) found non-military caretakers to be responsible for the major portion of substantiated maltreatment in military families.

Jensen, Xanakis, Wolf & Bain (1991) used standardized psychopathology rating scales to survey 213 six-to twelve-year-old children of military parents and their parents, usually mothers. Analysis of the children's self-reported symptoms and teacher rating scales indicated the levels of symptoms were consistent with national norms. Results indicated that mother's ratings of their own symptoms were higher than national norms, as were mother's ratings of their children's symptoms. The results suggest that reports of children's symptoms may be influenced by parent's reactions to stressors, although these stressors do not necessarily result in higher symptoms in the children (Jensen, et al., 1991). In order to avoid making assumptions about the

military, the authors recommend that further studies be conducted to explore the impact of military life stressors on military families.

To determine the effect of parental military deployment on the relative rate of outpatient visits for mental and behavioral health disorders in children aged 3 to 8 years, Gorman, Eide, & Hisle-Gorman (2010) connected the medical records of children of active-duty service members with their parent's deployment records. The issues were categorized as anxiety disorders; pediatric behavioral disorders, such as attention deficit disorder; and stress disorders, which include post-traumatic stress disorder and other types of stress reactions. Gorman, et al. (2010) found that young children from military families are more likely to seek mental and behavioral services when a parent is deployed than when a parent is at home. According to Gorman, et al., (2010) mental and behavioral health visits increased by 11% in these children when a military parent deployed; behavioral disorders increased 19% and stress disorders increased 18%. Although children's gender did not seem to play a significant role, rates increased in older children and children of married and male military parents. While the overall outpatient rate and rates of visits for other diagnoses decreased when a parent was deployed, researchers found that when the caregiver back home was the mother, the mental health visit rates increased; however, if the caregiver was the father, less of an increase was noted.

In a related study to examine the rates at which children of military parents accessed military health care regarding preventive well-child visits, Eide, Gorman, & Hisle-Gorman (2010) found that children of young, single, military parents are seen less frequently for preventive care when their parent is deployed while children of married parents are seen more often during this time. The authors theorized that parents exposed to consistent psychological

stress perhaps take their children to medical providers more frequently than they would if they were not coping with the same stress. Eide, et al., (2010) noted a discrepancy in symptoms experienced by children of single and married parents, especially among younger parents; suggesting that the mental health community and military social services could direct their efforts towards families with young, single parents. Nevertheless, discovery of higher rates of child maltreatment related to deployments confirms the need for improved support for non-military parents along with more effective preventive services for military families during deployment (Gibbs, et al., 2007; Eide, et al., 2010).

Stages of Deployment and Reintegration

Deployment is a period of transition and stress for military families; however, there is limited understanding of the experience of children from military families (Chandra, et al., 2010; Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler, 2005). The effect of parental deployment on families and children is of growing concern as tours extend and multiple deployments to combat zones increase (Lincoln, et al., 2008). Pincus, et al., (2005) describes the emotional cycle of an extended deployment (six months or greater) as divided into five distinct stages: Pre-deployment, Deployment, Sustainment, Re-deployment, and Post-deployment. A clear understanding of these stages is essential for counselors to develop in order to effectively support their clients through this process.

The pre-deployment stage begins with the warning order for deployment, and ends when the service member actually departs from home. During this stage, several emotional reactions occur, including, the anticipation of loss vs. denial; anger and protest; emotional detachment; family stress, and marital disagreements (Pincus, et al., 2005). The deployment stage is the

period from departure through approximately the first month of deployment. Family members may exhibit mixed emotions such as sadness, depression, disorientation, anxiety, and loneliness (Pincus, et al., 2005). The sustainment stage lasts from just after the first month through the duration of deployment. During this time, the family establishes new routines, discovers new sources of support, and feels more confident and in control (Pincus, et al., 2005). Re-deployment is the time period before the soldier is scheduled to return home, and is characterized by feelings of anticipation, excitement, apprehension, and high expectations (Pincus, et al., 2005). Post Deployment or reintegration starts with the homecoming, which is typically a honeymoon period (Drummet, et al., 2003; Pincus et al., 2005). During the post-deployment period, family roles and routines must be renegotiated, and feelings may include resentment and insecurity as the service member attempts to reintegrate into a family that is not the same as the one that was left (Pincus et al., 2005). Rest and Recuperation, known as R&R, is a period during deployment when the service member briefly returns home. During a 12 month deployment, service members may receive two weeks of R&R, at which time the family attempts to reconnect; despite the impending departure of the service member.

A prevalent misconception is that the troubles of separation instantly disappear when the military spouse and parent returns home (Drummet, et al., 2003). Service members who return home usually arrive as altered individuals (Basham, 2008). Clearly, the suppression of emotions is necessary for the combat experience. However, the skills that maintain combat survival do not fully operate well in coping with everyday life at home (Basham, 2008). Returning service members frequently experience mental health challenges at homecoming, and their own level of adjustment or grief, as well as the spouse's reaction, impacts their abilities to relate to their

children and care for their emotional needs. Returning spouses may experience frustration because they feel an intense need to normalize their lives but realize that they are uncertain about the new structure of the household (Drummet, et al., 2003). Feelings of alienation may increase tensions between the couple to the degree that ensuing deployments become anticipated as a source of relief from marital discord (Vormbrock, 1993). Reunion stressors also increase if the returning service member displays indicators or symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder such as nightmares, flashbacks, withdrawal from activities, and detachment from others (Hogancamp & Figley, 1983; Drummet, et al., 2003; Pincus et al., 2005). When one parent is deployed, the remaining parent is likely to experience loneliness, emotional overload, role shifts, financial concerns, reduction in community support, extensive parental demands, and frustration with the military bureaucracy (Vormbrock, 1993). Reunification from deployment introduces additional challenges to military families, including adjustment to combat-related injuries (Goff et al., 2007) as well as increased risk for domestic violence and child maltreatment (Rentz et al., 2007). Sayers, Farrow, Ross, & Oslin (2009) conducted a study to examine whether family reintegration problems and psychiatric symptoms are associated in recently returned military veterans. A measure of military family readjustment problems and a screening measure of domestic abuse were developed for this study, and other measures included the Mini-International Neuropsychiatric Interview for psychiatric diagnoses, the 9-item Patient Health Questionnaire for depression diagnosis and severity, and screening measures of alcohol abuse and illicit substance use (Sayers, et al., 2009). Results indicated that among married veterans, three fourths reported some type of family problem in the previous week, such as feeling like a guest in their household (40.7%), reporting their children acting afraid or not being receptive toward them

(25.0%), with 37.2% reporting as being unsure about their family role (Sayers, et al., 2009).

Among veterans with current or recently separated partners, 53.7% reported conflicts involving "shouting, pushing, or shoving," and 27.6% reported that this partner was "afraid of them" (Sayers, et al., 2009).

Reintegration into a family for a service member who has been living in a warzone for 12 months or more is a new configuration for families, with 3 of every 4 families reporting the first 3 months after "coming home" as the most stressful part of a deployment (Flake, Davis & Johnson, 2009). Research by Chandra et al., (2010) found that older children, especially those in middle or later adolescence, experienced more problems with parental deployment and reintegration than the younger children did, with girls having more problems with the reintegration period in particular. Upon reunification, there is excitement, anticipation, and relief, occasionally followed by emotional conflict as the service member reintegrates back into the family (Basham, 2008; Chandra, et al., 2010). Chandra, et al., (2010) reported that while students generally expressed excitement to have their parent return, these returns were often challenging to the new family dynamics that had been created in that parent's absence. For example, children must determine which adult is now setting household rules as they struggle with relating to the deployed parent again, as well as with any physical, mental, or emotional changes that may have occurred (Pincus et al., 2005; Chandra, et al., 2010). Findings indicate that mental health problems may complicate veterans' readjustment and reintegration into family life. Overall, depression and posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms were both associated with higher rates of family reintegration problems, suggesting that improved treatment of psychiatric disorders may be facilitated by addressing family problems (Sayers, et al., 2009).

School Children

Military children have been perceived as being exceptionally resilient and adaptable to change (Ternus, 2010) although school-aged children may exhibit more emotional symptoms and changes in mood and school performance. Many children with deployed parents experience school problems, and adolescents may be angry and apathetic. These feelings are associated with increased acting out and decreased interest in usual activities (APA Task Force, 2007). Although some children seem to cope well with deployment, school staff reported to Chandra, et al., (2010) that school functioning of many children diminishes with increased responsibilities at home, and the limited coping ability of remaining parents. To examine the relationship between military deployment and children's achievement across academic subjects, Engle et al., (2010) combined the standardized test scores of children enrolled in Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS) with their military parent's personnel data and evaluated the effect of a parent's deployment on the academic achievement of his or her children. Overall, Engle et al., (2010) found that within this military context, parental absences are associated with slightly lower academic achievement for children. This study offers evidence that deployments could potentially affect the academic achievement of children whose parents serve in the military, emphasizing the need for schools serving military connected students to develop programs that lessen the effects of deployment on children's educational attainment.

School Counselors

School counselors are visible and available as part of children's daily school experience, especially in elementary school. School counselors are commonly perceived as individuals whose expertise and professional training are specifically designed to aid students during times

of emotional crises (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992). Accordingly, the school counselor is in a pivotal position as the most appropriate person in the school setting to provide the necessary support to students of deployed military personnel (Mitchum, 1991; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Fenell, Fenell, & Williams, 2005). Parents, teachers, students, and even administrators are most likely to look to the school counselor for direction in helping students cope with difficult situations; not the least of which is parental deployment.

The presence of school counselors' influences the school climate significantly. Flake, et al., (2009) noted that the predictable structure and routine of a positive school environment directly impacts the emotions, behaviors, and academic achievement of students. Several studies have concluded that the presence of school counselors is especially associated with progress in student learning, overall mental health, and in students' impulse to externalize or internalize problem behaviors (Gerler & Anderson, 1986; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Reback, 2010). In a study of the impact of school-counselor-led interventions on student academic achievement and behavior, Brigman & Campbell (2003) found that the combination of group counseling and classroom guidance positively influenced student achievement and behavior. School counselors are often the first professional students and families meet immediately following a trauma or disaster (Chibbaro & Jackson, 2006) therefore the interaction with the school counselor is critical to the impacted student's long-range well-being. Reback (2010) noted an increase in counseling services accompanying special-education services, with counselors being included on Individual Education Plans (IEPs- formal documents establishing eligibility for special-education services) for students who specifically need to modify behavior. While most school counselors meet with students either one-on-one, in small groups, or with entire classrooms of students, Carrell &

Carrell (2006) found that a greater counselor–student ratio leads to fewer disciplinary occurrences and a lower rate of repeated referrals for the same offenses. To this end, the American School Counselor Association’s recommends a ratio of 1 counselor per 250 students (ASCA, 2005) although many states exceed this recommendation (Reback, 2010).

According to Whiston (2002) while counselors are valuable to students and have a major influence on their development, there is not sufficient literature to document the positive contributions of school counselor services. Some researchers (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Whiston, 2002) have speculated that the absence of significant research measuring and demonstrating the impact of school counseling services could potentially result in the entire profession becoming at-risk for attack. It is particularly difficult to estimate the impact counselors have on student outcomes. It is evident that when professional school counselors have the time, the resources, and the framework of a comprehensive guidance program within which to work, they play a significant role in student achievement and the development of positive and safe learning environments in schools (Sink & Stroh, 2003; Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Reback, 2010).

The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (2005) establishes school counseling programs as integral to the school’s overall mission by promoting academic achievement, career planning and personal/ social development. The professional school counselor, operating in a program reflecting the guidelines of the ASCA National Model, (2005) provides advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change within a framework that includes the program foundation, accountability, delivery system, and management system (ASCA, 2005; Studer & Oberman, 2006; Keim, 2009). According to ASCA (2005) school

counseling programs are developmental in nature, preventative in design, and comprehensive in scope; ensuring access to every student by providing counselors with clearly defined roles and functions, including that of an advocate for students.

The Department of Defense (DOD) has provided schools on selected military bases in the United States and abroad since the end of World War II. The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) consists of two school systems: a) the Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS), which is the overseas school system, and b) the Department of Defense Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary (DDESS), which is the domestic or “stateside” school system (DoDEA, 2009). DoDEA's schools serve the children of military service members and Department of Defense civilian employees throughout the world. DODDS School Counselors provide a comprehensive guidance and counseling program to all students in grades PreK-12, the foundation of which is a Competency-Based Counseling Program (CBCP). DoDEA Regulation 2946.1 (DoDEA, 2009) aligns this comprehensive program with the ASCA National Model (2005) and addresses three areas of student development: academic achievement, career planning and personal/ social development. Thus, DODDS school counselors facilitate student success by providing direct and indirect services to students, families, and school staff, and through collaboration with military and community services.

School Counselors, Deployment and Children

In general, research on parental deployment and the mental health of children and adolescents suggests that while a parents’ deployment is undoubtedly stressful, children of military service members demonstrate an extensive range of coping skills. There is every indication that school personnel experience situations where they have to provide increased

emotional support for students. Burnham & Hooper (2008) advised professional school counselors to take into account how the experience of parental deployment may affect school-aged children in their daily emotional, behavioral, and academic functioning. According to Chibbaro & Jackson (2006) school counselors should be aware that as a result of trauma or crisis, students of all ages may undergo changes in behavior and academic performance or increased absenteeism. Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, et al., (2010) reported higher anxiety and defiance in adolescents of deployed parents, with increased behaviors and acting out associated with the duration of deployment. Although some children seem to cope well with deployment, school staff reported to Chandra, et al., (2010) that increased responsibilities at home, anxiety related to parental absence, and diminished mental health of remaining parents negatively impacted the school functioning of significant numbers of children. On the other hand, Mmari, et al., (2009) found that students' ability to cope with parental deployment largely depends on the students' level of resilience and how well the family as a whole adapts.

Chandra, et al., (2010) reported that schools have become a safe haven, with students remaining after school longer, and depending on school staff for emotional support at extraordinary levels. Conversely, Mmari, et al., (2009) and Ternus (2010) found that many parents and school personnel agreed that teachers and counselors are not prepared to navigate deployment issues among the military students and need specific training on how to interact with children who are experiencing parental deployment. In schools that are heavily affected by military students Mmari, et al.,(2009) and Chandra, et al., (2010) specifically noted the need for school staff to better appreciate the military culture in order to offer students opportunities to discuss deployment-related issues and stressors, especially during the parent's return and

reintegration. Burnham & Hooper (2008) urged professional school counselors (and those in training) to develop the knowledge, skill, and competency needed to help children cope with war. Mmari, et al.,(2009) and Chandra, et al., (2010) added that professional school counselors need additional training to recognize the signs to look out for and quickly identify military students who are struggling to adjust to parental deployment. Mmari, et al., (2009) noted that while some students indicated that it felt good to discuss problems with someone, they understood that the guidance counselors at schools could not really change the situation of deployment for them.

Keim, (2009) surveyed school counselors in an investigation of school counseling services provision to children of deployed military parents. Each participant completed a 14-item survey (School Counselor Service Provision Questionnaire) which was developed by Keim (2009) to gather information on a number of topics related to service provision to children of deployed military parents. The survey was designed to determine school counselors' perceived outcome of interventions used to assist children of deployed military parents. Keim (2009) found that 72.2% school counselors reported that they had provided school counseling services to children of deployed military parents since September 11, 2001. According to survey results, 75.9% of school counselors indicated that the needs of individual students were determined through parental request; 75.0% of school counselor participants reported that student needs were identified by student self-disclosure, 65.1% reported that student needs were identified by teacher request, and 42.2% reported that student needs were identified through direct observation (Keim, 2009). Further, 59.0% of school counselors who worked with children of deployed military parents reported that they relied on other school counselors or other professionals within

the educational setting (school psychologists, social workers, administrators) for guidance in working with these children (Keim, 2009). Whereas children and adolescents of deployed soldiers require preventive and sometimes remedial service from school counselors, Rush & Akos (2007) proposed a 10-session psycho-educational counseling group to build student competencies (e.g., coping, developmental tasks) increase student knowledge about deployment, and provide a safe environment to express feelings within a supportive peer network. Using an experimental/control group pretest-posttest design, Mitchum (1999) examined the effectiveness of a six-session group counseling intervention for children who had a parent experiencing military-induced deployment. Participants were 65 children (30 boys, 35 girls) of enlisted military personnel attending elementary schools where school counselors facilitated the counseling groups. Findings by Mitchum (1999) indicated that the functioning of children who attended the counseling sessions did not differ from the control group over time.

Fairly (2006) explored the level of parental satisfaction with school counseling services offered to children of deployed military personnel. In this study, 45 parents completed a 17-item Military Parent Questionnaire (MPQ) developed by the researcher and designed to capture specific demographic information (gender of deployed parent, age and gender of children), and nature and satisfaction level of counseling services provided for the children (Fairly, 2006). The results indicated that although many of the participants in the study suggested that their child might have benefited from some form of counseling within the public school, their child did not receive any counseling from their School Counseling program. These findings support the notion that school counselors who are implementing a comprehensive and developmental counseling program have a duty to offer appropriate services to students who are in need of

personal and social counseling interventions (Fairly, 2006). Researchers have only recently begun to address the need for developing school-based programs and services for children of deployed military parents (Keim, 2009). Through examining the perspective of school staff on the impact parental deployment has on children's social and emotional functioning, Chandra, et al., (2010) highlights the importance of school staff in support of adolescent development. The limited amount of published research indicates that school personnel see parental deployments as distressing the ability of children to function at school, yet staff are underprepared to handle the issues related to students from military families (Keim, 2009; Chandra, et al., 2010; Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, et al., 2010; Mmari, et al., 2009; Ternus, 2010).

School counselors are an integral part of children's daily lives and are charged with tending to the academic, social, and emotional needs of students. According to Burnham & Hooper (2008) the implications for professional school counselors underline the ethical obligation to assist during times of crisis, confirming the need for additional training and research. Given that the perspectives of school counselors who spend a significant amount of time interacting with military connected students have not been the focus of research, more studies are needed on the effects of military parental deployment on children and youth. Very little has been written about the experience of school counselors who work with military children who have a parent deployed. Unfortunately, as Burnham & Hooper (2008) reported, "the paucity of literature comes at a critical time when American youth are faced with potential deleterious effects of the war." It is therefore incumbent on counselor educators to comprehensively investigate and understand the perspectives of school counselors who work with military children.

This particular study seeks to inform counselor research, training, and practice through the findings generated via individual interviews with counselors who live the experience under investigation, specifically, the phenomenon of school counselors who work with military children. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, design, participants and procedures employed throughout the study.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology used in this study. The chapter begins with a description of the researcher role and positionality, and includes a discussion of the chosen research design, the purpose of the study and the research questions upon which the study is based. A rationale for each of these components is included. Additionally, the methods for data collection, analysis and validity measures are described. The chapter proceeds with a discussion of limitations encountered while conducting the study, and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

Researcher Positionality

My research interest is in counselor development of the cultural competence to identify and meet the mental health needs of military service members and their families. As the daughter of a United States Air Force and Vietnam Veteran, I experienced several national and international relocations during my childhood. I attended Department of Defense Schools in Europe, and these experiences during my formative years allowed me to develop a natural comfort and acceptance of differences in people. My array of experiences with separations, relocations, mobility, loss, and exposure to diverse cultures as a *military brat* made me more flexible, adaptable, independent, and resilient. Other *brats* who shared similar experiences reminded me how different I felt from my peers whose parents were civilian. As an adult, I had the opportunity to work for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DoDDS) as an elementary school counselor. During my nine years as a DoDDS counselor, I worked closely with military children, families, and community organizations, and further increased my

understanding of the culture of the military. I was familiar with the challenges they faced with relocation but I was exposed to the academic, emotional, psychological, behavioral and environmental challenges from a new perspective. I was working on a military base in Europe when the 9/11 terrorist attacks and subsequent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan began. Friends and parents of my students were deploying, and families and children were devastated. As the counselor, I could see the changes, but was unsure how to intervene. Our community had very few deployments, but the ones we did have made an impact. I noticed that some children acted like nothing had happened, yet I often had moms in my office in tears about the absence of the deployed spouse. I worked with young siblings who took turns visiting the nurses' office, resulting in the mother taking home at least one sick child each day of the week. Deployment was new to us, but I still felt like I was not doing enough to help the children. I knew something needed to be done and I thought research would help bring awareness. Upon entering my doctoral program, I decided to study the effects and mental health needs of military families during the stages of deployment. I felt that counselors and other school personnel needed specific training on how to meet the needs of this unique population. The lens through which I view my research is from the perspective of a former military brat who experienced extensive relocations and separations, including her father's deployment to Vietnam. I am positioned as a school counselor living and working in a military community in a foreign country during peacetime and subsequent wartime deployments. I am positioned as an advocate of social justice and development of cultural competence to work with special populations. I am positioned as a qualitative researcher and future counselor educator.

The phenomenon explored in this study is the experiences and perspectives of school counselors who work with school-aged children with deployed military parents; and to give voice to those experiences. Consequently, while every effort was made to suspend and reduce my personal bias during phases of data collection, I opted instead to engage bias as a validity strategy during data analysis and discussion of findings, thus drawing on personal experience as confirmation of participant experiences. This study seeks to capture the voices of professional school counselors, thus contributing to narrowing the gap in literature. My intent is to develop a research agenda that informs the training of new counselors to successfully work with the military population.

Research Design

This qualitative study used an exploratory phenomenological approach to examine the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents from the perspectives of school counselors who work with children and adolescents of deployed military service members. Qualitative research methodologies are appropriate for usage across a range of situations, depending on the purpose of the research. Exploratory phenomenological research seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Glesne, 2006) and is often the chosen method used to explore the lived experience or meaning individuals attach to issues or circumstances (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) discussed the five major approaches of qualitative research, which are most often used in the social, and behavioral sciences. Among the five approaches are (a) narrative, (b) phenomenological, (c) grounded theory, (d) ethnographic, and (e) case study (Creswell, 2007).

Narrative study involves the researcher exploring the lives and personal stories of individuals, and subsequently retelling those stories. Thus, the result is a collaborative narrative that incorporates views of the participants and the researcher (Creswell, 2009). The narrative method of inquiry was rejected because the researcher intended to explore a phenomenon rather than combine her personal views with those of the participants in the retelling of stories. The grounded theory method of inquiry was rejected because the purpose of the study was not to generate a theory of process or action based on the views of the participants. Further, the multiple stages of data collection were prohibitive based on the resources available to the researcher. The extended period of time and prolonged exposure to the participants required to complete a case study or ethnography also exceeded the resources of the researcher. Further, the participants for this study were not considered to be an intact cultural group. The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of individuals who experience the phenomenon in question. In this case, the phenomenon in question was the lived experiences of professional school counselors who worked with children of deployed military parents. This study sought to explore the perspectives of professional school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school-aged children and adolescents. The characteristics of a phenomenological method of inquiry allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the true essence of the phenomenon in question (i.e., the perspectives of school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents). Face to face interviews, a major phenomenological data collection procedure, required the researcher to bracket her own beliefs and experiences and instead explore the meanings held by the participants. Phenomenological data analysis endorses the emergence of themes generated via the multiple perspectives of

participants (Creswell, 2007) and provides for a rich description of the lived experiences of the participants. Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007) discussed several phenomenological methods to incorporate into exploration of the lived experiences of study participants. These methods include: (a) vigilant consideration of researcher positionality and bias; (b) prudent selection of participants; (c) use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews; (d) identification of significant statements; (e) converting significant statements into themes; (f) development of textural descriptions (what and how) of the experience; and (g) formulating a thick, rich description of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). These phenomenological methods supported the goal of answering the research question, thus I chose a phenomenological method of inquiry for this study. The phenomenological method of inquiry was appropriate to capture the voices and lived experiences of professional school counselors who work on the front lines with military children and families encountering parental deployment.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Chandra, et al., (2010) suggested an examination from the perspectives of school personnel to study the effects of parental deployment on the emotions and behaviors of children and youth in the school setting. Correspondingly, this study seeks to answer the following research question:

- 1) *“How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?”*

Procedures

This qualitative study used an exploratory phenomenological approach to examine the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents from the perspectives of school counselors who work with children and adolescents of deployed military service members. Qualitative research methodologies are appropriate for usage across a range of situations, depending on the purpose of the research. Exploratory phenomenological research seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Glesne, 2006) and is often the chosen method used to explore the lived experience or meaning individuals embrace about an issue or circumstance (Creswell, 2009).

Phenomenological data is collected directly from the source, thus this study used face to face confidential interviews. Although qualitative researchers usually collect data in the natural setting of participants, this study took place at a professional conference and not at the schools where the counselors work.

The researcher completed the university IRB process and was granted an exemption for human subjects (Appendix E). Recruiting posters and flyers were developed and the university IRB granted permission for their use. The posters detailed the title and nature of the study and invited professional school counselors to participate in a research study by granting a confidential and audio- taped personal interview that would last between 30-45 minutes.

(Appendix D)

Upon arrival at the conference facility, the researcher met with one of the conference organizers and displayed the recruiting posters and flyers in several locations around the conference facility. The researcher used purposeful sampling where she positioned herself at the

conference registration table and personally greeted and recruited potential subjects from conference attendees who identified themselves as school counselors during the registration process. As part of the purposeful sampling, the researcher explained the nature of the study and invited school counselors to participate by granting an interview that should last between 30-45 minutes. School counselors or other personnel who did not work with school aged children and adolescents with one or more deployed military parent were excluded from the study, but were invited to suggest potential participants. All potential subjects had the option of declining the invitation to participate in the study. Upon identifying individuals who were willing to participate in the study, the researcher scheduled appointments to conduct confidential interviews. Several participants contributed to *snowball* sampling where they recommended others to participate in the study.

The researcher secured a private room at the conference facility in which to conduct interviews. Possible distractions were the noise from the rain outside and the room temperature, which some subjects found to be cold. Upon arrival of each interviewee, the researcher provided an Explanation of Research (Appendix E) information sheet that detailed the purpose and nature of the study, and what was expected of each participant, i.e., to participate in a personal and confidential audio-taped interview regarding their perceptions of the effects of military parental deployment on the school children with whom they worked. As the study was granted an IRB exemption, no signature was required. Each participant was given a pseudonym to aid in transcriptions and data analysis. No personal identifying information was gathered. The researcher read the same introductory script to each participant and asked for permission to audio tape the interview. Upon obtaining permission to audio tape the interviews, the tape recorder was

turned on and each interview began. An independent company with no affiliation to the researcher or the university later transcribed taped recordings of the interviews verbatim.

Population

The population from which study participants were drawn consisted of professional school counselors who work with school-aged children and adolescents who have one or more deployed military parent. The research was conducted at a professional counseling conference in Germany in the fall of 2010. Conference attendees include a number of school counselors who work with children who have one or more deployed military parent. The researcher is a member of the professional organization, and was able to gain access to the intended population via attendance at the conference. Prior to the conference, the researcher contacted the conference organizers to obtain permission to conduct the study during the conference. Permission was granted, and one of the organizers offered to assist the researcher in identifying potential participants.

Table 1 illustrates the demographic data of the 12 professional school counselors who participated in confidential interviews for this study. There were 10 female and two male participants. Ages of participants ranged from 34-66, with an average age of 50. Years of experience as a school counselor ranged from 3 months to 42 years, with 15.6 years as the average. The time spent at current school locations ranged from 3 months to 38 years, with an average of 8.25 years. Of the 10 participants who were elementary counselors, two worked at both elementary and middle schools. Of the two middle school counselors, one also worked at a high school. Seven of the participants identified as Caucasian, three as African American, one as Hispanic, and one as Caucasian and American Indian mixed. Each of the participants held at

least one Master's degree, while three held doctorates. Four of the participants were licensed mental health counselors, and two were master addiction counselors. There was some overlap in certifications, including dual certifications as Licensed Professional Counselors and Master Addictions Counselors. Several of the participants indicated they worked for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS).

Table 1: Participant Demographic Information

| Pseudonym | School Level | M/F | Age | Ethnicity | Years Exp | Years Current | Certifications |
|-----------|--------------|-----|-----|----------------------------------|-----------|---------------|---|
| Steve | Elementary | M | 40 | Caucasian | 7 | 4 | NBCC |
| Ann | Elementary | F | 49 | Caucasian | 8 | 1.5 | LMHC; NCC Master's + 60 |
| Zoey | Elementary | F | 52 | African Am | 18 | 3 months | Ph.D- Education |
| Beth | Elem/Mid | F | n/a | African Am +Caucasian | 14 | 9 | LPC; NCC; 2 Master's |
| Eve | Mid/High | F | 40 | Caucasian | 3 | 3 | Master's |
| Marge | Elementary | F | 55 | Caucasian | 13 | 3 months | LPC;NCC;MAC; EAP |
| Carlos | Elementary | M | 42 | Hispanic | 11 | 11 | Ph.D. Education |
| Diva | Elementary | F | 34 | African Am | 7.5 | 4 months | Certified Teacher & Counselor |
| Jen | Middle | F | 66 | Caucasian | 42 | 38 | Ed.D; NBCC |
| Sue | Elementary | F | 63 | Caucasian+ Native American | 15 | 2 | LPC; CAC; School Psychologist; Special Ed. Teacher |
| Trish | Elem/Mid | F | 57 | Caucasian | 33 | 17 | Master's; NBCC |
| Fran | Elementary | F | 53 | Caucasian | 19 | 12 | Counselor; Gifted Ed; ESL K-12; Bilingual K-8 |

Participant Snapshots

Steve is a 40-year-old Caucasian male with seven years' experience as a Department of Defense Dependent Schools-Europe (DoDDS-E) professional school counselor at the elementary level. He has been at his current location on a military base in Germany for the past 4 years. Steve's community houses several military commands, and classified communication between them results in limited dissemination of deployment information. Steve, a passionate advocate on behalf of children from dual military and single service member families, conducts deployment support groups and mentor programs on behalf of children with deployed military parents. Steve is NBCC certified and trained in crisis intervention, but the last few years have consisted of training workshops sponsored by the Military Child Education Coalition. Steve's school does not have a formal process for counselor notification of military parental deployment, although he feels reasonably prepared to work with military connected children. He recommends that counselors in training gain knowledge about military life and culture, the stages of deployment, behavioral interventions, and family systems therapy.

Ann is a 49-year-old Caucasian woman with eight years' experience as a Professional School Counselor at the elementary level. Ann has worked as a Department of Defense Dependent Schools-Europe (DoDDS-E) school counselor in Germany, Italy and Korea, and currently conducts deployment support groups on behalf of children with deployed military parents. Ann, an NBCC certified Licensed Mental Health Counselor, is trained in critical incident stress debriefing, but states that more training is needed to effectively work with military children and families in the school setting. Ann's school does not have a formal process for counselor notification of military parental deployment, although she feels extremely prepared

to work with military connected children. Ann has worked in communities with 98% deployment rates, and passionately advocates on behalf of the mental health needs of children who experience parental deployment. She recommends that counselors in training develop an understanding of military life and culture in order to comprehend the challenges associated with being a child of a deployed service member.

Zoey is a 52-year-old African American woman who brings 22 years' experience as a DoDDS-E professional school counselor at the elementary and middle school levels. Zoey holds a Ph.D in Education, and conducts weekly deployment support groups on behalf of children with deployed military parents. A passionate advocate on behalf of families experiencing parental deployment, Zoey credits her childhood as a military brat as giving her the confidence to work with military connected children. Although the school does not have a formal process, Zoey states that parents usually notify the school counselor or teacher of impending deployments. A veteran counselor in Europe, Zoey recommends that counselors in training develop patience, appreciation, and unconditional positive regard for military connected children and families. Zoey advocates on behalf of the mental health needs of remaining spouses during deployment, and considers an understanding of military life and culture as essential to supporting these families.

Beth identifies as bi-racial, African American and Caucasian and has 14 years' experience as a professional school counselor at the elementary and middle school levels. She has been at her current location in Germany for the past nine years, and currently serves both elementary and middle school. Beth conducts deployment support groups on behalf of children with deployed military parents, and monitors their attendance and academic progress. She

perceives middle school students as reluctant to attend deployment groups, and often questions the weekly practice. Beth states that teachers inform her when children have or will have a deployed parent. Beth has two master's degrees, is NCC certified, and is a Licensed Professional Counselor although she indicates that she lacks training, expertise and confidence in working with children of deployed military parents. Beth passionately advocates for the academic achievement of military connected children, and recommends counselors in training to conduct research into the numerous effects of deployment on military children and families.

Eve is a 40-year-old Caucasian woman with three months' experience as a professional school counselor at the middle and high school level. Although Eve is a very new counselor, she feels her ten-year experience as a military spouse and mother has prepared her to work with military children and families. She conducts deployment support groups at the elementary and high school and looks forward to more training. Eve attended a deployment-training workshop sponsored by the Military Child Education Coalition. The military command at Eve's Mediterranean School District observes strict security measures and rarely releases deployment information; therefore, counselor notification of parental deployment depends on parents sharing that information. Eve passionately advocates on behalf of children with deployed military parents, and recommends counselors in training develop a firm appreciation of the ways in which military life and culture influence children and families.

Marge is a 55-year-old Caucasian woman with diverse experience and certifications. She worked in Germany as a practicum student during 1990/'91, and was later hired as an adolescence substance abuse counselor for the military bases. Most of her work since 1990 has been with military service members and their children, including working with adults in

substance abuse, and as an LPC in schools. She is in her 5th year as an elementary counselor, and has been working predominantly in elementary and middle DoDEA Schools. There is no formal process to notify Marge about parental deployment, but she usually investigates on her own. Marge conducts weekly deployment groups and monthly deployment support activities on behalf of children with deployed parents. Marge is a Licensed Professional Counselor, Master Addiction Counselor, Certified Employee Assistance Program Counselor, and is NCC certified. Marge recommends that counselors in training develop an understanding of the stages of deployment and military life, especially as they relate to military missions and relocations. She also suggests counselors in training be skilled in grief counseling and group counseling.

Carlos is a 42-year-old Latino male who has been a DoDDS elementary school counselor in Germany for 11 years. Carlos describes himself as positive, optimistic, nurturing, with a natural ability to connect with children. He regards his mother's unconditional love as his best preparation for life and for his job; although he earned a Ph.D in Education. Carlos conducts deployment groups on behalf of children with deployed parents. He learns about parental deployment via the School Liaison Officer (SLO) who facilitates communication between schools and military commands. A veteran of Operation Desert Storm, Carlos spent the ages between 18 -15 in the Army, and has a firm appreciation of military life and culture. He suggests that counselors in training understand the role of the counselor in children's lives and in the military community. Carlos believes his first responsibility is to advocate for students, and to provide as much emotional support as necessary to help them through the deployment cycle.

Diva is a 34-year-old African American woman with seven years' experience as a school counselor for military children at the elementary, middle, and high school level. A certified

teacher, Diva has worked at Ft. Hood, Texas, and her current assignment is with the Mediterranean District of the Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe (DoDDS-E). Diva conducts deployment support groups on behalf of children with deployed parents and receives deployment notification via information from teachers and parents. Diva credits her experiences as a military brat and training from the Military Child Education Coalition as significantly influencing her preparation and competence. Diva encourages counselors in training to refrain from making assumptions, and view each military family and situation as unique. She views patience and emotional support as critical components of her role with students.

Jen is a 66-year-old Caucasian woman with 42 years' experience as a Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) professional school counselor at the elementary and middle school levels. Jen has counseled students through deployments to Kosovo, Bosnia, Desert Storm, Iraq and Afghanistan. Jen has an Ed.D in Counseling Psychology, and is considered a leader in the counseling community. She learns about parental deployment via the School Liaison Officer (SLO) who facilitates communication between schools and military commands, or via the Commander of the Rear Detachment of non-deployed units. Jen conducts deployment groups, assemblies, and school wide celebrations on behalf of students with deployed parents. Jen cautions against generalizing about the effects of deployment on individual families, and suggests considering the myriad of factors that influence the deployment experience. Jen notes the complexity of military life and culture and the influence it has on families, and expresses her love for her job and for the military children and families.

Sue is a 63-year-old Caucasian woman with eight years' experience as a professional school counselor at the elementary, middle, and high school levels; and 11 years as a licensed

professional counselor and certified addiction specialist. Trained as a school psychologist, Sue has taught students with special needs and participated on crisis teams during the aftermath of Columbine High School. Sue embraces a strength and resiliency model in her work with families, and strongly endorses the use of group therapy for children and adults. Hence, she conducts weekly deployment support groups, study skills groups, and afterschool homework groups. Sue credits her feelings of competence to her background as a therapist, and views her school counseling role as multifaceted. Sue receives deployment notification via information from teachers and parents, and strongly believes in school counselors providing direct and indirect service to students through the support of teachers and families. Her experiences with military families have left her with enormous feelings of pride and gratitude. Sue recommends that counselors in training develop skill in mental health counseling, group counseling, family systems, special education, and PTSD.

Trish is a 57-year-old Caucasian woman with 33 years' experience as a professional school counselor at the elementary and middle school levels for the Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe (DoDDS-E). In the past 26 years, Trish has counseled military children and families through deployments to Bosnia, Kosovo, Desert Storm, Iraq, and Afghanistan. She credits her feelings of competence to personal consumption of research, experience, trainings provided by the Military Child Education Coalition, and counselors working together to develop their own materials. Trish conducts weekly deployment support groups on behalf of children with deployed parents, and receives deployment notification via the School Liaison Officer (SLO). Trish's perception of the disparity between children who live on military installations in Europe and those who live in the United States directs counselors in

training to become knowledgeable about military life and culture, especially as related to family adjustment during the cycle of deployment.

Fran, a 53-year-old Caucasian woman brings 19 years' experience with the Department of Defense Dependents Schools-Europe (DoDDS-E) as a professional school counselor at the elementary and high school levels across Germany. Fran conducts weekly deployment support groups on behalf of children with deployed parents, writes a counselor's column in the school newsletter, and maintains school and community support and mentoring partnerships between elementary, middle, and high school students. Fran's certifications include elementary teacher for grades kindergarten through sixth; Bilingual/Bicultural teacher for grades kindergarten through eight, counselor, gifted education, and English as a second language (ESL) teacher for grades Kindergarten through 12th. Fran is active in her military community and the school serves as a community center and source of support and information for families. She suggests counselors in training develop an understanding of the unique features of military culture and communities.

Interview Protocol

Interview protocols were established based on a review of the literature, and were developed prior to data collection (Appendix A). The interview protocol consisted of open ended questions regarding counselor experiences working with military children who endure parental deployment. Interview questions were structured to encourage counselors to openly and honestly express their perspectives on the effects of deployment on school aged children. Review of the literature generated questions regarding the stages of deployment, counselor training and preparation to work with military populations, academic, social, emotional, and behavioral

outcomes observed in children, and recommendations for counselors in training. (Appendix B) Questions also invited counselors to discuss the personal impact working with military families has had on them, and were designed to gain an understanding of the authentic perspectives of the participants, and were guided by the research question:

How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?

The researcher established rapport by disclosing her interest in conducting the research study and acknowledging her bias as a former school counselor who has worked with military children and families. The researcher discussed her commitment to bracketing her prior knowledge, and invited each participant to respond freely to the interview questions. The researcher read an introductory script to each participant and obtained permission to begin taping the interview. The researcher asked each participant the open ended interview questions that had been established based on a review of the literature. The open ended questions were presented in a conversational tone, and allowed interviewees the opportunity to elaborate on each point or offer insights that were specific to their own perspective and lived experience. The researcher maintained a delicate balance and minimized bias by limiting the amount of suggestive answer prompts, while allowing for follow up questions and probes. Most participants were very forthcoming and thoroughly offered their perspectives. The researcher practiced “*epoche*” whereas the instrument of research, she suspended or bracketed her preconceived notions about the subject matter (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). For example, if participants discussed an issue with which the researcher was familiar, the researcher invited the participant to elaborate specifically according to their own experiences or perspectives. Thus, the researcher did not

guide the interview with her own experience and knowledge of the subject matter. The researcher listened to each answer and recorded reflective notes and observations of topics requiring further probing, and asked for definitions or examples of concepts and terms. The researcher positioned herself as a reader with limited knowledge of military life and culture, permitting participants to offer their authentic perspectives without scrutiny by the researcher. Thus, participants were free to guide segments of the interviews when they became passionate about a topic.

Review of the transcripts indicated that the research drew on a number of counseling skills including reflective listening and offering minimal encouragers of understanding (*right, ok, yes, nodding of head*). Although the researcher was familiar with many of the terms used, participants were still asked for clarifications to minimize researcher bias and attempt to interpret the definitions. The participants provided their own definitions of terms and often elaborated on their answers without prompting. The researcher refrained from interrupting as it was essential to capture the perspectives of the participants' and not her own. At the end of the interview, the researcher asked the participants to complete a demographic information form. This form was given at the end of each interview so as not to influence the answers given by the participant. Demographic information was kept separately from interview transcripts and the corresponding pseudonyms were indicated on the form. The demographic information form was designed to capture relevant information from the participants. For example: number of years as a school counselor, grade level of students with whom they work, type of training, and the nature of the procedure in place at their school for counselors to be informed that a student has a parent who is deployed. At the end of each interview, the researcher offered each interviewee a token of thanks

for their participation and the tape recorder was turned off. Interviewees were given the option of providing contact information for the purpose of member-checking and verification, if they so desired. The time of the interviews ranged from 18 minutes to 56 minutes.

Data Analysis

Analysis of data followed the procedures recommended by Creswell (2009) and Moustakas (1994). Thus, the data was first organized and prepared for analysis. The interviews were transcribed by an outside agency with no affiliation to the researcher or the university. At the end of individual interviews, the researcher sometimes audio-taped personal observations as field notes, and these were also transcribed for analysis. The stages of analysis consisted of listening to the taped interviews while comparing each line to the written transcripts to ensure accuracy. Transcripts were edited as necessary to accurately reflect what was on the audio recordings. Study participants who indicated a desire to review the data were sent copies of the transcripts to validate. The researcher read through all of the transcripts to gain a general sense and impression of the information (Creswell, 2009) and bracketed all assumptions in order to critically examine the data as it was presented. First cycle coding methods (Saldana, 2009) consisted of exploratory Initial and Holistic coding of words and phrases that appeared to describe the lived experiences of the participants. These preliminary codes helped to segment the data until more refined codes could be identified (Creswell, 2009). This first stage consisted of highlighting, underlining, jotting notes and circling.

To identify basic descriptive information, this first cycle of coding included Attribute Coding (Saldana, 2009) of the participant's demographic information forms, and identified certain characteristics such as years of experience and grade level of school assignment. As the

first cycle coding progressed, the researcher used Simultaneous Coding (Saldana, 2009) or co-occurring codes for segments of data that could be coded under more than one category. For example, some of the children's behaviors were coded under both emotional and behavioral responses. The use of In Vivo Coding (Saldana, 2009; Creswell, 2009) allowed the researcher to code the exact words and phrases used by the participants. Direct statements from participants' own words later supported the validity of the themes and findings. Additional first cycle coding consisted of Descriptive Coding (Saldana, 2009) which facilitated the identification of characteristics associated with meaningful statements. Descriptive Coding guided the researcher in categorizing and obtaining an organizational grasp of the data (Saldana, 2009). Upon multiple reviews of the transcript data, the researcher determined several variations of the experiences of the participants. Inductive codes were developed through direct examination of the data. Consequently, Emotion Coding (Saldana, 2009) was included as the first cycle coding progressed. Emotion Coding identified the emotions recalled, described, or experienced by the participants. This stage of the coding process generated detailed descriptions of the experiences of the participants. The inclusion of Descriptive, In Vivo, Simultaneous, and Emotion Coding (Saldana, 2009) provided the basis for the next level of analysis.

After reviewing several transcripts, similar topics were clustered together, assigned descriptions, and later developed into preliminary categories (Creswell, 2009). Upon completion of the first cycle coding process, it was clear that the second cycle coding methods of Pattern Coding and Focused Coding (Saldana, 2009) would best be served through the use of a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis System (CAQDAS; Saldana, 2009). Therefore, the researcher used ATLAS.ti to simultaneously display and organize multiple codes and categories.

The ATLAS.ti program allowed the researcher to move back and forth between various sections, and facilitated the process of visually identifying and grouping the data set. Subsequent reviews of the data transcripts allowed the researcher to refine and revise codes as necessary. Through this process, the true essence of the phenomenon substantially emerged.

ATLAS.ti

ATLAS.ti is a qualitative data analysis program designed to facilitate the management and organization of large data sets. The researcher navigated through the instructional tutorials that accompanied the program, but underestimated the time and effort required to master the functions and capabilities of ATLAS.ti. Nevertheless, the researcher began another level of initial coding using un-highlighted transcripts and ATLAS.ti. During this phase of analysis, the researcher looked for key words, phrases, ideas, similarities and inconsistencies. This round of open coding of the data transcripts resulted in the identification of 347 codes. The researcher meticulously dissected the data, which possibly resulted in over coding. Subsequent reviews of the codes and data set indicated redundancy between some of the codes. Attempting to merge the 347 codes into 30 or 40 categories became an impossible, ineffective, inefficient undertaking, although the process revealed several relationships between codes. Whereas ATLAS.ti permitted the merging and renaming of codes, the researcher felt that the original 347 codes were a result of biased reactions to the data, and subsequently chose not to use that function. At the early stages of analysis, the researcher was biased in favor of the participants such that almost every statement was coded as meaningful. Consequently, after reviewing the data transcripts and listening to interviews multiple times to get a sense of the meaning attached to the statements, the researcher was able to detect certain nuances, patterns and subtleties. This stage of analysis

required the researcher to concentrate on the participants' voices rather than her own. The researcher listened and read as a blank slate to focus attention on what participants said rather than what she thought she heard. With the help of the list of codes to merge, additional reviews of the data allowed the researcher to discover a number of categories within which to code the data. Categories developed according to their relevance to each topic. Broad topics were combined into smaller categories that later became codes. The data yielded 30 preliminary categories that became the new codes.

Three peer debriefers reviewed the 30 codes and categories, and determined them to be appropriate for further analysis. The researcher reflected on what she wanted to discover from the data. The answer was in the original research question: *How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?* Returning to the purpose of the study facilitated analysis and categorization of the data according to what the participants shared about their experiences. The researcher again started with blank transcripts and coded each one according to the 30 preliminary categories. This round of focused coding actually yielded three more categories, for a total of 33 new codes.

Upon completion of coding each data set according to the 33 preliminary categories the researcher conducted an analysis of the relationships between categories. The linking of codes using ATLAS.ti identified relationships and networks across the data set. This level of focused coding yielded similarities and semantic relationships among and between the categories. Many of the categories were associated with each other or eventually emerged as themes that represented the voices of the participants. The emergence of four themes guided interpretation of the big picture and the primary themes among all of the data sets.

Validity Strategies

Creswell (2009) and Creswell & Miller (2000) offer several procedures to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research. The procedures in which the researcher engaged are discussed below.

Member Checking

Each participant was offered the opportunity to review the data transcripts for accuracy and reflection, and number of study participants indicated they would be willing to do so. Accordingly, these participants were sent electronic copies of the transcripts after the first round of initial coding. Email communication invited participants to offer any insights or comments they thought were appropriate or necessary, including any thoughts or feelings that arouse during the entire process. In this case, member checking was not an effective validity strategy. Maintenance of confidentiality necessitated that participants be identified only by pseudonyms, yet personal email and contact information was required for member checking. Thus, none of the participants who indicated they would review transcripts actually responded to the communications.

Researcher Reflexivity

A significant validity procedure in which the researcher engaged involved clarifying researcher bias. The researcher is a former school counselor who worked with children of deployed military parents, and is therefore a member of the population being studied. The researcher desired to give a voice to this population, and to validate their experiences. Consequently, self-reflection and disclosure of researcher bias were integral components of the research study. Prior to conducting the personal interviews, the researcher disclosed to

participants that she was a former school counselor who worked with children of deployed military parents, and how that experience influenced her research interest. The researcher openly discussed her desire to examine and validate the experiences of the participants, while still suspending her personal feelings and bias. The interview questions were developed through an exhaustive review of the literature, rather than from the researcher's interpretation of what constituted appropriate questions. Participants were encouraged to expand their answers as the researcher jotted personal notes and reflections rather than impose bias on to the participant. Review of personal reflections and field-notes aided the researcher in bracketing her own perceptions. Instead, the researcher concentrated on the perspectives of the participants without offering undue influence.

Sitting here talking with these counselors makes me feel right at home. This whole thing is giving me a lump in my throat hearing what they deal with and remembering what it was like. Their stories are so detailed and they say a lot at a time. I guess that is what counselors do. I hope I am not getting in over my head!- Researcher Journal

Reduction of researcher influence permitted the participants to speak openly and honestly about their experiences. The respondents gave true accounts and elaborated on points that offered frank descriptions and confirmation of the validity of the data. The researcher's challenge not to exhibit bias during data collection may have resulted in some missed opportunities to probe further into participants' descriptions. The researcher incorporated her bias as a validity strategy during the data analysis and discussion sections of the study. The researcher has lived the experienced under investigation, yet suspended her bias during data collection. Instead, personal experience confirmed and informed the discussion of findings and implications for further research, training, and practice.

Peer-Debriefing

Engaging in peer debriefing enabled the researcher to discuss her perceptions outside the process of data analysis. Peer debriefing enabled the researcher to “bounce” ideas and interpretations off fellow qualitative researchers. Peer debriefers offered challenge and support as the researcher engaged in formal and informal peer debriefing throughout the entirety of the study. Peer debriefers were chosen based on their willingness to assist the researcher by reviewing documents, discussing ideas, listening, and providing feedback. Knowledge of qualitative research was desired but not necessary.

Bob, one of the peer debriefers, was a classmate who recently completed a phenomenological investigation and was very familiar with qualitative data analysis, interview transcripts, and recognizing themes from codes and categories. Bob was aware of this study from its inception, and frequently offered guidance throughout the research process. Bob shared his knowledge of qualitative research, and provided resources and references that aided in the completion of the study. Bob had limited knowledge of military life and culture, thus he functioned as a blank slate upon which the researcher could reflect and monitor potential bias. The following communication illustrates Bob’s willingness to offer constructive feedback.

OK. You are getting so close. I believe you need to re-code. . . but this time with a defined list. (Research Key, Devenish, 2002,) So, any of your existing codes with four or less “hits” needs to be rolled into a new or existing code. Also, the code with 60 “hits” “Effects of deployment” is too vague and needs to be broken down. I can’t think of a way to do this other than reduce your code list to a manageable number . . . the themes will emerge from the codes.

Dr. Hollins, a second debriefer, was a professor of qualitative research methods. Dr. Hollins provided guidance throughout the coding process and the initial phases of learning and

using ATLAS.ti. Dr. Hollins consistently referred the researcher back to the research question, and provided feedback, guidance and support. Despite her expertise in qualitative research methods, Dr. Hollins facilitated discussion throughout many of the steps during the analysis process without once giving the answers! Consultations occurred as necessary, and usually included discussions on methods of data analysis as related to this study. Thus, Dr. Hollins functioned as a peer debriefer, instructor, expert, and mentor.

Jan, the third debriefer was a doctoral student with expertise in instructional technology. Although she was familiar with classifying data sets, her contribution to helping discover the themes was based solely on the data and not on researcher interpretations. Jan reviewed the 33 codes and categories and offered insight into the links between codes. Thus, Jan conducted an almost blind review of the categories and identified imbedded relationships.

Hey- it looks to me like you have at least distinct themes here. I will need you to explain what you mean by Military Life because that has the most codes under it.

None of the three debriefers was very familiar with the particular subject matter of this study, (military children and families who experience parental deployment) so their unbiased insights as readers were valuable. An acceptable level of inter-rater reliability was established as the debriefers generally coded data segments the same way and indicated similar levels of understanding of the subject matter.

Thick, Rich Descriptions

The final write up of data analysis and results contained thick, rich descriptions of the research findings (Moustakas,1994). The use of In Vivo codes permitted the researcher to report themes through the use of participants' own words. Collections of direct quotes from the data validated the final report. Use of original words, descriptions, and details supported the

authenticity of the study, and provided readers with the ability to picture and experience the events described in the study. Creswell (1998) used the term “vicarious experience of being there for the reader.” Moustakas (1994) encouraged the use of thick, rich descriptions to provide readers with the true essence of the phenomenon under investigation. Use of significant rich descriptions in the participants’ own words lent credibility to the participant experiences and supported the researcher’s goal to suspend personal biases and interpretations. Additional validity measures included an extensive review of previous literature, and openness to disconfirming evidence (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a rationale and description of the methodology, research design and data analysis procedures used in this study. This chapter also contained a discussion of the purpose of the study and research questions, along with population sample and data collection procedures. This chapter discussed the development of interview protocols and procedures used to ensure validity. This chapter provided insight into the researcher’s positionality and potential biases, and discussed methods of suspending personal bias. Also included is a discussion of the coding process and ATLAS.ti, a qualitative data analysis tool. Chapter four details the results of data analysis, the emergence of four distinct themes, and the codes generated in support of those themes.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the study. This chapter provides an overview of the purpose of the study, research design and data analysis procedures. This chapter then presents a discussion of the development of codes and emergence of themes. Each code and theme is discussed, accompanied by supporting quotations from the data set. The chapter concludes with a summary.

Overview of Research Design

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of professional school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Thus, this study seeks to answer the research question: *How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?*

This qualitative study used an exploratory phenomenological approach to examine the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents from the perspectives of professional school counselors who work with children and adolescents of deployed military service members. The research took place at a professional counseling conference in Germany in the fall of 2010. The researcher engaged in purposeful sampling and recruited potential subjects from conference attendees. Several participants contributed to *snowball* sampling where they recommended others to participate in the study. The researcher explained the nature of the study and invited school counselors to participate by granting a confidential interview. Study participants consisted of 12 professional school counselors who

work with school-aged children and adolescents who have one or more deployed military parent. Each participant adopted a pseudonym to aid in transcriptions and data analysis. No personal identifying information was gathered, although many of the participants indicated that they worked for the Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS). Individual interviews occurred privately in a secure room at the conference. Use of open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to elaborate and offer insights that were specific to their own perspective and lived experience.

Generation of Themes

The first round of open coding identified 347 codes. Subsequent reviews of the codes and data set indicated redundancy between some of the codes. Further analysis combined broad topics and yielded 33 preliminary categories that became new codes. Comprehensive analysis of relationships between codes in each of 33 categories resulted in the emergence of four distinct themes. The themes are *Military Life*, *Stages of Deployment*, *Role of the Counselor*, and *Children and Adolescents*. Glesne (2006) describes the process of illustrating each code and theme individually, supported by quotes from the data set. The data set for this study included 12 interviews, 347 original codes, 33 categories, and 4 themes.

Categories of Research Codes

Table 2 illustrates the research key generated by the 33 codes or meaning units and preliminary categories (Devenish, 2002; Moustakas, 1994). Categories emerged through analysis of relationships between meaningful statements.

Table 2: Research Codes

| Code or Category | Focus of Related and Significant Statements |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Abuse- neglect | Neglect, basic needs unmet; suspected abuse; FAP. |
| Academic Impact | Grades, focus on academics; homework not done, school issues |
| Adolescents | Impact on adolescents; adolescent reactions & issues |
| Children’s exposure to information | Children’s lack of information; misinformation; media exposure; parent’s conversations; stories from others. |
| Children’s needs | What do they need? How are needs demonstrated? |
| Children’s relationships with parents | Relationships with deployed & remaining parent; missing or not missing parent; loving parents; stepparents. |
| Communication during deployment | Technology; letters, Skype, email, phone calls, communication or lack of communication. |
| Communication with Military Commands | System to find out about deployments; support from commands; SLO; information from command. |
| Counselor competence and preparation | Counselor training, need for or lack of training; counselors’ training themselves; DoDDS training; counselor perception of own competence. |
| Counselor experience | Years of experience; experiences with other deployments, bases, branches, “brats”, spouse. |
| Counselor relationships with students | Children talk to counselor, connection with students, Love for students; commitment to students. |
| Deployment groups | Counselor or school psych conducts; children get together & share & support each other; use of deployment groups. |
| Deployment-sustainment | During actual deployment; deployment extensions; multiple deployments. |
| Emotional Impact- Adult | How do the adults react? Feelings, anger, fear. |
| Emotional Impact-Child | How do the children react? Crying, lack of sleep, shut down; numbness; internalizing behaviors |

| Code or Category | Focus of Related and Significant Statements |
|------------------------------|---|
| Externalizing behaviors | What kind of behaviors do children demonstrate? Behavioral impact; acting out, taking drugs. |
| Family adjustment | Family establishes new roles and routines; ability to adapt. |
| Family care plan | Child care, children cared for by grandparents or other than parent, use of child care services, child care challenges of dual military or single soldiers. |
| Military Branches | Differences in Army, Air Force, Reserves; deployment cycle; rank structure; military missions. |
| Military Community | Differences in Army, Air Force, Navy bases; community involvement; celebrations. |
| Military life | Stressors, benefits, challenges, unique aspects; related to dual military or single soldiers. |
| Personal Impact on Counselor | Counselor statements & reflections; feelings; impact; pride. |
| Pre-deployment | Preparation for deployment; prior to service member leaving. |
| Reintegration | What happens upon return of deployed parent? Challenges of homecoming & reintegration; risk factors. |
| Resilience | Resilience and adaptability of military children and families. |
| Role of the counselor | What does the counselor do? With whom does he or she interact? (parents, teacher, command);counselor actions; communications; responsibilities. |
| Role of remaining parent | Ability to cope; mental health; mother as remaining parent. |
| Role of teachers | Teachers under pressure for academics; teacher influence; teacher relationships with students; what do they say and do? |
| School Activities | Celebrations, acknowledgement, mock pre-deployments. |
| Social Impact- | Children's relationships with peers; children supporting each other; relating to each other. |

| Code or Category | Focus of Related and Significant Statements |
|--|--|
| Social Support | Available support for parents and families; needed support; neighbors. |
| Spectrum | Statements discussing the spectrum of impact, observations and experiences; no assumptions. |
| What counselors in training need to know | Military culture; group work; family therapy; new roles; responsibilities; challenges; expectations. |

Code Frequencies Supporting Each Theme

Each code appeared several times throughout the process of data analysis. Subsequently, relationships between the codes resulted in the emergence of distinct yet related themes. Table 3 illustrates the code frequency in support of each theme.

Table 3: Code Frequencies

Military Life

| Supporting Codes | Frequency |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Military Life | 55 |
| Military Community | 27 |
| Military Branches | 13 |
| Emotional Impact Adult | 8- |
| Family Adjustment | 18 |
| Family Care Plan | 13 |
| Role of Remaining Parent | 22 |
| Social Support | 10 |

Stages of Deployment

| Supporting Codes | Frequency |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Pre-Deployment | 11 |
| Deployment-Sustainment | 14 |
| Reintegration | 27 |

Stages of Deployment

| Supporting Codes | Frequency |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| Communication during Deployment | 12 |
| Communication with Military Commands | 11 |

Role of the Counselor

| Supporting Codes | Frequency |
|--|------------------|
| Counselor Competence and Preparation | 51 |
| Counselor Experience | 42 |
| Counselor Relationships with Students | 20 |
| Deployment Groups | 18 |
| Personal Impact on Counselor | 22 |
| Role of the Counselor | 51 |
| Spectrum | 23 |
| What Counselors in Training Need to Know | 33 |

Children & Adolescents

| Supporting Codes | Frequency |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|
| Abuse- Neglect | 6 |
| Academic Impact | 21 |
| Adolescents | 15 |
| Children's Exposure to Information | 8 |
| Children's Needs | 10 |
| Children's Relationships with Parents | 10 |
| Emotional Impact-Child | 25 |
| Externalizing Behaviors | 14 |
| Resilience | 5 |
| Role of Teachers | 13 |
| School Activities | 15 |
| Social Impact | 10 |

Certain aspects of life are unique to the military culture, thus many of these aspects are routine in the lives of people associated with the military. Study participants framed discussions of their experiences in the context of living in military environments. An understanding of

military culture appears to be essential to the exploration of the phenomenon of professional school counselors who work with children of deployed military parents. Therefore, counselor perceptions and comments regarding children's responses to military parental deployment are offered in the context of counselors who work with military families living in Europe, primarily in Germany. Military Life was one of the major themes to emerge from comprehensive data analysis. A discussion of the theme of Military Life is included, followed by a discussion of each of the codes that comprised the theme. Each code is presented with supporting statements from participants.

Theme of Military Life

The theme of Military Life was comprised of 8 codes, and encompasses statements related to perceptions of various aspects of military life. As a code, *Military Life* appeared 55 times in reference to stressors, benefits, challenges, unique aspects and issues related to military families, dual military or single service members. The significance of this code to understanding counselors' perceptions was such that this code emerged as its own theme. Military life is supported by 8 codes, examples of which follow:

1. Military Life
2. Military Branches
3. Military Community
4. Family Adjustment
5. Family Care Plan
6. Role of Remaining Parent
7. Emotional Impact- Adult
8. Social Support

Steve expresses his perception of military life for children:

Right now, I think it's our fifth grade or, no, it's our third graders, who were born in 2001; and so their parents have been constantly deployed their whole life. I see the behavior in that population to be a little bit more elevated than with the older

students...those kids have had war in their whole life, and most of their parents have been in the military since then or before then, and so this is something that they have grown up with. This is something that is chronically pervasive in their dialog, in their experience. It's odd because they'll talk about it so matter-of-factly, right?...developmentally, I don't think that they can comprehend, you know, what risk is and what that's about.

Fran and Marge express their perceptions of children's' experience with military life:

The second time their parents deploy they tend to be more negative and hostile because they know what it is like. When they were younger, they had to go too and they didn't like it then. And so the second one it's some resentment kind of like, "why do you have this job anyway...why don't you just get out?" I had parents and dads come in and say "I tried to explain to them, I'm not going because I want to... it's my job, I have to go." By middle school, they buy that or they don't. It's like no, "you could have a different job and you could get out." The parents, the dads, really try to convince them...it's not that simple. You don't just get out.-Fran, Elementary School

They don't know about the sacrifices that by their parent being in the military, that things that they have, they have some advantages, yes. They have a roof over their head, they have full medical benefits, and they have good education. So all those benefits, but there's also...those sacrifices, and that is moving a lot, disruption in their lives, constant change, - Marge, Elementary School

Marge shares her perception of military life for military spouses:

I've had spouses say, you know, they are off over there playing war and some of it is rough but some of it is a lot of downtime but I'm back here doing the grocery shopping and the laundry and running the family and paying the bills and they are tired of it. They feel as if, "Yeah, my husband signed up to defend his country, but this is just too much." You know, 3, 4 deployments, they're just asking too much of the families... I can think of one family where the mom was saying, "Now, they're sending him off to all these feel good things, and I don't get to do anything." And she's just feeling like there's like an unfair burden."- Marge, Elementary School

Trish discussed her experience with military life:

It's been my life for the past 26 years, so I really have come to appreciate the commitment that a military member makes for their country much more so because I see it up close and personal[rather] than living back in the United States where....you hear about our country has an Army, but I wasn't around anybody who is in the Army. It's made me appreciate much more what a military member does for their country and beyond that, how it affects the family.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Trish further expresses her feelings about military life:

I was really heartened when Obama came into office and Michelle Obama was going to commit herself to supporting the military family. I want that to be recognized, highlighted, and applauded and supported in any way shape or form that it can be supported because it's huge. It's huge what the military family does and what they go through in order to support this military member who is getting deployed 2, 3, 4 times....- Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Ann discussed her experience of military life when a service member is killed:

Often times what I've seen, is when a family has, a deployed parent dies, the whole family ships back to the States so quickly that there's no opportunity. That's what happened with my first school. There were deaths of a couple of parents and the kids didn't even have a chance to say goodbye. They were automatically shipped back to the States. So there wasn't even a grieving process. I mean they couldn't even experience that and kids didn't get to say goodbye and that kind of thing. -Ann, Elementary School

Sue, Marge, and Fran offered their impressions of military life compared to life in the United States.

I think there's a sense of safety in the military community because you getyour housing, you get your medical, you get your insurance.... there's a sense of being taken care of in some ways.- Sue, Elementary School

I think that in the United States, they'd be more isolated. Military kids ... more isolated from the military support structure. They might have more family support....they might have their extended family if they live near their original home....they have more of the opportunity of having the extended family systems... which we don't have here.-Marge, Elementary School

I feel like I am really doing a service to the families... I do not think that the general American public even is aware of what the American military families go through and the sacrifices that these kids have andthe spouses who are not military and they have to be stuck with. I think they are oblivious to that. So yeah, I think that I have a need to want to share that.- Fran, Elementary School

Carlos offers his impressions of military life for young service members:

If there's more rank, you know, they're better able to cope with it 'cause they've had more experience and they...you know, they have been in the Army longer, they know what to expect, they know the lifestyle of the military. Whereas newer military families, they're not...they're still learning it. The young mom whose only 23 or 24 with a 5-year-

old or 6-year-old and then her husband's gone. He's only 24, 25 himself gone for a year. She has to learn all about how to manage the household while he's gone. You know, she doesn't have nobody to rely on except for... maybe her neighbors. –Carlos, Elementary School

Interviews with counselors revealed their impression that single parent and dual military service members endure unique challenges with regard to military life. Counselors discussed their perceptions of challenges faced by children of single parent service members and dual military families:

Maria shares:

I had another student who at 8 years old had her father gone for 12 months; he was Army- and then came back, and her mother left for 12 months and she is 8 years old, and she's had...and then her father was getting ready to go again. I mean, that kind of thing is completely different.- Maria, Elementary School

Diva offers her insight:

There's an effect on every part of their life that's shaken up by one of their parents being deployed. There are a lot of dual military households where both parents are deployed at the same time and then you'll find a single parent household where the parent is deployed and so that definitely affects the child's social, emotional, and behavioral life. –Diva, Elementary School

Sue discusses her perceptions of military life:

We have more single fathers and when they're deployed that's a problem... we don't have a lot of services for single parents, we don't support them enough in the military. And the military exacts a huge price out of a family.- Sue, Elementary School

Eve shares her observations:

The lower the rank the more problems they endure because they don't have the money to put their kids in extra activities.- Eve, Middle & High School

Codes Supporting the Theme of Military Life

A discussion of each of the 8 codes that comprise the theme of Military Life follows, accompanied by counselor statements from the data set.

Military Branches

Military Branches appeared 13 times in reference to statements regarding Army, Air Force, Navy, or Reservists. This code includes counselor references to differences in deployment cycles, rank structure, and military missions. *Military Branches* is also associated with the stages of deployment.

Sue shares her impression of a particular branch of the military:

I haven't worked with the Marines yet, but Marine bases are notorious for having wonderful structures in place for families.- Sue, Elementary School

Marge discusses her experiences with different branches of the military:

The difference I see with the Air Force community is number one, you don't know they're going necessarily. It is not like the whole unit tells you, "look, we're leaving in 3 weeks. Be prepared to help these kids." There was a big hush, ... originally the parents didn't even want to talk about the deployment. -Marge, Elementary School

Trish and Fran shared their impressions of how differences in military branches manifest:

The last several years I've been in Air Force-I mean, it's this mixed community but it is on an Air Force base. It's really different because to support a student in school, it's not a collective experience. I learned the expression of how the Air Force deploys in buckets, which I knew but didn't understand when I first went from Army to Air Force. Of course, we have Army students as well, so the Army students' parents are going for 12 months now. It was 15 months, now its 12 months, and the Air Force students' parents are going-the typical one is 4- 6 months, although some of those Air Force people are also attached to Army bases and so they're 12 months.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Fran continues the discussion:

Some families I have worked with, like in Special Forces where they deploy and there was no pre-deployment talk because it was secretive. I think the parents that have very secretive missions have extra stressors on their family because the children – and I worked with military intelligence units where these guys would just disappear for weeks, months, and their kids would talk about it, and in groups, they'd share notes. The kids found out a fair amount especially if daddy came back and got drunk and was talking about it. They find out daddy was here and not there.... when daddy came back,

sometimes he had a different hairdo, drove a different car...and those children had a much higher rate of unpredictability in their lives. - Fran, Elementary School

Military Community

Military Community appeared 27 times in reference to community activities, involvement, celebrations, and perceptions of community. Counselors framed their experiences working with children of deployed military service members in the context of their membership in military communities. This code is also associated with *military life*. Jen and Fran shared their perspectives on the impact deployments have on military communities:

My community has been deployed since the day after Christmas. A few went in early January and right now we are under such deployment fatigue that the emotional weight and stress is unbearable.-Jen, Middle School

Fran offers this insight:

Nobody sat me down in the beginning and said look, you're in a military community, this is what kids needs, this is what kids have. It's only been particularly fairly recent that I've also had to work with students who've had parents killed in action. That's another dimension, you know, working with children that lose their parent in the deployment.... when you're in a military community and there are casualties, it affects the whole community.- Fran, Elementary School

Carlos and Marge discuss the proximity among members of military communities:

Not only do they go to school together, they live together, right across the street in housing. You know, they're each other's neighbors, they see each other at the PX, the commissary, they're in the same classes.- Carlos, Elementary School

Marge offers her perspective:

When I was in [my last] community, about 90 to 96% of the base would deploy in any given time, and then the only people - the people that are back are called the rear detachments... the school became the home base if you will, kind of the community center.- Marge, Elementary School

Fran shares her impressions of relationships between military and local communities:

The entire community was experiencing it as a collective experience so when it was time for the reunion, it was a huge thing. The entire German community would have the yellow ribbons up and the welcome home signs and sheets would go up on the fences... they would spend months preparing to get the parents home... and the spouses home. It would be big homecoming.... they had to bring all the tanks in on trains.- Fran, Elementary School

Family Adjustment

Family Adjustment appeared 18 times in reference to counselor perceptions of families' ability to adapt and establish new roles and routines during and after the deployment. Study participants indicated that family adjustment takes many forms. This code is associated with military life, and the role of the remaining parent. Data analysis revealed that the level of adaptation achieved by the family influences counselors' work with children. Counselors perceived the impacts of deployment on children as directly related to the impact of deployment on remaining spouses and families. Counselors shared their perspectives on military family adjustment during deployments:

According to Jen:

Everybody is maxed out you know.....it's like taking a wheel off a car and then trying to figure out how to make the car run.-Jen, Middle School

Beth offers her perspective on military family adjustments:

There is family fatigue. They're all spread thin but.... it takes a different form from kid to kid from time to time. There are not constants but of course, you have everything from academic negligence, some of degree of depression, some acting out, some anxiety that comes across as acting out. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Fran discusses her perspective on military family adjustments:

I've seen the whole gamut. I've seen kids being really better in school, better in their lives....but there were some experiences.... where the family ran much better without the spouse here, without the military member here.- Fran, Elementary School

Steve shares his experience with military family adjustments:

I have a small population who's - have dual military parents. And what I've seen with those students, they seem to have the most trouble with adjustment because what happens more than anything is, one parent will be deployed while the other parent stays here on post.- Steve, Elementary School

Marge expressed her impressions that positive outcomes are associated with family adjustment.

I have even heard mom say comments, like, “well, I kind of like when my husband’s gone, we have more money, the financial pressures are off, and the kids get more stuff.” They realize all of a sudden they can afford more, and mom may be happier, and the financial pressures are lessened on the family.-Marge, Elementary School

Carlos shares his insights into factors that influence military family adjustment:

I have seen in some families, when dad deploys, things settle down. So if there’s a lot of conflicts between the parents, mom and dad aren’t getting along, sometimes sending dad away calms things down and the kids have more stability. You see everything. There’s so many things that go on... with military families. It’s such a fluid, you know, thing that military family; sometimes it’s a good thing that they’re being deployed because they’re going to save a lot more money. , Sure they’re going to miss their significant other, but... several moms over the years have said, “I can't wait for so and so to leave ‘cause at six months, I have this much saved up and then I can leave him. I have enough money to escape from him with my kid.” And they have plans. They, you know... The money they make when they’re downrange in Iraq or Afghanistan is all tax-free, they get danger pay, and they get additional money for being separated from their family members. So instead of maybe \$1,500 or \$2,000 a month, they’re making maybe \$3,500 or \$4,000 a month. And some spouses, you know, save that money, some families don’t save it, or they spend it while their husbands are downrange. Like the research says, if there were problems and troubles in the marriage before the deployment, they certainly keep going during the deployment and certainly after the deployment.- Carlos, Elementary School

Sue, Eve, and Marge shared their observations of family adjustment to deployments:

Some kids as much as they hate to admit it, and they’re always embarrassed to say this, but they tell us that they’re glad that.... usually the military parent who is deployed makes life easier.... because they have a little softer environment at the house -less restrictive with that ...military bearing on the family.- Sue, Elementary School

It might be that the dad is the one who really knows Math, and then during the time that the dad’s gone, then the kid is floundering because they don’t have their dad to help them with their Math. They often talk about the fact that the father is gone during a birthday or

a holiday or, you know, Father's Day, Mother's Day, things like that...- Eve, Middle & High School

If one family almost dies.... we're missing daddy, this is horrible, how can we go here....another family is, thank god he's gone....he's drunk a lot. Daddy's role in the family or mommy's role in the family when they're gone makes a huge impact on how the adjust.-Marge, Elementary School

Ann shares her perception of the role of children in family adjustment:

I've noticeda couple of things that happen. One... if it is a male student then he is chosen to be the man of the family and often times takes on a role that is much, much bigger and much more difficult to accomplish and all the feelings that go with that. I'm thinking of a particular child right now, who's much more withdrawn, although trying very hard not to show that.....girls and boys are different in how they respond but I'm thinking particularly of some of the boys. The boys are the ones who have come to my attention more readily than the girls and I'm not sure what that's about.--Ann, Elementary School

Family Care Plan

Military service members are required to develop family care plans to ensure the appropriate care of family members when the service member is deployed or on temporary duty (TDY.) The code *Family Care Plan* appeared 13 times in reference to statements associated with childcare issues and services; children cared for by other than their parents, including single parent service members and dual military service members.

Eve and Trish share their experiences with military family care plans during deployment:

I've had a number of kids who have gone to stay with grandparents or maybe grandparents or somebody has come to Europe to stay with the family and that's yet again a different dynamic that goes on.- Eve, Middle & High School

There's one third grader last year, both of the parents were gone at the same time. Luckily, she had German grandparents and so she didn't really have to have disruptions that she and her brother had to live with the grandparents here. But when that happens in other situations, of course, people come from the United States over to stay with the kids and take care of them. -Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Zoey and Beth share their impressions of military childcare arrangements during deployment:

When you have two parents deployed and a child is living either with some -another family, or going back to the states and having to interrupt their education, or possibly the older brother or sister is taking care of them for a period of two to three months with only a family checking in with them. This causes a lot of anxiety, they have a lot of fear of people breaking in the house, and they have a lot of fear of getting hurt and no adult helping them. On the other hand, these kids are amazing, just amazing, and so some of them just excel.- Zoey

Mostly females, mostly mothers that are single.... they will send the child to an ex spouse back in the states. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Sue shares her impression of positives outcomes associated with family care plans:

I have one little boy who's parents have both been deployed a lot and he's been living with his grandmother and grandfather who happen to be in their 50's, and I have to say they have done a miraculous job....and they're divorced. By all rights you would say this little boy shouldn't be healthy or.... should show all kinds of problems, and this little boy is adorable, he's bright, he's a happy child... it's obvious he's very loved. And this family somehow in their divorces, in their deployment, both parents have been deployed, and with their grandparents have worked out some kind of a dance that's just been miraculous.... it's been a good awareness that good things can come out of the worst situations... like two parents being gone -and he's only six.- Sue, Elementary School

Role of Remaining Parent

Results indicated that counselors in this study perceived the reaction of remaining parents as critical in evaluating the effects of deployment on children. Many counselors discussed their experiences in the context of behaviors displayed or not displayed by remaining parents. The code Role of Remaining Parent appeared 22 times in reference to the non-deployed or remaining parent's influence and ability to cope during the deployment. This code is also associated with family adjustment and emotional impact-adult. These counselors discuss their perceptions of the reactions of non-deployed and remaining parents:

Ann shares her experience with remaining parents during deployment:

In one community I worked in 98% of the students in our school had a deployed parent for over a year....their mothers were the ones left home....there was a high degree of undiagnosed depression....and those students just had to get themselves up in the morning and get themselves to school. They often didn't have breakfast and their clothes [were not] always clean and they had not showered. I would say half the school suffered. I mean it's a lot of kids, so some of the really basic things, like you know, having food at school, clean clothes, showering and homework done....homework was not even, was just for our school at that point in time, school was not the issue that we were working on. We had to deal with have they had enough sleep? Did they have lunch? Did they have breakfast?--Ann, Elementary School

Sue offers her observations:

I don't think we give spouses who are left home enough credit for how they manage deployment and maintain the families.- Sue, Elementary School

Zoey shares her experiences with remaining parents:

In the past twenty-two years, I have noticed that there is a huge effect and I feel that the effect comes from the parent that is left at home. If the parent that is left at home is organized....and has accepted it....the family usually stays together. For the families that are not accepting it or not willing to help the kids out.... the kids have behavioral issues at school, they are always, always, always, falling apart. They're always crying. They always seem lost. You call the parents to assist with them and the parents respond with, "well, I am sorry, I am just barely holding on myself, so that's your job at school to deal with the kids." It's just very rough for everybody involved. I try my hardest as a counselor to make sure that the child has a safe haven in my office to come to and we can talk.-Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Carlos shares his impressions of the influence of remaining parents:

I've noticed, by and large kids react how their parent - their stay-at-home parent reacts. You know, if mom is coping well with the deployment, the kids more likely are going to cope well with the deployment too. A 10 pound weight on a parent is like a 100 pound weight on a child. So, if mom's doing good, things are going to be good. If mom is not doing good, the chances are the kids are not going to do good. That's my experience, and I've been running deployment groups for about eight years now.- Carlos, Elementary School

Fran offers a perspective on the reactions of remaining parents:

We see parents that I suspect or I know have depression issues. Their children often don't fare as well as the PTSA kind of mom that's always in the school, super involved, active with the children, doing stuff on the weekend, those families. If mom is functioning well

and seems to be well-adjusted to the deployment, I think the children adjust much better to the deployment situation. Yes, they miss dad.... or they miss mom. Yes, some of them tell me they cry at night and some of them come to my office, especially the first weeks of the deployment and say, "I miss my daddy, I feel sad." But with time, how well the other parent is coping seems to be a huge factor of what we're observing. - Fran, Elementary School

Diva, Marge and Zoey share their perceptions of behaviors displayed by remaining parents:

Well, depends how well the parent that's here is coping. I see a direct relationship with that. So, if the parent is feeling overwhelmed and abandoned and miserable and angry with the military and scared, you see that with the kids.- Diva, Elementary School, Elementary School

There's moms who just say, "hey, I feel lonely... I'm getting involved... I'm doing PTA thing and I'm getting my kids involved 'cause I can't entertain them 24/7." I think these parents sometimes have more success 'cause they're getting their kids involved, they're getting involved and the times goes faster, the kids are kept busy, and so, I think how a parent reacts.-Marge, Elementary School

Sometimes kids will come in not having been fed breakfast. Sometimes some kids will come in with clothes that have not been cleaned. The other parent is so overwhelmed that if they are going through depression that they just shrug to all responsibilities because they can't. Homework sometimes is done, sometimes it isn't done. Things are lost. Kids can't keep their hands on things. They just don't have it.- Zoey, Elementary School

Emotional Impact- Adult

Results indicated that school counselors are often exposed to the emotional reactions of adults and parents with whom the children interact. Thus, emotionality of adults influences counselor's perspectives on the effects of deployment on children. The *code Emotional Impact-Adult* appeared 8 times in reference to statements related to the feelings of adults. This code is also associated with the role of the remaining parent and family adjustment, and includes emotional reactions of service members.

Trish, Jen, and Fran expressed their perceptions of the emotional states of some adults in the children's lives:

I think there are many parents who have experienced some difficult combat things. I don't want to label it PTSD but some exposure to seeing people get wounded, killed, hurt, having to transport wounded, and seeing some bad things.... and so you can kind of speculate that once they come back 6 months later if some of those things are still creeping up.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

I have kids say to me, "Oh, my gosh, last Sunday I was in the kitchen and I dropped the skillet and my dad was sleeping on the couch and he came off the couch screaming and yelling and he didn't know where he was." They felt so guilty...so you have to kind of say, "Oh, this is perfectly normal, he's fine."-Jen, Middle School

The volunteering in the school has declined. I think the parents are tired. I think they're tired of the tempo.- Fran, Elementary School

Marge discusses emotional reactions in some military families:

They would ERD their spouses- I don't know if you know what that means, Early Return of Dependents and the Army would do that. No questions asked. If they said, "I don't want to be married anymore or I don't want my wife here anymore. -Marge, Elementary School

Sue shares her impressions of how adults experience emotions associated with deployment and reintegration:

How it impacts families and children is that men have a tendency to shut down. Women too probably in the military too, but men particularly have a tendency to shut down and not communicate. I think the more action they've seen the less they communicate to their spouse. And so there is an isolation that happens with a mate that is really hard to live with. There's less touching.... there's just less nurturing coming from your partner, and to the kids.... and I think that get's interpreted as somebody doesn't care when in fact I think that they're so fragile they're just doing everything that they can to keep it together....and there's run off onto the children. They'll either model what they're seeing, or they'll question if they're loved, or cope the very way that everybody else is coping in the family by not talking, and things get pretty high risk.- Sue, Elementary School

Eve discusses her impressions of the emotional circumstances of families in her community:

We have a lot of mental health needs...a tremendous amount of secondary PTSD that impacts families...and the PTSD of the person that was overseas experiencing whatever they were experiencing. Real posttraumatic stress.- Eve, Middle & High School

Fran shares her observations with emotional responses of some remaining parents:

I've seen grandmothers sometimes come in and cope better than a single parent is doing. I think it just depends on the emotional and physical resources of that person that's being tested.- Fran, Elementary School

Social Support

Results indicated that counselors perceived families to need social support and connections. Counselors discussed social support as it relates to availability and necessity. The code Social Support appeared 5 times in reference to the availability of support for families, needed support, and neighbors. This code is also associated with family adjustment and military community.

Sue and Marge discuss the perceived lack of social support in the context of the military community:

In my belief system there's not enough good, healthy support systems to support children when a missing member is gone like I don't understand why we don't have Big Brothers-Big Sisters on bases.- Sue, Elementary School

This has a completely different impact when the spouses are in a foreign country, don't speak the language, feel more isolated, are afraid to leave the bases... some of them don't drive, some of them [are] Hispanic or speak a different language, so they don't speak English very well, they don't speak... German or Italian where they're living. That has a tremendous impact...they're much more isolated. I've seen families where the deployed parent is the only one that drives.... this greatly impacts [children's] social behaviors, they can't go to birthday parties, they just take the bus home and hangout with mom or grandma and are much more isolated.-Marge, Elementary School

Carlos shares his perception of parents' need for social support:

If you don't have the neighbors you're in a world of hurt...there's no support system...you know... this building over here has great neighbors, everything's great, everything's running really well. You know, you watch my kids while I go to the

commissary today, tomorrow...I'll watch yours while you go to the commissary, to the bank and all that stuff. In other buildings, they're.....watch out, watch your back...hey, your kid's smoking dope upstairs, can you tell him to stop or I'm going to call the MPs on you. There's distrust, mistrust, anger. So, it just really depends on where you're living at a military community, what kind of support you have.- Carlos, Elementary School

Fran discusses the ways in which she provides social support to families:

There are so many things is going on with the community that one of the things I do is serve as a conduit for information, so that all of my students who have deployed parents are in support group. I have the parent's email... so whenever I get newsletters or any free activities or anything like that I immediately send it out to them...you know what is going on in the community and what is available to them.- Fran, Elementary School

Summary of Theme of Military Life

The preceding section discussed the codes that contributed to the emergence of the theme Military Life. As demonstrated, counselors in this study shared their diverse perspectives on several aspects of military life and the subsequent effects on children. The perspectives discussed in support of the theme of military life have the potential to influence future training, practice, and research. Many counselors will most likely encounter students or clients with current or former connections to the military. For example, military connected individuals, children and families may seek mental health, addiction, rehabilitation, career, financial, or marital counseling. Military connected children may attend schools where their unique needs and characteristic go unnoticed due to personnel who lack experience and exposure to military life and culture.

Training of new counselors in the area of military life could follow recommendations of Fenell (2008) who advocated for incorporation of the multicultural competencies generated by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). Fenell (2008) and regards the military as a unique and

distinct culture, worthy of appropriate treatment and services historically associated with cultural and ethnic groups and Reger, Etherage, Reger, & Gahm, (2008) discussed the ethical challenge of military mental health care providers to provides services within the unique military culture.

Development of cultural competence to work with military families extends to the counseling practice. Hall (2008) contends that non-military counselors will most likely provide services to the military population. Thus, the abundance of children and families touched by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could most likely seek counseling services in the near future. Adoption of the Veterans Benefits, Healthcare, and Information Technology Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-461) represents recognition of licensed professional counselors as mental health specialists within health care programs operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Tricare is the medical entitlement program of the Department of Defense (DoD), and uses civilian health-care providers as part of the health network for referrals and consultations. Passage of Public Law 109-461 emphasizes the urgency with which targeted training of new and practicing counselors should occur.

Emergence of the theme of military life supports the need for further research into some of the unique aspects of military life. For example, the participants in this study live in military communities and work almost exclusively with military children and families. A future study could examine the lived experiences of school counselors who work with military children who are not part of a larger military community, such as children of reservists. Future research could examine the influence of various aspects of military life from the perspective of school counselors who operate outside of military life. The next section presents the emergence of the second theme, Stages of Deployment, and offers discussion of the codes that support this theme.

Theme of Stages of Deployment

The purpose of this study was to explore school counselors' perspectives on the effects of military parental deployment on children and adolescents. Therefore, participants in this study discussed their lived experiences with children during each stage of deployment. Sue details her overall impressions of the cycle of deployment:

I think what happens in the beginning stage of when they first deploy....it's like... a minor death has happened in the family, of sort of a distance relative that you were close to... there's that missing and longing, and a reshuffling of the family dynamics, who's going to do what now that one of the role players is out of the picture. Then in the middle of deployment,...what I think happens is everybody finds their particular role in the family, and there's a stabilization process. Mom gets it together, or the support team gets it together. Somehow everybody finds a way to stabilize....because one can only be unstable for so long, and either one has to stabilize or go on medication. If you think of yourself with a continuous instability it's just not...something's going to give somewhere. I believe everybody tries to find a place, and in some ways mother becomes very empowered and everybody settles into a nice routine that can work for mother, Okay. And because it's a single family environment at that point, that makes all the difference.- Sue, Elementary School

The relevance of the deployment cycle resulted in the emergence of the theme Stages of Deployment, and is represented by 5 codes, examples of which are presented thus:

1. Pre-Deployment
2. Deployment-Sustainment
3. Communication during Deployment
4. Communication with Military Commands
5. Reintegration

Codes in Support of the Theme Stages of Deployment

Pre-Deployment

Counselors perceived the pre-deployment stage as significant to the impact on children. Pre-deployment is the period after the service member receives orders to deploy and before the

service member actually leaves. The code *Pre-Deployment* appeared 11 times in reference to the preparation and anticipation associated with the period prior to the service member leaving. This code also refers to feelings associated with the upcoming deployment, and is associated with military life and family adjustment.

Diva shares her impressions of family reactions during the pre-deployment stage:

Pre-deployment, there's more stress in the family. There's more stress pre-deployment, beginning of the deployment. R&R may be a very happy time, but then leaving again can often reactivate those stressors and then homecoming can be very stressful....also.... the pre-deployment, the service member is usually completely stressed out because they have so many preparations to do. So they really don't have a lot of time to spend with their family either in pre-deployment phase.- Diva, Elementary School

Eve shares her perception of pre-deployment:

Pre-deployment has a lot of anxiety especially on the part of the parents and the one that's staying behind.... they get anxious and many of the parents will come to the school counselor and will say so and so is leaving for an extended time. They're going to Iraq. They're going to these war zones. I don't know where they're going.- Eve, Middle & High School

Ann and Beth discuss their perceptions of children's reactions to pre-deployment:

I've seen that in pre-deployment there is a fair amount of denial from what I can see. I've seen that there's just not.... I've actually asked kids to come in and talk.... when I found something out and they just don't really want to talk about it. Because I think that makes it real.--Ann, Elementary School

If the family was having a rough time before the deployment happened, the pre-deployment, you see kids that are like; well this parent/member is going so, now we will be able to have fun with the staying back parent. You know, it's not going to be as chaotic in the house. We are not going to have the boss or the bully in the home. They are gone and we can talk to them. We can write to them. That threat isn't there. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Steve offers his impressions of family adjustment during the pre-deployment stage:

In my deployment groups, I talk about the different stages of deployment and I will say probably the most impacting time is pre-deployment and reintegration. Pre-deployment, a lot of anxiety is there simply because there is a lot of activity, a lot of buzz about the

deployment. They see a lot of things happening. They can see parents and spouses become anxious and... it looks like mood swings, tolerance goes down. Sleep goes down.- Steve, Elementary School

Deployment-Sustainment

Deployment- Sustainment refers to the period when the service member is gone during the actual time of deployment. Results indicated that counselors perceived a range of family reactions during the actual deployment. The code Deployment-Sustainment appeared 14 times in reference to the identified stages of deployment. Statements articulate counselors' perception of the time during actual deployment; deployment extensions; and multiple deployments. This code is also associated with family adjustment.

Steve shares his perceptions of family adjustment during the deployment stage:

When the soldier actually deploys, there's almost kind of a period of respite. Now it's happened and the adjustment time for that, I would say is kind of minimal, just a couple of weeks even in some cases that I've seen, that new norms are set, and once that happens, the family kind of falls into a groove. Now I've certainly seen families falling to dysfunction during this time; however, I think, when the actual deployment occurs, most families adjust rather quickly.- Steve, Elementary School

Trish provides another perspective on the deployment stage:

There is family fatigue. They're all spread thin and... it takes a different form from kid to kid from time to time. There are not constants but of course you have everything from academic negligence, some of degree of depression, some acting out, some anxiety that comes across as acting out.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Ann shares her perception of some of the challenges associated with deployment:

The first part of the deployment, they're trying to get use to things and I've had parents tell me that the kid won't even come to the phone or talk... it's as if they can't trust their emotions on the telephone. It's kind of like its rough right in the beginning and then they fall into a routine, so things can kind of normalize after a while.--Ann, Elementary School

Jen offers her impressions of the deployment-sustainment stage:

I think there are stages. I think it is not as bad in the beginning....they do begin to get tired and there's definitely fatigue at the end....there's just deployment fatigue. We have all been at this for too long.... so it's the combination. It is not the first one....we've been through this before and we are tired again, you know.-Jen, Middle School

Eve discussed her perception of how children cope with deployments:

At the deployment, the kids go into survival mode....some shut down, some do not. Sustainment after a while... I think it becomes a routine or the kids.... they're just so resilient I think that they deal with it in different ways. Most of the time, they're just basic survival and some of them, in order to sustain, do turn to drugs and they turn.... to behavior that will get them the attention that they need from the parent that's there. And in some ways it's the way to get the deployed parent home which they don't but I think it's... very hard for them to think of their parent in a harm's way.- Eve, Middle & High School

Results indicated that the issue of multiple deployments often influences counselor perceptions of children's reactions. Beth shares insight into challenges associated with multiple deployments:

I think for me now the biggest difference is which number of deployment it is. My kids... they're 6th, 7th & 8th grade and this year I work with 7th & 8th graders. Last year it was just the 8th grade and they're all pass number two. I mean it was rare if it was the only the second deployment. Many of them it was their third deployment. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Fran shares her observations of multiple deployments:

I think the most interesting tell-tell activities that we do that tells me a lot about the kids is I'll put them groups of, let say, 6, and they have to put themselves in order of the number times that their parents have deployed. And it's been anywhere from 1 to 9. And this one kid told me his father is deployed 9 times. I called his mom and talked to her and indeed he had been whether it is to a school or to a conflict area or things like that.- Fran, Elementary School

Communication during Deployment

Results indicated counselor perceptions of the effects of deployment on children to be associated with levels of communication between families during deployment. The code

Communication during Deployment appeared 12 times in reference to methods of communication between children and family members and the deployed parent. Forms of communication under this code include use of technology, letters, Skype, email, phone calls, or lack of communication. This code is also associated with family adjustment, reintegration, and counselor's relationships with students.

Steve offers his perspectives on the influence of family communication during the deployment stage.

For the families who are not able to stay connected in a frequent way, their reintegration process seems to be more difficult. I have more family advocacy cases that go with those kinds of families, and I noticed that divorce rates for the parents who don't stay connected have... I think I have 7 families in divorce right now, after they reintegrated in, and most of them had extramarital affairs either down range or through the internet with other people.- Steve, Elementary School

Steve provides another perspective on communication during deployments:

I have some families who Skype every day. I have families who Skype once a week. I have some families who just do e-mail, and I have some families who don't connect at all. There may be one or two phone calls a month. And for those kinds of families, those are the most difficult reintegration times. I make a great effort to talk about communication patterns with the spouses and the students themselves because that is such a function of the reintegration process. The more connected they are during the deployment, the less impact the reintegration seems to be. And that's just an observation. I've never collected data on that, but I know when I see families who make a strong effort to stay connected.- Steve, Elementary School

Zoey discusses facilitating communication between children and deployed parents:

On my own, if the student was really, really, really suffering, I would contact the family member or the parent that is still here. Ask for the email for the parent that's away and then arrange for the parent that's away to call on a DSN phone number and have the child in the office talk to the parent and we take pictures while the child is talking. After they get off the phone, the parents are so appreciative... on the other side of the phone crying, "thank you so very much for helping me and for making sure that I heard my child's voice and thank you for being sensitive enough to know that my child needed to talk to me at this time." Then the child and myself will send a real quick email or love letter and send that with some pictures that I would take while the child was talking to the parent on the

telephone. That is just, you know, one little way of them being able to keep in contact.-
Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Communication with Military Commands

Results indicated that counselors perceived communication with military commands as key to the deployment process. Counselors communicate with commands as do family members. The code *Communication with Military Commands* appeared 11 times in reference to systems to learn about deployments; support from commands; School Liaison (SLO); information from commands; notifications. This code is also associated with military life and military community. Marge offers her insights into challenges associated with communication from military commands:

Deployments are very unpredictable things. The difficult thing with deployment is the military says, "This deployment is going to be six months," but hey, it ends up being 12. Or they say, "we're going to have 12 months and it ends up being 18 months." And the parent that's gone is only coming back for two weeks, say, of a year deployment, two weeks is the norm or 18 days maybe. If it's gone over a year, then they get 18 days.-
Marge, Elementary School

Ann shares her views on obtaining information from military commands:

With security measures being what they are, we used to get lists of those kids who had a deployed parent and now that's an issue because you're not supposed to know that someone's parents are in Iraq. So that's an issue right now in our schools, finding out who those students are without soliciting information. There's no formal way for us to find out who's deployed, when they'll deploy and when they'll return.--Ann, Elementary School

Fran discusses communication between children and military commands:

We had a meeting with the General at our school meeting with the students, and they told him both before and after, so pre-deployment and post-deployment that the army needed to leave their parent alone and let them be there with the family instead of continuing to pull them away.- Fran, Elementary School

Steve shares his experiences communicating with military commands:

Here, we have 78 commands, 78. And not all of them talk to each other and so no information, no data is gathered or collected to give us that information. So what we have to do is rely on deployment surveys and the feedback from spouses of deployed parents because the government does not provide us that information, and so it's very frustrating for us because we will have parents who have deployed for 6 to 8 months and we won't know it. We will not know it. Then all of a sudden we may see some behavior or some symptoms or some impact. That is very frustrating and is something unique because of our structure in this military community and like I said we have so many commands. The communication between them is very difficult.- Steve, Elementary School

Reintegration

Reintegration, or homecoming, is the period after the service member returns from deployment and rejoins the family. Counselors perceived children to be influenced by a range of family reactions and behaviors associated with the service member/parent's return. *The code Reintegration* appeared 27 times in reference to homecoming, Rest & Recuperation (R&R) and the challenges associated with return of the deployed parent. This code is also associated with communication during deployment, emotional impact-child, and family adjustment.

Zoey shares her perception of family reactions to the service member's return:

When it comes to the reintegration, everybody's so happy that they're back and the whole, you know, squadron comes back and everybody's excited and it's a honeymoon for maybe a week and then, BAM! You have the situation before if it was an unstable family, they have the situation before plus the effects of the person who was down range who saw what was going on, you know.-Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Trish discussed the perceived challenges associated with reintegration:

The reunion, I know that all the literature says that the reunion time can be probably one of the most difficult times for readjustment, and I can't generalize and say, yes it is for all kids. I think it is for some and I think it isn't for others.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Results indicated that counselors work with children who experience distress during the period of reintegration. Steve shares his awareness of situations children confront during reintegration:

One of the biggest things that I see students struggle with is just a basic understanding of why their parent, who has returned, is emotionally disconnected. Often, students will tell me that when their dad is on the computer, they're not allowed to speak to them. When they get back into the family, they reintegrate in; the computer seems to be a place where they land. I hear from the students, whose parents are on Facebook all the time, social networks, and things like that....students who don't understand why they are being rejected and that's how they interpret it. You know, I tried to talk to my dad last night, but he was on the computer for 6 hours.... and mom was really mad at him for it. He won't talk to her either. I hear that a lot, especially with my older students.- Steve, Elementary School

Eve notes that her limited experience shapes her impressions of reintegration:

I can answer with homecoming. Most of the time the children are pulled from school. They go on vacations. It's a very joyous time. Everybody is together. And the children are just happy to have their parent home and... in my experience I haven't seen a lot of the negative effect on the kids but that's from my experience at this point.- Eve, Middle & High School

During deployments, service members receive a number of days to return home, rest and recuperate, and then return to the war zone. Results indicated that counselors perceived R&R to have an impact on children. Zoey offers her observations regarding R&R:

R&R is a, it's a period of time. Its two weeks or it could be three weeks where the military member comes back home and usually what has been the pattern...the family goes away on a vacation. They go away a week together as a family and reunite. They come back and they go through the routine of deploying again. Okay, having to go through the anxieties. Having to go through, you know, I am going to miss you dad. I am going to miss you mom. So, I don't know if that's helpful or benefit. I don't know if it's beneficial or if it's, I don't know if it's very beneficial. It's good to have the parent there and to have the family members there, but the emotional stress on the child and on the other family members. It's hard and it's hard on the parent that has to leave also.- Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Ann shares her impressions of children's reactions to the return and departure of parents during

the time of rest and recuperation:

What I've noticed is when the parent comes back part way through, that there's a great deal of excitement. In some cases, there are some concern about, "Oh my gosh! Have I been doing the right thing? Have I been listening to mom?" Often times its mom not dad, that's why I say that. Have I done my job as I was supposed to do? Am I gonna let dad down when he comes home cause I haven't done? And then there's that period of excitement when dad's home. But oftentimes what happens is, in my experience, the parent comes back and the family structure doesn't re-integrate the way it was before and it is temporary so there's a lot of chaos and perhaps unmet expectations. Then when the parent leaves, there's this period of just kinda [exhale] okay, now we have another x number of months to go.--Ann, Elementary School

Results indicated that counselors experience exposure to the actions taken by the parents of their students. Marge discusses her experiences with children and families during R&R and reintegration:

At homecoming reintegration children tell me that mommy and daddy are fighting a lot, daddy's come back, mommy and daddy are having problems. It depends on what the parents are doing in that time. I mean, in the deployment where I was at one school, a lot of young families, young children, young parents, sometimes the parents are only 20, 25, and they have 5-year-olds, 7-year-olds..... the under thirty group and their spouse is gone for a year. Well, you hear about a lot going on. Some of the spouses are not practicing fidelity in their marriage during the deployment or the one that stayed home. Well, sometimes, that hits the fan. When daddy comes for R&R and finds another man in mommy's bed. Children figure that out pretty fast; some uncle is staying with mommy now. All of a sudden, this persons disappeared and now mommy's not getting along with daddy, or now mommy's back with daddy and I just don't know exactly what's going on. I'm told it's very, very high rate of infidelity. It's not something I concern myself with. It's none of my business, but children do tell me.-Marge, Elementary School

Results indicated that each family member copes with reintegration in his or her own way. Sue expressed her thoughts regarding family reactions to the service members' homecoming:

I think the roughest stages is reintegration, and if a family is going to buckle under stress it's going to be during that time frame because at that point mother has.....the family has learned to operate without dad or...well it depends. Sometimes the family is functioning, its working well.....everybody has a role in it...and all of a sudden you add another

member to the family... particularly one that has had a leadership role. So if its dad or mom, now everybody has to shuffle again for their role, and the parents are sort of struggling for power. Who has the power, who's in charge really..... "was I -was I even missed? Everything's so together. What's my role, what's my point and need for me being... I might as well be gone if things can operate without me."- Sue, Elementary School

Fran shares her experiences of the impacts of reintegration on a military community:

When they return home, the reunion - several families; I mean, the honeymoon period would be at first possibly, and then about 6 months later...we'd start to see the throws of it. Two things would happen; we would start to see increasing things like drinking and some abuse things, although that didn't correlate so clearly. You'd also see a lot of pregnancies. You know, like everybody would come back and everybody would be pregnant - so the whole community would be delivering at the same time and that happened last year...that same community was expecting something like 400 births in April of last year.- Fran, Elementary School

Summary of Theme Stages of Deployment

The previous section discussed the theme of the Stages of Deployment and the codes contributed to the emergence of the theme. Results indicated that counselors play a critical role in the lives of children experiencing military parental deployment. Pre-deployment and reintegration identified as the most critical stages. However, the actual deployment and parental absence impacts different families in different ways. Many families adapt quickly, and many struggle, depending on each family's level of resiliency and ability to cope. Communication with the service member during deployment contributes to positive children's responses to parental absence, and communication from military commands facilitates may or may not be available.

Counselors discussed the occurrence of deployment extensions within weeks of scheduled return dates. Because of multiple deployments, military children and families regard unexpected extensions as an additional stage of deployment. Discussion of the stages of deployment highlights the unique experiences shared by counselors who work with military

children and families. Pincus, et al., (2005) outlined the stages of deployment as the emotional cycle of deployment but counselors in this study added the distinction between stage and number. School counselors who have worked with military children throughout multiple deployments is a potential phenomenon to investigate.

Theme of the Role of the Counselor

The third theme to emerge from sustained data analysis was the Role of the Counselor. Many participants discussed the changing role of the counselor. Counselors talked about the range of activities in which they are involved, what they do with students, and how they view their role. Presence in a military community and culture shaped counselors' perceptions and accordingly, the counselors' role varies depending on the needs of the school and community. *The Role of the Counselor* was its own code prior to emerging as a theme, and appeared 51 times in reference to counselor duties and interactions, and their perception of their role. Comments refer to what the counselor does, with whom he or she interacts (parents, teacher, commands) and counselors' actions and communications. The emergence of a theme associated with the role of the counselor illustrates the depth of counselors' perspectives on the effects of deployment on children.

Following is a discussion of the theme, The Role of the Counselor, accompanied by a discussion of each code and supporting statements. Eight codes are associated with this theme:

1. Role of the Counselor
2. Counselor Competence & Preparation
3. Counselor Experience
4. Counselor Relationships with Students
5. Deployment Groups
6. Personal Impact on Counselor
7. Spectrum
8. What New Counselors Need to Know

Codes in Support of the Theme Role of the Counselor

Role of the Counselor

Data analysis indicated that counselors engage in a number of roles throughout the school day. Results indicated that counselors' often gauge their role based on their own feelings about what each situation requires. These counselors shared their perceptions of their role in school and with students and families:

Ann offers her perspective on her role as the counselor.

As a school counselor, I know that I can do some family counseling if the opportunity presents itself. But oftentimes my role is so multifaceted that the time just isn't there and so often times I'll do the groups and I'll work with the kids individually as I can. I see that there is a need for the family to be engaged in regular, weekly counseling with someone who's invested with them. I can't do that necessarily. I want to but I can't.--
Ann, Elementary School

Steve shares his impressions of his role as a counselor:

I want to make it real clear that our role is to promote the education of students. That's really our role and being a counselor in elementary school, that's where our focus should be. I think where we kinda get trapped is because if the emotional needs of the child aren't met, if a child is chronically anxious or doesn't feel safe, you know, it's Maslow. Their hierarchy of needs isn't met, so we can't meet their educational needs because they simply can't focus enough to learn, because they're dealing with so many other things. And so, we go through the back door to get students on track for that. But our primary role is to promote their education....and so we're not therapists...we don't provide therapy....we don't have therapeutic relationships with students. We do fall under the umbrella of psycho-educational counseling and solution focus counseling and problem solving, but I think in our heart, we're really more seen as behavior management specialists, and especially for the younger grades. And as the student ages, I think that focus shifts on the academic development and career counseling because you know, I think that our primary goal is to prepare these kids for the world.- Steve, Elementary School

Results indicated that counselors who were also licensed therapists often felt challenged by the role of the school counselor. Sue describes the diverse roles she undertakes in a given day:

I believe in working with other inter-agencies on the base, I believe the more I can develop support structures for my families the better they're going to be. I'm really trying to realize that the counselor's role in the school is very different than a therapist role and my job is to get them to a therapist. So I really.... work hard with that. I do a lot of putting out fires. My role is primarily behavior specialists because that's a strong background that I have. I work a lot with children who are acting out, extreme acting out kids from the school so there's always one of them. It's like popcorn popping; you know there's always one of them going off. My day is composed of teaching, individual sessions, working with children that come on the radar either from the teacher or myself or the parent. And it's busy all day long. I try not to do duties like lunch duty or playground duty unless I'm observing a child, or I need to be with one of the kids that's acting out. Because I think it's a wrong use of my time and talents, I just think it's a waste. We have other people out there who can do duties.- Sue, Elementary School

Beth offers insight into how she perceives her role as a counselor:

When they first started deploying back in 2002 or whatever, I kept after this one child, "Come on, join the group- a middle schooler. Join the group." And I said, "Don't you think you need to join them?" And she's got this, "You know, my dad is doing his job over there and I'm doing my job here. So, I don't need any group." That's what she told me. You know, that is stuck in my mind ever since, and I've repeated it over and over again. That was very enlightening to me.... if they're OK, all the signs are there, their grades are good, their attendance is good, they're not having emotional issues where they need to come to me, mom isn't saying, you know, could you please see my child? I think, then I leave them alone. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Jen discusses her personal feelings regarding her role and responsibilities:

I said I try to never say "no," and I do know that's demanding to really but I do. It is too easy to say no....it's too easy to have a reason not to be there for a kid. It's too easy to say, I'm spread too thin. I really feel a great deal with the hat that I wear, those kids that I serve if they're - if I'm not they're counselor it's okay, you know whatever, I mean I'm not saying I'm trying to change the world but if I'm a kid's counselor I make every effort to be there.-Jen, Middle School

Sue offers further discussion of her perception of the role of the counselor:

I maybe wrong, I mean I'm sure counselors may tell you I'm off base because after all they're just school counselors. But where better to make a difference than a school environment?. They spend eight hours, seven hours a day in our environment. My God we have an opportunity to have a huge impact. You know and if you're working together in a good team, with a team of two counselors who say "okay let's just kick some booty and let's make this school rock for counseling.- Sue, Elementary School

Results indicated that participants shared very strong reactions to the Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC) who are sent to bases to provide short-term confidential therapy. These discussions relate to the military community. Fran shares her perception of MFLC's:

The military has sent in counselors who work for six weeks and they'll go back home. I just think that's worthless. Because people don't trust -they might be good for really short term. I mean I can't even imagine a problem so short term for six weeks therapy. It'd have to be pretty minor stuff, but major stuff nah it's not enough.- Fran, Elementary School

Jen expresses her perception of the MFLC's:

We do have what they call "Family Life Counselors." Which is a big expense for a small service but they are available to work with families and not really for kids but they are there in the community, they are available....I think that the negatives far out weight the positives as far as being a really good referral source. They're very highly paid.....they come for two months...they work anywhere they wanna work..... I don't know the whole picture. I'm not saying they don't do any good. Supposedly, it's a big plus because they don't write anything, so people will talk who need counseling. My recommendation would be for the military to change whatever it's doing that makes people afraid to talk and to put these people on staff so that we all can use them in a network of referral services.... We need them...we need these two, which often times its two people. I need two reliable social workers, counselors, licensed professional counselors available to work with my families. They come over.... it takes a week to figure out, you know. "Where is the Commissary? Where do I, where's downtown? What do I do?" They're only there eight weeks and they're gone. And somebody else comes and takes their place. I think it's a very ineffective model.-Jen, Middle School

Counselor Competence and Preparation

Results indicated that counselor perception of their own competence and preparation influenced their work with children. Licensed counselors offered different perspectives on their competence than non-licensed counselors. Results indicated that some counselors perceived a need to train themselves due to a lack of official training opportunities. Participants who felt more competent also had more years of experience than did other counselors. Nevertheless, results indicated a range of perceptions regarding counselors' competence and preparation to

work with children who have deployed military parents. The code *Counselor Competence and Preparation* appeared 51 times in reference to counselor training, need for or lack of training, and counselors' perception of their own competence. This code is also associated with counselor experience. Results indicated that some of the counselors who identified as members of the DODDS system perceived a lack of training to deal with deployment issues. Ann discusses the ways in which she obtains training:

Other than my graduate work and the conferences I go to and the graduate classes I've taken, there's no specific training.- Ann, Elementary School

Carlos shares his perception of training opportunities for school counselors:

There's been workshops, no doubt, in my organization, Department of Defense Dependents Schools Europe that address deployment issues...but there's hasn't been, like "this is how you sit down with them, this is how you talk to them" absolutely not. I wouldn't buy into that kind of a workshop because either you connect with kids because you can connect with them or you can't. I haven't had a formal workshop telling me, well, if he's deployed, this is something you have to talk about, or this is a curriculum you use.- Carlos, Elementary School

Carlos continues his discussion of his professional preparation:

I just... You know, I find it easy to connect with, and I credit that not to my - so much to my education, but just being brought up with a mother who loved us unconditionally. Obviously that was the most important ingredient.- Carlos, Elementary School

Results indicated that counselors credited the Military Child Education Coalition for the majority of training in which they have engaged. Eve and Steve discuss their exposure to training opportunities:

I actually went to a workshop at the Military Child Coalition or Child Education Coalition and we talked a lot about transition and deployed kids and it was a two-day workshop, I believe.... it really brought up a lot of issues and there was a lot of getting together the resources at our base. So that is really the basic training I've had.- Eve, Middle & High School

Steve shares his training experiences with DoDDS:

I have to be really honest; I don't think DoDDS has ever provided a workshop or any kind of formal training on working with students with deployed family members. However, they do send us on workshops occasionally The Military Child Coalition provides some training and we've gone to I think 3 trainings in my career that the Military Child Coalition has provided....but the thing is, most of those workshops are how to deal with the Carnegie credits, when the child is transferring from school to school. How does a new student reintegrate in? It's that kind of training. You know, in terms of like the emotional needs in the family system impact, none.- Steve, Elementary School

Results indicated that licensed professional counselors perceived a higher level of competence and preparation than non-licensed counselors did. Ann and Sue discuss their impressions of their own competence:

I feel prepared. I worked as a clinician. I'm a licensed therapist so I feel like I'm prepared and I have some experience. I also think though that the preparedness has to do with community and the community has to buy in.--Ann, Elementary School

I personally feel very confident but you're talking to someone who is older. I'm in my - early 60's. I have been a therapist, a school psychologist, a teacher of special ed, a counselor in the schools, a private therapist, a child play therapist. So, I myself am very confident, to the point that gets frustrating for me really in dealing with a school environment.- Sue, Elementary School

Results indicated that a number of counselors felt competent and prepared due to their own personal experiences. Zoey and Jen discuss the factors that contribute to their feelings of competency:

Well, I feel prepared and confident because I am an Air Force brat, so I understand that kind of mindset, that life since I experienced that through my life. Just from being sensitive and keeping up with what's going on with the publicity that's out there and all of the publications that are out there, I have been pretty much training myself. -Zoey, Elementary Counselor

I think we all really developed what we needed worked out what we needed as we went, you know, I think cause' there was nothing in the states that could catch up with what we needed. There were no experts. We had to develop our own expertise as we went along. By now I feel very competent. This is number five, with Bosnia, Desert Storm, and three,

two Iraq and now Afghanistan. I will say Afghan; this last one was the scariest or the most concerning because it seemed to have the highest risk factor.-Jen, Middle School

Jen discusses her early preparation for the job of a school counselor:

I think I've been very blessed that..I think I'm centered enough that it doesn't throw me off balance. I have really deep, deep, deep roots....because I had such a really strong grounding Oklahoma; ranch, farm, animals, you know rock of Gibraltar that I really think I'm really stable enough to be able to really to let the kids lean on me.-Jen, Middle School

Beth describes her decreased feelings of competence:

The reason that I attack the academic component myself is because I don't feel confident working with a group of kids, of middle school kids especially, because they tend to not want to come to group first of all, they would rather be with their friends. But the powers that be says I have to, you know, we have to...so I'm in a quandary as to whether or not we should be pulling those kids and putting them in a group. And taking them away from their classes. So here it is, what can I do for those kids? I don't feel very confident at all. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Trish offered her impressions of the availability of training opportunities:

The ASCA model doesn't address anything about deployment. It talks about competencies in the areas of academic, career, and social emotional of which you could say to try and help build resilience as a part of their social emotional part of them. Anyway, there is not; DoDDS within the past 9 years, I can't see they've provided anything. They will allow us.... one training that has come here is MCEC, and MCEC has a module called Living in the New Normal, and they will allow us to go to this; so I've been to that. That was 1-day training or 2-day training. -Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Counselor Experience

Results indicated that counselors had diverse levels of experience. Levels and type of experience appeared to influence counselor's work with students. Some counselors discussed previous experiences with deployments. Results also indicated that some of the counselors who identified as DoDDS counselors had several years' experience working with the military population in various locations across Europe. The code Counselor Experience appeared 42

times in reference to counselors' years of experience, including experience with other deployments and other military situations. Counselors discussed their various years of experience. Marge offers the following:

All my work since 1990, most all of my work has been with military service members and their children, specifically I would say the middle high school population for about seven or eight years with the focus a lot on substance abuse, and then now about, I'm on my fifth year with elementary schools.-Marge, Elementary School

Trish discussed her experience with past deployments:

I work in DoDDS schools and there have a number of times in the past 26 years that kids have had parents deploy. We had quite a big push when parents were deployed to Kosovo. There was a lot of material information that came out for the DoDDS counselors. That deployment, it seemed as if people were very concerned how kids were going to react, but that was kind of like my first exposure....my first really big push about counselor's need to support kids whose parents have gone to Kosovo.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Trish's account continues:

September 11th happened and then March 2003 happened with Iraq. And so at that point in time, I am at school with another counselor. We ran a lot of deployment groups; 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and we would do the grade level at-you know, just one grade level at a time. So we've done these all kinds of things to try to support them and then since 2003 what I've seen now are just multiple, multiple deployment kids whose families' parents have been deployed 2, 3, or 4 times, things like that.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Results indicated that some counselors have prior experience with military deployments and the impacts on children in the school setting. Fran discusses her experience working with military children and families:

I've been a school counselor for 18 years. In Germany the entire time...for several years with Infantry and Artillery ... I moved to [an]Air Force Base where I worked with a purple community where we have probably about 40% Army and 60%--maybe not 60% Air Force because there are several civilians as well and contractorsI've beenat the high school level and now at the intermediate school, which is grades 3, 4, and 5. I work with grades 3 and 4 primarily right now, and I've been doing that for...this is my 12th year...I feel very experienced. ...I've been doing this since the first Gulf War. I

haven't had to have the experience with my individual students having a death whereas I have gone to help support, like my former community when they have deaths down range.- Fran, Elementary School

Jen discusses her many experiences with parental deployments:

I was a Department of Defense overseas school counselor.....in elementary [and]middle school for 42 years. I first faced deployed parents with Bosnia, which was pre Desert Storm. I had my first training to work with deployed parents when we deployed to Bosnia. When we had Desert Storm our entire community deployed, that was rough and really hard on everybody because they really weren't ready for.....there were no support services to speak of. It was like everything was supposed to carry on as usual but it wasn't normal..... I had three deployments since then. So all together I've had at least five deployments. And they're usually a year. Although one of them was for 15 months and that wasn't announced until the year was almost up. And it was tremendous emotional stress. -Jen, Middle School

Carlos recalls his years as a counselor:

I've been a school counselor now for - this is my 11th year. And after my first year, 9/11 happened. - Carlos, Elementary School

Counselor Relationships with Students

Results indicated that counselors valued their relationships with students and considered them important. *Counselor Relationships with Students* appeared 20 times in reference to connections with students and commitment to students. This code is also associated with role of the counselor. Carlos shares his perspective on relationships with students:

I'm a very nurturing person, I'm very positive, optimistic person, and kids sense that and they know I'm genuine with them. So they feel like they can just connect with me right away. And often times, they ask me if they can come to my office, you know, more than just two or three times a week. Well, I have that nice connections with kids and it's no problem to get into the, you know, being there with them. So together, we go through the deployment.

Carlos continues his discussion of relationships with students:

I had one student in particular who's a fourth grade girl who couldn't sleep. She was having nightmares when her dad first left for deployment 'cause she loved him so much. You know, she was just really worried about her father. And every day, I would check in

with her... and there was nothing more important in my day than giving her the time that she needed to bring her back, to ground her to make sure she was going to be OK, and to be there with her and to feel her pain and let her know that I was there with her.- Carlos, Elementary School

Jen and Sue's statements indicate that counselors perceive their relationships with children as positive:

The first long deployment I had - I had eighth graders and they said, "Please don't make us talk about deployment." So I would just meet with them and feed them, we have pancake breakfasts... and you know and bacon and an orange juice. So just - a lot of psychological support through nurturing...you know through the symbolism of food.-Jen, Middle School

Sue describes her daily relationships with students:

I'm never bored, but I've never been bored in my career. I have a -well I, I think I have a natural love for children, and I think I'm a natural teacher and counselor by personality. I think kids know that...so I have kids in my room all the time - I have kids who want me - want to hug you all the time.- Sue, Elementary School

Deployment Groups

Results indicated that counselors considered deployment groups to be a central component to their work with children. Many counselors conduct deployment groups, but some do not. Deployment groups are a form of support group for students who have deployed parents. Children use the deployment groups as a way to connect with and support each other. The safety of deployment groups allows children to express their feelings about what they are going through. The code Deployment Groups appeared 18 times in reference to groups at school for children of deployed service members. This code is also associated with social impact and counselor relationships with students. Zoey discusses her experiences conducting deployment groups:

The Army Community Services where I was located had a wonderful person who would come and assist me and lead the kids with the deployment groups and we would write

letters to parents. We would send them off. We would make special holiday treats and send these treats off to the deployed member.-Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Eve offers her thoughts on the need for deployment groups:

The only thing I would suggest for every school and if they don't have it they should, is a deployed support group for kids because it does wonders to be able to share with other kids because they, developmentally, they understand each other and sometimes, it's speaking a language that no matter how hard we try as professional counselors, we're never gonna quite get that language. Anybody that's not that age is just not gonna get that language. And so I think it's very important for them to have that support group.- Eve, Middle & High School

Beth shares her perceptions of deployment groups:

Right now as a counselor, what I'm doing, I really - the groups... The school psychologist takes care of the groups because I do not - I see the school as an academic arena, wherein what we can do is to make sure that academically that they're doing OK. That's one little component that we can provide for them. But to pull them from classes for a deployment group to give them candy, we don't have resources. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Beth continues her discussion:

When mom or dad gets back, sometimes there are conflicts. And this is not just reading about what the research says will happen. The reality is, that there are conflicts, and we talk about that in group, that sometimes.... they pipe right up and they say, oh, yeah, and they tell us about what happened this time and what happened. They, you know, are very willing to talk about it. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Sue offers her perspective on the value of group counseling for children:

I found that groups helped children -it's amazing how many people can't -don't do groups. They don't have enough background or they never had a lot of experience in it. But groups are really powerful for building a pseudo-family. A place where they can come and safely drop off their anxieties their fears, their angers, their frustration at what goes on in the home when dad or mom is gone.- Sue, Elementary School

Sue continues offering insights into the value of deployment groups for children:

I think deployment and my experience with deployment groups is that it has to have a composite of talking, and then something pleasurable that possibly can be generalized to the family like....what are we going to do for Christmas, what are some things that we can do at Christmas that would make it less lonely. How can we include the missing

parent? My deployment groups in the past has participated in service projects. I find that being in service decreases, to someone else, -takes the emphasis off their own pain and allows them to give to someone else. I think it just is a great diversion.- Sue, Elementary School

Trish shares her experience with deployment groups:

We have deployment groups at least in the school where I work. I do them once a month and so we provide materials, and we do activities and sometimes we'll have speakers come from the Wellness Center to talk about stress and how to manage your stress, and we might watch films and things like that.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Fran discusses her participation in deployment groups:

In our school, we have weekly deployment support counseling groups. That is where we do the counseling part. That is where we do the, you know, the letter writing, the booklets that talk about the different things that are going to happen. We do role plays. We talk about, you know, what to expect. I always do a check in when the kids come in, physically and emotionally. Like how they are feeling physically, how they are feeling emotionally, and why. And the check in really helps because, you know, kids will say the gate guard answer, "I'm fine" until you ask them- okay above my door I have a 1 to 5. 1 worse- 5 best, and then, they will be able to say well I am a 2.- Fran, Elementary School

Fran offers her perspective on the frequency with which deployment groups are held:

I know that the middle school....it is done by schools but I think most of the schools do weekly groups at our level, at the elementary school. In middle school, I know they do not meet quite so often with their groups right now may meet like every 2 or 3 weeks I think or when they need to. The elementary school, I know, has the deployment buddies once a month. I don't know if they have the weekly groups, but most schools, my age level, my student age, like grade 3 to 5, are doing weekly support.- Fran, Elementary School

Carlos shares his experience with deployment groups:

I've been running....deployment groups as an important part of my day. I see students from kindergarten through fifth grade. And at every grade level, I conduct deployment groups and those last the whole time of the deployment, or at least, the whole school year. And if their parents are still deployed after the summer is over, then we pick right up where we left off. Deployment groups are a space in my counselor's office where students lean on each other for emotional support, and we're all there kind of just to be there for each other to get through the deployment. And we'll do different things, activities, not necessarily about their moms and dads because, you know, that might make

them sad. We do things that help to empower them, become good friends, you know, we do the academic things and working on something from class or if they're not on the same class we'll do educational games or, you know, any number of things just to be there for one another. - Carlos, Elementary School

Personal Impact on Counselor

Results indicated that the experience of working with children of deployed service members does have an impact on counselors. Counselors described a range of ways in which they are impacted. The code Personal Impact on Counselor appeared 22 times in reference to counselor statements, reflections and feelings. Ann shares how working with children of military service members has affected her:

The thing that had deep personal impact on me was a young man, I wanna say young man but he was actually in elementary school, whose father was killed in combat. And what that did to the community and what it did to this young man was really, really hard to watch. I mean I, how do you? I helped as best as I could. He talked with me weekly and his mother did the best she could.-Ann, Elementary School

Eve shares how she has been impacted:

I was really saddened when I watched some of these kids suffer so much as such young people with their parent being deployed and their fear that that parent could die.- Eve, Middle & High School

Steve discusses the personal impact of working with military children and families:

I'm tired. I am tired. I'm burned out. I'm angry a lot. My tolerance is beginning to go, not only for students but for their parents and teachers as well. I have to model a lot, and I become frustrated when those techniques are rejected. Personally, I think I've experienced my fair share of sadness. I've had families come in who've had a death because of the war, but I've never experienced one first hand. None of my fathers or mothers has ever been killed in action. I have a lot of anxiety about that. That bothers me because our soldiers are at risk, and people die and I fear that. I fear the impact that will bring to our school. So personally, fatigue is probably the biggest thing. I've made a lot of steps to address that. To be quite honest, I gained probably 45 pounds after 9/11, and working with the kids. Recently, I've decided to make some boundaries of my own. I no longer work a 12-hour day. I give 8 hours and that's it. And win, lose, or draw, I'm

out of that building at 5 o'clock. That is my rule. And so that's been very helpful to me. And so... fatigue and burn out has been by far the biggest challenge that I'm experiencing.- Steve, Elementary School

Sue and Marge discuss the various ways in which counselors are impacted by their work in military environments:

I think I've developed a lot of empathy for the kinds of issues and I'm not a pro-military person. I've never been very...I very often disagree with what decisions are made for our military...what our country has decided to do militarily and send these people out there. I think working with the children has...has definitely made me more empathic. Has broadened my view as far as the sacrifice that they make I think it has impressed me, how military families do make a big sacrifice and the children have personal sacrifices that they don't know about.- Marge, Elementary School

Sue reflects on her feelings regarding the military community:

I guess coming out of all this I have a love for the military I never had. I believe I have nationalism. When I go to the movies and people stand up... on military bases you go to the movies you stand up. They play the national anthem everybody stands up and I miss that. I grew up in an environment like that you know. I grew up back in the 50's and 60's where you saluted the flag... you know you just did all that... I think there's a merit to nationalism. I have an appreciation and love for the military...and the people in the military I never had before... until I lived in, until I've done this work on a military base I just it's really changed my heart.- Sue, Elementary School

Carlos shares his experience:

I feel their pain, I feel, you know, I think I'm definitely a better person because I'm amazed how resilient they are, and, you know, you can't help but to be impacted by that personally because you do it because you care. So it's going to affect you personally, absolutely. You know, it's sad to see that.- Carlos, Elementary School

Diva continues the discussion of personal impact:

It's impacted me... it makes me feel like I wanna give more to these kids, like I am supposed to as much as I can stand in the gap for the parent that's deployed, just taking care of their needs. Like I said I grew up in the military so I kind of know how it feels to have someone leave...you feel for the babies when they.. I mean they don't know what's going on a lot of times...a lot of the support is given to the parent that is left behind and I just want to be -- I just want to give that support to the child.- Diva, Elementary School, Elementary School

Jen continues the discussion of personal impact:

It does break my heart when they are in so much pain because of divorces and issues, struggles. Not just the deployed ones but of course, you know when the child's, a student, a young person even a seventh and eighth grade is still a child. My heart goes out to them, so it's affecting me a lot emotionally but I'm certainly glad I was - I could be there for them .-Jen, Middle School

Spectrum

Results indicated that counselors perceived a spectrum of circumstances that accompany working with military children and family. Counselors advised that assumptions about military life should be limited. The code Spectrum appeared 23 times in reference to the range of counselor experiences, observations, and opinions revealed through data analysis.

Marge offers her insights on the spectrum of situations that could occur with military children and families:

I'd say, we see the whole spectrum, we see children that show tremendous resiliency and we see children that have great problems particularly before, during and right after deployment. And when I say right after, it's hard to measure how long exactly. I know some of the behaviors with some children pick right up as soon as dad or mom comes back home. In other cases, parents describe to me long term effects of having dad or mom gone so much of their child's life. And so...we see the whole spectrum of little or no impact that we can measure to very significant impact that could possibly even leave a... I'm hypothesizing that it could leave a permanent mark on these children.

Marge continues her perspective:

I think the spectrum of behavior is so complex. There's not ever one thing. So one family says we're missing daddy, this is horrible, how can we go there? Another family is, thank God he's gone. He's drunk a lot. You know, so, daddy's role in the family or mommy's role in the family when they're gone makes a huge impact..... It's so individual. Just saying daddy's gone, we see this, can't say that. It has an impact. It has a big impact but in each family, it takes its own twist and turn.- Marge, Elementary School

Steve and Trish reflected on the spectrum of impacts:

I will have to say that there's a spectrum of impact depending on this child's level of resiliency, adjustment, anxiety.- Steve, Elementary School

The reunion, I know that all the literature says that the reunion time can be probably one of the most difficult times for readjustment, and I can't generalize and say, yes it is for all kids. I think it is for some and I think it isn't for others.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Sue and Beth offer examples of their perceptions of the spectrum of potential impacts:

Don't make an assumption that somehow the home would be dysfunctional without the other parent. Because it's not true....I believe in the resiliency model and the strengths model approach to families. I have been with some very dysfunctional families and yet there's a tremendous amount of love in those families. I have -some of those families have experienced a tremendous amount of love and caring, and positive traits that other families don't have at all.- Sue, Elementary School

It's very individual. I mean, I cannot make a blanket statement and say, yes, there is a marked social-emotional componentIt just depends. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Jen discusses factors that may influence families' reactions to deployment:

I think it's very important not to generalize. You have to really look at it like a mosaic. How old is the child? Which number deployment is it? What is the picture of this particular family? And of course we have so many configurations; is it a step parent or is it the biological father. You have to really take into account the mosaic; the many -- the multiple pieces that go together in any family and of course the -- you have some spouses who stay back who are really, really, competent and rise to the occasion and some less competent. You know, the kids are not as well grounded or supported by that spouse who stays behind. So it's really, really important not to over generalize. You can't cookie-cutter these deployment situations.-Jen, Middle School

What Counselors in Training Need to Know

This code refers to recommendations the study participants offer to counselors in training. Results indicated that working with children of deployed military service members requires certain competencies, many of which are discussed here. *What counselors in training need to know* appeared 33 times in reference to the training of new counselors. This code is associated with implications for research, training and practice. This code facilitates an

understanding of the true essence of the experience for counselors, and advocates for appropriate training and preparation for new counselors. Carlos offers his recommendations to counselors in training:

And as counselors in training, they just... I would say, to be there with them genuinely and in the moment. Like Carl Rogers says that. I believe it was. Just to be there with them and to listen to them and to let them know that you care about them; otherwise, you're definitely in the wrong business. –Carlos

Steve shares his thoughts about the training of new counselors:

I'm not really a behaviorist at heart, but I think as counselors deal with the problems and behaviors that come with attachment issues and family situations that I talked about earlier, I think having a firm understanding of behaviorism and learning how to.... To be quite honest, I've never wrote a behavior chart until I got into the school, you know, and then if I wrote one, I wrote a thousand of 'em and, you know, I think I was unprepared for that. I don't think my degree really gave me enough preparation for that aspect of the school counseling job.- Steve

Eve provides guidance for counselors in training:

They need to know this is very special situation. This is not a typical behavioral issue necessarily and for those that have not had exposure to a military community; they really need to know the different terminology for deployments. Some people deploy for nine months. Some people deploy for three months. And knowing that actually gets them a little bit of, I don't know if edge is the right word, but it gives them the knowledge they need to work with this very special population.....I think that's very important for school counselors in training to keep in mind is that again, Johnny is not necessarily in trouble because he's into drugs or he's not necessarily in trouble because he went with somebody that's notorious for it. It's sometimes because they just, they don't know how to deal and I think it's extremely important to know that.- Eve, Middle & High School

Sue shares her impression of the changing role of the counselor:

I think the counselor -can no longer just be a glorified secretary and assistant to the principle, with discipline. On a military base there's too many needs. We are in a very complex world, families are very complex.- Sue, Elementary School

Summary of Theme Role of the Counselor

The school counselor is a pivotal person in the lives of children, and is regarded as a key member of a military community. Thus, the role of the counselor varies according to the needs of the school and community. School counselors may serve as a conduit for support, outreach, and information for parents and families. In schools without systems to inform counselors about impending deployments, participants indicated that their relationships with families and teachers helped keep them informed. Many counselors discussed their commitment to provide social and emotional support to children and families. Counselors provided first line contact and intervention, and participants who were trained therapists expressed temptation to engage in family counseling, but resisted. Questions asked of counselors about children often yielded responses about family. The needs of the military community compel school counselors to advocate for families as well as children. Thus the counselors' perceptions of their role are framed through the experiences of counselors who live in military communities and work almost exclusively with military connected children and families.

Theme of Children and Adolescents

Results indicated that counselors' experience a range of circumstances in their work with children of deployed service members. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Thus, emergence of the theme of *Children and Adolescents* provides insight into the phenomenon. Results indicated that counselors perceived children and adolescents to be impacted in numerous ways. This theme includes discussions about school issues, parental issues, and academic, emotional, social and behavioral impacts on children and adolescents. The theme of Children and Adolescents consists of 12 codes, each of which is discussed,

accompanied by supporting statements in participants' own words. The codes contributing to the emergence of this theme follow:

- Abuse-Neglect
- Academic impact
- Adolescents
- Children's exposure to information
- Children's needs
- Children's relationships with parents
- Emotional impact- Child
- Externalizing Behaviors
- Resilience
- Role of Teachers
- School Activities
- Social Impact

Abuse- Neglect

Results indicated that counselors perceived abuse and neglect as significant issues with which they are confronted in relation to the children of deployed military parents. The code Abuse- Neglect appeared 6 times in reference to suspected child abuse or neglect. This code is also associated with children's needs, and the role of the remaining parent. Marge offers an overview of her familiarity with children who have experienced abusive or neglectful situations:

I've seen more – with deployment situations, I've seen an increase in neglect. Some parents just don't get up in the morning and get their kid's breakfast. Whereas, if there's two parents, one will pick up the slack. If one has a headache, one doesn't feel well, one's depressed, the one that's left behind, they're under functioning, then I see more – increase in those children of neglect significantly. I've seen more stress on some students particularly if the other parent parentifies the children, takes the oldest one and says, "you're mommy's helper". I've seen it in cases where mommy relies on an eight-year-old to change the baby's diapers to do the laundry, to walk the dog. You put them in roles that are way beyond their capabilities. And if that child doesn't perform, the mother may be severe in punishing them, you know, "I need you. I can't do it alone. You have to do this." I do see – we do suspect, and it's very hard to get behind because parents have a lot of influence and they are able to decide whether their child goes to school or not. Now, sometimes it's neglectful. They say, "Mommy has a headache, I can't care for

the baby today. So I'm going to let my 10-year-old stay home because my 10-year-old can watch the baby when I am showering or do this or that." Some students need more affection from the parent their missing. Some have an increase in physical needs that aren't being met, clothes aren't clean. Some have needs that they're being parentified, like, daddy's gone, you be the man of the house now. Now you've got to do what – now, you're the big man of the house. So, oh, don't cry, you know. So they're not allowed to be children....I didn't talk much about abuse, but there's also increase in abuse. If one parent tends to be abusive that's left behind, they let it out on those kids too. Or if the abusive parent's deployed, it can decrease the abuse.-Marge, Elementary School

Beth shares her perspectives on children's risk for abuse:

In the interview, I discovered that mom had been TDY for a long period of time. She sent [the girl] back to stay with her natural father and she has lots of cousins and people that she was with over there. My thinking is that this child had been abused. Someone had shown themselves to her by the way she answered the questions. But it was not the classmate, a five-year-old, under the cafeteria table. No, it wasn't. And then she told me it was under a swing out at the playground. And it was not. She might have very well been talking about an abuse issue. But this is what happens, these kids are from this person to that person, and things happen to them. They really do. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Steve offers his impressions of children's risk for abuse and access to services:

Families who are not able to stay connected in a frequent way, their reintegration process seems to be more difficult. I have more family advocacy cases that go with those kinds of families. Family Advocacy is basically social work services, child services. It is our legal avenue that we go to, to report situations of child abuse or neglect.- Steve

Academic Impact

Results indicated that counselors perceive military parental deployment to have a diverse academic impact on children. The code *Academic Impact* appeared 21 times in reference to homework, grades, and school issues. Ann offers her perspective on the academic impact of children with deployed military parents:

I mean in a couple of cases, in particular with a couple of girls, I'm thinking of their grades actually were the same or better. So there is a tendency to really focus on school work. But then again, generally speaking, my experiences have been that the boys that have come to my attention, grades go down and the family dynamic changes, the way who has which role.--Ann, Elementary School

Steve offers his impressions of the academic impact experienced by students:

I will say that students tend to be academically resilient. There certainly is some academic impact and that can go either way, I think in the absence of a parent, or if the parent is deployed, especially if they have a stay at home parent. If the father is deployed and the family stays in Germany, what I see often is a hyper focus on academia, where their job is to go to school and do well for their deployed parent. A lot of parents rely on that. It gives the students a role. It gives them a purpose. It gives them something to show and share when they do communicate with their parent. But I've also seen many cases where the child, you know, simply doesn't do well. However, I would say more often than not, academic impact is minimal; and in some cases, it actually increases because it becomes a focus in the home.- Steve, Elementary School

Zoey offers her impression of the academic impact of parental deployment on children:

I talk to the teachers so the teachers understand what's going on. Most of the time, the parents ...the families that are pretty much together have notified the school saying that my child is going to be going through difficulty in our family because of the fact that we have a deployed member. The parents try their hardest; the parent that stayed back tries their hardest to keep things under lock and key, to keep things normal. To keep things regulated. The academics pretty much stay the same. They may miss a homework assignment. They may miss school if there is R&R, but we understand that. The families that are not doing well with the deployments, the academics, they slip. They start to slip and you see a big difference. The child seems to be transit. He or she seems to be missing a lot of the concepts because they are so worried about their parents in this harmful situation. So, the academic does start to slip. I see a big difference in the academic.- Zoey

Marge shares her perspectives on academic impact:

I've seen when a parent's gone, academic... decreasing academics. And when a parent's gone for a year, I've seen permanent patterns get established that after a year, it's not just Johnny didn't do his homework much, mom can't get him to do when he's angry, daddy's gone. After a year, that child is fairly in trenched learning, so some of these patterns can have far reaching effects on them.-Marge, Elementary School

From Sue:

I'd say the kids who aren't very strong academically are going to be impacted more than the kids who are. Kids who have good study skills, and I find that I have to do those programs at least once a year, study skills, and how to study for tests and that. Because the remaining parent at home usually has more than one child to deal with. Many of

them are working parents. And so I think it impacts the amount of time each child in a family gets to have special attention.- Sue, Elementary School

Fran discusses her observations on the academic impact of parental deployment:

A student the other day just told me, “You know what, my father is the one that I do the homework with and he is deployed, and my mom comes home from work, and she is also in the military. We have a lot of dual military in the Air Force. And she is tired and she is grouchy and she doesn’t, you know, we get into arguments. She really gets short-tempered with me, and then I don’t want to do it with her, and so I don’t do my homework.” I mean, that was one particular student, but I think that that’s an overall concern that teachers are feeling right now. The parents are saying, “Hey listen, all that school stuff should just be done at the school and we don’t want to do anything when we get home.- Fran, Elementary School

Fran continues her discussion:

I work in a community now where it’s very high achieving, very like upper...older parents and higher ranking, both enlisted and officers, and, you know, they’re not just starting out in the military and there’s a real emphasis on achievement...but I have seen a huge decline in level of support. Homework is not being finished at any level whereas before it would be-in the last 6 years, I’ve seen a huge difference at our school. It’s very difficult for the kids to get their homework done. The high schools even are noticing it sometimes.- Fran, Elementary School

Jen counselor continues the discussion:

They do have the tendency to have academic exhaustion. So we really have to energize them. We always need to impress upon them. We do have a very proactive approach of - it takes a lot of work and everybody’s part but our feeling is that we make sure every child’s succeeds.-Jen, Middle School

Adolescents

Results indicated that only four of the participants indicated that they currently work with the adolescent population. Thus, there is limited representation on behalf of issues concerning adolescents. The code Adolescents appeared 15 times in reference to issues, impact, and reactions of adolescents. Eve, a middle and high school counselor, offers her perspective on the effects of deployment on adolescents:

I think the social end is, if they're shy, they tend to be more withdrawn. And the emotional, I mean, they don't always act out behaviorally. They will often try to become pleasers or they shut down. And you notice a little bit of their grades slipping or they just keep saying "Everything is OK. Everything is OK." They put like a bubble around them to really protect themselves. And again, that goes with shutting down. I think it's a survival mode. Sometimes, we get where the students will start getting in with the wrong crowd and they just, it's a form of escape. We have substance abuse problems at our school like every school and you'll start seeing that in some of the kids, but I think the main thing is emotionally, they just react in so many different ways. I don't know exactly how to put this but emotionally, they just, they don't always reach out to the school counselor. I think they wanna be the brave kid and they wanna do their duty as the kid and everybody focuses on that. And for some of these students, the emotional impact is huge but they won't admit it and they won't talk about it.- Eve, Middle & High School

Fran discusses her experiences with adolescents during parental deployment:

I mean, I've seen kids acting out, to kids being the hero because their parents' gone. I mean to be the big kid. At the high school level, I think what happens is they've been through it before; so they just feel like, "Okay, I know how to do this...I've had the gamut. I've had... actually older kids have gotten closer when I was at the high school level. Some of those kids got closer to their parents while they were deployed because they actually wrote to them, like consistently wrote to them, and they didn't really sit down and talk with them when they were home. I see that where actually the relationship gets better while they're gone-- that's sounds odd but that's true- Fran, Elementary School

Trish shares one of her experiences with adolescents during parental deployment:

I just had a student the other day whose father came home, and he came home about May, so here it is November, so about 5 or 6 months post-deployment and her brother ran away, and he's a high schooler. So I'm imagining that this reunion and then trying to get back to normal is obviously not going well in that family, but you know; there are good stories and there are bad stories.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Children's Exposure to Information

Results indicated that counselors perceived children's exposure to information to be of concern. Counselors discussed their experiences with children's reactions to exposure to information. The code Children's Exposure to Information appeared 8 times in reference to

children's exposure to information, misinformation, media, and stories from others. Steve his perspectives on children's exposure to information:

Some parents disclose a lot of information, which can increase the students' anxiety. Some parents are very guarded with that information. And so, a lot of students don't really understand what's happening. And they're, kind of, misinformed and left to find out the information either through the school or through the media, or through their peers.- Steve, Elementary School

Trish shares her impression of children's exposure to information:

Sometimes when kids do get very personal, and they share some of the war stories that their family has told them. I think how could this person have told this to their child? I felt traumatized just hearing it, so I thought okay, here's the soldier who is traumatized, then they told it to their child and the child knows that this is a really bad story and then they come to the deployment group, and they tell the rest of us. I'm feeling traumatized and I want to cover up the ears of the other kids because I don't want them to hear some of these things.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Marge discusses her experiences with children's exposure to information:

Some of the children see the news that comes on about so and so helicopters down and stuff, and their daddy's flying helicopters and you really wonder what goes through their heads when they're seeing the news and they hear their parents, they hear others in the units, you know, parent, moms talking with their friends and all their worries that so and so got hurt. They hear it all and they put this picture in their mind.-Marge, Elementary School

Children's Needs

Results indicated that counselors often find themselves tasked with trying to meet the needs of children. The code Children's Needs appeared 10 times in reference to needs demonstrated by students. This code is associated with abuse-neglect, emotional impact-child and the role of the remaining parent. Counselors offer their perspectives on the need demonstrated by children during parental deployment: Ann offers her perspective on children's needs:

They need support. They need homework assistance. They need organizational support in terms of just knowing what they need to accomplish so they can go home and do it. Because I find that they're often more distracted and their focus is less on school work and more on what's happening with the deployed parent. They need to know that they can communicate with that individual and there needs to be a way for them to do it. They need an attachment. They need objects of attachment that they can use.--Ann, Elementary School

Zoey discusses her work with children in need:

Sometimes kids will come in not having been fed breakfast. Sometimes some kids will come in with clothes that have not been cleaned. The other parent is so overwhelmed that if they are going through depression that they just shrug to all responsibilities because they can't. Homework sometimes is done, sometimes it isn't done. Things are lost. Kids can't keep their hands on things. They just don't have it. They are just so preoccupied with the safety of their parent that they just they need to know that we care. Like they need to have constant reminders. Homework is being given again. Sometimes I have kids come in who don't get their homework done and they will come into my office and they will get it done.-Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Diva offers this insight:

I mean they need a little bit more love just a little bit more tenderness and patience sometimes.- Diva, Elementary School, Elementary School

Sue and Eve share their perspectives:

Attention. Probably the primary thing is they need attention, they need someone to share their -they need someone who can tell the truth to who is not going to judge them. They also need diversion. - Sue, Elementary School

I think they need the extra attention. I think that's the biggest thing. And sometimes at school, they need to be just a kid especially if they are the oldest taking care of younger siblings I think, especially high school. They tend to just need to be kids. And that's the big thing. -Eve

Carlos demonstrates a male counselor who is keenly aware of children's emotional needs:

The need for attention; to have someone listen to them, and that's what I do as a school counselor. I'm there to listen to them, to hear them out, to listen to their fears, their, you know, their hopes, you know... their anger 'cause they don't understand why the Army has to send them away for so long. They just need someone to fill that void, and I can't be a father to all those kids in my school, but certainly when we have that space, you know, in my office for deployments, you know, they lean on each other for support. -Carlos

Steve offers his impressions on children's needs:

Emotional neediness. Comfort. They seek attention. They seek approval. They want to share their life with anybody who will participate with them...It seems to me that for those students who have the dual enlisted parents, they - how do I put this. They always need hugs. They always need just TLC. I have a girl right now who is in that very situation, who acts out daily. We have her on behavioral plans and all these structured plans and things. And generally speaking, they're very unsuccessful because it's not a sticker. It's not a reward. It's time. It's connection. And it's those kinds of resources that she just doesn't have a chance to get. And she loves her mother and father dearly; however, she just simply never sees them. We arranged things, you know, on the weekend, she Skypes with her parents. But I have to say that coming back out of the weekend, transitioning into the school day is very difficult. And by the time we get together around on Wednesday, Thursday, we're gearing up for the weekend. And so, it's really difficult. - Steve, Elementary School

Children's Relationships with Parents

Results indicated that counselors' work with children of deployed service members often encounter the children's parents. Results also indicated that children have a variety of relationships with their parents. The code Children's Relationships with Parents appeared 10 times in reference to children's relationships with both deployed and remaining parents.

Marge shares her impressions of children's relationships with their parents:

The impact I see is correlated or is connected with what kind of a relationship and the depth, and the intensity of the relationship with the parent that is deployed. Some children have a dad that's been deployed so much, it's like a CEO of a big company that they only see dad maybe a few hours on the weekend. And over years and years, that's just the norm...With girls close to daddy, daddy leaves, all of a sudden, they talk in groups about arguing with mom a lot and stuff. So there's the power struggles with mom may increase.-Marge, Elementary School

Jen shares her experience:

I have had kids who couldn't care less that their step parent was deployed and I've sometimes had them in counseling group, I mean in deployment groups and they'll say "I don't care, it doesn't bother me. I don't care when he comes home.-Jen, Middle School

Sue discusses children's relationships in the context of families:

Yeah, they're struggling to just like everybody else in the family find their role. I think though the kids adapt quicker than the parents do. I think the kids are glad that the missing person is back,-particularly if it's a mom. I'm going to go out on a limb here and say that mom's are the center of a home often. Whether we want to say it or not, at least in the early stages of the elementary aged child. I think around 12 in Junior High the boys are missing.....-they need that male model, the mother can no longer serve -a mother can't become a man for their son. So that again is a need for some kind of support that sort of initiates boys into manhood, if their father isn't there. But little kids like elementary aged kids that I work with, the mother is everything... a missing mom is like the heart has left the family, and kids who have both parents missing...what can they do?- Sue, Elementary School

Trish offers her impressions of children's relationships with their parents:

Trying to assume the role in the family, for a boy, for example, when the father says, you know, take care of the family. That puts a big burden on the kids. It seems like when it is mother, that is even a more difficult for the children because mothers seem to be like the emotional heart or connection for both the boy children and girl children, and I work in a middle school. So for the girl children, for the moms not to be there, and they're going through times of puberty and they really need their mom and then the mom is not there ... that's rough for them as well.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Beth offers her perspective on children's relationships with their parents:

I have one little boy to say to me, he was very upset, missing his dad, and Thanksgiving was coming up. And his dad used to cook for Thanksgiving every year, and he said that his dad cooked better than his mother. So, he missed his dad because it was about to be Thanksgiving and he wasn't there to cook Thanksgiving dinner for him. -Beth, Elementary & Middle School

Emotional Impact-Child

Results indicated that counselors perceived military parental deployment to have an emotional impact on children, although not always outwardly visible. The code Emotional Impact-Child appeared 25 times primarily in reference to internalized emotional reactions. This code is associated with Externalizing Behaviors. Steve states, "I see a lot of mood swings and

anxiety in the younger students” and Ann discusses her experience with children’s emotional reactions:

I remember one particular time, I went into a classroom with the school psychologist and all the kids were sitting on the floor and they looked at us and they just looked horrified. And I said to him, they think we’re coming in to tell them that their parents died. He said no, I said yes. So we sat on the circle on the floor and I asked, do any of you think we’re here to give you bad news? Yes, we do think that. And I said no, we’re not, that would not come from us. But that was the climate. And I was very much impacted by that to the point where we actually had to have, I wasn’t impacted so that I needed help but it was the fact that we had so many issues with these students that just couldn’t, the internal resources weren’t there and their external resources were just tapped.--Ann, Elementary School

Zoey discusses her observations of emotional impact on children:

Every once in a while if there is a huge conflict in either Iraq or Afghanistan, and it happens to be . . . if they have injured or dead, deaths from this, the kids will act up. I find they act up on the playground as if they are role playing this conflict. They are nervous. The kids are nervous. They are afraid of getting that phone call, you know what's going to, what's going to happen to my life, or what's going to happen to our family if, you know, mom is dead or dad is dead. You know, how are we going to go through this? Who is going to take care of us now? How, what am I going to do about no friends? So they have a lot issues that they are going through and they are little. They are little kids. This is Elementary level that I am dealing with K-6, K-7, K-8.- Zoey

Zoey continues her observations:

The kids will every once in a while fall apart at school and they will come in to me as a counselor and claim I miss my mom or I miss my dad. I wished they didn't have to go. Why is there this war? Why does it have to be my dad? Why is it my mom? I am frightened for my mom. I am frightened for my dad. That's expected.- Zoey

Sue offers her impression of the emotional impact of parental deployment on children:

Well, the number one mental health issue in the United States right now is anxiety. And that’s impacting like 77% of the United -of the adults of the United States. And so you see that in children. I think we’re seeing a lot of children identified as ADHD who are just children with a lot of anxiety. But the symptoms are very similar.- Sue, Elementary School

Trish offers insight into responding to children’s emotional reactions:

You need to recognize that yes, they have a parent who's deployed and acknowledge that because that is an undue stress on the family.... although the kids might not verbalize it and talk about it, it's always nagging at them about is my parent going to be safe or are they going to come back safely all in one piece or are they going to come back at all. So I think you need to acknowledge that the parents are gone because they're in a, many times, in a life and death situation. I've had kids tell me that they just worried the whole time that the parent was gone, and I've had kids tell me how could the President send people off to war? This is my father. This is my family. How could they do that?-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Jen discusses her experience with children's emotions:

I think it was Desert Storm and then my first deployment where the kids were almost poetic. And parents would really call and say," I just - I can't communicate with my son, I'm close with my daughter but my son is really struggling." And when you would talk with him he goes, "she goes to those meetings, and they're just gonna tell her that they'll bring him home in a body bag. And so boys were so aggressive about their grief, their struggle, their fear.-Jen, Middle School

Carlos shares his impression of the emotional impact of parental deployment on children:

I've seen the difficulties. You know, the younger the kids, the fewer the coping strategies they have. At least the older ones, they can verbalize it more than the kindergartners or first graders I definitely noticed that, and the acting out, certainly, yes, anger, insecurity, you know, a lot of those emotions come out when you don't know and you're very close to your father or your mother, and usually it is the father that deploys.- Carlos, Elementary School

Externalizing Behaviors

Results indicated that counselors perceived military parental deployment to have a behavioral impact on children. Counselors often experienced children engaging in externalizing behaviors. Discussion of counselors' exposure to children's externalizing behaviors contributes to understanding school counselors' lived experiences as it pertains to the phenomenon under examination in this study. The code Externalizing Behaviors appeared 14 times in reference to behavioral impacts, and behaviors demonstrated by children. Trish observes that "behaviorally, you'll see kids who are just kind of like emotionally numbed out."

Marge shares her observations of children's behavior:

I do know behavior difficulties, noncompliance, anger, emotionality increase particularly pre-deployment, re-deployment. When they come home for two weeks, there is often a lot of stress and a lot of anxiety. Dad is going to leave again... or mommy. Deployment, just at the time of deployment, we see more agitated behaviors, kids get nervous, tense, stressed out, sad, more likely to show acting out behaviors just at the very start of the deployment and right after the homecoming.-Marge, Elementary School

Steve shares his impressions of children's behavior:

The impact that they do feel, is the absence of their parent. And really, and that's, and to me, what I see that's consistent with behavior problems. The more absent the parent, the more intense the behavioral problems tend to be.- Steve, Elementary School

Steve continues his discussion of children's behavior during parental deployment:

Emotional impacts can look like a lot of different things. I see a lot of mood swings and anxiety in the younger students. Currently, I work with Pre-K through first grade. And most of the time, I will see, very consistent with parents who have – who were deployed. The student will often act out, become aggressive with other students; hitting, kicking, non-compliance with teacher's directives, very clingy, very attention – a lot of attention-seeking behaviors. I see a lot of that .- Steve, Elementary School

Marge offers her impressions of children's behaviors in the context of families:

Different children react differently behaviorally. Some act out more. I've seen that with boys, particularly when they're getting up to... I've seen it even young children. One little boy, a first grader was acting out, mom said when daddy leaves, he gets very angry. But I've seen, like in the fifth, sixth grade part when daddy leaves, often the boys have real...can have... acting out behaviors, become defiant, don't want to do their work, become very resistant. Also with dads, the main disciplinarian, and mom is really laissez faire and just kind of goes with the flow, when dad leaves, I tell you, you notice mom's overwhelmed, doesn't know how to set limits, there's no boundaries, tries to over compensate or whatever, and the kids may take advantage of it. So you see that, a behavioral acting out.-Marge, Elementary School

Resilience

The concept of resilience has often been associated with military children and families.

Results indicated that counselors considered the resilience of their students to factor into the

impact of deployment. The code Resilience appeared 5 times in reference to the adaptability of military children and families. This code is associated with Military Life. Ann shares her impression of resilience in children from military families:

I grew up in a military community. I love military kids. I think they're a really special group and a lot of them haven't been to the States and if they have, they haven't been there very long. Many of them, I did a lesson a couple of days ago and I asked kids to tell me how many schools they've been in. I had a fifth-grader stand up and tell me she'd been in nine schools and she's ten. So they're pretty phenomenal kids.--Ann, Elementary School

Sue offers several examples of her perception of resilience in children from military families:

I guess what I am most surprised about is how resilient the kids are...I'd have to say the majority of them are just resilient as heck and they just are amazing kids...I will have to tell you I am extremely impressed by the resiliency of the families.- Sue, Elementary School

Trish offers her impressions of resilience in children from military families:

Resilience. Sometimes quite frankly I think resilience is a word that is created to make us feel good about all the not so good things that these families go through. We want to feel good about--oh, they're going to get something out of it, and you know what, what does not kill you, it makes you stronger. Well, yeah, but how much do they have to keep going through?- Trish

Role of Teachers

Results indicated that teachers played a significant role in counselor's interactions on behalf of children who have deployed parents. Counselors and teachers are the people with whom children interact at school. The code Role of Teachers appeared 13 times in reference to the influence of teachers, and teachers' relationships with students. This code is associated with the role of the counselor. Steve offers his impressions of the role of teachers in the lived experience of working with children of deployed service members:

With all the academic pressures and, you know, school improvement plans, and data collection, and assessments, and, you know, the business of a school and education.

There's a lot of pressure put on faculty members and teachers for academic performance. And so, I think they're kind of in a catch 22, because they could certainly spend most of their time building relationships and meeting those emotional needs. However, I think sometimes, teachers kind of get pigeon-holed into pushing academics more so and valuing that more, because they are under so much pressure from the administration and, you know, the district to get our data. And I have to say that that does have an impact. Some of our teachers are very understanding and patient. Some of them are not because of that.- Steve

Steve continues his discussion:

I have many faculty members who will tell me, you know, they don't have a lot of tolerance because their expectations are not going to be lowered because of the student's circumstances. Now I've seen that work in the student's favor because students tend to rise to high expectations. Although I've also seen that kind of work to their detriment when we have a family who is in, you know, a crisis or dysfunction when those kinds of pressures are put on the student. They don't do well and they tend to act out and have behavior and that's when we get in the fights and the office referrals. And they develop a real negative relationship, not only with school but with their teacher, and, you know, their whole academic career, and the school becomes a negative place. And it's in those situations where I, as a school counselor, really try to intervene and step in and become an advocate for the student. Not to make excuses for them, but to give a level of understanding to the classroom teacher in order to kind of help promote growth and promote what we can accomplish rather than just to see what we can't, and focus on , you know, this kid did this or he acted out. He doesn't have his homework. He never-- he always comes in late, you know.

Steve continues his discussion:

Some teachers really develop a negative relationship with students who are chronically, you know, messing up. And so they see them as a barrier to their academic goals that they want the class to achieve. I think they see this as a barrier for classroom management because once behavior starts, you know, the kids will flare up and the teacher see that as a barrier, not just for them teaching that particular student, but for them to teach the rest of the class, you know. I think right now, our numbers in our upper grades are 28, 29 kids. And so, in our classroom, you know, that's a lot of kids, and so teachers are under a lot of pressure. And so, I think that that's a function of the student's impact in the relationship that they have with the school for sure.- Steve

Sue offers a perspective on the relationship between teachers, students with deployed parents, and the role of the counselor:

I also think counselors need to realize that teachers are under a tremendous amount of pressure. And so I really work hard to be in service to the teachers. And it upsets me sometimes when they want to tell you how to do your job. On the other hand they just have a lot of pressure, they have -there's so much that teachers deal with today that people don't have a clue unless they've ever been in a classroom. So, I work with teachers- I meet -I probably do more meetings in the hallway, the bathroom, and then running in the teacher's lounge to get a cup of coffee or something than I have meetings anywhere. Because there's always somebody -I serve 12 teachers myself, and their classroom, and their children. And we have huge classes right now, anywhere from 25 to 35 kids in a class. 35 in fifth grade...And so there's always someone who has a child that needs something.- Sue, Elementary School

Fran offers insight into her interactions with teachers:

I think it is important for the counselors to help the teachers see what to do. A few teachers I know, a couple of them were military kids themselves...they take the time to like adopt the parents who are deployed, you know, and as a class, they'll will do things like send cards or send emails or things like that. It makes a big difference because the kids feel so connected, and they feel like they have other people who are caring that their parents' are not there. I think that makes a huge difference in the way they feel.- Fran, Elementary School

Fran continues her discussion of her experiences working with teachers:

I think it is our responsibility to help the teachers to remember what the kids are going through too. But I also think it is important that we do not feel sorry for these kids. I mean, it is important for them to keep seeing that achievement and structure and continuity of their daily routine is a very important; that consistency is very important for their continuing resiliency because you, you know... you don't want to say " ahhh you don't have to do your homework because your dad is deployed. You know, that sets them up for all kinds of problems. - Fran, Elementary School

Trish offers her impression of the role of teachers in the lived experience:

I've tried many times-you know, again, it's the norm in this school as opposed to an exception, but trying to get the teachers, I think they have a need...sometimes they can't academically pull everything off, and I want the teachers to be mindful of that. But many teachers quite frankly-it's, you know, because it's the norm, everybody just keeps marching on as if everybody has everything back in place at home, which they don't, but the teachers, I guess, there's kind of two schools of thought. Understand this and acknowledge it, but on the other hand, hold high standard for the academic work.-Trish, Elementary & Middle School

Carlos offers confirmation on the role of teachers:

If the teacher gives them that structure, provides that... the standards...the expectations of high...you know, appropriate behavior and the same work ethic that...her students whose parents are not deployed have, I noticed...and then I carried out the study to see if it was true. And sure enough, I was surprised to find that it was true, that they responded...you know, they did the work and they didn't have that much more behavioral problems in kids whose parents were not deployed. - Carlos, Elementary School

School Activities

Results indicated that counselors perceived school activities as essential to children with deployed military parents. The school counselors coordinate most school activities. The code School Activities appeared 15 times in reference to school activities, celebrations and acknowledgements. This code is also associated with deployment groups. Ann discusses her experience with school activities:

At my school, we started a wall of honor so students can, I mean it's a very basic thing, but when a child walks by and see his dad's picture there, I think that can elicit feelings of sadness but also pride. And they need to be recognized. That's probably more need on the part of the school than it is on the part of the child. But when...identification can be problematic to even know which kids those are unfortunately.- Ann

Sue discusses her involvement in school activities:

We started a program at my school where, a teleconference, where we can put them on a big screen, and they can have a birthday party, and we can Skype Dad into -or Mom into the birthday party with them. So, we can do things today that we couldn't do before, and I think that's fantastic.- Sue, Elementary School

Jen discusses her involvement in school activities:

When the parents come back we always have a reintegration party. Sometimes, we have a parade and we have our band, we march around the school, we carry banners and flags, you know just celebrate. We celebrate a lot. We celebrate recognizing that the kids are making an effort. When we had these programs, the kids started saying, "I wish I had a deployed parent," and the moms who were there said, "No, you don't. You just think you do." But that's why we included them... because we wanted to recognize that there were many kids who really were good friends to their friends with a deployed parent. You know, inviting them over and you know being there for them.-Jen, Middle School

Jen continues her discussion of her involvement and coordination of school activities:

We do lots of little of activities, like we make stars and ribbons and they put them on their lockers. I'm proud about my - I have a parent serving, a deployed parent, you know they have a little ribbon on their locker and we....well, different deployments we've done different things but we posts the things[in the] lobby. You know.... the stars with the name of the kids that have deployed parents and just, you know anything to give, to celebrate, to recognize, to give them special appreciation. Its special attention but we try to do it in a positive, appreciative way.-Jen, Middle School

Social Impact

Results indicated that counselors perceived military parental deployment to have a diverse social impact on children. The code *Social Impact* appeared 10 times in references to children's relationships with peers and children relating to each other. This code is also associated with military life and emotional impact-child.

Zoey offers her perspective on the social impact associated with military parental deployment:

Socially the kids, for some reason, socially, they need that security. They need the security with their friends. That's normal. They get to have their friends. They still have their play dates. They know that when they come to school, their friends are going to be there. Their friends understand, probably much better than we adults do. Even with all of our, you know, sympathy and empathy. We sometimes, we're there for them all the time, but don't understand like a friend does. Most of their friends go off in the same situation. They are in the same predicament. You know, with a deployed parent being away or sometimes both parents being away.-Zoey, Elementary Counselor

Trish offers her perspective on the social impact associated with military parental deployment:

Socially at school so many kids are in the same boat... no one has it any better or any worse than the other person. I'm sure in a state side's school, they don't have a clue. In a military school, it's constant. Somebody is leaving, somebody is about to leave, somebody has come back on R&R, somebody is getting ready to deploy. It's a constant- so socially, from kid to kid it's the norm instead of the exception. So I don't think that any one person stands out too much more than another person because there's so many kids whose parents are deployed. -Trish

Fran offers her perspective on the social impact associated with military parental deployment:

What I see is the kids-they have the same sense of like everybody is in the same boat. Since we have really done a lot with deployment support in the schools and we made a big deal about this, kind of a fun thing, it's sort of a club now. And everybody wants their parent to be deployed. They'll say "that's not fair, my dad never goes and I want a teddy bear." Wait a minute; let's talk about what you mean by this, you know because it becomes sort of a cool thing to have a deployed parent. You know, you get all this free stuff and you get to have all the support. - Fran, Elementary School

Special Code

A final round of In Vivo coding revealed two additional participant statements that significantly contributed to an understanding of the phenomenon of the lived experience of counselors who work with children of deployed military parents. Counselors perceived the circumstances to occur among military families relatively frequently. The richness of description contained in these statements detail issues that impact many military families, but are rarely discussed. Steve, a committed and passionate school counselor and study participant discussed his perception of some of the challenges associated with military life for dual service member families or single service members:

I have a small population who's – have dual military parents. And what I've seen with those students, they seem to have the most trouble with adjustment because what happens with more than anything is, one parent will be deployed while the other parent stays here on post. The soldiers who are here on post because were, kind of, thin with the resources because a lot of our soldiers are deployed, they're working 10, 12 hours a day. And so, what happens is, one parent will stay with the children and they'll be working here on post 10, 12 hours a day. And the other person – the other parent is deployed. And they rely on child care from outside resources, and they can look like a lot of different ways. One way is, they have family care providers who work out of their home or military housing. We also have the Child Development Center who provides care for Pre-K way down to preemies. And we also have a Youth Center. I have to say that my most intense behavior problem kids are consistently, consistently students who attend the CDC for the a.m. and p.m. hours.

Steve's discussion of issues related to dual military parents continues:

The parents are required to get up and PT in the morning. And so, students have to get up 4:30 or five o'clock. Their day starts very, very, very early. And what happens is the

CDC opens up at 5:30. They drop the students off at 5:30. They're provided a breakfast and some morning activities. Then the CDC provides transportation from the CDC to the Elementary School. And they'll be in the care of the CDC from 5:30 until 8:15 when school starts. And they'll go through the school day. And at the end of the school day, the CDC will provide care providers to come and pick up those same children and take them back to the CDC for care, and then they'll close at six o'clock. Now, I would say, all of my intense behavior problems and it's very consistent that those are the kids who are the a.m. and p.m. pick-ups. And so, they have very little interaction with their parent. They're very emotionally needy. They act out often. A lot of times, their basic needs aren't met. And I'm not talking about, you know, food and water. But I am talking about, you know, nurturing and care, and time with their parent. And when the parents come, often their reaction is very flat. It's consistently so. And when I say this, I'm framing that in the dual service member family. And I notice a significant decrease in those kinds of behaviors in stay-at-home moms. Some of our parents do work. They have civilian jobs on post. And they also take advantage of the Child Care offered through the post. However, I don't see the intensity of the behaviors in that population that I do in the dual enlisted and dual military families.

Steve's discussion continues:

Now, a lot of our behavior problems are stemmed from problems that arise at the CDC. If they had a bad morning at the CDC, we're pretty much guaranteed that there's gonna be a rough go to transition into the school setting. Not only because of the emotional instability of the student, but also the transition and the expectations that the students have in the school setting. The expectations and boundary systems in the CDC are a lot more open. And so, the student has a lot of anxiety and adjustment to deal with when they come in to the school setting because...and they're expected just to line-up and they're expected to, you know, sit down for extended periods of time. And that is very difficult. I think that developmentally, it's difficult anyway. However, when they have these mix boundary systems, they have a lot of trouble adjusting to that.- Steve, Elementary School

Jen, an experienced and dedicated counselor discusses issues related to deployment, reintegration, family adjustment, emotional impact and military life, and personal impact on counselor:

The real heartache - I didn't know I was going to do this (crying). What's been really hard for me is the divorces. So the kids wait a whole year for their parent to come home and then their world falls apart. It was bad enough when they were gone but their world falls apart. I've had kids have nervous breakdowns in my office... just become emotionally hysterical, and not able to function for a period of time...and they're saying things like "No, I will not go back to the States without my father, we will not separate ,

we will not leave.” (*crying*)It’s heartbreaking. And I think the military has tried to get better... in the beginning they would put men and women together because they couldn’t send women out on patrols alone, so they would pair them with the men. But they might be paired for six months. And the bond would be overwhelmingly strong and they would come back and not be able to separate from each other which even with the men sometimes they have trouble separating from each other. And then they often would then decide to stay together in a relationship. It’s a little better but it certainly hasn’t stopped. I was hoping this one that we are in now that it wouldn’t maybe result in so many divorces but we have had divorces. It’s really sad.-Jen, Middle School

Summary of Theme Children and Adolescents

The previous section discussed the codes that contributed to the emergence of the theme of Children and Adolescents. Participant statements from the data set supported each theme and code. A special code associated with unique issues faced by military families emerged through final In Vivo coding. Some children and adolescents suffer during parental deployment and some do not. Children’s responses are influenced by the actions and behaviors of their adult caregivers, and they often share the anxiety and depression demonstrated by their parent. Similarly, children whose parents remained active and engaged reported positive experiences. Most children described in this study have only experienced military life during wars and deployments. Many children accept the military lifestyle and the accompanying parental separations, and some resent it. Many young children of single and dual military service members spend extended time in childcare and suffer a need for parental attention. Socially the older children depend on each other for support. Many of them share the experience of parental deployment and do not stand out among their peers. School activities and celebrations acknowledged the sacrifices associated with having a deployed parent, and children without deployed parents participated in school wide activities. Children and adolescents described in this study primarily live on or around military

bases in Europe. Therefore, analysis of military connected children who do not live on or near military bases could take place in future research.

Summary of Findings

The influence of military life and culture was a theme throughout. Professional school counselors on military bases in Europe are vital members of the surrounding military communities, yet they perceive a lack of deployment related training opportunities. Many counselors rely on their experience, compassion, commitment and common sense to develop effective interventions. Most children and families adapt well and accept deployment as part of military life, but each family is different. Thus, assumptions about family dynamics should be avoided. Sometimes families function better in the absence of the service member, but multiple deployments usually have negative effects on children and families. The coping ability of the remaining parent is significant factor in children's responses, and reintegration is often the most difficult stage of deployment. There is limited support for the unique challenges encountered by dual military and single service members, particularly in terms of childcare and family care plans. Study participants overwhelmingly recommended that counselors in training develop an understanding of the culture and structure of the military, as well as the unique nature of military children & families. Thus, challenges and characteristics of military life was seen as the most significant factor in the experiences of children and adolescents who experience parental deployment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the results of the study. The chapter began with an overview of the research question and research design. This chapter reviewed the stages of data collection and

data analysis. Data analysis resulted in the emergence of four distinct, yet related themes. This chapter discussed each of the four themes along with the 33 codes that contributed to the emergence of the themes, and discussed a special code associated with unique issues faced by military families that emerged through final In Vivo coding. The chapter ends with a summary of findings. Chapter five includes a discussion of connections to research literature and implications for future research, training, and practice.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Introduction

The final chapter provides a review of the purpose of the study, research design and research questions. Findings are discussed in the context of the review of literature. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of study limitations, implications for future research, training, and practice, for Counselor Education and Supervision.

Overview of Study

An exploratory phenomenological approach was used to explore the perspectives of professional school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Exploratory phenomenological research seeks to understand social phenomena from the perspective of those who have experienced the phenomenon (Glesne, 2006). Thus, this study seeks to answer the following research question: *How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?*

The research site was a professional counseling conference in Germany in the fall of 2010. The researcher engaged in purposeful sampling and recruited potential subjects from conference attendees. The researcher explained the nature of the study and invited school counselors to participate by granting a confidential interview. Participants consisted of 12 professional school counselors who work with school-aged children and adolescents who have one or more deployed military parent. Each participant adopted a pseudonym and no personal identifying information was gathered though a number of participants indicated an affiliation with Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS). Individual interviews occurred privately in a secure room at the conference. The researcher disclosed to participants that she was

a former school counselor who worked with children of deployed military parents, and discussed her desire to explore and validate the experiences of the participants.

Data analysis included the coding of meaningful words and phrases throughout each transcript, and yielded 33 preliminary categories that became new codes. Analysis of relationships between codes in each of 33 categories resulted in the emergence of four distinct themes: *Military Life*, *The Stages of Deployment*, *The Role of the Counselor*, and *Children and Adolescents*. Quotations supported the codes, thus participant voices provided thick, rich descriptions of the phenomenon. Validity strategies included peer debriefing, researcher positionality, and multiple examinations of the data set.

Overview of Findings

Findings indicate that school counselors do in fact perceive an impact on children and adolescents who have deployed military parents. Counselors reported having seen the gamut in reference to the difficulty predicting which children will have which reaction. Marge offers her perspective on the spectrum of potential impact:

We see the whole spectrum, we see children that show tremendous resiliency and we see children that have great problems particularly before, during and right after deployment. We see the whole spectrum of little or no impact that we can measure to very significant impact that could possibly even leave a... I'm hypothesizing that it could leave a permanent mark on these children.- Marge, Elementary School

The military culture and the students inform counselor's experiences; their parents inform the students, and the military culture informs the parents. Findings revealed counselors' perceptions to be primarily influenced by their location, experiences, and most importantly, by the surrounding culture of the military. The question of how counselors in this study perceive the effects of deployment is best answered in the context of military life. The components of military

life determine the experience. The emergent codes and themes represented several factors that demonstrated the impact takes many forms. Themes were consistent with the research question: *How do professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents?* Counselors attached meaning to their experiences via their feelings of competence and preparation, perception of their role, and relationships with children and families.

Correlation of Themes and Existing Literature

Military Life

Military life and culture significantly influences military children and families. Counselor's perceptions and interactions with children, families, service members and military commands, are considered through the context of the military culture. Participants in this study have an average of 15 years experience working with the military population. Thus, the theme of Military Life was pervasive throughout each interview. Findings are consistent with Drummet, et al., (2003) who suggested mental health professionals appreciate how strongly military culture demands commitment of the service member and wholly requires an equal amount of commitment from the family of the service member. Common challenges related to military families include relocation, separation, deployment, and post-deployment reintegration (Ternus, 2010). As male and female service members deploy to war zones for long periods, these deployments disrupt family life and place additional weight on the adults and children in the family. These results are consistent with the findings of Di Nola (2008) and Davis (2010) who suggested that the emotional burden of war extends beyond the military service member's combat time and results in damage to the spouse and children that could possibly surface years

after the combat exposures. Codes associated with military life include: military community, family adjustment, and the role of the remaining parent. Counselors perceived remaining parents to significantly impact children's ability to cope with parental deployment. In one of the earliest studies to point out that the well-being of the non-deployed parent has a significant effect on the coping ability of the children, Knapp and Newman (1993) found that during an extended separation, the lower the collection of stressors and perceived military stress, the greater the psychological well-being of Army wives. If the mother's reaction to her spouse's deployment is depression, then the children may reflect her depressive symptoms or behaviors, especially if they display as parental neglect and indifference (Drummet, et al., 2003). The influence of the remaining parents is also associated with perceived social support, and emotional impact on adults. Thus, each of the nine codes that support the theme of military life are interconnected with one another. The emergence of the theme of military life is consistent with Fenell (2008), who recommended that that counselors strengthen their ability to help military clients by regarding the military as a distinct culture and developing interventions based on the multicultural counseling competencies developed by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development and endorsed by the American Counseling Association. Thus, military life is correlated with military culture.

Stages of Deployment

Findings from this study indicated that while children are shaped by the stages of deployment, multiple deployments might in fact result in sustained difficulty adjusting. This finding is supported in the literature by Gibbs, et. al., (2007) who reported that while military families are acknowledged for demonstrating high levels of resilience, multiple deployments

distress the children, the soldier parent preparing for (or returning from) deployment, and the parent remaining at home during deployment. Emergence of the theme Stages of Deployment confirmed that counselors perceive military parental deployment to impact school aged children and adolescents. Pincus, et al., (2005) described the emotional cycle of an extended deployment (six months or greater) as divided into five distinct stages: Pre-deployment, Deployment, Sustainment, Re-deployment, and Post-deployment. Blount, Curry & Lubin (1992) note that military families experience unique stressors throughout the pre-deployment, deployment, and reunion stages. Although most families adapt well to these stressors, in families without adequate coping skills, these stresses can lead to significant problems. Family roles and routines must be renegotiated during the reintegration of the service member. Results from this study confirmed research findings that reintegration or homecoming is one of the most challenging stages of deployment. Drummet, et. al., (2003) discussed the misconception that family troubles disappear when the military spouse and parent returns home. Findings from this study concur:

A lot of times what happens is most people think that once the parents are back, that's it.... Whereas really, there's that honeymoon period at first, but that redeployment, that reunion piece wasn't always hunky-dory. In fact that was the hardest part... especially for the 15 months, 12 months deployments.... because a lot of times, those guys want....they don't want to be home.- Fran, Elementary School

Upon reunification, there is excitement, anticipation, and relief, occasionally followed by emotional conflict as the service member reintegrates back into the family (Basham, 2008; Chandra, et al., 2010). Chandra, et al., (2010) reported that while students generally expressed excitement to have their parent return, these returns were often challenging to the new family dynamics that had been created in that parent's absence. Findings from this study are also consistent with Flake, et.al., (2009) who described the reintegration period as the most stressful

stage of the deployment. Results indicated a significant inconsistency between the current literature and the experiences of school counselors who participated in this study. Counselors indicated that multiple deployments influence children and families such that the question has changed from *which stage of deployment?* to *which deployment is it?* The question of the effects of multiple deployments requires further investigation, but is outside of the scope of this study.

Role of the Counselor

Counselor interactions with school aged children and adolescents vary according to the role of the counselor. Counselors in the study discussed undertaking various roles according to the needs of the children, families, school, and community. The role of the counselor is associated with counselor experience, competence and preparation, as well as their relationships with students. Results from this study indicate that while professional school counselors take on many roles at school, their primary role is twofold: to “be there” for the students, and to support the academic mission of the school. Several studies have concluded that the presence of school counselors is especially associated with progress in student learning, overall mental health, and in students’ impulse to externalize or internalize problem behaviors (Gerler & Anderson, 1986; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Reback,2010). Counselors in this study also indicated a willingness to intervene with parents, service members, military commanders, and teachers on behalf of students. Counselors in this study reported that they frequently provided emotional support to students and remaining parents. These findings are consistent with Chandra, et.al.,(2010) who reported that students with deployed military parents rely on school staff for emotional support. The role of the counselor extends beyond students and families, thus, counselors in this study viewed themselves as vital members of the military community. They have an awareness of the

military rank structure and chain of command; and the role this structure plays in the lives of children and families. Counselors' perceptions of the multiple roles in which they engage are consistent with Flake, et al., (2009) who noted that the predictable structure and routine of a positive school environment directly impacts the emotions, behaviors, and academic achievement of students. thus, the presence of school counselors' significantly influences the school climate.

The Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) is responsible for the education of dependents of Department of Defense (DOD) military and civilian personnel stationed at or near military bases in a number of states and overseas. A number of participants identified themselves as members of the Department of Defense Dependent School (DODDS) school system. DoDDS-Europe operates 82 schools within five districts throughout Europe, and serves over 35,000 school-age children of active duty military and civilian employees (DoDEA, 2009). DoDEA recognizes military connected families as undergoing frequent relocations, extended deployments, and a variety of unique characteristics that result in students needing additional counseling services. Therefore, the school counselor is in a crucial position as the most appropriate person in the school setting to provide the necessary support to students of deployed military personnel (Mitchum, 1991; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Fenell, Fenell, & Williams, 2005). Keim (2009) found that 59.0% of school counselors who worked with children of deployed military parents reported that they relied on other school counselors or other professionals within the educational setting (school psychologists, social workers, administrators) for guidance in working with these children. Parents, teachers, students, and

even administrators most likely look to the school counselor for leadership in helping students cope with difficult situations; especially parental deployment.

Children and Adolescents

The theme of Children and Adolescents emerged as the third finding. The children and adolescents with whom counselors on the study work must be evaluated in terms of their relationships with their families, and demonstrates the connection school counselors have with parents and the military community. The theme of Children and Adolescents contributes to an understanding of the phenomenon in question. Children's reactions to parental deployment are consistent with findings by Harrison & Vannest (2008) who found youth resiliency and adjustment to parental military deployments to be influenced by the coping ability of the remaining parent, and the length of the deployment. Study participants indicated that although older children adjust better to multiple deployments because of prior experiences with deployments, Lincoln et., al., (2008) noted that children in these situations may be emotionally exhausted, particularly as the coping ability of the remaining parent becomes impaired. Findings from this study indicated that children and family members adopt additional family roles during the deployment cycle. These findings are consistent with Hillenbrand (1976) who reported that many children mature and intensify their responsibility during the military parent's absence. Huebner & Mancini (2005) found that adolescents viewed deployment as a frightening period in their lives, accompanied by feelings of stress, depression, and anger. Further, Barker and Berry (2009) found that young children with a deployed parent showed increased behavior problems during deployment and increased attachment behaviors at reunion compared with children whose parents had not experienced a recent deployment. These findings are consistent with Palmer

(2008) who reported that families experience a myriad of complications associated with parental deployment.

Implications for Further Research

Wellness of counselors who work with military families experiencing deployment could be the focus of further studies, and the effects of multiple deployments on families are potential topics of investigation. Counselors in military communities experience multiple deployments along with their students however, self care appears to be an area in need of examination. The impact of extended deployment on family relations and marital satisfaction are potential areas of investigation. The experiences of school counselors who are licensed therapist necessitates future investigations, and implications for practice should be explored. This study had 12 counselor participants and allowed for only one interview. Future studies should increase the number of participants and incorporate multiple interviews and focus groups. Focus groups facilitate the triangulation of data, supporting future generalization of results. Few of the participants identified as middle or high school counselors, which limited the data collected for the adolescent population. Results from this study support further investigation into adolescent responses to parental deployment. The impact school counselors have on children is a potential area of study. Counselors in this study discussed the importance of connecting with students, and their voices contribute to the discussion of strategies to measure the value of school counseling services. Counselors identified as members of the community and questions arise as to the influence military culture has on counselors who are not in the military. Thus, counselors' role in a military community is a potential area of study.

Implications for Practice

Results indicated that the coping ability of remaining parents significantly influenced children's reactions to parental deployment. The role of the school counselor now includes providing emotional outreach and support to parents. Counselors need to know what signs to look for in clients or students experiencing parental deployment. Understanding the stages of deployment and accompanying responses facilitates the appropriate provision of services. These findings are consistent with Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo et al., (2010) who reported the need for support for families in which caregivers are struggling with their own mental health. School counselors can provide assistance in addressing family needs via school programming, mental health services, or coordination of resources.

Engle et al., (2010) reported that military parental absences are associated with slightly lower academic achievement for children. Findings from this study emphasize the need for schools serving military connected children to develop programs that reduce effects of deployment on children's educational achievement. School counselors are often tasked with implementation of such programs. Although schools on military bases have a standard curriculum, many military children attend schools off base. School counselors frequently intervene on behalf of students with adjustment difficulties due to relocations and varying educational standards. The Military Child Education Coalition facilitates student transitions between schools, thus counselor awareness and collaboration can link relocated children with necessary educational resources for remediation or enrichment.

The practice of school counseling often requires a measure of family counseling and behaviorism. Parents, teachers, students, and administrators look to the school counselor for

direction in helping students cope with difficult situations such as parental deployment. Thus, school counselors are perceived as individuals whose expertise and professional training are specifically designed to aid students during times of emotional crises (D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992). Accordingly, the school counselor is in a pivotal position as the most appropriate person in the school setting to provide the necessary support to students of deployed military personnel (Mitchum, 1991; D'Andrea & Daniels, 1992; Fenell, Fenell, & Williams, 2005). School counselors who were also licensed therapist were able to undertake multiple roles depending on the needs of the school community. Thus, school counselors who are skilled mental health professionals offer additional value to military children and families.

Implications for Counselor Training

Code for What Counselors in Training Need to Know

The last finding is associated with implications for the training of new counselors. Participants offered several insights into what they perceived as necessary for counselors in training to learn. Counselors overwhelmingly recommended counselors in training to develop an understanding of the culture and structure of the military. This finding correlates with the emergence of the theme Military Life. Therefore, challenges and characteristics of military life was seen as the most significant factor in the experiences of children and adolescents who experience parental deployment. Accordingly, participation in and attachment to the military culture dictates the experience of counselors who work with this population. The code *what counselors in training need to know* appeared 33 times in reference to training recommendations for new counselors. The most common recommendation related to an understanding of military life in general and stages of deployment in particular.

Steve offers his recommendations for counselors in training:

I think a firm understanding of the deployment cycle is crucial. I think that they also need to have a family systems background or at least the family systems understanding to see how that impact can occur. I think those 2 things are pretty crucial into the management of those particular cases.- Steve, Elementary School

Study participants also noted the importance of the counselor in intervening on behalf of students with deployed parents. Ann shares her thoughts:

What I've found is teachers are teaching and that's their focus. Principals are administrating and that's what they're doing. Nurses are trying to take care of the medical things. But it's the counselors, who really is the person that child can come to if they, if the counselors know to look for the signs of the withdrawal or the acting out or the sadness or the disheveled clothing or whatever. I hope that this will provide counselors in training or not, learning to become counselors or not, to know what to look for and how to get help for these kids.- Ann

Sue speaks passionately regarding her perception of training counselors:

I believe that we need to retrain counselors. I think counselors are operating off an old model of what counseling is like maybe centuries ago, or when I was younger. We have a different population; we have children, who have two and three parents. They have stepbrothers, half brothers, half sisters, stepsisters. Particularly on a military base they have deployed parents or maybe they're shifting from one country to another country when someone's gone and then coming back.

I think the new counselor needs to have a little bit more therapy background. There's not any training. In the eight years I've been in DODDS I've been to one training for counselors. You know they don't know how to do groups; they don't have any group experience. They don't have any training. I think that they can use some family therapy background. I think being able to work in short term family work with families and the schools would be ideal. Because kids don't come out a vacuum, they come out of a family and the needs of the schools are so different then they used to be, it's not that simple anymore.

It's imperative that counselors in the United States, that think because they're not on the battlefield or down...when you are overseas where the fighting is happening you're much more aware of all of it...that it doesn't impact them. Anywhere where there is a large military population you are going to have the fall out of the military war system. It impacts our country just like Vietnam did. We have wounded physically and emotionally wounded family members, and that impacts children... and that impacts our country. So not to train counselors to be aware of military life, of military demands, being a military

spouse...not understanding what deployment is is negligent in my view of educators creating counselors to operate in the field. I think colleges need to come on board, get educated themselves.- Sue, Elementary School

As the war on terrorism continues, so does the demand for well-qualified, culturally competent counselors to provide mental health services to military personnel and their families. Professional counselors who have an understanding of the military culture will be most helpful to clients. Counselor educators who view the military as a distinct culture and develop experiential learning experiences based on the multicultural competencies identified by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) and endorsed by the American Counseling Association (ACA) will do a much better job of preparing new counselors. The AMCD Multicultural Counseling Competencies require counselors to possess specific knowledge and information about the particular group with which they are working, including knowledge of family structures, hierarchies, values, and beliefs from various cultural perspectives (Sue, Arredondo & McDavis, 1992). The Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) 2009 standards require counselor educators to provide training and experiential opportunities in the area of multicultural counseling. The ACA Code of Ethics (2005) require counselor educators to actively infuse multicultural/diversity competency in their training and supervision practices. To the extent that a culture includes a language, a code of manners, norms of behavior, belief systems, dress, and rituals, it is clear that the military represents a unique cultural group (Reger, et al. 2008). Public Law 109-461, the Veterans Benefits, Health Care, and Information Technology Act of 2006, recognizes licensed marriage and family therapists and licensed professional counselors as mental health care providers within

programs operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA; American Counseling Association, 2010).

Research indicates non-military counselors will most likely provide the majority of mental health services for military children and families (Hall, 2008; Chandra, et. al.,2010; Fenell, 2008; Keim, 2009) Thus, counselor educators have an opportunity and responsibility to develop appropriate training programs. The need is clear. The field of social work is already engaged in providing training specialization for working with military families. At the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, millions of traumatized military families will most likely seek mental health services. Counselor educators must be prepared to meet the demand for properly trained and qualified personnel to service these families. Findings from this study indicate urgency for training opportunities. Thus, findings from this study support the adoption of a master's level course on the fundamentals for working with military families. Table 4 illustrates a sample course outline for such a course. Appendix C illustrates a complete syllabus. The semester course includes instruction in the military structure and culture, the military family, and the stages of deployment. Each of these topics are consistent with the themes that emerged from this study, and thus is supported by these findings. The course is designed to meet the CACREP 2009 Standards, and provides several opportunities for field based learning and collaboration with military sponsored resources and organizations. Assignments can be adapted to meet the needs of individual training programs, but is designed for all counseling tracks (marriage & family, school, and mental health) and incorporates many of the recommendations offered by study participants.

Table 4: Counseling Military Families Course Outline

| Week | Topic | Readings, Assignments |
|------|---|---|
| | Overview of Course Requirements; Department of Defense; Branches of the Military | Chapters 1-2 in Hall |
| | Military Culture and Structure; Rank, Hierarchy; Chain of Command | Chapter 3 in Hall:1-3 in Martin, et al., (2000) |
| | Military Culture and Structure continued; Language & Acronyms | Guest Speaker; Wertsch (1991) *Reflection Paper |
| | The Military Family- Strengths, Challenges; Spouses; Transitions | Chapter 4 in Hall Drummet, et al., (2003) |
| | The Military Family- Dual Military Couples; Single Parent Service Members; Blended Families | Chapter 6 in Hall Palmer (2008) |
| | The Military Child – Military Brats; Unique Strengths & Challenges; Adjustment | Burnham & Hooper (2008) *Reflection Paper |
| | The Military Child- Education; Special Needs | Guest Speaker Fallon & Russo (2003) |
| | Major Challenges of Military Families: Relocation, Separation; Mental Health | Basham, K. (2008) Lincoln, et al., (2008) |
| | Major Challenges of Military Families Risk Factors (stress, violence, substance, spousal, and child abuse, addictions, finances) | Chapter 7 in Hall APA Task Force (2007) *Reflection Paper |
| | Emotional Cycle of Deployment- Pre-Deployment Deployment/Sustainment | Chapters 1-5 & 11-12 in Slone & Friedman (2008) Pincus, et al.,(2005); |
| | Emotional Cycle of Deployment- Re-deployment; Reintegration | Bowling & Sherman (2008) |
| | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder | Guest Speaker Chapters 11-12 in Slone & Friedman (2008) *Reflection Paper |
| | Effective Interventions | Chapter 9 in Hall Weiss, Coll, et al., (2010) Group Presentations |
| | Military Resources and Organizations | Guest Speaker Field Work Log Due |
| | Training and Supervision of Mental Health Professionals to Effectively Treat Military Families | Group Presentations- Case Studies *Reflection Paper |
| | Military Language | Quiz on Military Acronyms |

Integration into Existing Curriculum

Many counselor-training programs lack the resources to incorporate a new standalone course. Thus, opportunities to develop the cultural competence to work with military populations need to integrate across existing curriculum. Instruction on military culture could begin in introductory counseling courses, permitting students to build upon their knowledge throughout their educational programs. The CACREP (2009) standards facilitate integration of issues of military life and culture throughout the core curricular areas. Integration across disciplines permits students to receive training in military culture and structure, military children and families, major challenges facing military families, the emotional cycle of deployment, and effective interventions.

Studies under Section II G.1 -Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice provide an understanding of professional roles, functions, and relationships with other human service providers, including strategies for interagency/interorganization collaboration and communications. Thus, instruction on collaboration with military organizations, resources, and agencies integrates seamlessly within these courses.

Section II G.2- Social and Cultural Diversity includes studies that provide an understanding of individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies. Fenell (2008) advocates for counselors to develop the multicultural competence to work with military families as a distinct culture. Section II G3- Human Growth and Development includes studies that provide an understanding of the effects of crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events on persons of all ages and theories of addictions and addictive behaviors, including strategies for

prevention, intervention, and treatment. Military families often experience trauma-causing events, especially as deployments to active war zones continue. Instruction on resiliency in military families and risk factors associated with multiple deployments integrates well into these courses. Additionally, military families are often at risk for addiction and could thus be included in courses designed to address such issues. Certified addiction counselors will most likely encounter military connected clients, thus instruction in this area is facilitated across courses.

Section II G. 4- Career Development includes studies that provide an understanding of the interrelationships between work, family, and other life roles and factors, including the role of multicultural issues in career development. Clearly instruction on military structure and culture is appropriate for this section. Military service is not like other jobs or careers. Service members are governed by the military chain of command, and have little control over major life decisions, such as family relocation and separation. Aspect of military culture that impact spouses, children and families integrate well into courses designed to study career development. Additionally, as veterans separate from the military, career development will potentially become an area of expertise for counselors with the cultural competence to serve these clients.

Section II G.5 Helping Relationships includes studies that provide an understanding of the counseling process in a multicultural society, including counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence helping processes and essential counseling skills. Courses in this section address a systems perspective that provides an understanding of family and other systems theories and major models of family and related interventions. Many of the counselors in this study advocated for counselors to develop knowledge and expertise in family systems theories. Marriage and family counselors and school counselors could benefit from the integration of

military life and culture into associated coursework and field experiences. Further, this section provides studies in crisis intervention and suicide prevention models, which again are relevant to military life and culture, and the effects of deployment.

Section II G.6-Group Work includes studies that provide theoretical and experiential understandings of group purpose, development, dynamics, theories, methods, skills, and leadership or facilitation styles. Findings from this study indicated that counselors lack training and expertise in conducting counseling groups although the value of groups work is clear. Many counselors conduct weekly deployment support groups, thus integration of military children and families is appropriate for such coursework. Section II G.8- Research and Program Evaluation includes studies that provide an understanding of research methods, program evaluation and the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession. Military life and culture contains an abundance of potential research opportunities. Studies in these courses could increase the amount of research conducted in support of counselor preparation to work with the military population, and provide evidence in support of effective counseling practice.

These examples illustrate the ease with which cultural competence to work with military populations can be integrated into existing master's level courses according to the CACREP (2009) standards.

Limitations

Although this study achieved its objective of examining the perspectives of professional school counselors on the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents, several limitations do apply. The researcher was aware of potential bias and therefore refrained from attempting to influence the answers offered by participants. Perhaps the

researcher could have fully embraced her bias and used it to step further into the experiences of participants instead of remaining neutral. However, neutrality is central to phenomenological research. Still, subjects were exceptionally forthcoming and freely elaborated on their answers without excessive prompting. The researcher designed the interviews to last between 30-45 minutes. Upon completion of the interviews, many of the participants stated they would have been willing to take additional time and answer more questions. Subjects were exceptionally forthcoming and freely elaborated on their answers without excessive prompting. The researcher was also limited by only having one opportunity to interview participants. Follow up interviews and focus groups may have yielded additional information about the phenomenon, and would have provided an avenue for the triangulation of data. The researcher attempted to member check, but did not receive responses. Interview transcripts were sent to the participants who agreed to review their transcripts. The researcher speculated that they did not return them because they wanted to remain anonymous. Although data was collected using pseudonyms, these participants were asked to supply the real person's email address.

The researcher spent an amazing amount of time and energy learning the ATLAS.ti software program due to the mistaken belief that it could magically code, sort, and arrange the data. Instead, there was no substitute for sustained immersion into the data. The program was helpful; though not equal to the time it took to try to learn it with the extremely limited amount of tutorials and absence of customer support. Nevertheless, the data collected appears to be an accurate reflection of the experiences of the participants.

Conclusion

Military connected children and adolescents are often described as resilient, resourceful, independent, self-reliant, flexible and adaptable. They are commonly well traveled, and exposure to international languages & cultures makes them more accepting of differences and open to new experiences. In some ways, the positive aspects of military life outweigh the negative or challenging aspects. War and deployment has changed the landscape of military life, often referred to as the new normal.

Military families continue to suffer under the weight of extended and multiple deployments. Findings from this study are consistent with previous findings detailing the challenges associated with military parental deployment. Many military families endure frequent family moves with lack of adjustment time. Often service members receive short notice before moving and families are required to quickly adapt. Short-term relationships are common because military rotations usually occur on a 3-year cycle. Transitions to new cities, states, or countries create patterns of loss, goodbyes, broken relationships, changing schools, and constant disruption. Feeling out of place in new city and a new school, children who need to make new friends often experience isolation. Military connected children benefit from the ability to make friends easily. It is often difficult for spouses to find jobs in new cities, and military families often become at-risk for a range of challenges. These risk factors often increase during overseas tours to foreign countries, with isolation and lack of extended family and social support identified as major contributors. Some families are at risk for infidelity, divorce, addictions, violence, abuse, and financial difficulties. The family stress and hyper vigilance associated with deployments transfers to the children and shapes their responses to parental absence. Thus, any discussion of children's responses must consider the experiences of the family. The incidence of

alcoholism, gambling addiction, and spousal abuse among military suggests further studies in this area.

Military service members continue to confront the stigma against seeking mental health services. Mental health professionals within the military recognize this impending crisis and have successfully advocated for the removal of some counseling barriers. For example, in 2008, Department of Defense took steps to remove the perceived stigma attached to service members seeking help for mental health concerns. Question 21 on the Standard Form 86, the official form required to apply for and obtain a security clearance no longer requires service members to state if they have previously sought counseling (Department of Defense, 2008). This gesture demonstrates the military commitment to protecting the mental health of its members, and will significantly increase the need for qualified mental health professionals.

Many counselors will most likely encounter students or clients with current or former connections to the military. For example, military connected individuals, children and families may seek mental health, addiction, rehabilitation, career, financial, or marital counseling. Military connected children may attend schools where their unique needs and characteristics go unnoticed due to personnel who lack experience and exposure to military life and culture. Training of new counselors in the area of military culture could follow recommendations of Fenell (2008) who advocated for incorporation of the multicultural competencies generated by the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD) division of the American Counseling Association (ACA). Fenell (2008) regards the military as a unique and distinct culture, worthy of appropriate treatment and services historically associated with cultural

and ethnic groups and Reger, Etherage, Reger, & Gahm, (2008) discussed the ethical challenge of military mental health care providers to provides services within the unique military culture.

Development of cultural competence to work with military families extends to the counseling practice. Hall (2008) contends that non-military counselors will most likely provide services to the military population. Thus, the abundance of children and families touched by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan could most likely seek counseling services in the near future. Adoption of the Veterans Benefits, Healthcare, and Information Technology Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-461) represents recognition of licensed professional counselors as mental health specialists within health care programs operated by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). Tricare is the medical entitlement program of the Department of Defense (DoD), and uses civilian health-care providers as part of the health network for referrals and consultations. Passage of Public Law 109-461 emphasizes the urgency with which targeted training of new and practicing counselors should occur. Emergence of the theme of military life supports the need for further research into some of the unique aspects of military culture. For example, the participants in this study live in military communities and work almost exclusively with military children and families. A future study could examine the lived experiences of school counselors who work with military children who are not part of a larger military community, such as children of reservists. Future research could examine the influence of various aspects of military life from the perspective of school counselors who operate outside of military life.

An understanding of the stages of deployment is necessary for counselors to provide appropriate intervention for students at school. The use of deployment groups by the counselors in this study indicate that children need support throughout the stages of deployment and beyond.

Thus, implications emerge for training and practice of school counselors. Counselors in training need to know what signs to look for in clients or students during the stages of deployment and during multiple deployments. Understanding the stages of deployment facilitates the appropriate provision of services. Some children and adolescents suffer during parental deployment and some do not. Children's responses are primarily influenced by the actions and behaviors of their adult caregivers, and they often share the anxiety and depression demonstrated by their parent. Similarly, children whose parents remained active and engaged reported positive experiences. Most children described in this study have only known military life as a result of wars and deployments. Counselors described some of the challenges associated with single and dual military service members. Many of these children spend extended time in childcare and suffer a need for parental attention. Socially the children depend on each other for support. Many of them share the experience of parental deployment. Children and adolescents described in this study primarily live on or around military bases in Europe. Therefore, analysis of military connected children who do not live on or near military bases could take place in future research.

School counselors play an essential role in the lives of children. The school counselor is usually the one person in the school who children can count on for unconditional acceptance. School counselors who work with military connected children on military bases in Europe offer a unique perspective on the cycle of deployment, thus the voices of school counselors contained here are essential to understanding the effects of deployment on children. Participants in this study are members of military communities and live the phenomenon under investigation. Consequently, while counselors attempt to meet the needs of school age children and youth, counselors also experience the impact and effects of military parental deployment.

APPENDIX A INTERVIEW SCRIPT AND PROTOCOL

Interview Script and Protocol

Date: _____ Time: _____ Pseudonym _____

“Professional School Counselor Perspectives on the Effects of Military Parental Deployment on School –Aged Children and Adolescents

Good afternoon

My name is Cheryl McCloud and I am a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education at the University of Central Florida. I am conducting my dissertation research study on the experiences of professional school counselors who work with children with one or more deployed military parent.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study by granting this interview. You have been chosen because you are a professional school counselor who works with children with one or more deployed military parent. The interview questions will ask about your experiences and perceptions working with these students.

This study had gone through the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and has been granted an exemption for human research. This information sheet explains the purpose of the study and what you will be asked to do. I will give you a few minutes to read it. Please note that this interview will be audio taped. Thank you. Do you have any questions?

For the purpose of this interview your pseudonym will be:- or you may select your own pseudonym.

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|-------|
| Ann | Fran | Marge | Sue |
| Beth | Gail | Niles | Trish |
| Chris | Joan | Pat | Val |
| Deb | Kim | Ron | Will |
| Eve | Lee | Sam | Zoe |

If you do not have any questions or concerns, I would like to turn on the recorder and begin the interview.

Interview Script and Protocol

Date:_____ Time:_____ Pseudonym_____

“Professional School Counselor Perspectives on the Effects of Military Parental Deployment on School –Aged Children and Adolescents

1. Can you tell me about your experience working with children of military service members?
2. Is there any effect or impact of parental deployment on the social, emotional, behavioral and academic functioning of students in the school setting?
 - a. Probe: social, emotional, behavioral, academic
3. What types of needs are demonstrated by students who have a deployed military parent?
4. Do you notice anything different according to the various stages of deployment?
 - a. Probe: pre-deployment, deployment, homecoming/reintegration
5. How competent and prepared do you feel to work with students who have a deployed military parent?
6. What kind of training have you received to enable you to work with students who have a deployed military parent?
7. What do you think school counselors in training need to know about students who have a deployed military parent?
8. Please discuss if or how your experiences working with children of military service members have impacted you personally.
9. Is there anything else would you like to share about your experiences and involvement with students who have a deployed military parent?

This concludes the interview. Thank you for your participation. Would you please take a few minutes to complete this demographic and background information form? Please accept this token of my appreciation. Thank you again. Turn off tape recorder.

APPENDIX B RESEARCH-BASED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research-Based Interview Questions

Research question:

How do Professional School Counselors perceive the impact of military parental deployment on school-aged children and adolescents?

Interview Question

1. Please describe your experience and involvement working with children of military service members.

Literature & Research Support

Professional school counselors who work with military children must be sensitive to the experiences of military family life (Fenell, 2008).

72.2% of school counselors reported that they had provided school counseling services to children of deployed military parents since September 11, 2001.

2. Is there an effect or impact of parental deployment on the social, emotional, behavioral and academic functioning of students in the school setting?

Chandra et al., (2010) suggested an exploration from the perspectives of school counselors to examine the effects of parental deployment on the emotional and behavioral outcomes of children and youth in the school setting.

3. What types of needs are demonstrated by students who have a deployed military parent?

Although military children have been known to be resilient and adaptable, parental deployment has a substantial effect on the family system and particularly on children and adolescents.

4. Do you notice anything different according to the stages of deployment-; Pre-deployment, deployment-sustainment; homecoming-reintegration

Deployment is a period of transition and stress for military families; however, there is limited understanding of the experience of children from military families

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- Pincus, S.. et al. *The emotional cycle of*

deployment: A military family perspective.
Retrieved from
http://www.hooah4health.com/deployment/family_matters/emotionalcycle.htm

5. How competent and prepared do you feel to work with students who have a parent deployed?
6. What kind of training have you received to enable you to work with students who have a deployed military parent?
7. What do you think school counselors in training need to know about students who have a deployed military parent?

Research has shown that school staffs were underprepared to handle the issues related to students from military families
Professional school counselors need additional training on the signs to look out for when military students are having difficulty adjusting to a parental deployment (Mmari et al, 2009).
Each of the eight core curricular areas of the 2009 CACREP standards call for counselors in training to understand the impact of crises, disasters, and other trauma causing events.

Ternus, M. P. (2010). Support for adolescents who experience parental military deployment. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 46*(3), 203-206.
Mmari, K., Roche, K. M., Sudhinaraset, M., & Blum, R. (2009). When a parent goes off to war: Exploring the issues faced by adolescents and their families. *Youth & Society, 40*(4), 455
Webber, J., & Mascari, J. B., (2009). Critical issues in implementing the new CACREP standards for disaster, trauma, and crisis counseling. In F.R. Waltz, J.C. Bleuer, & R.K. Yep (Eds.) *Compelling counseling interventions: VISTAS 2009* 9pp 125-138)

8. Please discuss if or how your experiences working with children of military service members has impacted you personally.

Chandra, et al., (2010) found that students rely on the school staff for social and emotional support.

Chandra, A., Martin, L. Hawkins, S. & Richardson, A. (2010). The impact of parental deployment on child social and emotional functioning: Perspectives of school staff. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 46*(3), 218-223
Fenell, D. L., Fenell, R. A., & Williams, R. (2005). The school counselor's role in supporting children of deployed military families. In J. Webber, D. D. Bass, & R. Yep (Eds.), *Terrorism, trauma, and tragedies: A counselor's guide to preparing and responding* (2nd ed., pp. 127-129).

9. Is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences with students who have a deployed military parent?

Mmari, K., Roche, K. M., Sudhinaraset, M., & Blum, R. (2009). When a parent goes off to war: Exploring the issues faced by adolescents and their families. *Youth & Society, 40*(4), 455-475

APPENDIX C SYLLABUS FOR COUNSELING MILITARY FAMILIES

Syllabus for Counseling Military Service Members and Their Families

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
COLLEGE of EDUCATION
Department of Educational and Human Sciences
Counseling Military Service Members and their Families
MHS XXXX

Required Text:

Hall, L. K. (2008). *Counseling military families: What mental health professionals need to know*. New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

Slone, L & Friedman, M.J. (2008) *After the war zone: A practical guide for returning troops and their families*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press.

Required Readings:

APA Presidential Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families and Service Members, Johnson, S., Sherman, M., & Hoffman, J. et. al. (2007). *The psychological needs of U.S. military service members and their families: A preliminary report*, American Psychological Association.

Wertsch, M. E. (1991). *Military brats: Legacies of childhood inside the fortress*. New York: Ballantine Books

Note: Students will receive additional reading assignments (journal articles and website information) throughout the semester.

Catalog Description: This course examines the distinct strengths, challenges and mental health needs of service members and their families; effects of combat trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); the emotional cycle of deployment and reintegration, and options for specific training for mental health providers who work with military service members and their families.

Purpose of the Course: The purpose of this course is for students to gain an in-depth understanding of the unique needs, strengths and challenges facing military service members and their families. The course also provides an examination of the ways in which service members and families are influenced by military culture, diverse unit cultures, and the cultures surrounding their bases (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). Theory-based and research-

informed strategies to assist military families are reviewed, and ethical issues for working with this population are considered.

For Whom the Course is Intended: This course is for graduate students who intend to become professional counselors, marriage and family therapists, clinical social workers, school counselors, or counselor educators who train mental health professionals. The course could also be of benefit for practicing counselors who are interested in further developing their knowledge and skills in working with diverse populations.

How Course is Related to Other Courses:

The course examines specific approaches and strategies for counseling military service members and their families. This course recognizes the military as a unique culture, and builds upon the knowledge gained in Counseling Special Populations: Foundations for Multicultural Counseling. This course also complements courses in School Counseling, Mental Health Counseling, and Marriage and Family Counseling.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will obtain an overview of the structure and culture of the military.
- Students will develop insight regarding the unique challenges faced by military service members and their families.
- Students will acquire an understanding of the mental health needs of military service members and their families.
- Students will be able to successfully identify and access military sponsored mental health and family support resources.
- Students will develop skills to enhance effective collaboration with military mental health professionals.
- Students will gain knowledge regarding the effects of combat trauma, PTSD, and the emotional cycles of deployment.
- Students will be introduced to effective counseling strategies that can be used to work with military families.

Course Objectives:

At the conclusion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate the following dispositions, knowledge, skills, and attitudes (CACREP 2009 Standards) as noted:

Section II G.1 -PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION AND ETHICAL PRACTICE—studies that provide an understanding of the following aspects of professional functioning:

a: professional roles, functions, and relationships with other human service providers, including strategies for interagency/interorganization collaboration and communications.

Section II G 2: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY—studies that provide an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society, including

b. attitudes, beliefs, understandings, and acculturative experiences, including specific experiential learning activities designed to foster students' understanding of self and culturally diverse clients;

d. individual, couple, family, group, and community strategies for working with and advocating for diverse populations, including multicultural competencies;

f. counselors' roles in eliminating biases, prejudices, and processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination.

Section II G3. HUMAN GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT—studies that provide an understanding of the nature and needs of persons at all developmental levels and in multicultural contexts, including

theories of individual and family development and transitions across the life span

effects of crises, disasters, and other trauma-causing events on persons of all age

d: theories and models of individual, cultural, couple, family, and community resilience.

e: a general framework for understanding exceptional abilities and strategies for differentiated interventions.

f: human behavior, including an understanding of developmental crises, disability, psychopathology, and situational and environmental factors that affect both normal and abnormal behavior.

g: theories and etiology of addictions and addictive behaviors, including strategies for prevention, intervention, and treatment.

Section II G 4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT—studies that provide an understanding of career development and related life factors, including:

a. career development theories and decision-making models

career, avocational, educational, occupational and labor market information resources, and career information systems

career development program planning, organization, implementation, administration, and evaluation

d. interrelationships among and between work, family, and other life roles and factors, including the role of multicultural issues in career development;

Section II G5. HELPING RELATIONSHIPS—studies that provide an understanding of the counseling process in a multicultural society, including:

b. counselor characteristics and behaviors that influence helping processes

c. essential interviewing and counseling skills;

d. counseling theories that provide the student with models to conceptualize client presentation and that help the student select appropriate counseling interventions. Students will be exposed to models of counseling that are consistent with current professional research and practice in the field so they begin to develop a personal model of counseling;

e. a systems perspective that provides an understanding of family and other systems theories and major models of family and related interventions;

f. a general framework for understanding and practicing consultation; and

g. crisis intervention and suicide prevention models, including the use of psychological first aid strategies.

Section II G6. GROUP WORK—studies that provide both theoretical and experiential understandings of group purpose, development, dynamics, theories, methods, skills, and other group approaches in a multicultural society, including

b. group leadership or facilitation styles and approaches, including characteristics of various types of group leaders and leadership styles;

c. theories of group counseling, including commonalities, distinguishing characteristics, and pertinent research and literature;

d. group counseling methods, including group counselor orientations and behaviors, appropriate selection criteria and methods, and methods of evaluation of effectiveness.

Section II G8. RESEARCH AND PROGRAM EVALUATION—studies that provide an understanding of research methods, statistical analysis, needs assessment, and program evaluation, including

- a. the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession;
- d. principles, models, and applications of needs assessment, program evaluation, and the use of findings to effect program modifications;
- e. the use of research to inform evidence-based practice; and
- f. ethical and culturally relevant strategies for interpreting and reporting the results of research and/or program evaluation studies.

Course Format

Methods of instruction will consist of lectures, in-class discussions, student presentations, experiential activities, video tapes, and guest speakers. Interactive in class activities will be included to provide application of content, theories and concepts. *As class discussion is an integral part of the learning process, students are expected to come to class ready to discuss required readings and their application to theory and practice.*

Course Requirements:

Stages of Deployment Literature Review (100 Points)

Intervention Theory Presentation (50 points)

Reflection Papers (50 Points)

Case Study (100 Points)

Interviews and Field Experience (100)

Attendance and Participation (100 Points)

Stages of Deployment Literature Review The purpose of this assignment is for students to improve skills in conducting literature reviews and synthesizing results of literature reviews in the form of a comprehensive and cohesive manuscript. Students are asked to conduct a literature review on family issues related to military deployment. Develop an abstract for a potential manuscript that bridges your findings with counseling military service members and their families according to your counseling track. Abstracts are to be 100 words or less.

Intervention Theory Group Project: Students will form small groups of up to four students per group. According to counseling track, students will present a theory of appropriate interventions to use when working with military families. Example: Multicultural Counseling, School Counseling, Mental Health Counseling, and Marriage and Family Counseling. Students will integrate relevant article(s) from the course readings and demonstrate how the chosen theory interfaces with meeting the needs of military service members and their families. Include an

outline with the following information from the theory utilized in your presentation: Please make copies of your outline for all classmates and instructor.

Specific principles for practitioners using this approach

List any phases or stages relevant to this approach

Role of the counselor in this approach

Particular skills needed in using this approach

Advantages or Limitations to using this approach

Any other relevant or distinctive aspects of this approach

Reflection Papers: Throughout the semester student will complete 5 reflection papers on various topics that are covered in class. For each reflection, please consider the following questions:

What are the most challenging and rewarding aspects of this topic?

What are the most meaningful, surprising, uncomfortable aspects?

Did you grow, change, or learn anything about yourself ?

How can knowledge about this topic inform your practice as a counselor?

Case Study: Students will be given a case study to investigate. Students are required to identify needs specific to the case, obtain and understand necessary resources, include a discussion of a presenting problem, assessment, diagnosis, treatment plan, referrals, confidentiality and ethical issues.

Field Experience (40 hours): Students are required to complete 40 hours of fieldwork or volunteer service with agencies that serve military service members and their families. A brief list of suggested locations follows. This list is not intended to be exhaustive. A minimum of 3 interviews with personnel from your field experience must be completed.

Military Hospitals

Veterans Affairs Hospitals and Outpatient Centers

Military Family Services Units “Family Readiness Groups”

Military Correction Facilities

Community and military-impacted schools and childcare centers (K-12)

University Student Counseling Centers

Community Mental Health Centers

Vocational Rehabilitation Centers

Armed Forces Service Centers

Attendance (100 Points)

It is expected that graduate students attend all classes. You are allowed one unexcused absence. However, ten points will be deducted for each additional unexcused absence. Students with more than three unexcused absences will receive 0 points for attendance.

If a student has any health or situational issue that adversely impacts their attendance, a medical leave should be sought or they should drop and retake the course during a subsequent semester.

Additional Suggestions:

Graduate students are expected to attend all classes. If you have to miss, ask someone in the class to pick up any handout for you. I am sorry that I cannot take the time to save and retrieve handouts from the last class.

Please make a copy of all assignments before turning them in to the instructor.

Please enter into class discussions. If the class becomes slow and uninteresting, you have some responsibility to make it better. Learning is stimulated and enhanced by inquiry, challenge, dispute and questioning.

Please communicate with the instructor regarding problems or concerns. With timely feedback, we can correct problems and misunderstandings before they grow.

Students with any disabilities (physical or learning) must notify the instructor *prior to the second class period* so reasonable accommodations may be made.

Please turn off all cell phones, pagers or any technology that may disturb class.

Assignments are due on the date listed on the class schedule. Late assignments will be docked 10% daily until it is received by the instructor.

Grading Criteria:

Total Points: 500

A: 90% and above

B: 80 – 89%

C: 70 – 79%

F: <70%

Please refer to UCF's Golden Rule Student Handbook regarding policies and procedures as it pertains to the student rules of conduct.

Course Outline

| Week | Topic | Readings, Assignments |
|------|--|--|
| | Overview of Course Requirements; Department of Defense; Branches of the Military | Chapters 1-2 in Hall |
| | <i>Military Culture and Structure; Rank, Hierarchy; Chain of Command</i> | Chapter 3 in Hall Chapters 1-3 in Martin, Rosen & Sparacino (2000) |
| | <i>Military Culture and Structure</i> continued; Language & Acronyms | Guest Speaker Wertsch (1991) *Reflection Paper |
| | <i>The Military Family</i> - Strengths, Challenges; Spouses; Transitions | Chapter 4 in Hall Drummet, Coleman & Cable (2003) |
| | <i>The Military Family</i> - Dual Military Couples; Single Parent Service Members; Blended Families | Chapter 6 in Hall Palmer (2008) |
| | <i>The Military Child</i> – Military Brats; Unique Strengths & Challenges; Adjustment | Lamberg (2004) Burnham & Hooper (2008) *Reflection Paper |
| | The Military Child- Education; Special Needs | Guest Speaker Fallon & Russo (2003) |
| | <i>Major Challenges of Military Families</i> : Relocation, Separation; Mental Health | Basham, K. (2008) Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser (2008) |
| | <i>Major Challenges of Military Families</i> Risk Factors (stress, violence, substance, spousal, and child abuse, addictions, finances) | Chapter 7 in Hall APA Task Force Report (2007) *Reflection Paper |
| | <i>Emotional Cycle of Deployment</i> - Pre-Deployment Deployment/Sustainment | Chapters 1-5 & 11-12 in Slone & Friedman (2008) Pincus, et al.,(2005); |
| | <i>Emotional Cycle of Deployment</i> - Re-deployment; Reintegration | Matsakis (2007) Bowling & Sherman (2008) |
| | <i>Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder</i> | Guest Speaker Chapters 11-12 in Slone & Friedman (2008) *Reflection Paper |
| | Effective Interventions | Chapter 9 in Hall Weiss, Coll, et al., (2010) Group Presentations |
| | <i>Military Resources and Organizations</i> | Guest Speaker Field Work Experience Log Due |
| | <i>Training and Supervision of Mental Health Professionals to Effectively Treat Military Families</i> | Group Presentations- Case Studies *Reflection Paper |
| | Military Language | Quiz on Military Acronyms |

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APPENDIX D RECRUITING FLYERS

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS



PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY



“Professional School Counselor Perspectives on the Effects of Military Parental Deployment on School –Aged Children and Adolescents”

WHO: PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS!!!
WHAT: Answer questions in a 30 minute confidential interview
WHERE: Meeting room to be announced
WHEN: November 4-7, 2010 at the EB-ACA Conference OR date and time at your convenience

WHY: To advance research through sharing your experiences working with school children and adolescents who have a deployed military parent and to provide insight into the training needs of future school counselors.

Contact: Cheryl G. McCloud, MS
University of Central Florida Doctoral Candidate
cmcccloud@mail.ucf.edu
Phone: + 32 0478 8401 44

Dr. E.H. Mike Robinson III,
UCF Faculty Supervisor
erobinson@mail.ucf.edu.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELORS RESEARCH STUDY VOLUNTEERS



“Professional School Counselor Perspectives of the Effects of Military Parental Deployment” on School –Aged Children and Adolescents



SIGN UP HERE



APPENDIX E UNIVERSITY IRB DOCUMENTS



Title of Project: Professional School Counselor Perspectives on the Effects of Military Parental Deployment on School –Aged Children and Adolescents

Principal Investigator: Cheryl G. McCloud, M.S.

Faculty Supervisor: E.H. Mike Robinson III, PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you and completely voluntary.

The purpose of this study is to explore how professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview and will be asked questions regarding their experiences as professional school counselors who work with school aged children and adolescents who have a deployed military parent. Interviews will be audio taped. No names or personally identifiable data will be collected, but pseudonyms will be developed to aid in transcriptions and data analysis. Interviews will be conducted in a designated meeting room at the EB-ACA (European Branch of the American Counseling Association) Conference in Heidleberg, Germany, during November, 2010. The researcher will travel to alternative locations to interview participants who are identified through snowball sampling. Interviews may also be conducted via telephone. Interviews will last between 30-45 minutes on one occasion. Interviews may be scheduled at an alternative time and location that is most convenient for the participants.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints or think the research has hurt you, talk to Ms. Cheryl G. McCloud, Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida Counselor Education Program (407) 823-2401 or Dr. E.H. Mike Robinson III, Professor and faculty supervisor, Department of Educational and Human Sciences at (407) 823-2401 or by email at cmcccloud@mail.ucf.edu or erobinson@mail.ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.



Professional School Counselor Perspectives of the Effects of Military Parental Deployment on
School –Aged Children and Adolescents

Informed Consent for an Adult in a Non-Exempt Research Study

Principal Investigator(s): Cheryl G. McCloud, M.S.

Faculty Supervisor: E.H. Mike Robinson III, PhD

Investigational Site(s): EB-ACA Annual Conference, Heidleberg, Germany

Introduction: Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 10-12 people nationally and internationally. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a professional school counselor who works with school aged children and adolescents who have a deployed military parent. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study. The person doing this research is Ms. Cheryl G. McCloud of the University of Central Florida’s Department of Educational and Human Sciences Ph.D program in Counselor Education. Because the researcher is a doctoral student, she is being guided by E.H. Mike Robinson III, PhD, a UCF professor and faculty supervisor in the University of Central Florida’s Department of Educational and Human Sciences Ph.D program in Counselor Education.

What you should know about a research study:

Someone will explain this research study to you. A research study is something you volunteer for. Whether or not you take part is up to you. You should take part in this study only because you want to. You can choose not to take part in the research study. You can agree to take part now and later change your mind. Whatever you decide it will not be held against you. Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to explore how professional school counselors perceive the effects of military parental deployment on school aged children and adolescents. The proposed study seeks to capture the voices and lived experiences of professional school counselors who work with children of deployed military personnel. Chandra, Martin, Hawkins & Richardson (2010) noted that perspectives of school staff who spend a significant amount of time interacting with these youth have not been the focus of research, yet students are relying on the school and school staff for social and emotional support at unprecedented levels. Chandra et al., (2010) reported that an analysis from the perspectives of front line responders, such as teachers and school counselors, is merited to more closely examine the effect of parental deployment on the emotional and behavioral outcomes of children and

youth in the school setting. Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset & Blum (2009) found that most parents and school personnel agreed that teachers and counselors need specific training on how to deal with military children who are struggling with a parent deployment. This study seeks to contribute to the counseling field in the form of research and identification of strategies to incorporate into the training of new counselors, and by capturing the voices and lived experiences of school counselors who work with children of deployed military personnel. Insight into how school counselors help military school age children cope with deployments will provide counselor educators and military and civilian leaders with essential information to adjust existing support programs or develop new programs that will help schools meet the needs of military families living in a state of recurring deployments.

What you will be asked to do in the study: Participants will be asked to participate in an individual interview. Participants will be asked questions regarding their experiences as professional school counselors who work with school aged children and adolescents who have a deployed military parent. Interviews will take between 45 and 60 minutes to complete. Participants will be asked to interact with the primary researcher, Cheryl G. McCloud. The interviews will take place during the months of November and December, 2010. Interviews will be scheduled at the time and location that is most convenient for the participants. Interviews may also be conducted via telephone. You do not have to answer every question or complete every task. You will not lose any benefits if you skip questions or tasks. Pseudonyms will be developed to aid in transcriptions and data analysis.

Location: Interviews will be conducted in a meeting room at the EB-ACA (European Branch of the American Counseling Association) Conference in Heidelberg, Germany. The researcher will travel to alternative locations to interview participants who are identified through snowball sampling. Interviews may also be conducted via telephone.

Time required: We expect that you will be in this research study for 30 to 45 minutes on one occasion. Interviews will be scheduled at the time and location that is most convenient for the participants. Interviews may also be conducted via telephone

Audio or video taping:

You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will not be able to be in the study. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed after the researcher transcribes the data.

Risks: The investigation is designed to be low risk. No participant will be asked to reveal any personally sensitive information. None of the questions are designed to elicit personal information. Participants may experience discomfort when discussing the effects of military parental deployment on school-aged children and adolescents.

Benefits:

We cannot promise any direct benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include the ability to share your perceptions of the effects of military parental deployment on school-aged children and adolescents; the opportunity to contribute to the counseling field via the identification of strategies to incorporate into the training of new counselors, and the opportunity to provide counselor educators and military and civilian leaders with an abundance of information to adjust existing support programs or develop new programs that will help schools meet the expectations of military families living in a state of recurring deployments to a war zone.

Compensation or payment: A decorative candle will be offered to all participants as a small token of appreciation. There is no additional compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

Confidentiality: No names or personally identifiable data will be collected, but pseudonyms will be developed to aid in transcriptions and data analysis. Access to demographic information collected in this study will be limited to members of the research team who have a need to review this information. Demographic information will be kept separately from the audio tapes. The audio tapes will be kept in a locked, safe place. The audio tapes will be erased or destroyed after the researcher transcribes the data.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, talk to Ms. Cheryl G. McCloud, Doctoral Candidate, University of Central Florida Counselor Education Program (407) 823-2401 or Dr. E.H. Mike Robinson III, Professor, Department of Educational and Human Sciences at (407) 823-2401 or by email at cmcccloud@mail.ucf.edu or erobinson@mail.ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

Withdrawing from the study:

All participants will be free to rescind their agreement to participate at any time. There will be no penalty to withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty for non-participation. There are no penalties for withdrawal once the individual interview has begun.

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