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A Mixed Methods Study of Technological Influences on Communication and Media Exposure in Military Children Experiencing Parental Deployment

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MIXED METHODS STUDY OF TECHNOLOGICAL INFLUENCES ON COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA EXPOSURE IN MILITARY CHILDREN EXPERIENCING PARENTAL DEPLOYMENT

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of School Psychology in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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Lexington, Kentucky

2014

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Military children have been a population of interest and research speculation for several decades. Despite the research base built studying this population, many questions remain regarding their specific experiences and mental health outcomes. To accommodate the nation's needs when fueling the armed forces by the all volunteer force currently comprising the service branches, many military personnel have found themselves in circumstances including multiple deployments and deployments of lengths approximately equal to one year. With family relationships now a more prominent issue for military members, the necessity of considering the effects of deployment on these family members has become especially pertinent. The purpose of this study was to investigate the way increased exposure to technology affects children’s deployment outcomes in today's military culture, especially in their deployment experiences.

Participants included 71 parents and 20 children in military families currently or within the past year experiencing a deployment. Participants were divided into two phases for completion of study tasks. Phase one participants, 20 children and one of their parents, completed interviews, emotional/behavioral measures, and a deployment experiences survey. The 51 parent participants in Phase two completed only the deployment experiences survey. Evaluation of data presented from participants provided insight into the deployment experiences of these families as impacted by the technological advances in communication and media today. Results indicated a range of positive effects related to technologically supported communication between parents and children throughout deployment. Families participating in increased parental communication during deployment showed relationships to decreases in ambiguous loss symptoms, increases in positive attitudes including growth and maturity, and smooth reintegration following deployment. Despite increases in availability, news exposure reported from children occurred at a low incidence rate. Regardless, negative reactions to news viewing was reported.
KEYWORDS: Military Children, Military Deployment, Deployment Communication, Child Media Exposure, Military Deployment Technology-Based Communication

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May 1, 2014

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Rebecca Goodney

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DEDICATION

“You can kiss your family and friends good-bye and put miles between you, but at the same time you carry them with you in your heart, your mind, your stomach, because you do not just live in a world but a world lives in you.”
~Frederick Buechner

-To the families represented in this study.
My hope is that your stories were properly voiced.
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Chapter One
Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Military children have been a population of interest and research speculation for several decades. Despite the research base built studying this population, many questions remain regarding their specific experiences and mental health outcomes. Chapter one will include a discussion of both the current research base as well as literature gaps in considering the potential effects of deployment on children and families. Areas of consideration include the technology effects of media and communication and the potential relationship between military deployment experiences and ambiguous loss and posttraumatic growth.

Previous decades held guiding theories about military families and the guaranteed negative outcomes of their lifestyle, such as explained in Military Family Syndrome literature (Lagrone 1978). Lagrone (1978) describes the Military Family Syndrome as a phenomenon which negatively impacts the structure and relationships of family members in military families. According to his observations, the combination of factors including father separation, transiency, differential parenting, and the focus by the father on adhering to the rigid expectations and responsibilities associated with their military life negatively impacts the lives of all family members. Overall effects were stated to include less family cohesion, higher tension, and increased behavioral and mental health complications amongst the children. However, in further research, this theory has been shown to be inaccurate, with researchers unable to find statistical evidence of higher rates of mental illness or behavioral problems in these families strictly based on military association (Morrison, 1981). Despite decades of debate, both positive and negative factors related to the experiences of military children are still continually questioned. One of the challenges related to gaining consistently
applicable knowledge about this population is the ever changing face of military life and thus, the lives of these children.

Today's military faces a unique set of circumstances differing from those of previous wartime engagements. In the current conflicts, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the US military has faced a stretch in resources due to the ongoing nature of the wars and the necessary use of manpower. To accommodate the nation's needs when fueling the armed forces by the all volunteer force currently comprising the services, many military personnel have found themselves in circumstances including multiple deployments and deployments of lengths approximately equal to one year. Recent statistics reported that nearly 600,000 active-duty soldiers have deployed since 2001, with 110,000 having deployed twice, 38,000 deploying three times, and 8,000 serving four tours (Zoroya, 2009). As the wars have continued past the collection of this data, those numbers have continued to grow. Furthermore, as the voluntary nature of the Armed Forces has changed, so to have the demographics. Instead of the single, young, male soldiers who were the majority members of the military during previous war eras, today’s soldiers are much more likely to have spouses and children and to be female. A reported nearly 900,000 children in the United States have had at least one parent deployed since the start of the war in 2001, with approximately 234,000 children having at least one parent deployed during the time of a recent Pentagon survey (Zoroya, 2009). With family relationships now a more prominent issue for soldiers, the necessity of considering the effects of deployment on these family members has become especially pertinent. Thus, this study focused on the specific family effects experienced within the climate of today’s wars.
Although research on military deployments and military families exists, the research is not conclusive. Additionally, some authors have cautioned that much of the current literature is based on previous wars which did not occur under the same condition as the current conflicts. Thus, information may not necessarily directly apply to the families of today (Lester, Peterson, Reeves, Knauss, Glover, Mogil, Duan, Saltzman, Pynoos, Wilt, & Beardslee, 2010). For example, many of the studies were based on wars where families were not facing multiple deployments, deployments may have been shorter, or research was conducted in societies where children were directly exposed to war and wartime threats as the fighting was at home rather than across the globe. Finally, the effects of technology and the associated exposure to the scenes of war were previously less instant or constant as they are today. Although the influx of war images into America’s homes through television began during Vietnam, the increase in current technology such as the internet has continued to provide additional outlets for these images to be displayed all hours of the day. The current wars are the first where the internet has had these effects both by virtue of technological advancements and the more widespread access children have to this tool in both school and home settings. Additionally, this war has also seen an increase in media coverage in the form of embedded reporters delivering live and continuous updates of the war’s activities. This increase in reporting was seen from the very beginning months of the war (Barnes, Davis, & Treiber, 2007).

Current Literature Regarding Deployment Effects on Military Children

Research currently suggests most military children and families will navigate their deployment experiences without complication (Murray, 2002). Nonetheless, previous studies have demonstrated a wide range of possible effects related to military life and deployments.
However, again, the results of each of these studies continue to require additional research related to current conditions of today’s conflicts.

Deployment based research regarding military children’s experiences is a field of literature currently lacking across all ages. Thus, investigating any specific childhood group would advance the knowledge and data within this field. Based on children’s egocentric thoughts and problem-focused coping it has been theorized that they may not have the ability to adapt to deployment as well as older individuals (Weisenberg, Schwarzald, WAYSman, Solomon, & Klingman, 1993; Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino, 2000). However, at this time, several studies have begun to build the research field by focusing on the experiences of adolescents in military life (Wickman et al., 2010; Weber & Weber, 2005; Huebner et al., 2007; Reed, Bell, & Edwards, 2011). For example, recent research has discussed effects of technology in negative impacts on adolescents with deployed parents pointing to their more independent and readily available access to technology (Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2009). As children are accessing technology at younger ages, the need exists to research whether younger children of reading and news viewing ages are negatively impacted by this practice. Additionally, despite the lack of general information related to children within the proposed study population, a Pentagon survey did provide basic data pointing to children between the ages of six and thirteen being most affected by deployments, which would align closely with ages of focus within this study (Zoroya, 2009). Thus, this study will seek to gain information regarding the experiences of children between the ages of six to twelve years old.

Various studies have specifically investigated the possible psychopathology occurring in children directly related to effects of deployment. A 10% higher chance of hospitalization
due to psychiatric problems was found in children between the ages of nine to seventeen when they had a parent deployed longer than six months. Furthermore, this study indicated children who have a history of mental health issues are more likely to see these problems resurface during a deployment (Doheny, 2011). The increased deployment time of the current wars has also been initially noted to increase both depression and externalizing symptoms in children of soldiers (Manos, 2010). One study of adolescents with parents participating in OIF used biophysical measures including heart rate to reveal more signs of stress in those adolescents with deployed parents than adolescents whose parents were either stationed at home or are civilians. Specifically, these children were shown to have higher levels of posttraumatic stress and higher heart rates (Barnes et al., 2007). Another study found adolescents, especially males, to face increased reporting of suicidal thoughts, perceived low quality of life, and binge drinking when having experienced parental deployment (Reed et al., 2011). Children with fathers absent for a month or longer self-reported higher levels of depression and anxiety. However, these increases in symptoms were not readily obvious or reported by adult observers who were also asked to report on the children’s symptoms (Jensen, Grogan, Zenakis, & Bain, 1989). One study investigating self-reports of children also revealed increased depression rates, with younger children and boys being especially susceptible (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996). Another recent study investigating children affected by current wars showed that increased child depression and externalizing symptoms were present in children based on the cumulative effect of deployments over time in their lives. Additionally, it was shown that some of these effects remain in place even after the deployed parent returns home (Lester et al., 2010). In general psychological terms, increases in sadness, tearfulness, and demands for attention have been noted during deployment
(Lombard & Lombard, 1997). More noticeable emotional symptoms such as an increased risk of depression and anxiety for girls have also been reported (Morris & Age, 2009).

One issue consistently considered in this research field is the direct parenting impact of children related to the absence of the military parent for extended periods of time. Previously, father separation was the singular form experienced by military children. Thus, the earliest studies in this field focused only on investigating the effects of father separation on children’s development and behavior. A wide variety of negative impacts including increased aggression and dependency within boys and decreased quantitative ability for girls were cited in early literature (Hillenbrand, 1976). However, today’s military has been more heavily influenced by the presence of females within the forces. With this transition, the occurrence of either mother separated children, or children who have been separated from both parents have risen. Specific effects of mother separation continue to be debated. One study that aimed to investigate this trend (Applewhite & Mays, 1996) used Operation Desert Storm data to reveal a lack of statistical differences between groups of children who were separated from their mother versus those separated from their father. As this finding was contrary to the authors’ hypothesis, a need to further research the topic was discussed.

In addition to specific gender changes in parental separation, an increasing trend within military families has been single parent families. In fact, the military is the nation’s largest employer of single parents (Knox & Price, 1999). In this situation, as with both parents being deployed, children may be left without their parent(s) during the duration of the deployment. This transition could encompass a variety of arrangements including the child living with other family members, friends, or possibly a family member moving to the child’s location in order to prevent further disruption of their typical routine or preventing them from
necessarily moving during the year (Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010). As this demographic of children affected by deployments has been either nonexistent or overlooked prior to the current wars, it is a population requiring further research consideration.

One issue that continues to appear throughout the literature is the effect of adjustment of the parent at home, typically maternal adjustment, on the adjustment of children in deployment separation (Palmer, 2008; Wadsworth, 2010; Flake et al., 2009; Kelly, 1994). This factor could be one of the most important predictors for the manner in which children will deal with the separation. It has even been stated that the presence of pathology in these children may be directly related to the presence of pathology in their mothers (Jensen et al., 1989). Parental distress during long deployments has been shown to predict increased depression and externalizing symptoms in children (Lester et al., 2010). Some authors have pointed to this interaction of the mother’s symptoms influencing children not only when the father is absent, but also immediately following their return. It has been noted that during these transitional times the mother may have difficulty adjusting to the father being home again in consideration of the power and responsibility changes which must accompany this transition (Marsella, Dubanoski, & Mohs, 1974).

The Effect of Media/Technology on Children

One specific area of study suggested within the literature field has been the effect of technology on deployment experiences (Sheppard et al., 2010). Technology has had an increased influence in the lives of people today, including military children. Currently, professionals have speculated on both possible positive and negative effects of technological influences in the lives of these children. However, these statements currently lack research to support their claims. Based on these discussions within the deployment research field and
current gaps, two different aspects of media/technology will be considered. First, effects of the technology driven communication available and utilized by children and their parents will be studied. Second, the effects of the constant war related news children may be viewing will be reviewed.

Within technology driven communication, a range of possible negative effects have been considered. First, parents in communication are able to begin or continue long-distance conflict between themselves (Sheppard et al., 2010). The compounding of this stress on top of the stress related to the risk of the parent’s safety may actually hurt the child. Furthermore, the constant access to technology based communication with deployed soldiers has also been postulated to have a negative effect in the increased anxiety over injury or death which may occur when communication is interrupted for any number of reasons (Dao, 2011). Additionally, speculation based on soldier and family anecdotes has pointed to possible stress prompted by attempting to communicate normally and connecting in conversation between family members when life is radically different on either side of the world (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011).

Conversely, on the positive side, providing children with regular contact with their deployed parent has been hypothesized to assist in continuing their interpersonal bonds and aid in providing a more smooth transition to family life after the deployment (Sheppard et al., 2010). E-mail has also been noted as a morale booster for families throughout deployment, allowing them to share news and photos of important events at home (Lambert, 2004). This participation in life’s events by the deployed soldiers may even be able to occur in real time. Seeing the possible morale benefits for this interaction and communication, the Department of Defense has supported these communication efforts by lifting previous restrictions on
personal communication on military computers (Dao, 2011). Additionally, in positive marital relationships, increased communication through e-mail, care packages, and letters has been linked to lower PTSD symptoms following a soldier’s return home (Nauert, 2011). A state of positive mental health will increase the chance of a smoother transition into coming home and readjustment to family roles. Although this study did not specifically discuss child-parent communication issues, it is probable that the majority of younger children will have positive relationships with their deployed parents, thus lending themselves to the same effects seen in this study.

The effect of technology on the viewing and knowledge dissemination of war events has changed tremendously during the course of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The influx of internet usage in the homes of the majority of Americans has allowed children to access news stories and photos at an unprecedented rate culminating in 24-hour access. Concerns have been raised related to children’s exposure to war images and related news increasing their anxiety levels throughout the deployment (Mmari et al., 2009). This increase has been seen specifically in regard to war related news in American homes, with 77% of Americans going online for war-related news and e-mail communication within just the initial week of the Iraq War alone (Fox, Rainie, & Fallows, 2003). Television has also seen many changes. At the most basic level, the advent of channels devoted to 24 hour news reports have expanded beyond the mere singular 24 hour news channel in existence during the Gulf War or the brief hours of other traditional nightly newscasts (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006). Although reporters began to offer coverage of war stories from the frontlines during Vietnam, the visibility of stories of that time are incomparable to the ones of today. During the first days of the Iraq war over 600 journalists were embedded with troops gaining immediate access to the
United States soldiers’ campaigns (Pfau, Wittenberg, Jackson, Mehringer, Lanier, Hatfield, & Brockman, 2005). Additionally, technology has allowed news stories to now encompass live, unedited footage (Boone & MacDonald, 2009). Furthermore, battlefield images are for the first time able to be immediately shared via high-quality digital cameras, laptops, satellite phones, internet, and videophones (Schwalbe, 2006).

Although most research investigating children’s reactions to violence has focused on fictional television or video games, there is room to consider the role that media news stories and their associated violence plays in affecting children. Currently, few studies have investigated this viewpoint. Dating back to World War II, researchers found that even newspaper and radio reports were able to upset children’s dreams (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006). Gulf War news stories were found to upset 45% of children viewing them during that war (Cantor, Mares, and Oliver, 1993). Additionally, repeated viewing of violent news stories has been revealed to be a significant, positive predictor of safety concerns amongst children, even those without deployed parents (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006). Gender differences related to news exposure have been hypothesized, linking the higher television watching and violent video games played by males to serve as a basis for reinforcement of the violent consequences of war when watching media coverage (Reed et al., 2011).

One of the important aspects of this scenario to further consider is the reality component of news stories as opposed to other forms of violence children observe on television. Walma van der Molen & Bushman (2008) found that children reported more fear when facing news based violence as compared to violence in the course of fiction. The authors suggested that this effect could be due to a combination of factors including the fear of future threats to the children’s safety based on what they had viewed in the stories.
Further, children may view these stories as fear-invoking in their parents, giving them greater reason for concern. Additionally, the authors pointed out that in the course of fictional violence, children are often reminded from their parents that the violence is fake and not something that should concern them. However, this same reassurance does not necessarily occur when observing news based violence (Walma van der Molen & Bushman, 2008). The influence of the perception of reality affecting children’s feelings in response to media violence can be illustrated by the September 11 terrorist attacks. Although many of the children in the proposed study were too young to actually remember the events, they are fresh in the minds of the country and our history, as well as their parents. As such, the images and news stories of that day are easily accessible and have likely been shared with today’s children. These attacks were the first time since Pearl Harbor that our country was struck on our own soil. Thus, the influence of the perception of vulnerability of our own country is different in the current wars, with the ties to the events of that day, as opposed to previous engagements. The images of those attacks seen repeatedly in news stories either independently or in programming related to the current wars may further lead children to cognitions related to the fact that such devastating violence in their homeland is possible, potentially without parental reassurance seen in fiction based fears (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006). Furthermore, this scenario is a current example of how fear invoking responses in parents related to the news of these events and the acknowledgement of their reality may produce further emotional or psychological difficulties for children. In relation, children are noted to manifest more behaviorally upset symptoms in response to their parent’s fear (Walma van der Molen & Bushman, 2008). Drawing from the previous example, child responses may mirror the responses of their parents in news reported fearful situations such
as the September 11th attacks or other recent occurrences of terrorism. Relevant to the current study, parent adjustment to deployment is believed to be one of the most important predictors for a child’s adjustment. As with evidence from the previous examples, negative responses of parents to media surrounding war may also have an important influence on their children’s feelings and adjustment to war related news.

Again, news violence research is limited, particularly in research related specifically to military children and war related news. In one study of war news effects using a general sample of children, participants were asked if they knew anyone serving in the war. Children who reported knowing such individuals reported increased safety concerns in relation to their news viewing (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006). Further, increasing the knowledge of children regarding the nature of their military parent’s job, which may be accomplished through news exposure, has been noted to be a source of stress in these children (Morris & Age, 2009). In considering specific effects of these news stories, researchers have found that older children report greater fear in response to abstract, verbally communicated threats. However, younger children, consistent with the age of those investigated in the current study, reported more fear in relation to concrete, visual representations of war in the news (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006).

The purpose of the current study will be to investigate the way increased exposure to technology affects children’s deployment outcomes in today's military culture, especially in their deployment experiences. Due to the lack of research regarding current deployments and their effects on children, a necessity exists to investigate the lives of children both during and after deployment and how this experience has been influenced by their use of
media/technology as a communication tool to keep in touch with their parents, as well as a way of receiving information regarding the ongoing conflicts.

Ambiguous Loss

Theorized by Boss (1999), ambiguous loss outlines the principles surrounding a phenomenon of unclear loss issues felt in a variety of circumstances. Primarily, Boss (1999) describes two scenarios of ambiguous loss which may occur, someone may be perceived as physically present, but psychologically absent or physically absent and psychologically present. In both scenarios, healthy developmental and familial patterns may be interrupted due to members being unable to reach a point of certainty. Feelings of hopelessness, uncertainty, and confusion produced by ambiguous loss may be further complicated as living in this state has been noted to additionally produce depression, guilt, anxiety, and immobilization (Boss, 2004). Ambiguous loss has further been illustrated in families experiencing both exhaustion and guilt in relation to a general sense of missing part of themselves due to the absence of their loved one (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011).

Ambiguous loss is complicated by the lack of clear guidelines for navigating the associated feelings, due to difficulty fully defining whether or not a loss has actually occurred and the lack of clarity surrounding the anticipated length of this period of emotions (Boss, 1999).

Due to the distinct stages of deployment and deployment readiness experienced by families, the aforementioned ambiguous loss scenarios may be experienced consecutively (Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008). For example, during the deployment period when the parent is away from home, the children at home may perceive the parent as physically absent, but psychologically present. Although the parent is clearly not physically present for the day to day life of the child, they are still alive and may be
involved in daily life and decisions due to today’s technology. This technology makes it possible for parent involvement to range from not only basic communication, but to remaining heavily involved in decision making or discipline of the child throughout the deployment period. Therefore, throughout deployment, the child may continue to view the parent as psychologically present, especially in situations when parent involvement continues to occur to a higher, more consistent degree.

On the contrary, the opposite scenario may occur during the periods directly prior to or immediately following a deployment related absence. The child may perceive the parent as being physically present, but psychologically absent. Although the parent is present within the home, the child may notice that the parent is not fully attentive or involved in the home environment. Whether this effect occurs because the parent is preparing to leave, is still preoccupied by previous deployment tasks, or has returned with a mental health diagnosis, which has been cited as consequences of the current wars, the effects for the family structure can be complicated.

One of the tasks associated with ambiguous loss, especially in post-deployment transitions, involves determining family roles and boundaries. Faber et al. (2008) reported a period of transition following their research participant’s return home which resulted in difficulties due to renegotiating boundaries and family roles. This transition was noted to begin a few weeks before the soldier returned home, when the family began to make them more psychologically present in their continual consideration of how the family member would fit back into the family, as well as speculation regarding changes in their personality and behaviors upon their return home. Authors have noted that one of the most common factors influencing both ambiguous loss scenarios is “boundary ambiguity” (Faber et al.,
Within boundary ambiguity, the ill-defined nature of the family members and their presence translates to difficulty in interpreting the expected roles for each family member. As families adjust to the losses of their traditional family structure, modifications must be made in order to ensure that the family is able to properly function. However, a period of difficulty may exist in compensating for their loss and navigating these changes. During deployments this process can be especially stressful for parents in determining how roles and responsibilities must adjust in order to keep the household functioning during the military member’s absence. Families who have successfully resolved boundary ambiguity and the absence of their family member have been described as finding a balance between stretching their family boundaries in order to psychologically maintain the soldier as a family member, while still being able to temporarily reassign the vital functioning roles this family member would routinely fulfill (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003).

A further influence of ambiguous loss and boundary ambiguity specific to military scenarios is the influence safety has upon both phenomena. Faber et al. (2008) found that families adjusted the openness of their boundaries based partially on the issue of safety. Although many families were reported to attempt to leave the boundaries completely open at the onset of deployment, the influx of tragic news reports caused the families to readjust their boundaries slightly and alter the amount of information coming into the household. Safety and concerning news were also factors for the deployed service member as they adjusted the amount of information they chose to share with those at home (Faber et al., 2008). However, this area points to an additional manner in which technology based communication can help assist in resolving the ambiguity surrounding deployment. Children are faced with the reality
of the potential of losing their parents or a parent facing serious injury during the course of deployment (McFarlane, 2009; Mmari et al., 2009). Although more consistent communication will not necessarily completely relieve these fears, it may assist in helping them subside. Each time the child is able to communicate with their parent, the ambiguity surrounding their safety and presence of life itself may at least be momentarily resolved.

Another point regarding ambiguous loss especially pertinent to military families experiencing multiple deployments is Boss’s suggestion that families who are repeatedly subjected to ambiguous circumstances may begin to actually become accustomed to the situation (Boss, 1999). Thus, the family may reach a state where boundary ambiguity conflicts no longer promote a difficulty for these parties. This suggestion may be a promising sign for families who have experienced multiple deployments, as they may have become more accustomed to the role adjustments with each loss period resulting in more easily navigating the boundary changes in the future. However, the experiences of some military families have pointed to this role adjustment being less notable over time as the father’s multiple deployments have left them feeling more like a visitor in the home rather than a member requiring role transitions (Willerton, Schwarz, Wadsworth, & Oglesby, 2011).

When considering ambiguous loss, the primary issue which reinforces the associated difficulties is the uncertainty associated with life and relationships at that point. Specifically illustrating the pertinence of this condition in the current topic, Huebner et al. (2007) stated, “the only certainty about the deployment of a service member during war in an era of terrorism is uncertainty from beginning to end.” In an effort to treat ambiguous loss, families should aim to increase their tolerance for ambiguity and seek hope throughout the affected time period (Collins & Kennedy, 2008). Therapists will target family communication as a
primary avenue for achieving such tolerance and enhancing the family organization and structure. Through this communication families will begin to not only normalize their feelings, but move to adjust their identities and attachments.

Aligning with the current study, ambiguous loss was first examined in military families from the point of view of the deployed father. Fathers outlined considerable cognitive energy being utilized in order to ensure their children of their psychological presence in the father’s mind during times of physical absence (Willerton et al., 2011). However, these principles have not been closely linked with military child’s view and technologically facilitated communication thus far. Regardless, the previously outlined literature points to obvious links between deployment, communication, and ambiguous loss factors which should be considered. On the negative side, technology may add an additional complication for the deployed soldier as they are still able to be involved in many of the affairs at home, despite the distance between their current position and that of the family (Dao, 2011). Such potential effects have been discussed anecdotally, but have yet to be sufficiently studied. Some may argue that this scenario may further add to stress or distraction during the deployments for all parties involved, as the family roles and responsibilities remain ill-defined throughout deployment.

In a more positive view of possible technological effects, increased communication with the families at home may facilitate positive involvement of parents in the daily lives of their children. Technology may allow the families to remain in contact and thus remain in a structure more similar to their norm. The hypothesized overall effect in this argument is less role shifting is required, possibly leading to a stable attachment and less ambiguity
throughout the deployment. Such circumstances may provide for an easier family transition
not only throughout deployment, but upon the return home of the soldier.

Previous research has found that families who leave their boundaries at least partially
open during these ambiguous times are more likely to adjust well long term (Faber et al.,
2008). It is speculated that through these discussions and the communication between
individuals it will indeed be easier to facilitate these open boundaries. Not only will that
practice keep the families in communication and facilitate the relationships between family
members during the deployment, but it may further facilitate an easier transition upon the
soldier’s return. A previous study investigating technology based communication with
deployed first-time fathers of newborns stated that some of the deployed family member’s
psychological stress regarding their absence was relieved by frequent communication.
Further, investigators closed the manuscript with a hopeful note pointing to frequent
communication facilitating paternal role transition and the father-child relationship upon the
soldier’s return home (Schachman, 2010). Unfortunately, this logic could predict less
positive outcomes for familial relationships during and immediately following deployment
for families who are not able to stay connected in this manner due to the specific nature of
the deployed soldier’s mission or family access to technological resources.

The previously outlined existing literature offers several potential outlooks for
families in possible helpful or harmful effects in roles and loss experiences through the
utilization of technological communication during deployment. Through the current study,
this previous literature was utilized to inform questions and hypotheses to consider
ambiguous loss experiences as they relate to technologically based communication.
Posttraumatic Growth

Posttraumatic Growth, a recently growing literature, investigates individuals who are not merely resilient in the face of trauma, but seem to move above and beyond basic resiliency to use the experience to promote personal growth (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Areas of change experienced by these individuals previously noted in research include changes in self-perception, interpersonal relationships, and life philosophy (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Although this quality may be rare, it is beginning to be more readily documented in studies, and has been biographically discussed over time. The manner in which this growth occurs and the exact interactions present are still unclear, but the interaction of some personal characteristics are able to overshadow the possible negative outcomes of trauma. Unfortunately, this growth is activated by traumatic events in an individual’s life, and thus violence, war, or death seem to be necessary triggers (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Linley & Joseph, 2004).

Posttraumatic growth has not been reported or studied in military children related specifically to deployment. However, the children have been noted to be highly resilient in the course of the consistent cycle of moving between bases throughout their lives. Instead of experiencing trauma in relation to being uprooted, most children instead show evidence of flourishing in their abilities to make new friends and experience new places (Park, 2011). Although the situation surrounding deployment is much different, it is expected that children are able to apply these learned principles to adjusting to their parent’s absence, resulting in personal growth. Possible sources for this growth could result from emotional adjustments or greater responsibility they are asked to accept during the deployment of their parents. Similar responsibility based growth has been reported in required helpfulness research with
symptoms of fear and stress being mitigated in adults adopting social responsibilities viewed as helpful to others (Rachman, 1978).

Obviously, as deployment includes potentially traumatic experiences including losses, and symptoms associated with stress and worry surrounding the safety of a parent, there is room for traumatic growth investigation within the military children literature. Anecdotally, these growth patterns have been commented on, such as in an interview that insisted many children make gains in both maturity and independence in relation to parental deployment (Lambert, 2004). Adolescents have been reported to increase their level of personal responsibility through a willingness to take on more responsibilities at home to assist the family as a whole with the stresses of deployment (Ternus, 2010). Additionally, increased family cohesion, more meaningful family relationships, and increases in personal strength have been reported areas of growth during the deployment period (Houston, Pfefferbaum, Sherman, Melson, Jeon-Slaughter, Brand, & Jarman, 2009; Lombard & Lombard, 1997). Despite the aforementioned beginning findings of posttraumatic growth experiences in response to deployment, further research in this area is warranted. As limited previous research has focused on adolescents, the current study contributed to the research base through investigating the presence of these characteristics within younger populations experiencing deployments.

Summary and Purpose of the Current Research

By further considering the aforementioned research areas and hypotheses, researchers may be able to identify both possible risk and protective factors in the lives of children related to deployment experiences and outcomes. Through data collection utilizing interviews and surveys in this study, the deployment experiences of children and their
families were investigated. Greater detail about family’s general experiences through the words of the children themselves has provided insight to the field that is currently lacking. Combining the wealth of qualitative data revealed with the hypothesis specific findings, the information discovered through this study has supplemented the current literature field in a necessary manner. Information gained also points to ideas schools and parents could utilize in order to improve the experiences of children during deployment.

Information gained from this study may be directly applicable to school personnel and their knowledge base. At the most basic level, military children and adolescents spend the majority of their waking hours each day within a school building. However, many of these schools and their staffs are unprepared to deal with the deployment specific issues experienced by these students (Ternus, 2010; D’Andrea & Daniels, 1992). This lack of knowledge is unfortunate as there are currently more than 1.2 million children in U.S. public schools with parents in the military (Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010). Many of these children are served in educational settings outside of military base communities. As research has indicated possible deployment effects ranging from decreased school performance (Ternus, 2010; Knight Ridder/Tribune, 2011) to mental health issues or even behavioral problems, the school staff needs to be prepared to identify these changes and a plan for reaction. Additionally, difficulties relating to reintegration may also be reflected within the school setting. However, due to the general feeling that the homecoming will be an anticipated and joyous time, this occasion could again lack support due to the lack of knowledge regarding these specific redeployment issues (Mmari et al., 2009). In direct relation to this knowledge gap, recent manuscripts have called for an increase in research
relating to the schools’ responsibilities in providing support for these children (Ternus, 2010).

Through research based information, programs targeting military children may be developed to be used in the school setting. As schools have continued to increase students’ access to technological resources, this area could be one of the most obvious ways in which the information from this study could allow schools to bridge the task of finding ways to apply research to their setting to meet student needs. One possible example of an outcome which could be supported by these research results is the following. If continued technology aided communication between a child and their deployed parent is found to predict more positive outcomes, schools could utilize their computer access to allow children to e-mail or video chat (Skype) with parents at specified times of the day. Allowing children to use this technology already accessible at the school during recess, lunch, or after school hours may give children the ability to be exposed to this positive factor that may not be a resource available to them at home. Within recent news, a coordinated effort between a school district and a deployed brigade provided parents and children the opportunity to communicate through video teleconferencing hosted at an elementary school in Fort Hood, TX. This time was anecdotally reported as a morale booster for both children and the deployed parent (Wilson, 2011). However, this coordination was an isolated incident for this school and other similar coordination have not been reported or studied at this time. This example is merely one which points to a possible finding and associated change could result from this study.

Aims and Hypotheses of Study

Aim (1) to investigate the effects of technology on children’s experiences of their parent’s military deployment to a war zone.
Hypothesis 1a: Increased internet communication with deployed parents will be associated with positive effects and attitudes in children’s reaction to deployment.

Hypothesis 1b: For children whose parent has returned from deployment, a history of internet communication will be associated with an easier transition following the parents return home.

Aim (2) to investigate the effects of media on children’s experiences of their parent’s military deployment to a war zone.

Hypothesis 2a: Increased viewing of war-related images and news stories will be related to negative effects in children such anxiety, sleep difficulties and school difficulties.

Aim (3) to investigate the emotional changes experienced by children directly related to their parent’s absence due to military deployment to a war zone.

Hypothesis 3a: Children with increased parental communication throughout the deployment will report less ambiguous loss symptoms such as anxiety, confusion, somatic symptoms, and ambivalence.

Hypothesis 3b: Increased length of parent deployment will be associated with emotional and maturity growth in children.
Chapter Two

Methods

The purpose of this study was to investigate the way increased exposure to technology affects children’s deployment outcomes in today’s military culture, especially in their deployment experiences. The mixed methods design allowed the researcher to gain detailed descriptions of personal experiences from children having recently experienced the deployment of a parent in the form of qualitative data, while providing additional quantitative data to examine the experiences of a wider audience of families in their responses to a survey. The research protocol was approved by the University of Kentucky’s Institutional Review Board. Associated consent forms approved are attached in Appendix D. The current chapter will describe the participants, study design, procedure, and the analysis plan for collected data.

Qualitative Analysis Methods

Participants.

The sample included 20 families with children between the ages of eight to twelve with parent(s) in the Active Duty military. Children eligible for participation had a parent who was either currently deployed or had returned from a deployment within the past year. In addition to the child participant, the non-deployed parent of these children was asked to participate through the completion of questionnaires and measures. Subjects were recruited through the use of convenience and snowball sampling through word of mouth from participants. Avenues utilized for distributing advertisements for study recruitment included social media through social media groups targeted toward military members and families, message boards for military members and families, and listservs for military base
organizations. Additionally, study advertisement flyers were distributed to twenty-three elementary and middle schools in a school district with a high military population in the researcher’s city of residence. Initially, recruitment was targeted toward an Army base in the northeast and a joint military base in the southern United States due to the location of the researcher. It was expected that participant numbers would be easily met from these base populations. The northeastern Army base is one of the most deployed bases, the opportunities for gaining participation from the population and locating children who are or have recently experienced a deployment were predicted to be high. At this base 46% of soldiers have children, with 16.1% of the base population (approximately 1,819 children) falling between the ages of 5 to 14 years old (The Center for Community, 2007; U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The southern joint base consists of families assigned to three separate bases throughout the metropolitan area of one city. This joint base supports a population of approximately 80,000 people. However, as recruitment remained stagnant, the researcher sought IRB approval and opened recruitment to a wider audience. As such, internet recruitment expanded and subjects were recruited from locations throughout the United States.

Phase one included 20 parent and child participants from various locations throughout the country. The children in this phase were an average age of 9.83 (SD = 1.25) years old, but ranged from eight to twelve years old. Participants were equally split between male and females during this phase. Racially, the majority of participants were Caucasian (n = 13, 65%), but three children were identified as being of mixed racial identity. These children identifying as mixed races, primarily consisted of children with a predominant Hispanic/Latino racial identity. Fifty percent of children (n =10) were the oldest children in
their families, with only two children being in a one child family. Number of children in the families averaged 2.85 and ranged from 1-7.

Considering deployment experiences of these children, eighty percent (n =16) had parents with deployments lasting between eight to twelve months. The full range of deployment time periods for this population ranged from two to fifteen months. Additionally, the population was nearly evenly distributed with fifty-five percent (n =11) of the parents still being deployed versus having already returned home. Only 25% (n = 5) of children were indicated to be experiencing their first deployment. While ten percent (n = 2) had experienced four or more deployments. The mean number of deployments including the current one was 2.2 (SD = 1.04). The majority of deployed parents had been assigned to deployments in Afghanistan (n = 18, 90%) for the currently-studied deployment. The additional fathers were stationed in Kyrgyzstan (n = 1), continually transporting troops into Afghanistan via flight, and the other was aboard a Naval ship in the Middle Eastern and Pacific regions (n= 1). However, previous deployments experienced may have been in other countries.

Parents completing surveys for Phase one ranged in age from twenty-eight to forty-seven (M = 38.2, SD = 5.4). All indicated they are currently married to their deployed spouse and are female. As with the children, the majority of parents indicated their ethnicity as Caucasian (n =18, 90%), with one Asian American, and one mixed ethnicity (Hispanic/Latino) included. All parents in Phase one reported that they were born in the United States. None of the families in this phase of the study were dual military families. However, twenty percent of mothers (n =4) reported that they currently work outside the home, all in professional settings. Nearly all mothers completing this phase indicated post-
high school education received ranging from Associates to Graduate degrees (n =18). The
others reported high school graduation as their highest achieved level of education.

Instruments and Measures

Child Deployment Experiences Interview. All children participating in Phase one
completed a semi-structured interview regarding their experiences with deployment from the
point of notification to reintegration of their family. This interview was constructed based on
areas of inquiry requiring further researcher as indicated through the results of the literature
review, in addition to being shaped by the research questions of the study. This interview
served as the primary source of qualitative interview, providing an outlet for the child
participants to elaborate on their experiences according to and beyond the questions being
asked throughout the interview process. Interviews were designed to take less than one hour
based upon the age and attention span of the participants. Children were able to complete the
interviews within this time specification, without appearing restless or inattentive prior to the
completion of the interview session.

The interviews were the primary format for discussing deployment issues with
children. These interviews were conducted in a setting most convenient for the participants.
For those participants from the two outlined bases within geographic proximity to the
researcher, these families were met in a public place in order to complete the study steps.
Participants living in other areas participated in the study utilizing online videochat programs
including Skype and Facetime. Through discussions, children were invited to share
information regarding their deployment experiences including the technology aspects
previously discussed. However, additional questions regarding changes in their households,
their feelings experienced during deployment, emotional responses related to the temporary,
ambiguous loss of their parents (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass 2007; Faber et al., 2008; McFarlane 2009; Wadsworth 2010), the perception of danger experienced by their military parent, and possible posttraumatic growth prompted by the deployment (Lambert, 2004) were also raised. The interview script is included in Appendix A. The interviews were recorded via electronic means and transcribed by the investigator in order to retain the information for future consideration.

An advantage of the interview data collection is the ability to combine direct words of the children with the observations of their parents and teachers to paint a more complete picture of the lives and experiences of these families. Many current studies only seek information from the parents, which may result in inaccurate findings. Without the ability to fully access the inner workings of the minds of the children the information provided in other studies may be misleading, as children may describe a very different experience than their parents may believe they are having (Lester et al., 2010). Additionally, parents have been observed to report higher child psychopathology levels than both the child reported themselves or their teachers had reported (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996).

Procedures

Following initial contact from a parent regarding participation in the study, the researcher communicated with parents to learn basic geographic information regarding the family and ask several questions to ensure that the family fit the experiential and demographic characteristics required for participation. If the participating family lived in a location close to the researcher, a mutually agreed upon place was established for study participation to occur such as libraries and multipurpose rooms in buildings on military installations. However, if the participating family lived in a geographic location distant from
the researcher, study materials were compiled and mailed to the participating family, complete with a pre-paid and addressed return envelope. The packet was then mailed to the participating family. Once the packet was received, the researcher was able to begin data collection with the participants. At this point, the researcher contacted the family in order to establish an appointment date for the interview, as well as the online means to be utilized for completing the interview. Families participating in this part of the study primarily chose to complete the child interviews through the use of Skype. However, one family utilized FaceTime for the process. Screen-names were shared prior to the appointment time via e-mail in order to allow for the researcher to contact the participants promptly at the specified interview time established.

Parental consent forms were distributed to parents answering the advertisement for participation in the study. Additionally, child assent forms were included if the child participating was twelve years old. Children eight to eleven years old were simply asked to provide verbal assent prior to the beginning of the study. The forms provided to families were established by the researcher according to guidelines and approval from the University of Kentucky Internal Review Board (IRB). Consent forms outlined general study information including research purpose, study personnel, subject rights, and contact information for university personnel in the event of a complaint regarding the study. These forms are located in Appendix D. For families completing the research process in-person, these consent forms were the first item distributed and completed upon the beginning of the meeting. For families completing research from a separate geographic location, the forms were the first item mailed to the participating families. Once consent was received, the researcher was able to begin working the next steps in the study, including beginning the interviews. Interviews consisted
of one-on-one interviews with the child in an area with privacy to ensure their confidentiality and comfort in speaking their true thoughts and opinions. For in-person interviews, the researcher and child simply worked in one room, while the parent stayed in an adjoining room throughout the process. For the safety of the study personnel, as well as IRB standards, the parents were required to stay on premises during the interview process. For the geographically separated interviews conducted, the researcher outlined to parents prior to the date that they needed to remain at home during the interview, but in a separate room. These guidelines were reiterated to parents prior to the beginning of the child interview session.

Aside from the location and method of transmission (i.e. in-person versus online), the interviews for all children were structured the same. After receiving consent and assent, the interview began. A brief introduction was provided in order to outline the purpose of the interview and allow for any beginning questions for the children. The children were then provided with warm-up questions regarding their interests, people at home, and school activities in order to gain comfort and familiarity with the process prior to beginning to delve into the more specific questions regarding their deployment experience. The interview continued, following the primary questions and structure outlined in the interview questions (Appendix A), with additional follow-up questions as needed based on the particular child’s answers. Interviews were recorded, with the knowledge of both parents and children, through the use of a handheld electronic recorder and an iPad application, Supernote. Recording allowed for review of the interview at later dates for transcription and as a back-up copy in the event that the transcriptions were deleted or missing.
Quantitative Analysis Methods

Participants.

Participants for Phase two were recruited based on the inclusionary criteria of being a parent of a child eight to twelve years old age experiencing or having experienced a deployment within the past year. The only exclusionary criteria used was the specification of the families being those of United States military members, as a few international spouses had responded to the recruitment advertisement. Fifty-one participants completed the Phase two survey, a slightly higher number than the target of fifty participants. All participants completing the measure for Phase two were included in the analysis. For purposes of analysis and findings, the completed surveys for both Phase one and two were combined, resulting in a total of 71 participant data analyzed for the quantitative statistics in this study. Therefore, the population as a whole is described in further detail in Chapter Four.

Measures

Deployment Experiences Survey. The survey portion of this study was designed for parents to complete the inquiries regarding their children and family lives. Parents were responsible for completing two surveys. The first form encompassed questions regarding their child’s experience throughout the deployment. The second consisted of similar questions about their personal experiences. Demographic data were also included within the questionnaires. The complete survey may be viewed in Appendix B. Surveys were completed in multiple ways. For the first phase of the study, parents completed a hard copy of the questionnaire while their child was participating in the interview or completed it via mail for geographically distant participants. Second, an internet based survey, hosted on Qualtrics, was used to obtain additional deployment information from a wider audience of parents.
allowing quantitative results to also be obtained in this study. The surveys were pilot tested for readability, errors, and ease of completion through the process of having two people who fall within the constraints of the sample population complete the surveys. Based on completion of this process, necessary changes were targeted to be completed prior to the beginning of data collection. As per reviewing the feedback given during the pilot study, no changes were necessary prior to data collection.

Survey questions were developed based on current gaps in the literature field, necessary information needed to gain insight into the technology experiences of these children, and demographic data. In regard to literature gaps, a variety of topics were addressed in questions beyond the main hypotheses of the study. The topics of interest are those previous studies have pointed to the need to be further researched including the possible effects of SES, parental rank (Lester et al., 2010; Gibbs, Martin, Kupper, & Johnson, 2007; Fallon & Russo, 2003), gender of parent deployed or at home (Applewhite, & Mays, 1996; Park, 2011), parental ages (Gottman et al., 2011; Park, 2011), isolation from military bases and associated organizations (Gottman et al., 2011), increased deployment lengths (Jensen et al., 1996), multiple deployments (Manos, 2010; Sheppard et al., 2010; Lester et al., 2010), family psychiatric history (Flake et al., 2009; Cozza et al., 2005; Dekel & Goldblatt 2008), mental health history of the child (Lincoln et al., 2008), presence of children with disabilities within the family (Russo & Fallon 2001; Taylor, Wall, Liebow, Sabatino, Timberlake, & Farber, 2005), current pregnancies (Park, 2011), foreign birth of spouse (Park, 2011), potential school difficulties (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox, Tanielian, Burns, Ruder, & Han, 2010), marital satisfaction (McFarlane, 2009), and parental maladjustment to deployment (Palmer, 2008; Wadsworth, 2010; Flake et al., 2009; Kelly
1994; Chandra et al., 2010). Previous studies have found success collecting military family information through questionnaire based information packets, thus setting a precedent for this study design (Flake et al., 2009).

Behavior Assessment System for Children 2 (BASC-2). To gain a more complete picture of child adjustment related to deployment, the parent at home, as well as teachers and students were asked to complete the appropriate form of the Behavior Assessment System for Children 2 (BASC-2) (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004). These measures provided additional information regarding the presence of a variety of behavior problems and psychopathology experienced by the children. Information provided by Teacher Rating Scale (TRS) and Parent Rating Scale (PRS) were used as a measurable description of these symptoms and allow parents and teachers to report their perception of their child’s adjustment. Although parents do typically have greatest access to their children, previous studies have shown that they may not be the most accurate sources of reporting child psychopathology related to deployments (Lester et al., 2010). Part of this inaccuracy may be due to the emotional upheaval currently personally experienced during this period. Therefore, the teacher forms of this measure were used to provide adjustment information regarding the child from a source which is less likely to be emotionally affected by the current state of family separation. Children were provided with the opportunity to express their own perception of their adjustment through answering interview questions and completing the Self-Report of Personality (SRP) scale. Reliability and validity measures demonstrate acceptable psychometric properties for the BASC-2. Across ages and versions of the BASC-2 measures, reliabilities range from .77 to .95 on test-retest reliability and .70 to .84 on interrater reliability (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).
Posttraumatic Growth Inventory for Children-Revised (PTGI-C-R). A further revised version of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory for Children (PTGI-C-R) was created in order to capture all five Posttraumatic Growth domains (new possibilities, relating to others, personal strength, appreciation of life, and spiritual change), while isolating items more likely to be understood by young children (Kilmer, Gil-Rivas, Tedeschi, Cann, Calhoun, Buchanan, & Taku, 2009). The PTGI-C-R consists of two open-ended items and 10 Likert items. Use of the PTGI-C-R allowed children to report on posttraumatic growth experiences in a previously studied measure, allowing an outlet for these characteristics to be identified outside of merely the interview answers. The PTCI-C-R is a recently developed study without a long history of psychometric evaluation. However, beginning statistics offer evidence for solid psychometric properties of this instrument. Internal consistency estimates across the measure ranged from .77 to .81. Additionally, test-retest reliability was .44, higher than anticipated due to the PTGI-C-R measuring a dynamic, rather than static process of growth. Interrater reliabilities were measured across open response questions and found to range between .84 to .87 (Kilmer et al., 2009).

Quantitative Procedures

Quantitative data was collected in two phases in the current study. During Phase one, quantitative data was collected from parents of the child interview participants. For in-person interview participants, parents completed a BASC-2 protocol and the Deployment Experiences Survey in a separate room from the child and interviewer. For online interviews, the parents were mailed a packet including the BASC-2 protocols (Parent Report and Self-Report) and Deployment Experiences Survey for completion and return via the included
envelope. Child participants throughout Phase one completed the PTGI-C-R and BASC-2 with the researcher following the completion of their interview.

Additionally, permission was sought from parents during the consent stage to contact a teacher of their child for the purpose of requesting the teacher complete a BASC-2 form. When permission was granted and contact information provided by the parent, the researcher contacted the teacher requesting their participation in the study. Consent forms and BASC-2 forms were then completed through a mailing procedure similar to that outlined in the case of geographically distant participants.

Phase two participants were only required to complete the Deployment Experiences Survey hosted on the Qualtrics website. Following the request from parents regarding participation in the current study, the researcher replied to parents in order to gather basic information to assess their fit for the exclusionary criteria for the study, as well as provide general information regarding the study. Once it was established parents and children of focus were eligible for inclusion in the study, they were provided the hyperlink to the anonymous survey on the Qualtrics site. Online, the survey began with a participant consent form, but in order to protect anonymity, participants needed only to agree to the terms rather than provide a signature. Once accepting the terms, the survey immediately began. Participants were able to take the survey in one setting or begin and complete it within a two week period. If a survey was not completed within the two week window, the Qualtrics system was programmed to delete the unfinished survey. Participants were prompted when their survey had been completed, but no other follow-up was necessary. The survey data was stored on the Qualtrics site until exported by the researcher to SPSS. A summary chart of analysis used is provided in Table 1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Sources of data</th>
<th>Analytic Plan</th>
<th>Anticipated results</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hypothesis 1a: Increased internet communication with deployed parents will</td>
<td>-Questions from interview on child’s reaction</td>
<td>-Communication summative score vs. BASC-2 (Pearson correlation); communication</td>
<td>-High communication will be associated with the greatest report of positive effects</td>
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<td>be associated with positive effects and attitudes in children’s reaction</td>
<td>-Summative child communication score (from survey question 18)</td>
<td>summative score vs. child changes (Spearman correlation)</td>
<td>(Quantitative)</td>
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<td>to deployment.</td>
<td>-BASC-2 overall score</td>
<td>-Report themes related to relationship between internet usage and positive</td>
<td>-Themes will emerge about how internet communication facilitated relationship</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Parent report of child changes (from survey question 16)</td>
<td>effects and attitudes</td>
<td>during deployment (Qualitative)</td>
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<td>Hypothesis 1b: For children whose parent has returned from deployment, a</td>
<td>-Summative child communication score (from survey question 18)</td>
<td>-Summative communication score vs. transition score (Spearman correlation)</td>
<td>-High communication will be associated with reports regarding an easier transition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>history of internet communication will be associated with an easier</td>
<td>-Transition question on survey (question 20)</td>
<td>-Report themes related to relationship between internet usage and positive</td>
<td>following parents coming home (Quantitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transition following the parents return home.</td>
<td>-Questions from interview on child’s reaction</td>
<td>effects on transition (report transition experiences by communication level)</td>
<td>-Themes will emerge about internet communication facilitating transition upon</td>
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<td>parent’s return due to continued contact during deployment (Qualitative)</td>
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Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis 2a: Increased viewing of war-related images and news stories will be related to negative effects in children such as anxiety, sleep difficulties and school difficulties.</th>
<th>Summative media exposure score (from survey question 21)</th>
<th>Media exposure vs. BASC-2 (Pearson)</th>
<th>-High levels of viewing war-related images/news stories will be associated with higher reports of negative symptoms (Quantitative)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Emotion/outcome questions (from survey question 21)</td>
<td>-Media exposure vs. child changes on survey (sleep, anxiety) (Spearman)</td>
<td>-Themes will emerge regarding negative effects in association with high war-related viewing (Qualitative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-BASC-2 school difficulties composite and anxiety or internalizing score</td>
<td>-Report themes related to negative effects associated with war-related exposure</td>
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<td></td>
<td>-Questions from interview on child’s reaction</td>
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Chapter Three

Results

Data collected in this study consisted of both qualitative and quantitative datasets. Thus the study design is a mixed methods design. Ultimately, quantitative survey and behavioral measure data were considered in conjunction with qualitative data and themes from interviews to serve as evidence in considering hypotheses. The mixed methods approach allowed the researcher to build a study utilizing the benefits of qualitative methods in forming a narrative of the experiences of military children, combined with the quantitative data opening doors to basic level statistics potentially leading to areas of future exploration and points of interest in the experiences of these families.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data was collected in the audio recorded child interview sessions. The aim was to use the qualitative data to obtain detailed accounts of life during deployment from the children in this study. Rather than relying purely on the forced choice answers provided within survey data, the open-ended questions of the interviews allowed children to share any information they wished to convey pertaining to the included topics. Ultimately, this format provided richer data overall with a more intricate look into the lives of those children experiencing deployments. Questions ranged from general deployment household changes, posttraumatic growth, ambiguous loss symptoms, and ongoing deployment communication allowed discussion points addressing each hypothesis to be obtained.

In order to consider the qualitative data for hypothesis analysis, interview transcripts were transcribed verbatim. During initial analysis the transcripts were hand coded using a color coded system based on themes corresponding with interests outlined in the study
hypotheses. Associated codes and data were tracked on hardcopies of the interview transcripts and within a spreadsheet developed by the researcher. Furthermore, additional answer patterns recognized during transcript review were utilized to initiate the formation of new codes which were then applied to the data. Next, codes were used in considering overall data trends and themes within both the direct study of the hypotheses, as well as the acknowledgement of any data patterns of interest on which a priori hypotheses had not been generated. As the interview script was designed to include a variety of questions addressing each hypothesis from multiple focus points, themes were able to be extracted not merely as a single answer to each hypothesis, but in a more broad, elaborative approach. For example, one hypothesis states that children will report experiencing growth in responsibility and maturity throughout deployment. Answers addressing this specific hypothesis may have been supported from data from several questions included within the script. Questions related to this hypothesis range from those inquiring about school experiences to home responsibility and caretaking questions. Coding and themes from a range of questions produced a richer data set and understanding of the topic overall. Finally, during the course of review of interview transcripts, several quotations providing illustrations of specific factors of military child life were also recorded in a spreadsheet to be utilized to illustrate points of interest.

Qualitative Themes

Through reviewing the interview data from children, several themes became apparent related to the deployment experiences of the children and their families. Answers provided allowed study hypotheses to be examined using these narratives, for which evidence in support or in contrast will be discussed. Additionally, general themes observed through data analysis were noted as well and will be included in this section.
Technology Use

Technology is being utilized regularly within military families today in order to keep in touch throughout deployment. All children reported some use of technology as a tool aiding in their communication throughout deployment. Although the most frequent example cited independently by children was the use of Skype (n = 16, 80%) and excitement experienced when able to connect through this venue, various other methods have been adopted as well. Additional communication is occurring through similar video chat programs (n = 3, 15%), personal e-mail accounts of children and families (n = 11, 55%), instant messaging through sites such as their parent’s social media accounts (n = 3, 15%), and one family even shared their use of exchanging USB drives through the mail filled with pictures to share on either side of the globe. Each child had the ability to clearly articulate their family’s system of communication including methods used and estimated schedule.

Interestingly, children identified differences between their communication with their deployed parent, as compared to their parents’ communication with each other. Parent to parent communication was more frequent in the majority of these families. However, children seemed to understand that the parents had “parent issues” to discuss and thus did not express minding the parents speaking more frequently. In fact, some children noted ways in which their parents talking assisted in balancing the household or the feelings of their parents in a similar manner to themselves. When reflecting on the stress at home with essentially serving as a single parent to four children during the deployment, one child noted the calmness provided when his parents were able to talk alone, ”I think when they talk they even stuff out.”
Although negative effects of communication may be debated, children quickly jumped to describe their excitement during these sessions. Most children reported positive feelings regarding the ability to talk to their parent throughout deployment, staying connected in this manner. Several children specifically stated the ways in which their communication allowed them to bridge the gap in distance and time, as their parents remained involved in their lives through these processes. One child noted, “… it makes me feel like he’s here just talking instead of texting.” Similarly, another shared, “When I was talking to him it made me feel like he was still at home.” As seen with this particular child, technological communication was a way to not only bring about happiness and closeness, but reduced the ambiguity regarding the current status of her deployed father: “I feel happier. It makes me know that he’s safe. That he’s still doing fine.”

Whether based on the experiences of previous deployments or knowledge gained through other means, several of the children noted that communicating through technological means was part of their deployment plan from the beginning. These were topics addressed prior to the deployed parent’s departure and shared with the family as a means of providing comfort to the children as they looked upon the separation to come. In that vein, one child remembered the day her father left as follows,

I can just remember was me crying because I really love my dad. And I didn’t want him to go away. The only thing he said was try not to miss him too much and if I ever felt like I needed to talk to him either Skype him when he’s on land or I could just look at pictures of him around the house.
Technology was also utilized in order to allow the parent to be involved in activities they were missing due to the physical distance during the deployment period. One child shared the experience of her father being able to Skype for her birthday.

Again, the majority of children expressed positive responses to the video chat communication occurring through utilizing available technologies. However, one child in the study was an outlier in regard to this finding. He described his feelings regarding these discussions by saying, “…It made me more sad.” He was unable to further elaborate on why or what about the situation produced additional feelings of sadness for him. But, he stated he felt his sister and mother were also sadder following their Skype sessions with the deployed father. Of note, this child’s mother reported health concerns and additional transitions at home during the deployment year which may have influenced his experience. Further, the child was noted to have some difficulty with rigidity in viewing the world, including the deployment. Later in his interview, the child explained the deployment by stating, “it was like he was leaving me behind. He abandoned me.”

Although technology clearly was the tool utilized throughout deployment for these families, children shared a range of schedules and availability regarding this tool. Some children shared frequent communication, sometimes occurring on a daily basis (3/20, 15%), while some had parents with job specific difficulties that led to far more infrequent communication, with occurrences ranging biweekly (3/20, 15%) to monthly in these families (2/20, 10%). One example of such communication infrequency was a young girl whose father served on a ship, thus internet connectivity was only available reliably when the ship was at port. Aside from job specific difficulties, children outlined difficulty related to the time differences between their home and the deployment location as a barrier to
communication. Although only a few children were able to articulate specific time differences, based on information provided by the families related to geographic locations, the time difference between these locations primarily fell in the range of a nine to eleven hour time difference. In more general terms, one young girl explained the difficulty by saying, “…and also we only really get to talk to him late at night because he's just getting up in the morning.”

Home Role Transitions through Deployment

Deployments mean transitions at home for these families. Even in families which would likely be described as psychologically healthy and adaptive, children still noticed transitions at home and spoke of them on various levels. Most children pointed out a range of observations relating to their mother’s role, including the practical observation of more work and less free time to the sympathetic descriptions by some children regarding just how tired their mothers are during these deployments. One boy watching his mother’s frustration and demands turned the interview into an opportunity to ask the researcher what he could be doing to best support his mother during this time. The keen observations of one child explored the emotional impact of the mother’s responsibilities differentiated from simply a longer to-do list saying, “well, it’s just that there’s only one parent with four kids. So it’s not the jobs, it’s the frustration with stuff.” One boy pointed to the balancing act he was now observing with his mother’s responsibilities as she was now handling the duties of the household alone and the way it trickles down to affect the entire household, “well, things are hard for Mom when dad’s away. And to me it feels like when dad’s away that things haven’t just been hard for mom, but they’ve gotten harder, even harder.” As he followed-up, this boy later continued, “sometimes mom sends us someplace so she can take a break.” A young girl
explained her perspective related to her mom’s feelings during deployment in a very simple, yet observant manner, “some days are harder than others.”

In addition to the family unit transitions experienced and the observations from the child’s perspective, they experienced personal transitions related to their role in the family. This transition meant being the child in the family to whom the other responsibilities of a missing parent were delegated or being the protected sibling helped by older ones. The increased responsibility was explained through the conversation with one boy during his interview,

Like I said, we had to pick up a few more jobs. There was a lot more work and we couldn’t do some stuff that Dads like to do. The changes I made are helping out with the kids. When the babysitter comes I have to show them were the food is and all that. I have to help a lot.

Through conversations with the interviewed children, it seemed that there was a clear distinction between the additional duties assigned to them versus roles they chose to take on due to the personal responsibility or parentification they felt. For example, one boy clearly noted that he chose to step into a role that he saw to be missing during his father’s departure,

yeah, I felt since that dad’s gone and I’m the oldest kid that I had to take a little more care of my siblings. I have to be like Dad and say “XXX stop throwing cars” and I help my sister and little brother a lot since dad’s been gone.

In a manner which may be stereotypically expected, one boy even stated, “I am kind of the ‘man of the house’ because dad’s gone.” He illustrated through his interview the ways in which he chose to put responsibilities on himself in order to assist in ways he felt were necessary within the household.
Adaptive Attitudes and Behaviors

Military children are reporting proactive, adaptive attitudes and behaviors despite the difficulties associated with deployment experiences. Similar to resiliency seen in studies regarding the frequent relocations of these families, the transitions of deployment are coped with effectively by the majority of children. Although sadness occurs and certainly each deployment comes with its own unique issues and challenges, the children in this study were overall reporting positive adaptability to their current lives. In expressing her adaptability to changes in the military life, including previous moves and now deployment, a young girl shared, “I’ve learned how to deal with, how to react when things, when some things happen that you don’t exactly plan to happen.” Another child expressed the manner in which adaptability was felt for him as he proceeded through the deployment period. In his point of view, as with several other children, he expressed the difficulty with coping at the beginning, but transitioning more easily as time proceeded. This boy shared, “well it’s one of those things where it’s really, really, really bad at the first part, but then you kind of get used to it. And once you get used to it it’s easy.”

The children’s interviews overall did not follow the gloomy view of military families shared in early literature, but showed children with a variety of coping skills. When asked about her deployment experience, one girl shared her growth through the deployment, “the first month he was gone I felt bad, but as it’s been going I’ve learned to grow on it. So it’s just the fact that I miss him and he misses us.” While not necessarily approaching the topic of growth, other children shared that they are becoming accustomed to the deployment cycles in their lives and adapting to them. One specific girl stated, “it’s just that he wasn’t here and I’ll learn to get used to it.”
Nearly all children (18/20, 90%) reported that they were helping out more around the house and assisting their mother’s with workload, siblings with homework, and other household chores. As previously mentioned, this transition included both assigned and personally adopted responsibilities. However, the manner in which the children were willing to participate in these tasks often showed dedication and follow through without the feelings of resentment or anger which could have been displayed toward these changes. All of the children in the study discussing assistance with household responsibilities did so with a positive tone and details.

In addition to carrying through with additional responsibilities at home, children provided responsible thought patterns surrounding deployment in their attitudes and utilization of coping skills. Children spoke of positive examples from family, friends, and military resources when discussing positive coping strategies used to confront difficulties associated with deployment. A range of adaptive coping skills accessed by the children and families were mentioned during interview including accessing materials regarding deployment preparation, seeking out comfort from friends with similar experiences, and using breathing or relaxation techniques when upset, amongst others. One son shared with the researcher advice that his mother provided with him regarding coping methods to employ through the year as his father prepared to be deployed. He stated, “my mom said we need to write in a journal, like a diary about how things are going and we all need to stay together and pray for him.” When asked about things that make her feel better when she felt particularly scared or sad during deployment, another child verbalized her unique set of coping strategies which she employed to improve her mood. She stated she would “cry into a pillow or do my work on the yoga video, it helps me calm down.”
Everyday Losses and Absences

Many of the children interviewed reported thoughts and feelings consistent with the idea that, for them, deployment was nearly always a present consideration. As one child stated, “sometimes you just wish your dad was still here because there’s big steps in your life.” Even when the thought of the situation and surrounding feelings were not leading to catastrophic emotional discord, it was still a thought which would occur on a regular basis. Even children adjusting well to deployment shared stories of everyday moments of missing their parents. In some interviews, children recounted some of the most seemingly minor points as being the largest changes in their house during the deployment period. For example, one little girl shared, “he's not home to jump on the trampoline with us.” Another child pointed to simply the titles associated with her father as regular reminders of the general loss experienced for her during the deployment year. She illustrated this point of view in sharing, “I’ve been getting a little more emotional than usual. Like sometimes I would just randomly start crying if I hear the word dad or daddy”

Although holidays and special occasions were expectedly a time of loss for these children, it was in the everyday moments where they seemed the most affected by the lack of their parent’s presence. Time and time again, it was these moments that stood out in the interview sessions. When describing these moments, children were frequently more narrative, more descriptive. However, when mentioning holidays missed by a parent, the time that one would normally associate with a time of sadness or difficulty for children, several children simply named the holiday rather than providing in depth information related to the difficulty. For a majority of children, it was these everyday moments that seemed to provide ongoing sensitivity for children. These moments of missed dinners, daily time away, and
missing shoes were where the children’s focus laid during the interviews. One child shared how these everyday moments of missing affected him in the course of a daily chore routine, it took some getting used to when, um, Mom asks me to set the table and I get out six plates: one for dad, three for the younger siblings, one for me, and one for mom. But it took some getting used to getting five plates instead of six.

Another child pointed to the differences in the end of the day and lacking the opportunity to welcome his father home from work. He shared, I really like it when dad gets home from work and we see his car coming up the driveway because we have a driveway 1/16th of a mile long. And I like seeing his car coming up the driveway and going out to greet him. That’s something that has changed.

Regarding the beginning of the day, another girl shared her reminder of the lack of her father’s presence during the hours in which he would typically be getting ready to leave the house for PT in the morning. This daily change was one of note for her, in her sharing, “we don’t get woken up early in the morning by his footsteps.” Finally, another child shared her one-on-one time with her father as being something that was regularly missed in her household and stayed in her thoughts throughout the year. One example she provided regarding this absence was as follows ” normally everytime we're sitting on the couch I like to snuggle with him. But, it's weird not being able to snuggle with my daddy." Another everyday activity in which one child pointed to missing her father was when she was ill. She recalled this time missing her dad when she had pneumonia,
he also missed when I had pneumonia. At least I only had it for five days. It was kind of hard, but my mom said I was really great because I still went to the movie theater and the zoo with my grandparents while they were here.

Another boy shared his story regarding what it meant to him to have a dad missing during the everyday life events of his family,
	here have been some things where we needed dad to do it. But, our neighbors have been really nice. So one day I was riding a bike and um, I went by XXX’s house and said hi. Then his dad came over and said that it looked like my tire needed pumped and he pumped it. And that’s something that dads need to do. They can do some things that moms can’t and moms can do some things that dads can’t.

Another manner in which the children saw everyday losses and difficulty with the deployment was presented as the children spoke of challenges with school and associated activities. When discussing factors related to school work and social interactions, several children expressed that they felt a lack of focus and concentration in response to wondering or worrying about their fathers. One girl shared that she missed her father throughout the year, including their everyday chats. She shared, “I didn’t really have anyone to talk to and it was during my school year, so he missed most of my school year.” School was a focus of difficulty for one child who reported it was due to the loss of the assistance which her father offered her with homework and other tasks. Additionally, the role her mother was currently carrying within the household did not allow her to serve as a complete substitute for dad’s previous assistance in this regard. According to this child, “he used to help me with math and it was easier. But, since mommy had to do a lot of work, she couldn’t help me. And he was away so he couldn’t help me.” As mentioned, the distracting thoughts related to the loss of
the father during this time period served as a barricade for school related functioning in some of the children interviewed. One little girl articulated this seemingly regularly occurring difficulty as she told her story, “I noticed that I’ve had a harder time concentrating on certain things and get distracted very easily. But the grades I’m getting are pretty normal.”

Interestingly, several of the children sharing information in interviews also provided ties to their everyday loss feelings through the stories shared regarding the perceived absence felt by their pets. These stories highlighted again everyday routines involving their father and pets which were unable to occur during deployment or situations where children perceived a pet’s confusion surrounding the absence. Sharing her perception of her cat’s feelings surrounding the daily absence of her father, one little girl shared the following, “the weirdest thing is, XXX is my dad’s cat, so he’s like ‘where’s my daddy?’ He knows that [the cat] has been missing him.” When continuing to describe the daily routine differences at home, she elaborated, “...just the fact of coming home, doing homework and then later on seeing [the cat] at the door and knowing that dad isn’t coming home soon.” Another child shared this anecdote through the perception of her dog, “I felt really sad for my dog because he saw our neighbor’s husband in a uniform and went running to him because he thought it was my dad.”

Clearly, children illustrated a series of losses and reminders of father absence for them throughout the year in daily situations, not just holiday situations. However, it should be noted that nearly all children included at least one holiday their parent had missed when queried about something important they had missed throughout the year. The most frequently listed holiday for children was either their birthday or the birthday of their deployed parent. Relatedly, one little girl provided, ”I felt like my dad was missing part of my life. For part of
it he wasn’t seeing me grow up. Especially when he missed my 10th birthday.” Therefore, the absence of parents during holidays certainly is not a point to ignore.

Qualitative Information by hypotheses

In addition to coding the qualitative data according to an open coding system to investigate themes, the data was also coded utilizing a priori codes aligned with topics illustrated in the study hypotheses. The results of this qualitative data evaluation will now be explained as they align with study hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1a: Increased internet communication with deployed parents will be associated with positive effects and attitudes in children’s reaction to deployment.

Children participating in interviews spoke to the manner in which communication throughout deployment facilitated by technology assisted in the relationship between themselves and their deployed parent. The majority of children expressed the onset of a range of positive feelings in reaction to conversations with their parent. Further, children stated that they believed the communication between other family members and their deployed parent also resulted in more positive feelings for these families. In fact, only one child participant revealed negative emotions in response to his conversations, stating that his use of Skype made him “more sad.” As stated in a previous section, this student was described by his mother as having a rigid thinking style, and he highlighted feelings of abandonment due to his father’s absence. Although he did not link the two topics in his interview, one may hypothesize that the sadness during Skype sessions related to the reminders or reexperiencing of these negative feelings.

Feelings expressed by children throughout these interview sessions regarding talking with their parents indicated happiness, excitement, and security of parent safety. One child
stated “I feel happier. It makes me know that he’s safe. That he’s still doing fine.” Another explained the comfort felt when having the opportunity to talk with her father, “it makes my heart lift because I know that he’s not hurt and he’s actually glad to see me too. So in other words, it’s happy.”

Further, when exploring topics regarding the details of the children’s relationships with parents in regard to their communication, nearly all children expressed that communication helped them feel like their parent was still involved in their life. They discussed the manner in which this communication facilitated involvement throughout sharing pictures of activities, discussing daily events and special occasions, and simply the benefit of actually having the chance to see their parent via video when accessing video chat programs. Some of the children shared the testimonies similar to the following regarding their experiences with talking to parents on deployment, “…it makes me feel like he’s here just talking instead of texting.”

Hypothesis 1b: For children whose parent has returned from deployment, a history of internet communication will be associated with an easier transition following the parents return home.

The dataset overall was more represented by children and families with their Active Duty member currently deployed at the time of their participation (n=13, 65%). Therefore, limited data existed in response to transitions home following deployment. However, amongst the children interviewed with a parent who had already returned from deployment (n= 7), nearly all responded to queries with information regarding positive transitions home. The children reported feelings of happiness and excitement as homecoming time and the transition home continued. Children revealed feelings regarding the fact that they had been
able to keep in touch with the deployed parent and thus, they had stayed connected throughout the period, picking back up upon the return home. In the words of one participant, it’s not like I never saw him because we did talk a lot, like on Skype and stuff. I guess it was just that I missed him while he was gone and when you couldn’t talk, because you know, you can’t call them. They have to call you. And so when you couldn’t talk it was hard. And I did miss him when he was gone, but when he got home I was glad to see him.

Only two children reported difficulties related to transitions upon the return of their parent. In one child’s case, the parent not only returned to a busy work schedule, but the family immediately transitioned into the flux of moving to a new town upon the return from deployment. In the other child’s case, the child reported that life did transition to normal; however, she indicated distance upon the initial return home. “It felt kind of weird, because we hadn’t seen him for six months in person. Everything kind of seemed the same, but just knowing that he was there.” Interestingly, this child was one whom had reported lower levels of communication throughout deployment.

Due to the majority of children having parents deployed at the time of their participation, they were asked to hypothesize regarding their idea of how the transition home would go or voice any concerns or worries they were currently facing regarding the reintegration. Again, the majority of children (n=12, 92.31%) expressed that they felt that the transition would occur smoothly and spoke of celebrations to come including homecoming ceremony plans and vacations to occur. In fact, in response to the word “worry” being used, several children stated that they were only worried while their parent remained deployed, but
would not have concerns once he was home aside from the potential for a parent to come home injured.

Hypothesis 2a: Increased viewing of war-related images and news stories will be related to negative effects in children such anxiety, sleep difficulties and school difficulties.

Potentially related to a variety of factors, including age, news trends, and availability, children in this study did not report high levels of news exposure. As an example of news trends, one child shared the following regarding his lack of news exposure pertinent to his father’s deployment,

not really. Our main page that we go to is Yahoo and usually has some really dumb stuff like instead of hearing about Africa, we hear about a new ballpark. They don’t show much stuff… I don’t see much war stuff. Or, if I do, it’s not about Afghanistan they show like North Korea is trying to shoot a big missile at South Korea.

Another child spoke to the lack of news effects in relation to the small amount of news informing him of deployments.

We’re not hearing much about the Afghan thing. It’s more about different countries against other countries. It seems like there’s almost always like at least one war going on. At least always one country is fighting with another country.

Further, several children stated that they rarely see news, avoid it, or are shielded from exposure by their parents. At least one child shared an anecdote related to a previous news scare and her mother, which has led to the news being cut from their household during the deployment period.

Regardless of the limited exposure to news stories specifically related to the deployment, children were asked to share information related to their feelings in response to
news seen or hypothesized responses to news related to Afghanistan and other deployment areas. Some children expressed indifferent feelings regarding the news. However, the majority expressed negative feelings either experienced or hypothesized. Concerns for parental safety following viewing were expressed by several children (n=11, 55%).

I got worried that something would happen to him, like something really bad. But, I know it’s getting close so I don’t think something's going to happen. But you never know if something’s going to happen or not.

One child became dysphoric with tears when attempting to respond to the worries he experienced regarding his father’s safety and fears of “something bad happening to him” follow news exposure. Yet another child related his news viewing to concerns for the personal safety of his deployed father, “I felt kind of worried because like he’s going to be gone longer and there’s a lot of the suicidal bombers in that place.” News exposure was found in one student to serve as a reminder to recent war outcomes relevant to her family. “It’s kind of sad because one of the guys that died recently…was actually… my dad was, actually good friends with him.”

As several children reported a lack of news exposure for a variety of reasons, they were asked to hypothesize reactions they anticipate in relation to news. One young girl hypothesized her anticipated reaction to news viewing, partially as an explanation regarding why she does not watch it,

I’d probably feel sad because usually when people make videos on the internet they, they basically seem like, like they’re just bombing each other and they’re at war all the time. That’s what they try to make it like. So people try to avoid it.
In investigating the effects of news exposure on children, an interesting finding emerged regarding the manner in which the child’s knowledge regarding their parent’s deployment, location, and job influenced their feelings regarding the news they had seen or expected to see.

If it was talking about his area with bombing and stuff, then I’d be worried. But if they were just talking about things happening over there that wasn’t that bad, then I would be just the teeniest-tiniest bit worried. So far so good, I haven’t heard any news about where he is.

Another child expressed that the knowledge that her father’s job was performed on one specific base restricting his location close to the base, so she would only be worried if bad news was in that region. She informed,

I would see the news after school when I would come home… I knew he was safe and on a base because he was an anesthesiologist when he deployed. If he was out, like north, I would have been more worried.

Another child’s view of his father’s deployment informed his lack of fear when observing news stories regarding the war, “It wasn’t really a war. He just went over there to help out with stuff.”

Additionally, it appeared that children were not only negatively affected by war related news, but negative news of any threat type. The loss of security in having their father away from home added a different dimension to all news. Illustrating this point, one girl shared a narrative regarding her fears related to news stories of violence at home linked to her father’s absence. “I kind of felt unsafe, even though I am on a military base, because dad’s not here. I felt unsafe from the bombing in Boston when it was all over the news.”
Hypothesis 3a: Children with increased parental communication throughout deployment will report less ambiguous loss symptoms such as anxiety, confusion, somatic symptoms, and ambivalence.

As previously indicated, a variety of ambiguous loss issues may be experienced when individuals are confronted with situations of physical absence and psychological presence, such as in the case of military deployments. As such, presence of ambiguous loss in varying degrees is likely to be experienced by individuals placed in this life circumstance. In an effort to further understand children’s ambiguous loss experiences in relationship to their communication patterns with their parents, qualitative data was coded for the presence of ambiguous loss symptoms and compared to communication patterns. As the majority of the students in Phase one described regular communication with their deployed parent, the hypothesis would claim that the ambiguous loss symptoms experienced by these individuals should be relatively low. Of course, fluctuation in communication patterns exists, and thus loss symptoms may as well.

When investigating the ambiguous loss symptoms experienced by child interview participants, the majority of symptoms had fewer than two children endorsing the presence of that symptom. Symptoms expressed through the interview process included difficulty with transitions, guilt, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, and emotional exhaustion. Sharing the presence of guilt related to performing activities previous spent as bonding time with his father, one boy shared, “and something different was that I did some things without him and it didn’t really feel right when I was doing them with somebody else.” In support of the hypothesis, the presence of these symptoms were endorsed at lower numbers (M = .60) in children with higher communication scores. In fact, several of the children recounting daily
communication had no ambiguous loss symptoms described in their interviews. Children with lower communication scores reported between one to five ambiguous loss symptoms occurring, with an average of 2.57 symptoms ($SD = 1.49$).

Hypothesis 3b: Increased length of parent deployment will be associated with emotional and maturity growth in children.

When discussing the changes at home with children experiencing deployments, the resiliency and growth of the majority of these children became quickly apparent. As roles changed within their households, many of these children were stepping up to assist their parents in order to help keep the house afloat during these times. Children pointed out their observations related to their parent at home being busy, tired, or overstretched and the increase in responsibilities they were either assigned or independently adopted. Few children stated that the household had remained completely the same in response to deployment, with these children almost exclusively being the youngest children in the family. However, nearly all children quickly responded to questions regarding growth, maturity, and responsibility by indicating the changes in jobs at home. Children often reported that they had even taken over minor jobs which had previously been completed by their currently deployed parent. One boy shared his experience in helping out at home as follows, “we had to pick up a few more jobs, there was a lot more work...The changes I made are helping out with the kids.” Similarly, another boy shared his view on his increase in responsibility, “I felt since that dad’s gone and I’m the oldest kid that I had to take a little more care of my siblings.” Stereotypically, stories were shared regarding older children in families assuming responsibilities beyond necessary for their age or an attitude related to the necessity of them fulfilling a parental role. Several children shared narratives consistent with this behavior, especially when they were an eldest
child such as this boy, “I am kind of the ‘man of the house’ because dad’s gone.” As with previously included examples, he followed the theme of recounting additional responsibilities and roles he attempted to fill at home.

Other children responded to these questions in providing evidence of maturational and emotional growth through the process of deployment. One child described her experience as follows, “the first month he was gone I felt bad, but as it’s been going I’ve learned to grown on it. So it’s just the fact that I miss him and he missed us.” Another child shared her insight into the realizations regarding her deployment experiences affecting her growth, combined with looking ahead to the potential for the deployment trend to continue in her life. “It makes me feel that I’m growing up more dealing with it and that if my dad is going to be in the military for a longer time, I know he’s going to have to deploy again.” In some children, these ideas were present due to the manner in which they saw reflected by the way they were treated by others. For instance, one girl shared the following reflection related to her feelings surrounding her changes during the deployment year, “more grown up because I’ve had more responsibilities and people trust me more.”

Interestingly, even in children who had clearly provided examples of growth and maturity a few of them provided examples of their conflict regarding describing themselves in a manner of growth, typically due to emotional dysregulation causing them to feel younger when they were experiencing sadness and anxiety.

I think I’m in the middle because there’s still some stuff that I’m not really sure about. But, I’ve learned how to deal with, how to reach when things, when some things happen that you don’t exactly plan to happen.
Additional Qualitative Data

When completing Phase two of the study, slight modifications to the Deployment Experiences Survey were made based on questions arising during qualitative analysis from the child interviews. Due to these queries, a few additional questions were added to the Deployment Experiences Survey for Phase two. Three of these questions were designed to be open-ended format in order to obtain additional information regarding the biggest changes seen in children because of the deployment (based on parent perception), things parents wish others knew regarding deployment, and services parents wish were offered to their children and families during deployment periods. The responses to these questions were coded using an open coding, iterative technique. Qualitative data was reviewed and coded based solely on the information provided and themes emerging from parental responses. This data was used to form themes which shaped the codes used for analysis of these responses. Data was again reviewed for analysis and assigning of previously established codes. The aligning of data according to prescribed codes was then used to provide evidence of those themes which had emerged.

When responding to the question regarding the biggest child changes in relation to deployment, parents provided a range of answers the researcher categorized into a total of seven categories. The three most frequently occurring changes in children noted by parents included presence of emotions perceived to be negative (i.e. sadness, anxiety, fear), personal growth (stronger, independent, cherishing family), and defiant or negative external behaviors. Interestingly, five of the forty-four parents explicitly stated that they did not feel their children were changed by the occurrence of the deployments due to the frequency of the
experience for them. As one mother stated, “None really. Her dad has been in since before she was born so she is very much used to it.” Similarly, another mother shared her description of the state of deployments for her child as follows,

sadly, in her little life, deployment seems to be the norm. After this deployment her dad will have been gone for 1/4 of her life. I’ve found that she’s quite resilient and seems to get into deployment mode quite easily.

Additional respondents (four of the forty-four) indicated the presence of regressive behaviors (i.e. bedwetting), emotional distance from the deployed parent, and missing a male role model in the house.

When asked to describe what they wished others knew about deployment, parents’ responses ranged a wider spectrum of areas. The most commonly responded theme (n=13) related to the child continual missing their parent and nothing being able to replace the parent. Related categories were composed of responses related to lack of outward distress not signifying a lack of struggle at times, transitions and deployments being hard, and the need for their child’s experience to be validated through acknowledgement. Several of these comments were directed toward school staffs and the manner in which they could validate feelings or assist children during this period. A mother noting concerns related to this topic stated,

while it is a common occurrence these days to have a parent deployed, all children will handle these changes differently and therefore school staff and other adults need to recognize and adopt different procedures to help these children with this major transition in their lives as well as have trained counselors available to help the student
share their feelings, concerns, fears, etc. without feeling like they will be looked at differently.

Another mother shared a similar message to schools,

she does have to take on more self-direction, especially in school, while dad is away and this can be hard for her. She has adjusted to having a parent gone off and on and does handle it so well. I think it's easy to forget that even though she mentally understands and can handle the separation sometimes, she just really misses her dad and would just like to get to talk about him and how she misses having him around.

Just because a child is not acting out or having any outward sings of distress, it does not mean it's not hard when a Father’s Day program happens and dad isn't there.

An interesting and relatively frequent answer which corresponded with information in the child interviews related to how overwhelmed parents can be shifting into single family households and the need for flexibility. As one mother stated,

most deployed children have extremely stressed out-parent at home caring for them while the spouse is deployed. If my child is unorganized when she arrives at school, it is because her parent is not organized at the moment due to deployment stress at home.

An additional open-ended question gave parents the opportunity to give suggestions related to the services they wish were provided to their children in order to assist them in the deployment process. The overwhelmingly most frequent answer was counseling in a variety of capacities (n=16) including individual, support groups, lunch groups, or more informal check-ins. Several parents included that their suggestions were based upon previous services experienced in previous settings. Other less frequent answers included use of technology at
school to facilitate parent communication and excused absences near deployments. Six of the parent respondents expressed satisfaction with the services currently provided by schools, indicating the manner of support they felt it had offered and made a difference in the experience of their child. One mother sharing praises of her children's school recalled the difference the support meant to their family,

I can honestly say, I don't think I could have hand-picked a better school for my children to be in during this last deployment. From the teachers to support staff, everyone rallied around us and truly felt supported which was a huge change from the last deployment.

Another mother pinpointed school support impacting her child’s life, but the need for expansion of services.

this deployment, their school had a deployment group, which I think helped hugely!

But we are special ops, their dad leaves a lot more than the average dad. Offering something year-round or on-post would be awesome. These kids need to know they aren't alone.

Many of these schools were located on or directly near military installations and thus had familiarity with deployment related issues and high frequencies of deployments. Of note, despite current satisfaction with services and support found in specifically outlined schools, as expected, parents reported dealing with variability amongst staff and their rules regarding such interactions. This variability adds to uncertain expectations year to year even in schools previously providing supporting environments for facilitating communication. As shared by one parent, “his teacher last year used to allow me to Facetime him. The principal this year, I hear, is strict, I am hoping she will let us set it up for my son's 10th birthday.”
Finally, parents were also given the opportunity to address the positive and negative aspects of their child’s adjustment to transitions within the family following the departure and return of the deployed parent. In considering difficulties in the changes at home at the onset of deployment, the most frequently described child difficulties related to new parent roles, routine changes, and presence of behavior problems. Several parents outlined role and routine changes related to their limited ability to fulfill the roles and routines of both parents now that they are serving as the single parent physically present in the household. One mother shared, “he is an anxious child to begin with. He requires lots of repetition to understand why mom can't continue with all activities as when Dad is home.” Similarly, another mother shared, “I was super busy and had less time to check on her school work and progress, she had a hard year.”

In consideration of challenges upon the return of the deployed family members, parents shared the most common difficulties to stem from reliance on the parent who had remained home and changes in expectations at home. In sharing accounts related to reliance on the parent remaining home, several parents highlighted child confusion regarding the previously deployed parent’s role in decision making for the child. Several parents stated child confusion when relearning that their father can also make decisions in the household related to permission or assigning tasks. Further, the legitimacy of punishments received from fathers was now questioned by some children. One wife shared, “He tends to defer to me when it comes to anything, and if Daddy punishes him at all he comes to me to (seemingly) see if it was justified.” Similarly, another parent described difficulty related to this adjustment,
the adjustment from all discipline/requests coming from mommy to some coming from daddy can be difficult. I tend to ask things is a "nicer" way and "discuss" things. My husband is less that way. It can lead to some hurt feelings in the beginning as she adjusts to his way of doing things again.

Positive experiences with reintegration ranged in reports from parents as well. The most commonly cited reasons attributed to positive effects by parents related to communication during deployment, focus on quality time following return, and the simple fact that many of their children have grown accustomed to frequent deployments in their lives. In discussing communication, one mother shared,

my spouse is Navy, so he is constantly coming and going. I think this makes deployments a little easier for the kids. He is also always in constant communication with the kids throughout the deployment, so it's not like they don't know who he is or anything like that.

Another spouse shared an account summarizing the interplay of several of the previously mentioned factors in the readjustment of her family following deployment:

Honestly, I think that she just understands deployment at this time. It is not really a change in her life anymore; this was the 4th deployment in 4 1/2 years. The difference in how she dealt with things during and after this deployment are very different from her first and even second deployment experience. Mom, dad, and siblings roles as well as her own are now well established both during times we are all together and times we are apart. We try to communicate and keep Dad as involved as we can while he is away and keep him informed as to our daily routines. The more times we do this the easier it seems to get for her to deal with.
Summary

The current study gained valuable insight into the narrative experiences of deployment for these children and families through the utilization of qualitative data previously described. This data allowed for detailed accounts of the lives of these children to be recorded and analyzed in order to determine common themes amongst the experiences of families in deployment today. The utilization of technology in order to communicate and share bonds throughout deployment, despite variation in style, frequency, and specific difficulties with availability was noted in all families. The transitions of families throughout the deployment period in family roles was observed through interviews. The insight into the transitions and associated symptomatology of children was another manner in which children were able to share their stories through the collection of the qualitative data. As these transitions occurred for the families, children were also able to share their effective attitudes and coping strategies which they were applying to life’s current challenge. Finally, the insight gained related to the everyday losses and occupying thoughts related to deployments for these children provided evidence for the discussion of the idea that it may be the culmination of all these little events which need to be considered and buffered rather than large negative effects. Through granting the opportunity for parents to share their thoughts in a qualitative format as well, valuable information regarding child changes, deployment knowledge of others, and services provided was gained. Although these interviews and surveys provided merely a glimpse into the lives of these families, the detail in these accounts are valuable insight to be discussed further.
Quantitative Data Results

Quantitative data was provided through surveys regarding experiences of both the child and the parent remaining home. Additionally, psychological and adjustment measures were completed by children, parents, and teachers to assist in evaluating the presence of symptoms in children. The PTGI-C-R is a posttraumatic growth measure used to specifically consider hypothesis 3b, increased length of parent deployment will be associated with emotional and maturity growth in children. Outcomes of this measure provided direct data pertaining to whether or not children are reporting growth due to their deployment experiences.

Description of Sample

In this section, descriptive statistics for the entire sample of combined parent responses from both Phase one and Phase two (N = 71) are provided in the form of frequencies, as well as means and standard deviations when appropriate. The sample is described in demographic variables, deployment experience characteristics, and comorbid diagnoses. Minimal amounts of data were missing from various participants’ responses with no questions systematically missed.

Description of Sample Characteristics

In Phase two, the total subject pool of children were fairly equally distributed between sexes with 47.9% (n = 34) being males. Racially, most children of parents in the study group were Caucasian (n = 53), with small numbers existing within the following groups African Americans (n = 2), Asian American (n = 1), Pacific Islanders (n = 2), mixed races (n = 10), Hispanic/Latino (n = 10), and a nondefined race (n = 1). The majority of children parents centered their answers on were amongst the older children in the family with
84.1% of these participants being either the oldest or second oldest kids in the family.

Families most frequently had 2-3 children.

All families participating were eligible for the study due to the father being the parent experiencing a deployment. However, three of the participating families were dual military families, meaning both parents serve in the Active Duty military. Only 18.3% of children in participating families were experiencing their first deployment (n = 13), while 28.2% (n = 20) of the children had experienced three or more deployments. Subject families primarily consisted of officer’s families. Parental rank reported fell into the following groups: Enlisted members 7.2% (n = 5), Commissioned officers, n = 26 (37.5%), Noncommissioned officers n = 30 (55%), and Warrant Officers n = 3 (4.3%). At the time of participation, parents reported that 38 children (53.5%) had parents currently deployed, while 33 children (46.5%) had parents who had already returned home from their deployments. The total completed or anticipated length of the deployment being reported for this tour in these families ranged from two to twenty-four months (M = 10.33, SD = 3.03). At survey completion, the amount of deployment time completed for these families ranged from one to fifteen months (M = 7.64, SD = 3.40).

Parents completing surveys for the study ranged in age from 25-47 years old (M = 35.06, SD = 6.07). All parents except one, who described her status as single/never married, described their marital status as currently married. The parents participants followed similar racial and ethnicity patterns as their children identifying themselves in the following racial groups: Caucasian (n = 57, 82.6%), African American (n = 2, 2.9%), Native American (n = 1, 1.4%), Asian American (n = 1, 1.4%), Pacific Islander (n = 1, 1.4%), mixed race (n = 5, 7.2%), Hispanic/Latino (n = 10, 14.5%), and an undefined race (n = 1, 1.4%). Most
participating parents were born within the United States (n = 64, 92.8%), while a few indicated their place of birth elsewhere- England, Germany, Mexico, and Spain. The pattern of deployment experiences reflected similar patterns amongst parents, as compared to those indicated by survey responses provided about their children with approximately 61% (n = 43) having experienced three or more deployments. Additionally, 33.8% of parents (n = 24) indicated that they work outside the home, with three of these mothers also serving in the military. Eight parents (11.27%) indicated that they had experienced a pregnancy during spousal deployment.

In considering health problems experienced by families and potentially related to deployment experiences, children were described to have a limited history of both mental and physical disabilities and other complications. Children were indicated to primarily have no significant mental health problems historically (74%, n = 51), with Anxiety and ADHD being reported as the highest rated problems, both with 13% (n = 9) of children falling into these broad categories. Significant physical diagnoses were only indicated in three children with reported conditions of Type 1 diabetes, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, and Asthma. Non-deploying parents reported higher rates of mental health symptoms than their reports of their children. Parents reported Anxiety (n = 33, 46.5%), Depression (n = 29, 40.8%), and Anger (n = 16, 24%) being the most commonly reported mental health concerns. Interestingly, twenty-five parents (57%) reported that these conditions were previously related to deployment. However, only 49% (n = 22) reported experiencing these conditions at the time of survey completion. Aside from the child whom they were using as a resource for completing the survey, parents reported that other children in the household experienced the following conditions: Learning Disability, Autism, ADHD, Depression, Asperger’s
Syndrome, Asthma, Fibromyalgia, Anxiety, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, MDD, Central Auditory Processing Disorder, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In considering lifestyle factors, only 32% (n = 22) families were reported by parents to live on a military installation. However, the majority of participants not living on a military installation reported that they lived within 20 miles of one. Parents reported that many of the children have participated in a variety of base activities including Family Readiness Groups, Military Child Camps, afterschool programs, chapel programs, family retreats, family dinners, sports, FOCUS, Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) events, SKIES (School of Knowledge, Inspiration, Exploration, and Skills), and squadron sponsored events. Family Readiness Groups were amongst the most popular with 24 children participating (57%). Most of the children involved in the study attended public school (n = 60, 85.7%) with the remainder in private schools (n = 3, 4.29%) and homeschooled (n = 7, 10%).

Statistical Analyses

Quantitative data obtained in this study was entered and stored on both the Qualtrics server and SPSS 15.0 for Macintosh. All calculated analyses were performed utilizing SPSS. Demographic data for the study population were described using frequencies, means, and standard deviations. Correlations were conducted to explore relationships amongst the variables studied.

Prior to beginning correlations in relation to the hypothesis, summative scores were determined for communication and news exposure. These variables split into three ordered rankings (high, medium, and low) for each child, parent and family. This ranking allowed for consideration of multiple communication and media factors in single variables, projecting a
more comprehensive view of overall patterns in each of these categories. Focused observation on each particular communication or media avenue may have provided the possibility of missing the broad experience of the family.

In order to establish these groupings, the associated individual variables related to the patterns of communication and media exposure were transferred to a spreadsheet program. Data was then sorted for frequency of occurrence and rated. Highest frequencies were placed in the high group, low frequency in the low group, then the remainders were categorized as the middle. The data was divided as closely as possible to thirds, with slight deviations from equal groupings based on repeated numbers. A categorical variable was then created for utilization in statistical analyses.

Due to the study characteristics, the primary statistical analysis used was correlations. These correlations allowed the researcher to investigate potential relationships amongst variables hypothesized to exist in an area with limited current research. Additionally, the low numbers of participants, paired with high number of variables would not allow for the use of higher level statistical analyses.

Hypothesis 1a

Hypothesis one (a) predicted that increased internet communication with deployed parents will be associated with positive effects and attitudes in children’s reaction to deployment. Spearman correlations were performed to examine the relationship amongst the ordinal variables used to assess these characteristics in participants.

Correlations based on the summative communication scores produced no significant correlational values. The results of selected non-significant correlations performed on ordinal positive attitude and effect variables are listed in Table 2. A lack of changes in behavior and
emotions was positively correlated with both the Family Summative Communication Score, \( r(66) = .33, p < .05 \), and the Parent Summative Communication Score, \( r(66) = .28, p < .05 \).

Additional analyses were performed in order to establish any significant relationships between specific forms of communication use and positive behavioral and emotional changes. When investigating at this level, additional significant correlations were established. In considering child communication patterns with their deployed parent, the use of texting was positively correlated with the child’s responsibility score, \( r(63) = .31, p < .05 \). Further analyzing the potential impact of parent report of their communication on the characteristics of growth in their children, parental phone use was positively correlated with both maturity, \( r(64) = .27, p < .05 \), and responsibility, \( r(64) = .27, p < .05 \).

Hypothesis 1b

Hypothesis 1b predicted that for those children whose parent has returned from deployment, a history of internet communication will be associated with an easier transition following the parents return home. Spearman correlations were conducted to investigate a relationship between history of internet communication with transition reports following the return of the soldier. In the study sample, only thirty-eight of the deployed parents total had returned at the time of study participation. Thus, those with family members still deployed were asked to predict the transition reactions upon the return from deployment. Both actual and predicted transitions will be reported.

When calculating correlations based on summative communication scores throughout deployment, no significant correlations were found. Therefore, correlations were calculated based on individual communication modes to establish if correlations exist when using more specified information. Children having difficulty with their parent’s transition into roles at
home following the return from deployment was negatively correlated with frequency of video chat use, $r(60) = -.26$, $p < .05$, and parent mail use as a means of communication throughout deployment, $r(61) = -.30$, $p < .05$.

Hypothesis 2a

Hypothesis 2a predicted that increased viewing of war-related images and news stories will be related to negative effects in children such as anxiety, sleep difficulties, and school difficulties. Again, Spearman correlations were utilized in order to investigate the relationship between these variables due to the ordinal and categorical nature of the variables.

The first line of analysis completed investigated the presence of these symptoms in children in relation to the summative media score calculated. When considering the child’s summative media score, positive correlations were found between this score and Anxiety PRS, $r(18) = .64$, $p < .01$ and Internalizing Symptoms PRS, $r(18) = .54$, $p < .05$. Additionally, the Family Media Summative score was compared to negative symptoms to determine existing relationships. Family Media Summative score produced positive correlations with Internalizing Symptoms PRS, $r(18) = .48$, $p < .05$, Attention Problems PRS, $r(18) = .49$, $p < .05$, Concerns for deployed parent’s safety, $r(67) = .24$, $p < .05$, general fears expressed, $r(67) = .36$, $p < .01$, Fighting, $r(62) = .28$, $p < .05$, and negative school effects, $r(48) = .29$, $p < .05$.

Finally, in continuing to consider the parent’s role in their reporting of symptoms and observations of such, the Parent Summative Media score was compared to negative symptoms in order to determine the presence of relationships between these variables. This analysis revealed positive correlations between the Parent Summative Media score and Externalizing Symptoms PRS, $r(18) = .51$, $p < .05$, Attention Problems PRS, $r(18) = .55$, $p < .05$. 
Hypothesis 3a

Hypothesis 3a postulated that increased parental communication throughout deployment will be related to less ambiguous loss symptoms. Spearman correlations were again utilized to investigate this hypothesis due to the ordinal and categorical nature of the variables reported.

Spearman correlations calculated revealed negative correlations between the Child Summative Communication score and clinging \( r(67) = -.25, p < .05 \), guilt \( r(67) = -.24, p < .05 \), difficulty with additional transitions \( r(67) = -.24, p < .05 \), Hopelessness \( r(67) = -.32, p < .01 \), Inability to make decisions/overwhelmed \( r(66) = -.25, p < .05 \), decreased ability to handle losses \( r(67) = -.27, p < .05 \), withdraw from deployed parent \( r(50) = -.39, p < .01 \), sense of isolation from others \( r(49) = -.35, p < .05 \), and ambivalence \( r(49) = -.30, p < .05 \).

In addition to Child Summative Communication scores, negative correlations were and found to exist between Family and Parent Summative Communication scores when related to ambiguous loss symptoms. Family Summative Communication scores negatively correlated with clingingness \( r(67) = -.26, p < .05 \), anxiety \( r(67) = -.32, p < .01 \), guilt \( r(67) = -.30, p < .01 \), difficulty with additional transitions or changes \( r(67) = -.38, p < .01 \), hopelessness \( r(67) = -.41, p < .01 \), giving up easily on tasks or problems \( r(66) = -.25, p < .05 \), difficulty making decisions/overwhelmed \( r(67) = -.33, p < .01 \), decreased ability to handle losses \( r(67) = -.39, p < .01 \), withdraw from deployed parent \( r(50) = -.37, p < .01 \), physical exhaustion \( r(48) = -.29, p < .05 \), sense of isolation from others \( r(49) = -.40, p < .01 \), confusion \( r(49) = -.29, p < .05 \), and ambivalence \( r(49) = -.35, p < .05 \). Parent Summative
Communication scores negatively correlate with anxiety \( r(67) = -0.28, p < 0.05 \), guilt \( r(67) = -0.29, p < 0.05 \), difficulty with transitions or changes \( r(67) = -0.38, p < 0.01 \), hopelessness \( r(67) = -0.34, p < 0.01 \), difficulty making decisions \( r(67) = -0.27, p < 0.05 \), decreased ability to handle losses \( r(67) = -0.34, p < 0.01 \), and sense of isolation from others \( r(49) = -0.34, p < 0.05 \).

Spearman correlations were also calculated beyond the summative communication scores to investigate the presence of relationships between the nature of technological communication used by children, including type and frequency, and ambiguous loss symptoms. Many negative correlations existed between these variables as well. Child e-mail use was negatively correlated with physical illnesses related to their feelings \( r(57) = -0.28, p < 0.05 \). Child mail use was negatively correlated with both confusion \( r(44) = -0.36, p < 0.05 \) and ambivalence \( r(50) = -0.31, p < 0.05 \). Further, several ambiguous loss symptoms derived from the BASC-2 were negatively correlated with child communication use. Depression PRS was negatively correlated with child Facebook use \( r(20) = -0.66, p < 0.01 \). Child frequency of e-mail use was negatively correlated with Depression SRP \( r(19) = -0.55, p < 0.05 \). Somatization PRS was negatively correlated with child frequency of phone use \( r(19) = -0.52, p < 0.05 \).

Hypothesis 3b

Hypothesis 3b predicted that increased length of parent deployment will be associated with emotional and maturity growth in children. Correlations were also utilized to investigate the nature of relationships between the total length of deployment and length of deployment time passed at point of participation, as compared to positive emotional gains. Minimal significant findings surfaced through these calculations.

First, correlations were examined between scores on the PTGI-C-R and deployment length. However, no significant findings resulted from this calculation. Calculations between
positive growth factors addressed on the BASC-2 were also compared to deployment
timeframes. Again, no significant findings were found.

Growth factors from the Deployment Experiences Survey were further utilized to
compute correlations between these factors and the deployment length of time. Total length
of deployment was found to be significantly correlated with feeling pride in the United
States, \( r(63) = .33, p < .01 \). The length of time completed at the point of the interview was
positively correlated with responsibility, \( r(67) = .24, p < .05 \).

Post-Hoc Analyses

Additional findings related to the deployment experiences of these families were
investigated through data exploration outside of proposed data specifically resulted from
previously outlined hypotheses. In this section various data trends and relationships will be
discussed.

In discussing transitions at home during the child interview sessions, children were
able to articulate differences in mood and responsibility observed in their mothers remaining
at home. Mothers were also provided the ability to respond to questions regarding their
experiences and changes on the parent section of the Deployment Experiences Survey.
Investigating this data provides the opportunity to also consider the deployment effects on
parents and further demonstrate the awareness children have of the differences in parents
during these times. Parents endorsed a range of negative changes occurring during
deployment when reflecting on their personal experiences. Changes felt included difficulty
sleeping (\( n = 53, 75.65\% \)), increased crying (\( n = 43, 60.56\% \)), loss of energy (\( n = 39, 54.93\% \)), increased yelling at children (\( n = 30, 42.25\% \)), increased depression (\( n = 28, 39.44\% \)), isolating self from others (\( n = 22, 31.0\% \)), increased anger (\( n = 21, 29.58\% \)), and
Increased fighting with spouse (n = 19, 26.76%). Interestingly, despite the methods of communication utilized during deployments, 74.51% (n = 38) of parents insisted that their children are not witnessing arguments between spouses. Regardless of the hardships placed on these spouses during the deployment period, little variation in marital satisfaction between ratings prior to and during deployment existed. The majority of wives still endorsed ratings of satisfied or very satisfied in their marriages (n = 40, 78.43%).

To learn more about the roles of the deployed parents in the household and the communication between family members, parents were asked to reflect on their outreach to the deployed parent. In doing so, additional information including topics discussed and ratings regarding the quality of conversational time were collected. Parents endorsed both children and themselves discussing daily events, special occasions, discipline issues, and safety concerns for the deployed parent, amongst other topics. Frequencies of conversational topics are included in Table 3. Parents also estimated the quality of conversational time between the deployed parents and child. The majority of time spent in conversation was described as positive. However, negative conversational tones were estimated to encompass between 2-15% (M = 5.04, SD = 10.41) of conversational time.

Independent samples t tests were performed to determine if any significant differences existed between various collected measures. First, differences were investigated between children experiencing short versus long deployment periods at the time of study participation. Results indicated statistically significant differences between the two groups on several measures including ambivalence, child mail use, discussing news following viewing, and PTGI-C-R. Significant t-test values for these variables are presented below in Table 4. Secondly, children with summative communication scores falling in the low and high
communication groups were also investigated using t-tests to determine the presence of statistical differences between the groups. A range of statistically significant differences were found between groups in reports of negative symptoms. The full reports are presented in Table 5. Third, statistical differences between families with low and high media exposure were calculated as well. Again, several statistically significant differences were found between these two groups. Differences primarily existed when investigating reported feelings following news exposure and other viewing characteristics. The full reports are presented in Table 6.

Due to previous studies citing potential differences in deployment experience between genders, independent samples t tests were calculated to determine presence of these differences in the current data. Two statistically significant differences were found between the two genders, withdraw from deployed parent and self-report of depression on the BASC-2. Boys were revealed to receive higher scores than girls on ratings of withdraw from deployed parent, t(51) = 2.26, p < .05. However, girls rated themselves higher in depression than boys, t(19) = 2.53, p < .02.

Chi square calculations were completed in order to further explore significant associations amongst variables in line with both hypotheses and variable relationships present in research. Significant findings among chi square values calculated were limited. Relating to media observations and expressed symptoms/concerns, several significant associations existed between family media scores as compared to general fears discussed by children and questions about their deployed parent’s job/duties. General fears were reportedly discussed at lower rates in the families with low or medium media exposure, while this topic was endorsed at a higher rate in high media exposure families, $\chi^2 (2, N = 71) = 9.17$, 

Additionally, children in families with high media exposure differed significantly by being more likely to ask questions regarding the deployed parent’s location or job duties, \( \chi^2 (2, N=51) = 6.19, p = .05 \). General fears were also significantly less likely to be discussed by children with parents reporting low or medium media exposure, \( \chi^2 (2, N=71) = 6.43, p = .04 \).

Chi squares were also calculated to determine statistically significant associations between gender and symptom variables. Again, limited significant results were found. However, a significant association was found between gender and anxiety with parents reporting more frequently experienced anxiety in male children, \( \chi^2 (3, N=71) = 8.81, p = .03 \). A significant association between gender and sense of isolation from others was also found, with parents reporting lower rates of isolation from others in female children, \( \chi^2 (3, N=51) = 9.51, p = .02 \).
Table 2

Spearman Correlations Comparing Positive Attitude and Behaviors and Child Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Child Communication</th>
<th>Family Communication</th>
<th>Parent Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturity</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for siblings</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement in Activities</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability PRS</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership PRS</td>
<td>-.28</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>-.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations with Parents SRP</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance SRP</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem SRP</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Adjustment SRP</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05
** p < .01
Table 3
Conversational Topics Discussed with Deployed Parent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Parents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Events</td>
<td>100% (N = 71)</td>
<td>48.1% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Occasions</td>
<td>94.37% (N = 67)</td>
<td>9.91% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing Deployed Parent/Spouse</td>
<td>80.28% (N = 57)</td>
<td>12.51% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns about Deployed</td>
<td>46.48% (N = 33)</td>
<td>3.7% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent/Spouse Safety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being Disciplined</td>
<td>22.54% (N = 16)</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permission to go places/do</td>
<td>28.17% (N = 20)</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>things</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tattling on siblings</td>
<td>39.44% (N = 28)</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with problems</td>
<td>39.44% (N = 28)</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignment of jobs/duties</td>
<td>25.35% (N = 18)</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at home</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Discipline</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>8.93% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Parenting Decisions</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>10.77% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguing over Child Rearing</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>.36% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguing over Money</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>1.67% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Arguing</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>4.04% (N = 69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 4

Results of Independent Samples t tests Comparing Short and Long Deployment Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalence</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>-2.26</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1.41</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Child Mail Use</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discuss News</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>-3.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PTGI-C-R</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-2.97</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>.83</td>
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</table>
Table 5

Results of Independent Samples t tests Comparing Low and High Child Communication

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty with additional transitions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.74</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty Making Decisions</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Withdraw From Deployed Parent</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sense of Isolation</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambivalence</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.68</td>
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</table>
Table 6

Results of Independent Samples t tests Comparing Low and High Family Media Exposure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring Child News Exposure</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing Child From Viewing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>-3.42</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss Issues After Viewing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.44</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns for Parent Safety</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>-2.10</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Fears</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.37</td>
<td>-3.20</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalizing Problems PRS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-2.21</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention Problems PRS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-2.23</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Four

Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the way increased exposure to technology affects children’s deployment outcomes in today's military culture, especially in their deployment experiences. The current lack of research regarding today’s deployments and their effects on children necessitated this investigation of the lives of children both during and after deployment (Lester et al., 2010; Sheppard et al., 2010). The goal in this investigation was to determine the influence of technology on lives and experiences of military children today, as these factors were not present in previous wars and thus were factors missing from the current literature field.

The study utilized mixed methods methodology. The qualitative interviews and open response questions provided rich understanding of the daily lives and personal experiences of these children and families. Individualized, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were completed with child participants in Phase one. All interviews were conducted by the lead investigator. However, the method of interview, in-person or online, varied based on the geographic location of the participant. In total, twenty children were interviewed for Phase one. Quantitative methodology allowed for higher participant numbers and a more diverse dataset. Through the utilization of the Deployment Experiences Survey and psychological/behavioral measures, insights into a range of topics were gained. These measures were completed in a variety of ways, including online, in-person, and through the mail, diversifying the location of participants. In total, 71 participants completed the Deployment Experiences Survey. Only the twenty participants from Phase one were asked to complete the BASC-2 and PTGI-C-R measures.
Discussion

Qualitative Themes

Technology Use

Technology is being utilized consistently within military families today in order to remain in contact during deployment. All children reported some use of technology as a tool aiding their deployment communication. Although the most frequent examples sited independently by children was the use of Skype, a variety of technology based communication tools were utilized by families. Children described a wide range of communication availability and barriers for their families. Specifically, factors relating to job duties, time differences, and technological difficulties were all articulated as explanations by children influencing the frequency of their communication. Regardless of difficulties, children primarily reported positive experiences and feelings related to online communication, including connectedness and shared special occasions. This aided connectedness is best exemplified though the words of one child who stated “when he’s on Skype it’s like he’s sitting on the couch. I can tell him about the things I do and he can watch me do Tae Kwon Do because I can show him.”

Transitions through Deployment

Through sharing their experiences, children illustrated that deployments mean transitions at home for military families. The transitions of focus during these interviews primarily centered on transitions for the parent remaining at home, in addition to the child’s personal transitions. In detailing parent transitions, children outlined observations relating to their mother’s role in carrying more responsibility in the household and the difficulties in adjustment to these roles. One boy illustrated a specific example as to the difficulties
transitions have caused for his mother, “the bad thing is my mom doesn’t really like him being away. He could help us get things down because she can’t reach them. She also needs him for other help too.”

In addition to the family unit transitions experienced and the observations from the child’s perspective, children experienced personal transitions related to their role in the family. Personal transitions for these children typically meant an increase in assisting around the home or required independence due to the lack of assistance from a second parent in sharing home responsibilities. The experienced transition for children was observed to include both assigned and self-selected responsibilities and independence. Describing his experience with increased responsibilities, a young boy shared, “my mom couldn’t do all things by herself, and she decided to give us some more chores because we really had to help her out during that time.”

Adaptive Attitudes and Behaviors

Military children reported proactive, adaptive attitudes and behaviors in the face of their parents’ deployment. Despite deployment related difficulties, the children in this study reported indicators of adaptability to their current lives. Nearly all children reported increased assistance in home-based duties, doing so with positive attitudes and a goal of helpfulness. Additionally, children provided narratives outlining mature thought patterns surrounding deployment in their attitudes and utilization of coping skills. Children spoke of constructive examples from family, friends, and military resources when discussing positive coping strategies utilized. A range of adaptive coping skills accessed by the children and families were mentioned during interviews including accessing materials regarding deployment preparation, seeking out comfort from friends with similar experiences, and
using breathing or relaxation techniques when upset, amongst others. Illustrating the use of various tools to assist her through deployment, one child shared,

Someone from my Dad’s work gave him this quilt and this bear, named Beary, to give to me to remember him during deployment. It really meant something special that he gave those to me. Also, I got this video that shows kids with their dads deployed and they’re coming back. It helped when I would watch that as well.

Everyday Losses and Absences

Child interviews revealed thoughts and feelings consistent with the idea that, for them, deployment was nearly always a present consideration. Although holidays and special occasions were expectedly a time of loss for these children, with every child pinpointing at least one major event missed by their parent, it was in the everyday moments where they appeared most affected by parental absence. It was these moments that stood out in quality of description and emotion in the interview sessions. Interestingly, this child trend coincides with themes of a study previously outlining daily hassles as more stressful and emotionally impactful than seemingly more negative events such as direct combat in Air Force members (Heron, Bryan, Dougherty, & Chapman, 2013). Results show the necessity to refrain from overlooking the impact of the compilation of daily stressors over time, rather than focusing only on major traumatic or missed events often thought of when war is mentioned.

Internet Communication and Reaction to Deployment

Hypothesis one (a) predicted that increased internet communication with deployed parents will be associated with positive effects and attitudes in children’s reaction to deployment. In supporting this hypothesis, child interviews spoke to the manner in which communication throughout deployment facilitated by technology assisted in the relationship
between children and their deployed parent. The majority of children expressed the onset of a range of positive feelings within themselves and other family members in reaction to conversations with their parent. Most commonly endorsed positive feelings included happiness, excitement, and security of parent safety. Further, nearly all children expressed ideas related to communication facilitating a feeling of continued parental involvement in their life through the ability to share pictures of activities, discussing daily events and special occasions, and being provided the opportunity to see their parent interacting with them.

Quantitatively, the available data did not support Hypothesis 1a when considering communication statistically represented by a summative score across forms and frequency of communication. However, Family and Parent Summative Communication scores were positively correlated with a consistency of emotions and behaviors through deployment. When exploring the relationship between specific methods of communication and positive effects, relatively weak positive correlations were found to exist between the occurrence of a child texting their deployed parent and their rated responsibility score. Parental phone use was positively correlated with both child maturity and responsibility scores.

Communication and Transition

Hypothesis 1b predicted that for those children whose parent has returned from deployment, a history of internet communication will be associated with an easier transition following their parent’s return home. With the exclusion of two children, all participants with a parent post-deployment reported feelings of happiness and excitement related to their homecoming and a positive transition home. Children’s interviews revealed feelings regarding their ability to communicate with the deployed parent and staying connected
throughout the period relating to picking back up with their routines and relationships upon the parent’s return home.

Despite these observed trends, most children had not experienced a recent parental transition home as the majority of parents remained on deployment at the time of participation. In these cases, children were asked to hypothesize regarding their idea of how the transition home would go or voice any concerns or worries they were currently facing regarding the reintegration. Children predicted smooth transitions, speaking of homecoming celebrations to come. One girl shared excitement related to promises of celebrations from her father upon his return,

I’m just excited. He said that when he comes home if it’s like a Monday he’ll pull me out of school for a few days. We’ll go to roller coasters and have fun and do all that stuff because he really wants to make up for the time that he wasn’t here.

In voicing concerns or worries, children focused on current worries related to deployment safety rather than post-return concerns. As one girl stated, “I don’t think there’s anything to worry about. But I’m kind of scared when he’s gone because he could get hurt there.”

Calculated correlations lacked significance when considering relationships between summative communication scores and transition scores. The hypothesis was partially supported when computing correlations between transition scores and specific forms of communication utilized, with negative correlations existing between child frequency of video chat and transition scores, and parent use of mail and transition scores.

### Negative Effects of Media

Hypothesis 2a predicted increased viewing of war-related images and news stories will be related to negative effects in children such as anxiety, sleep difficulties, and school
difficulties. Low levels of news exposure were reported by almost all children with revealed
trends of rarely seeing news, avoiding it, or being shielded from exposure by their parents.
Regardless, the majority of children expressed negative feelings either experienced or
hypothesized to occur upon news exposure. Interestingly, children’s knowledge regarding
their parent’s deployment, location, and job influenced their feelings regarding the news they
had seen or expected to see. Further, some children reported negative personal effects to any
form of perceived negative news, not just war-related news. As explained by the children
sharing these views, concerning or violent news stories related to any topic became more
problematic during the deployment period due to lower perceived guaranteed safety at home
when dad was not physically present in the household.

Correlational data added some support to Hypothesis 2a. Child media exposure had a
moderate positive relationship with Anxiety and Internalizing Symptoms scores on the
BASC-2. When considering family media exposure, this variable was positively related to
internalizing symptoms, attention problems, concerns for deployed parent’s safety, general
fears, fighting, and negative school effects. Parental media exposure was shown to have a
positive relationship with Externalizing Symptoms, Attention Problems, presence of general
fears, and negative school effects. Further, t-tests, displayed in Table 6, revealed statistically
significant differences with families having high media exposure reporting higher general
fears, concerns for parent safety, internalizing problems, and attention problems in their
children. Finally, chi square tests revealed higher rates of general fears discussed by children
in families with higher family summative and parent media exposure. Additionally,
significant chi square values pointed to children in the families with higher media exposure
being reported to ask more questions regarding the jobs and duties of their deployed parent.
Communication and Ambiguous Loss

Hypothesis 3a postulated that increased parental communication throughout deployment will be related to less ambiguous loss symptoms. Ambiguous loss issues may be experienced to varying degrees when individuals are confronted with situations of physical absence and psychological presence, such as in the case of military deployments. Symptoms most commonly expressed in interviews included difficulty with transitions, anxiety, feeling overwhelmed, and emotional exhaustion. Providing additional support for the hypothesis, low frequencies of ambiguous loss symptoms were present in participating children, potentially related to all children discussing technology based communication occurring during deployment. Further, ambiguous loss symptoms were endorsed less in children with frequent parental contact. A few of the children reporting everyday contact actually reported no symptomatology consistent with ambiguous loss.

Hypothesis 3a was supported with negative correlations between child summative communication scores and clingingness, guilt, difficulty with additional transitions, hopelessness, inability to make decisions/overwhelmed, decreased ability to handle losses, withdraw from deployed parent, sense of isolation from others, and ambivalence. Similarly, negative correlations between ambiguous loss symptoms and parent and family communication totals were also observed. Finally, when investigating relationships between ambiguous loss symptoms and specific communication types utilized by children and frequency of use, additional negative correlations existed. These correlations existed between reports of depression and ambivalence as related to communication levels, with increased communication relating to lower depression and ambivalence symptoms. Further, as evidenced by information provided in Table 5, analysis provided additional statistical support.
for this hypothesis. Children with higher communication levels were shown to have statistically significant differences with lower ambiguous loss symptoms including difficulties with additional transitions, hopelessness, difficulty making decisions or feeling overwhelmed, withdraw from their deployed parent, sense of isolation, and ambivalence toward deployed parent.

Deployment Length and Growth

Hypothesis 3b predicted that increased length of parent deployment would be associated with emotional and maturity growth in children. When discussing the changes at home with children experiencing deployments, the resiliency and growth of the majority of these children became quickly apparent. One child verbalized her experiences with deployment and the impact it has had on her in the following manner,

I’ve learned how to deal with, how to react when things, when some things happen that you don’t exactly plan to happen. The first month he was gone I felt bad, but as it’s been going I’ve learned to grow on it. So, it’s just the fact that I miss him and he misses us. He’s safe and he’s doing something to help.

As roles changed within their households many of these children assisted parents with fulfilling house duties both through assignment and personal choice. Nearly all children quickly responded to questions regarding growth, maturity, and responsibility with indicating these changes as evidence for their personal transitions. Children additionally provided examples of emotional growth through the process of deployment. Interestingly, a few children provided examples of their conflict regarding describing themselves in a manner of growth due to emotional dysregulation causing them to feel younger when they were
experiencing sadness and anxiety. Regardless, even these children provided interview answers consistent with the presence of growth in some capacity.

Hypothesis 3b was not supported as strongly by quantitative data. Positive correlations indicated relationships between only two child characteristics and length of deployment. First, the length of deployment was positively correlated with child responsibility ratings. Secondly, deployment length was positively correlated with parent perception of children experiencing pride in the United States. Despite providing limited quantitative support, these correlations represent some child changes in a positive direction in response to their deployment experiences. Additionally, t-tests reported in Table 4 showed significant t-tests when investigating differences amongst short and long deployment periods in the PTGI-C-R scores. Ultimately, children experiencing longer deployments at time of study participation received higher scores on this measure of growth.

Strengths and Limitations

This study yielded thought-provoking results regarding the effects of technology on childrens’ deployment experiences. Below, strengths and weaknesses are discussed in order to highlight positive aspects and limiting factors affecting the consideration and application of study results.

Strengths

The current study has numerous strengths. First, the study adds to the research field regarding the influence of technology on the deployment experiences of children in military families. Although research related to deployment specific experiences and outcomes for military children is a topic currently being investigated in many new and ongoing studies, the technologically based influences on these experiences has not been addressed in publication
beyond speculation on the topic. This research has the ability to influence policy in an area which is timely and in-need of evidence-based findings leading to assistance for families dealing with deployments. The mixed-methods design is another significant strength of this study. This methodology provided an outlet for children and families to voice their experiences, as well as allowing basic statistical comparisons to open the door for future studies. Third, the geographical diversity and use of technology to conduct interviews made the sample more diverse and findings more generalizable. Participants crossed geographic and military installation locations rather than being limited to a specific locale. Fourth, the age of child participants in this study expanded upon the current literature in providing a narrative voice to children younger than those previously involved in military child and deployment research. Prior studies have largely focused on adolescent populations instead of younger populations. Rather than continuing to extrapolate previous findings, applying them to younger populations, this study provides data regarding the deployment experiences in children between the ages of eight to twelve. Further, it does so in an avenue which gave these children a voice rather than simply relying on their stories being told from the point of view of the adults in their lives.

Limitations

This study also had significant limitations. First, the small number of participants was thoughtfully planned in this study to allow rich narratives of child deployment experiences to be obtained. However, these low numbers did limit the power of quantitative data. Due to this fact, the application of findings to a wide audience should be done with caution and future work should engage a larger sample of children experiencing parental deployment. Third, the population studied in the current research is limited by the
demographics of the sample. Some of these demographic factors were delimitations defined based on study design (i.e. age), which restricted the picture of deployment experiences to those of a limited sample of the population. The focused ages of this population may have also provided more restricted data than would have been received from a population of older children or adolescents due to their comparatively lower abilities for emotional introspection and verbalization of their experiences. Further, along with the limited sample demographics, much of the data provided was merely circumstantial based on those willing to volunteer for participation. For example, the children and families participating in this study were overly representing by the population of officers rather than enlisted members. A more balanced study population may have produced other findings, as previous studies have indicated differences in these populations based on various measures. Next, the reliance of correlations as the primary statistical analysis in this study limits the scope of application for results, as causal relationships between variables cannot be assumed. Finally, the primary source of data were self-report measures. Due to the potential for response bias in self-report measures, the results may need to be interpreted with caution. This limitation was anticipated due to study design. As such, teacher measures of behavior and emotions were targeted in order to obtain a view of the child’s functioning from someone outside the immediate family. However, these measures were rarely returned. Further, several of the child participants were homeschooled and lacked appropriate interactions with an adult, other than a parent, in a structured setting. Thus, the teacher reports were limited in overall utility.
Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that technology is impacting the deployment experiences of families. Families shared their experiences with both the positive and negative aspects of deployment communication and media changes in the current war. Although public opinions and field speculation regarding the pros and cons of technological communication and current availability continues to fluctuate, the results of the current study point to potential benefits amongst families utilizing these resources. Families participating in increased parental communication during deployment showed relationships to decreases in ambiguous loss symptoms, increases in positive attitudes including growth and maturity, and fairly smooth responses to the reintegration of their parent when returning home. Therefore, from the perspective of assisting to mediate symptomatology and difficulties reported in children experiencing deployment, the advances of technology and utilization of these tools may serve to be an asset in assisting them through the process.

Currently, the majority of families reported their child’s main source of access to technological communication resources is from home. Few parents responded indicating their child having access to communication methods from avenues such as schools and libraries. However, due to named difficulties including time differences in communication, it may benefit the children for schools to reevaluate allowing access to items such as e-mail, web-chat, or video chat during the school day. Potentially, these resources could be provided in a controlled manner such as part of a lunch period, counseling group, or other specific locations or times during the school day. In the continual quest of schools to support families, this step may be one in which schools are able to utilize technology already available to them in order to provide interventions and support to their military child populations. Coinciding
with the results of this study, literature is beginning to emerge sharing anecdotal evidence for an increase in morale when schools allow families access to communication during the day (Wilson, 2011).

In voicing their concerns related to deployments, parents reiterated their desire for school personnel to offer support to their children. Such opinions fall in line with outcries in the research field for schools to take advantage of their unique opportunities to support these students (Reed et al., 2011). Even in the absence of outward signs of deployment related stress, children may benefit from even the most basic levels of school-based support. As one mother poignantly shared,

She just really misses her dad and would just like to get to talk about him and how she misses having him around. Just because a child is not acting out or having any outward signs of distress, it does not mean it's not hard when a Father’s Day program happens and dad isn't there.

In addition to the potential for technological communication support, this project revealed numerous avenues in which school personnel, including school psychologists, may be able to support military families during the challenges of deployments. Parent qualitative data revealed previous successes with and suggestions for a range of in-school supports. From more casual veins of simply acknowledging the deployment and checking in with students to formal counseling arrangements or support groups, parents described the need for additional support for their children. Further, the transitions at home for families revealed patterns of higher levels of responsibilities and duties for both parents and children. Carrying these responsibilities translated to a still manageable, yet more hectic lifestyle for many families. As such, parents shared views regarding the helpfulness of flexibility from the school and
other organizations when their child is late or slightly disorganized. Children also highlighted this pace of life in providing some difficulties for continuity of the homework and school support that they are used to being provided at home. Perhaps additional school support, possibly in the form of homework or tutoring supplements, may provide assistance to children experiencing limitations at home due to stretched parental resources during deployment.

Many children in this study did not report the tendency to view news or media in other forms related to wars. With ongoing access to a variety of avenues in which news exposure is possible, updated reports from the children in this sample assisted in gaining information regarding the manner in which children are or desire to view these stories. Regardless of low levels of exposure, negative responses were found to be associated to an increased viewing of news, consistent with previous literature (Smith & Moyer-Guse, 2006; Cantor et al., 1993). As no direct cause can be implied from correlation data, one must be careful in overgeneralizing these findings. But, it is important for families to be aware of the possible relationship and consider these findings in making decisions about their child’s exposure. Highlighting an unexpected finding in this vein, some children even reported difficult responses to new stories of a concerning, but non-war related material. Therefore, consideration of news content should also be conducted in the case of broadcasts seemingly unrelated to current stressors in the child’s life.

The potential negative media effects are points which schools should recognize. News topics and media use may be utilized in classrooms or built into curriculum and teachers may be unaware that it might have deleterious effects on children with deployed parents. Communication regarding the utilization of this material in the classroom should be
discussed with parents to ensure their awareness of its use and enable them to watch for potential negative effects or necessary follow-up of topics discussed with their children. Additionally, school psychologist involvement may be beneficial following school media exposure or classroom discussion in order to provide the students a place to debrief or discuss negative responses similar to those expressed in this study.

Implications for Future Research

This study points to the necessity of additional research to further elaborate and describe the true uniqueness of the deployment experience amongst families. Although trends held true across families in areas where commonalities existed, ranges of experiences and personal factors affected families. In deployment familiarity, stories ranged from a boy experiencing his fifth deployment and recounting almost no changes or emotional variation related to his father’s most recent departure to a girl who spent the first ten months of the deployment experiencing frequent nightmares. The range and availability of accessing technological communication benefits ranged dramatically from talking to fathers daily utilizing video chat to those having limited access due to technology, schedule, or other extraneous difficulties. In term of home transitions, some children felt that they were carrying a weight of new responsibilities, while others pointed to no changes. A vast array of other seemingly minor details which may prove to make distinct differences for these children could continue to be communicated. Clearly, a one sized fits all approach without consideration of additional factors simply will not suffice and a single study will not provide the details necessary to fully understand the lives of these families. However, the results of this study did produce introductory data related to the way technology in media and communication may be influencing deployment experiences for military families.
Due to the nature of the study, the breadth of findings presented open the door for future research involving these families and the assistance to be offered in utilizing technological communication throughout deployment. Future research should aim to investigate similar topics outlined in research hypotheses of this study, with the goal of expanding upon current participant numbers. These higher numbers would allow for the study to involve higher order statistics, providing greater predictability and application of findings to a wider military audience. Additionally, recruitment in future studies may aim to use methods likely to diversify the sample of participants amongst those families of various ranks and stages of deployments, as well as a wider scope of personal demographic factors such as mothers deploying, national guard or reserve members, or dual military families.

Finally, a similar study may produce different results if performed at a different stage of warfare. For example, the current move toward drawing down troop numbers and decreased deployed personnel may have been one of the factors influencing the difficulty of participant recruitment in this study. Not only was the pool of possible participants decreasing, but strategies of the war shifted into a more advisory role for our troop involvement. This shift in deployment patterns may have further influenced participating families being those of officers, potentially shaping the data. If the US military did engage in another conflict requiring increased deployments, it would be the opportune time to recreate and expand the study. As seen at the beginning of the current war, family’s deployment experiences are likely to be lower, while news production higher, during a time of war following a peaceful period. Due to these variables, the shape of the study and results may differ, adding valuable information related to potential interventions and risk factors for these families.
Ultimately, deployment is not an experience influencing only the deployed individual. Children and families are shaped and affected by their deployment experiences as they progress through the process with their loved ones. Although this study began to answer questions regarding the current impact of technology on the deployment experiences of family members at home, many factors affecting these families and their experiences still lack investigation. Through continuing to build upon studies such as the current one, professionals will increase their knowledge base related to family experiences and appropriate supports and interventions.
Appendix A: Interview Script

Interview Questions:

Intro: I’m doing a study looking at kids’ reactions and things that might help when their parent is deployed. You are here because you have a parent who is currently deployed or has been deployed. We’re going to talk for a little while about your experiences. You can say as little or as much as you’d like. You don’t have to say anything at all. Everything we talk about in here will stay private. I’m going to be tape-recording this conversation so we can remember what was said.

Warm up and general information about child’s deployed parent:

Please tell me your first name and age.

What grade are you in this year in school?

    What do you like best about school?

What’s your favorite thing to do for fun?

    (Do you participate in afterschool activities you really like such as sports or music?
        Tell me about them.)

Who lives with you?

Is your parent currently deployed?

    (If yes, where are they deployed? When did they leave?)

Or, if they have already been deployed (ask which parent and where and how long; remember to ask if both were deployed or have deployed).
Deployment Adjustment:

Family Adjustment:

What did your parent tell you about what deployment would be like? How did they let you know about it? (Was it a conversation or did they not tell you?)

Tell me about what it is like at home without your parent here. What’s different while they’re gone?

How do you think your parent at home and siblings are dealing with your other parent being gone?

(What do you think is the hardest part about your parent being gone for the parent still here?)

How have things changed in how your parents share jobs taking care of you now that your parent is deployed?

(What things that you are used to your parent at home doing have stopped since your other parent left?)

(With lots of changes at home, it can be hard getting used to your parents taking over new jobs with the way they take care of you. Tell me any of these changes you’ve had a hard time getting adjusted to.)

Personal Adjustment (and some ambiguous loss):

How about you, how have you felt since they’ve been gone?
How have your rules or responsibilities changed since your parent left?

Give me an example of something important to you your parent has missed during this deployment?

(What was that like for you?)

When you’re missing your parent, what helps you feel better?

School (and Posttraumatic Growth):

What has school been like while your parent has been gone?

(Have your grades been the same, better, or worse while you parent has been gone?

Why do you think it has happened this way?)

Tell me about things you worry about when your parent gets home. (For kids whose parents are home: Tell me about anything different when they got home)?

(When your parent returned home, did everything go back to how it was before they left pretty quick or not? Tell me about that.)

Posttraumatic Growth:

Do you think you’ve become more grown up or less grown up because of dealing with your parent’s deployment? Can you give me some examples of ways you feel more (or less) grown up?
Communication/Technology:

How do you keep in touch with your parent who is gone?

(What’s it like keeping in touch with your parent over the computer?)

(Do you use a computer to talk to your parents with e-mail or a program
where you can see them and chat? How often do you get to use these?)

(Tell me about the phone, do you get to talk to their parent that way? How
often? )

When you get to talk to your parent how does it make you feel?

How has staying in touch with your parent made you feel like they’re still involved in your
life even though they’re far away now? (In what way?)

How often do you see/hear your parents talking to each other? What are your parents using to
talk to each other? What is it like when they talk that way?

News/Technology:

How often do you watch the news or see/hear/read news stories about the war?

(Tell me about how you feel when you see this news.)

Is there anything else about your parent’s deployment you want to talk about?
Appendix B: Deployment Experience Survey

Questions about your child:

1) Child’s age: ______ years
2) My child is a:  ☐ boy  ☐ girl
3) My child’s race is:
   ☐ Caucasian          ☐ African American
   ☐ Native American    ☐ Asian American
   ☐ Pacific Islander   ☐ Mixed

   ☐ Other

4) Is your child of Hispanic/Latino origin:  ☐ yes  ☐ no
5) In terms of age, my child is the _____ (number) of ______ (number) of children in our family (for example, the 2nd of 4 children in our family or the 1 of 1 children in our family).
   How many of the following does your child have:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Ages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full Siblings: ____ ___________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half siblings: ____ ___________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-siblings: ____ ___________________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) Which parent is deployed?  ☐ mother  ☐ father
7) Deployed parent rank: _______________________________________
8) Is non-deployed parent in military:  ☐ yes  ☐ no
   If yes, rank: __________________
   If no, do they work outside home:  ☐ yes  ☐ no
   Profession: __________________
9) Does the child live on base?  ☐ yes  ☐ no
   If no, distance from closest base? __________________
10) Estimated dates of parent’s most recent deployment (month/year):
   ___________ to ___________ (month/year)
11) Number of military deployments experienced by child:  ☐ 1  ☐ 2  ☐ 3  ☐ 4 or more
12) Any previous mental health issues experienced by child?:  ☐ Depression  ☐ Anxiety
   ☐ Anger  ☐ Oppositional Defiant or Conduct Disorder  ☐ ADHD
   ☐ Other (please list) ________________  ☐ None
13) Where does your child attend school?  ☐ Private School  ☐ Public School
   ☐ Homeschool
   Child’s Grade Level: ________________
14) Please check any base sponsored events your child attends:  ☐ Family Readiness Groups
   ☐ Military child camps  ☐ Afterschool programs  ☐ Chapel programs  ☐ Other
15) Have any of these responsibilities changed for your child since deployment began?:

- Increased chores: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Helping to care for younger siblings: [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] No younger siblings
- Needing to be more independent (such as letting themselves in after school, etc.): [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Increased need to independently complete schoolwork: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Increased independence in self care (i.e. hygiene rituals): [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Responsibilities have remained the same: [ ] Yes [ ] No

16) Have you seen any of the following changes in your child since the beginning of deployment?

- Maturity: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Responsibility: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Independence: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Clinginess: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Grades: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Involvement in activities: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Behavior problems: [ ] Largely decreased [ ] Somewhat decreased [ ] No change
  [ ] Somewhat increased [ ] Largely increased
- Depression: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Anxiety: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Guilt: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Difficulty with additional transitions or changes: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally
  [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Hopelessness: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Withdraw from deployed parent: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom
  [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Giving up easily or not trying as hard as they used to when facing a task or
  problem: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Difficulty making decisions or feeling overwhelmed when they need to make
  decisions: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Decreased ability to handle losses: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom
  [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Physical illnesses related to their feelings: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom
  [ ] Frequently [ ] Always
- Physical Exhaustion: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently
  [ ] Always
- Emotional Exhaustion: [ ] Never [ ] Occasionally [ ] Seldom [ ] Frequently
  [ ] Always
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Uncertainty about deployed parent’s role in household: ☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Frequently ☐ Always
Sense of isolation from others: ☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Frequently ☐ Always
Confusion: ☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Frequently ☐ Always
Immobilization: ☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Frequently ☐ Always
Ambivalence (mixed feelings) about deployed parent: ☐ Never ☐ Occasionally ☐ Seldom ☐ Frequently ☐ Always
No changes: ☐ Strongly disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neither agree nor disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly agree

17) Questions regarding computer use:
   Does your child have access to an internet connected computer at home?
      ☐ Yes ☐ No
   How does your child use the computer?: ☐ Supervised ☐ Unsupervised
      ☐ Both
   How often does your child use the computer? ☐ Daily ☐ 4-6 times per week
      ☐ 2-3 times per week ☐ Weekly ☐ Monthly ☐ Rarely or Never
   What activities does your child use the computer for?: ☐ Homework
      ☐ Internet browsing ☐ Playing Games ☐ E-mail ☐ Watching television or movies ☐ Web-based chat ☐ Webcam ☐ Other

   Approximately how many hours per day does your child use the computer? ______

18) Communication:
   How does your child communicate with their deployed parent?
      E-mail: ☐ Yes ☐ No
      Video chat program: ☐ Yes ☐ No
         If yes, program name: ☐ Skype ☐ AKO Video Messaging
         ☐ Oovoo ☐ CamFrog ☐ iChat AV ☐ Other
      Facebook: ☐ Yes ☐ No
      Web-based chat program: ☐ Yes ☐ No
         If yes, program name: ☐ AIM (AOL Instant Messenger)
         ☐ Skype chat ☐ Facebook Chat ☐ Windows Live Messenger
         ☐ Yahoo Messenger ☐ Other
      Phone: ☐ Yes ☐ No
      Texting: ☐ Yes ☐ No
      Mail: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Other forms of communication or technology used to keep in contact not previously listed?: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   If yes, please list: ____________________________________________
For each form of communication used by your child, how often and/or how long does this communication occur?:

E-mail: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly
   Approximately how many emails a week does your child send to his/her deployed parent? __________
   Approximately how many emails a week does your child receive from his/her deployed parent? __________

Webcam: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly
   Length of communication: □ Less than 10 minutes □ 10-25 minutes □ 25-60 minutes □ More than one hour

Facebook: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly

Web-based chat: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly
   Length of communication: □ Less than 10 minutes □ 10-25 minutes □ 25-60 minutes □ More than one hour

Phone: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly
   Length of communication: □ Less than 10 minutes □ 10-25 minutes □ 25-60 minutes □ More than one hour

Texting: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly

U.S. Postal system “Snail” Mail: □ Daily □ Weekly □ Bi-Weekly □ Monthly
   □ Monthly

Please check all of the places where your children are accessing these communication tools:

E-mail: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other
   Webcam: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other
   Facebook: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other
Web-based chat: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other
   Phone: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other
   Texting: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other
   Mail: □ None □ Home □ School □ Friend’s House □ Library □ Other

When your child communicates with their deployed parent, what topics are discussed?:

   Daily events: □ Yes □ No
   Special occasions: □ Yes □ No
   How much they miss their parent: □ Yes □ No
   Being disciplined by deployed parent: □ Yes □ No
   Concerns about deployed parent: □ Yes □ No
   Questions about where they are or when they will be home: □ Yes □ No
   Permission to go places/attend things: □ Yes □ No
When your child communicates with their deployed parent, what percentage of the time is your child’s interaction:
Positive: ____________ %
Negative: ______________ %
Neutral: ______________ %
In what way?: ____________________________________________________________________________

19) Do you think that your child had difficulties adjusting to the new roles of parents and family members caused by the deployment? ☐ Yes ☐ No
In what way?: ____________________________________________________________________________

20) Has your child had difficulty adjusting to the transition of your spouse’s roles at home since their return?
☐ No difficulty ☐ Some difficulty ☐ Moderate difficulty ☐ High difficulty ☐ Spouse still deployed
In what way? ____________________________________________________________________________
To what factors do you attribute the positive experiences with reintegration upon the end of deployment?
________________________________________________________________________________________
To what factors do you attribute the negative experiences with reintegration upon the end of deployment?
________________________________________________________________________________________

When your spouse returns are you expecting your child to have difficulty adjusting to your spouse’s resumed and/or new roles at home? ☐ No difficulty ☐ Some difficulty ☐ Moderate difficulty ☐ High difficulty

21) Media access Questions:
Is your child exposed to news reports regarding the war? ☐ Yes ☐ No
In what venue is the child exposed? ☐ TV ☐ Internet ☐ Newspaper ☐ Magazines ☐ Other
Is the news exposure monitored? ☐ Monitored ☐ Unmonitored
Do you have concerns regarding what your children may see in war related news? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Are you attempting to prevent your child from viewing news during deployment?: ☐ Yes ☐ No
Do you discuss the issues raised in the news after viewing?: ☐ Yes ☐ No
What concerns are raised by child in response to news?: ☐ Deployed parent safety ☐ Safety of themselves ☐ Family Safety ☐ General Fears ☐ Fear related to “bad guys”
Please check any changes you notice following your child’s exposure to the news:

- Nightmares: □ Yes □ No
- Crying: □ Yes □ No
- Increased negative behavior: □ Yes □ No
- Fighting: □ Yes □ No
- Wanting to sleep with parent or sibling: □ Yes □ No
- Negative school effects: □ Yes □ No
- Other emotional changes: □ Yes □ No
- Asking questions regarding deployed parent’s location or job duties:
  □ Yes □ No
- Feeling of pride in US: □ Yes □ No
- Sense of accomplishment for parent and/or country: □ Yes □ No
- Desire for future military career: □ Yes □ No

22) What would you identify as the biggest change in your child due to deployment experiences?:

___________________________________________________________________________

23) What do you wish other adults (i.e. school staff) understood about your child’s deployment experiences?:

___________________________________________________________________________

Please list any services, support, or accommodations you wish the school would offer your child during deployment?:

___________________________________________________________________________
Questions about yourself:

1) Age: ______ years
2) Marital status: □ Married □ Single/Never Married □ Divorced/Separated
3) My gender: □ Male □ Female
4) My ethnicity: □ Caucasian □ African American
□ Native American □ Asian American
□ Pacific Islander □ Mixed
□ Other

5) Are you of Hispanic/Latino origin?: □ yes □ no
6) Were you born in the USA?: □ yes □ no
    If no, what is your country of birth?:________________________
7) My education level: □ High School/GED □ Associate’s Degree □ Bachelor’s Degree
□ Graduate Degree
8) Number of deployments experienced yourself (including current): □ 1 □ 2 □ 3 □ 4
□ 5 or more
9) Do you live on post? □ Yes □ No
    If no, distance to nearest base (miles):________________________
10) Have you experienced a pregnancy during this deployment?: □ yes □ no
11) Previous or current mental health issues you have experienced: □ Anxiety
    □ Depression □ Anger □ Other
    Are these conditions currently being experienced by you?: □ Yes □ No
    Were any of these conditions previously related to a deployment?: □ Yes □ No
12) Have any children in your household been diagnosed with any
    disabilities/conditions?:
    None: □ Yes □ No
    Learning Disabilities: □ Yes □ No
    Autism: □ Yes □ No
    ADHD: □ Yes □ No
    MMD/FMD/ID: □ Yes □ No
    Downs Syndrome: □ Yes □ No
    Other:________________________________________
13) Do any children in your household have any physical disabilities?: □ Yes □ No
    If yes, please describe:____________________________________

14) Please select any of the following that you have experienced as a change since beginning
    deployment:
    Difficulty sleeping: □ Yes □ No
    Fighting with spouse: □ Yes □ No
    Yelling at children more than previously: □ Yes □ No
    Crying: □ Yes □ No
    Loss of energy: □ Yes □ No

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15) What forms of news do you follow regarding the war?:
   Internet: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   TV: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Newspaper: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Magazines: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Other: ☐ Yes ☐ No

16) Communication Questions:
   How do you communicate with your deployed spouse?:
   E-mail: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Video Chat program: ☐ Yes ☐ No
     If yes, program name: ☐ Skype ☐ AKO Video Messaging
     ☐ Oovoo ☐ CamFrog ☐ iChat AV ☐ Other
   Facebook: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Web-based chat program: ☐ Yes ☐ No
     If yes, program name: ☐ AIM (AOL Instant Messenger)
     ☐ Skype chat ☐ Facebook Chat ☐ Windows Live Messenger
     ☐ Yahoo Messenger ☐ Other
   Phone: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Texting: ☐ Yes ☐ No
   Mail: ☐ Yes ☐ No

   For each form of communication used by you, how often and/or how long does this communication occur?:
   E-mail: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly
     Approximately how many emails a week do you send to your deployed spouse? __________
     Approximately how many emails a week do you receive from your deployed spouse? __________
   Webcam: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly
     Length of communication: ☐ Less than 10 minutes
     ☐ 10-25 minutes ☐ 25-60 minutes ☐ More than one hour
   Facebook: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly
   Web-based chat: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly
     Length of communication: ☐ Less than 10 minutes
     ☐ 10-25 minutes ☐ 25-60 minutes ☐ More than one hour
   Phone: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly
     Length of communication: ☐ Less than 10 minutes
     ☐ 10-25 minutes ☐ 25-60 minutes ☐ More than one hour
   Texting: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly
   Mail: ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ Bi-Weekly ☐ Monthly

   How would you rate the availability of communication throughout deployment?:
     ☐ Too infrequent ☐ Adequate communication ☐ Too available
What are your largest barriers to communication during deployment?:
- Spouse job/responsibilities
- Time differences
- Disruptions due to technology problems
- Cost
- Other: _______________

When you communicate with your spouse, what percent of time do you spend discussing the following topics?:
- Daily events: ____________%
- Special occasions: ____________%
- How much you miss them: ____________%
- Child Discipline: ____________%
- Safety Concerns (for deployed spouse): ____________%
- Other parenting decisions: ____________%
- Arguing over money: ____________%
- Arguing over child rearing: ____________%
- Other arguing: ____________%

Nature of arguing:
- Arguments occur: □ more than they did before deployment
- Arguments bother me: □ more than they did before deployment

When arguments occur during deployment, does your child witness these events?: □ Never □ Occasionally □ Seldom □ Frequently □ Always

17) Marital Relationship:
- How satisfying is your marriage now?: □ Very Satisfying □ Satisfying □ Neutral □ Unsatisfying
- How satisfying was your marriage before deployment?: □ Very Satisfying □ Satisfying □ Neutral □ Unsatisfying
Appendix C: Study Advertisement

Military Children Deployment Study

You are invited to participate in a study evaluating the experiences of military children and their families, especially those influenced by technological communication, throughout deployment. The study is being conducted by Rebecca Goodney, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky School Psychology Program.

The study involves your child's participation in an online interview (i.e. Skype, Facetime, etc.) which will last approximately one hour. Additionally, one parent will complete three surveys/measures regarding deployment experiences, which will be mailed to them. One of the measures will also be sent to a teacher identified by your family for completion.

Children will receive a small prize and parents will be entered for a chance to win a $25 gift card for participation in the study.

If your child is between the ages of 8-12 and either currently have a deployed parent or one who has been deployed within the past year, and you would like more information about participating, please contact Rebecca Goodney at xxxxx@xxxx.com or xxx-xxx-xxxx.
Appendix D: Consent Forms

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Deployment Experiences of Military Children

WHY ARE YOU AND YOUR CHILD BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about the deployment experiences of military children. You and your child are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a parent of a child who is or has recently experienced a military deployment of a parent. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about one hundred people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
The person in charge of this study is Rebecca Goodney of University of Kentucky Department of Education, School, and Counseling Psychology. She is a doctoral student being guided in this research by Dr. Julie Cerel and Dr. H. Thompson Prout.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
By doing this study, we hope to learn about the deployment experiences of military children and their families. More specifically, the investigators are trying to learn information about the effects of technology and media on children’s experiences of their parent’s military deployment to a war zone, as well as investigate the emotional changes experienced by children directly related to the deployment.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU OR YOUR CHILD SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
In order to participate, your child must be between the ages of 8-12 years old. Only one child per family is requested for participation in order to avoid repetitive data. Additionally, he/she must either currently have a parent deployed or the parent must have been deployed within the past year and willing to participate in the study.
In order for you to participate, you must be the parent of the child who you will be answering questions about in this study.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
The research procedures will be conducted at a public meeting place of convenience on or near Fort Sam Houston (i.e. library, conference room, community center, etc.) or via Skype with participants from any other active duty base. You and your child will need to come to the study location just once for the study. This visit will take about one hour. You will also be asked to fill out questionnaires online at your convenience either during the time your child is participating in the interview or over the week following your visit. The total amount of time you and your child will be asked to volunteer for this study is no more than an hour over the next week.

WHAT WILL YOU AND YOUR CHILD BE ASKED TO DO?
During the study session your child will participate in an individual interview. He/She will be discussing questions specific to their deployment experiences. These experiences will include their communication with their deployed parent, feelings throughout the deployment, as well as their observations of their family’s life during this time period. These questions will include topics regarding their observations of parent emotions, roles, and relationships. The interviews will be digitally audio recorded in order to allow the researcher to review the recordings at a later date as part of the data analysis. Your child will also be asked to complete a self-report measure, the BASC-2, to provide information about their emotions and behaviors. Children participating in online interviews will be mailed BASC-2 forms to complete. Following completion, you will be asked to return them via a preaddressed envelope provided.

Throughout the time of the interviews, you must remain in the facility for safety and security reasons. For online interviews, you must remain at home during the interview time. However, it is expected that you will not be in the same room as your participating child in order to give them privacy and ensure confidentiality of their interview answers. For your participation in this study you will be asked to complete a survey and the BASC-2 parent form. Surveys will ask about your child’s experiences and family life surrounding the deployment time period, your individual deployment experiences, and your child’s behaviors and adjustment during this time. Some of this information can be completed while your child’s interview is being conducted. If you wish, you may elect to complete the surveys online either during or after the interview session. BASC-2 forms will be completed during interview sessions for those children completing on site interviews. For children completing online interviews, you will receive a parent BASC-2 form in the same package as the one received by your child. You will be asked to complete the parent BASC-2 and return it with the child form in the provided preaddressed envelope. The interviews are expected to last approximately an hour and we expect it will only take you an hour total to complete the study questionnaires either in person, on-line, or via mail.
Additionally, you will be asked to give permission for one of your child’s teachers to complete a questionnaire regarding their observations of your child’s behaviors and feelings. Although the teacher will be asked to complete the measure, no information regarding your child, family, or any of your responses throughout the research process will be shared with him/her.

**WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?**
To the best of our knowledge, the things you and your child will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. However, during participation, information will be provided to all participants regarding counseling and mental health services in the event you feel it is necessary to contact these resources.

**WILL YOU OR YOUR CHILD BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
There is no guarantee that you or your child will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people have experienced relief when having the opportunity to answer questions and discuss their personal experiences. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

**DO YOU OR YOUR CHILD HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?**
If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering. Similarly, your child can choose whether or not to participate.

**WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?**
There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

**WILL YOU OR YOUR CHILD RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
Upon completion of your child’s participation in the interview session and your completion of the surveys and measures being conducted, you will be entered into a drawing for a $25 giftcard. Additionally, your child will receive a small gift for his/her participation in the study.

**WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU AND YOUR CHILD GIVE?**
We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you and your child to the extent allowed by law.

You and your child’s information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You and your child will not be
personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name, your child’s name, and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you and your child gave us information, or what that information is. The hard copies of measures and surveys completed for this study will be kept by the researcher in a locked cabinet at her home. For online surveys, the data will be collected and compiled on a website which is password protected. Only the research team will have access to the information. Data compiled on the computer will also be kept in password protected files.

We will keep private all research records that identify you and your child to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your or your child’s information to a court or to tell authorities if you or your child report information about a child being abused or if you or your child pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you or your child to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you and your child decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. Neither of you will be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you or your child from the study. This may occur if either of you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation for you and your child to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Rebecca Goodney at XXXX or XXXX@XX.XX. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of this consent form to take with you.
Printed name of your child taking part in the study

_________________________________________  ____________
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study     Date

_________________________________________
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study
Parental Consent for Teacher Participation

I, ____________________ (name), give permission for the teacher listed below to be contacted for the purpose of completing a questionnaire about my child for this study. I understand that the teacher will only be contacted with the request to complete the Behavior Assessment Scale for Children, second edition Teacher Rating Scale (BASC-2 TRS). Additionally, the only information about myself or my child being provided to the teacher will be my child’s name, so they know who they are answering questions about. The teacher will only be asked to provide answers to the questions on this measure, and will not be provided personal information or study results in return.

___________________________ _______________________
Parent name  Date

___________________________
Signature

___________________________
Child name

Please complete contact information for the teacher you wish to be contacted to complete the questionnaire.

Name: ________________________________

School Name: ____________________________

E-mail address: __________________________

Phone: _________________________________
WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about the deployment experiences of military children. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a parent of child who is or has recently experienced a military deployment of a parent. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about one hundred people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
The person in charge of this study is Rebecca Goodney of University of Kentucky Department of Education, School, and Counseling Psychology. She is a doctoral student being guided in this research by Dr. Julie Cerel and Dr. H. Thompson Prout.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
By doing this study, we hope to learn about the deployment experiences of military children and their families. More specifically, the investigators are trying to learn information about the effects of technology and media on children’s experiences of their parent’s military deployment to a war zone, as well as investigate the emotional changes experienced by children directly related to the deployment.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
In order to participate, your child, who you will be answering questions about throughout the study, must be between the ages of 8-12 years old. Additionally, they must either currently have a parent deployed or the parent must have been deployed within the past year and willing to participate in the study.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
The research procedures will be conducted online through the Qualtrics survey site. The survey will take about thirty minutes to complete.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?
For your participation in this study you will be asked to complete online surveys. Surveys will ask about your child’s experiences and family life surrounding the deployment time
period, your individual deployment experiences, and your child’s behaviors and adjustment during this time.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. However, some people have experienced relief when having the opportunity to answer questions and discuss their personal experiences. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?
If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?
There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
Upon completion of your survey questions you will be entered into a drawing for a $25 giftcard.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?
We will make every effort to keep private all research records that identify you and your child to the extent allowed by law.

The information you provide will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You and your child will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. For online surveys, the data will be collected and compiled on a website which is password protected. Only the research team
will have access to the access information. Data compiled on the computer will also be kept in password protected files.

Please be aware, while we make every effort to safeguard your data once received from the online survey/data gathering company, given the nature of online surveys, as with anything involving the Internet, we can never guarantee the confidentiality of the data while still on the survey/data gathering company’s servers, or while en route to either them or us. It is also possible the raw data collected for research purposes may be used for marketing or reporting purposes by the survey/data gathering company after the research is concluded, depending on the company’s Terms of Service and Privacy policies.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking part in the study.

The individuals conducting the study may need to withdraw you from the study. This may occur if you are not able to follow the directions they give you or if they find that your being in the study is more risk than benefit to you.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Rebecca Goodney at XXXX or XXXX@XXXX.XXXX. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. Please write this information down or print page in order to retain contact information for your records.
Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Deployment Experiences of Military Children

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?
You are being invited to take part in a research study about the deployment experiences of military children. You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a teacher of a child who is or has recently experienced a military deployment of a parent. The child’s parent provided your name as a teacher they preferred to be contacted to provide information about their child. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about twenty-five people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?
The person in charge of this study is Rebecca Goodney of University of Kentucky Department of Education, School, and Counseling Psychology. She is a doctoral student being guided in this research by Dr. Julie Cerel and Dr. H. Thompson Prout.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?
By doing this study, we hope to learn about the deployment experiences of military children and their families. More specifically, the investigators are trying to learn information about the effects of technology and media on children’s experiences of their parent’s military deployment to a war zone, as well as investigate the emotional changes experienced by children directly related to the deployment.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?
In order to participate, you must be a teacher of a student who either currently has a parent deployed or a parent who was deployed within the past year.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?
The research procedures you are asked to participate in include completing a behavior measure about your student. You may complete this measure at your convenience at home or school, then return it to the researcher in the envelope provided. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is no more than thirty minutes over the next week.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?
During your participation in the study you will be asked to complete the BASC-2, a common behavior measure used in school and psychological practices. The measure will ask you to answer numerous questions about the child’s behaviors and feelings according to your observations of him/her during your relationship. When you receive the BASC-2, you will also be provided a pre-addressed envelope. Once complete, you will be asked to return all forms to the researcher via the pre-addressed envelope.
WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?
To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help society as a whole better understand this research topic.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?
If you decide to take part in the study, it should be because you really want to volunteer. You will not lose any benefits or rights you would normally have if you choose not to volunteer. You can stop at any time during the study and still keep the benefits and rights you had before volunteering.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?
There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?
You will not receive any rewards or payment for taking part in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?
The information you provide will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. The hard copies of measures and surveys completed for this study will be kept by the researcher in a locked cabinet at the her home.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your information to a court or to tell authorities if you report information about a child being abused or if you pose a danger to yourself or someone else. Also, we may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.
CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?
If you decide to take part in the study you still have the right to decide at any time that you
no longer want to continue. You will not be treated differently if you decide to stop taking
part in the study.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR
COMPLAINTS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any
questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns,
or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Rebecca Goodney at
XXXX or XXXX@XX.XX. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in
this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of
Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of
this consent form to take with you.

_________________________________________  ____________
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study      Date

_________________________________________
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study
ASSENT FORM

Deployment Experiences of Military Children

You are invited to be in a research study being done by Rebecca Goodney from the University of Kentucky. You are invited because you have or recently have had a parent deployed with the Army.

If you agree to be in the study, you will be asked to talk to Rebecca about your recently deployed parent. Rebecca will be asking you questions about your experiences and you will be able to discuss your feelings and answers. The discussion will be audio recorded so Rebecca can review the recordings later and remember what you said. Also, you will be asked to answer some questions on a few papers you will be given by Rebecca. These questions will be about how you are feeling now, as well as things that may have changed because of your parent’s deployment.

At the end of the discussion time you will be given a small gift (i.e. a camouflage bracelet or pencil) for taking time to answer Rebecca’s questions. If you are participating in the interview online, you will receive your gift in the mail following the interview.

Your family will know that you are in the study. If anyone else is given information about you, they will not know your name. A number will be used instead of your name.

If something makes you feel bad while you are in the study, such as talking about your feelings, please tell Rebecca. If you decide at any time you do not want to finish the study, you may stop whenever you want.

You can ask Rebecca questions any time about anything in this study. You can also ask your parent any questions you might have about this study.

Signing this paper means that you have read this and/or had it read to you, and that you want to be in the study. If you do not want to be in the study, do not sign the paper. Being in the study is up to you, and no one will be mad if you do not sign this paper or even if you change your mind later. You agree that you have been told about this study and why it is being done and what to do.

________________________________________  ____________
Signature of Person Agreeing to be in the Study Date Signed
Works Cited


Lambert, L. (2004). When military parents are sent to war, children left behind need ample support. JAMA, 292(13), 1541-1542.


Vita

Rebecca Goodney

Education
M.S. University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY  
2007 Department of Educational Psychology, School Psychology

B.S. Pennsylvania State University, Erie, PA,  
2005 B.S. High Distinction: Psychology  
Schreyer’s Honors College

Professional Experience

December 2011-December 2012  Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Tutor, Three Tier Consulting, Watertown, NY

April 2011- December 2011  Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) Tutor, Autism Services North, Watertown, NY


August 2007- May 2008  
School Psychology Practicum, Hospice of the Bluegrass, Lexington, Kentucky.

August 2006- May 2007  
School Psychology Practicum, Fayette County School District, Lexington, Kentucky.

August 2005- June 2006  
Research Assistant, Reading First Evaluation, Collaborative Center for Literacy Development, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky.

Research Experience

2012-2014  
Principal Investigator, Dissertation Research Project, University of Kentucky with Julie Cerel, Ph.D. and H. Thompson Prout, Ph.D.
Conducting individual child interviews and parent and teacher survey and behavioral measures to investigate the deployment experiences of military children related to technology, media, and potential loss and growth issues.

2010  
Principal Investigator, Pre-Dissertation Research Project, University of Kentucky with Julie Cerel, Ph.D.
Conducted a secondary analysis of a pre-existing data set to investigate teens’ perspectives on the suicide attempts of their parents.

2009  
Group Research, University of Kentucky with Julie Cerel, Ph.D. and Julie Kaplow, Ph.D.

2008  
Group Research, University of Kentucky with Julie Cerel, Ph.D.
Completed research with Dr. Cerel and four other authors researching the effects of parental bereavement on children, as observed by the children’s teachers.
2005 Individuals Research, The Pennsylvania State University, Schreyer’s Honors Thesis with Dawn Blasko, Ph.D., Charisse Nixon, Ph.D., and Derek Mace, M.S.
Proposed and conducted original research re: Stereotype Threat Theory and Gender in a Private Setting; data input and analysis using SPSS; write-up in APA style; thesis defense.

2004 Group Research, The Pennsylvania State University with Charisse Nixon, Ph.D.
Proposed and conducted original research with one other student re: Change Detection and Working Memory Capacity in College Students; data input and analysis using SPSS; write-up in APA style and poster presentation.

Presentations


___________________________________
Rebecca Goodney