LIFE IN THE ARMY: A CASE STUDY OF JUNIOR-ENLISTED SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH DEPLOYMENT RESOURCES AND EXPERIENCES

by

David Estrada, Jr.

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families endure when preparing for a deployment. This study sought to answer the research question: What are the experiences of military families before and during the deployment of a junior enlisted soldier to include challenges or successes with existing deployment resources and programs? A total of 10 participants were selected utilizing criterion sampling for this study and solicited volunteers from junior-enlisted soldiers and their families in the U.S. Army. The Relational Turbulence Theory served as the theoretical framework for this study and utilized the following data collection methods: (a) one-to-one interviews, (b) focus groups with both the military spouse and soldier, and (c) a completion of a survey named the Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation- Military questionnaire. The data analysis portion utilized (a) thematic analysis for one-to-one interviews, (b) comparative analysis for the focus group, and (c) descriptive statistics for the parent survey. The results of this study included the emergence of three themes that illuminates the challenges and successes of junior-enlisted families and deployment preparations. Findings from this suggest that military families rely on information through personal and organizational support networks, word of mouth, and the soldier’s unit to prepare for deployments. This research study was used to design a briefing for junior-enlisted military families who are preparing for future deployments.

Keywords: military deployment, military child, deployment resources, military deployment effects
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©, 2021, David Estrada, Jr.
I dedicate this manuscript to Jehovah, my wife, and our unborn son, David Elijah. I hope that this manuscript will serve as a testimony for others that all things are possible with Christ. From day one of this journey, God provided the resources, people, and energy required to complete this project in His time. This journey has taught me so much about praising, praying, and listening for the Lord. No matter the season or the obstacle - Jehovah took every mountain and moved it into the sea. We serve a mighty God!
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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... 3
Copyright Page ................................................................................................................ 4
Dedication .......................................................................................................................... 5
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................ 6
List of Tables .................................................................................................................... 10
List of Figures .................................................................................................................. 11
List of Abbreviations ....................................................................................................... 12
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 13
  Overview ....................................................................................................................... 13
  Background .................................................................................................................... 13
    Historical Background ................................................................................................. 14
    Social Background ...................................................................................................... 15
    Theoretical Background ............................................................................................. 16
  Situation to Self ............................................................................................................. 17
  Problem Statement ....................................................................................................... 19
  Purpose Statement ....................................................................................................... 20
  Significance of the Study .............................................................................................. 20
  Research Questions ...................................................................................................... 21
  Definitions ..................................................................................................................... 22
  Summary ....................................................................................................................... 23
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ................................................................................ 25
  Overview ....................................................................................................................... 25
  Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................. 25
    Relational Turbulence Theory ..................................................................................... 25
    Parent-Child Separation Populations ........................................................................ 27
    Cultural Capital .......................................................................................................... 31
  Review of the Literature ............................................................................................... 34
    Military Culture .......................................................................................................... 35
    Supports to Develop Adaptability and Resilience of Military Community ............ 36
    Officers vs. Junior Enlisted Soldiers .......................................................................... 39
    Combat Deployments ................................................................................................. 40
    Deployment Resources .............................................................................................. 41
Challenges of Deployments Among Military Families ........................................... 43
Military Deployment Cycle ................................................................................. 50
Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory as a Superior Lens .................................. 51
Summary ............................................................................................................. 54
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS .............................................................................. 57
Overview ............................................................................................................ 57
Design ................................................................................................................ 57
Research Questions ............................................................................................ 58
Central Research Question ................................................................................. 58
Sub-question One .............................................................................................. 58
Sub-question Two ............................................................................................... 58
Sub-question Three ........................................................................................... 59
Setting .................................................................................................................. 59
Participants ......................................................................................................... 59
The Researcher’s Role ......................................................................................... 61
Procedures .......................................................................................................... 63
Data Collection and Analysis ............................................................................ 64
Interviews ............................................................................................................ 64
Focus Groups ..................................................................................................... 68
Survey ................................................................................................................ 72
Ethical Considerations ....................................................................................... 74
Summary ............................................................................................................. 74
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ............................................................................... 75
Overview ............................................................................................................ 75
Participants ......................................................................................................... 75
Jessica ............................................................................................................... 77
Tony .................................................................................................................. 77
Vanessa .............................................................................................................. 78
Roger ............................................................................................................... 78
Christine ............................................................................................................ 79
Susan ................................................................................................................ 79
Danny ................................................................................................................. 79
Robert ................................................................................................................. 80
Caitlin ................................................................................................................ 80
List of Tables

Table 1: Interview Participant List ................................................................. 58
Table 2: Focus Group Participant List ............................................................. 68
Table 3: Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation-Military Survey ........ 69
Table 4: Theme 1 Junior-Enlisted Military Lifestyle ......................................... 79
Table 5: FIRA-M Survey Response Question 3 ................................................ 83
Table 6: Theme 2 Deployment Resources and Organizational Support ............ 88
Table 7: Predeployment Soldier Checklist ....................................................... 89
Table 8: FIRA-M Survey Response Question 10 ............................................. 91
Table 9: FIRA-M Survey Response Question 11 .............................................. 93
Table 10: Theme 3 Navigating the Deployment Experience ............................. 95
Table 11: FIRA-M Survey Response Question 15 ........................................... 97
List of Figures

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model ........................................................................52
List of Abbreviations

Department of Defense (DoD)
Relational Turbulence Theory (RTT)
Relational Turbulence Model (RTM)
Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation – Military (FIRA-M)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and their families endure when preparing for a deployment. A resurgence in global conflicts in the Middle East has led to an increase in both the frequency and duration of U.S. military deployments among active duty and reserve service members. This increase in deployment tours has resulted in more frequent and longer separations among service members and their families. Additionally, Peebles-Kleiger and Kleiger (1994) reports, “Mobilization and preparing for prolonged deployment to a hostile combat theater environment has been identified as one of the most stressful aspects of military life” (p. 153). The increase in deployment tours has led to the development and implementation of family resources and support programs to assist with preparing for deployments. A review of the literature reveals a gap in research regarding military deployments among junior-enlisted families and the utilization of said deployment resources.

Chapter One provides the reader with an overview of the study and includes the following sections: (a) background, (b) problem statement, (c) purpose statement, (d) significance of the study, (e) research questions, (f) definitions, and (g) summary. This study will examine the knowledge and engagement levels of junior-enlisted military families with existing deployment resources. This research will fill a gap in the literature regarding deployment preparations and utilization of existing deployment programs and resources among junior-enlisted families.

Background

The background section introduces the historical, social, and theoretical concepts associated with deployments and military family units to the reader. The historical aspects of
military deployments and phases of the deployment cycle are introduced to the reader and will be further explored in the literature review. Research findings from previous studies on the military family unit and the impact of deployments are examined in the social section. The theoretical section introduces the reader to the theory that will be utilized to complete this study.

**Historical Background**

Military deployments include the separation of the active duty soldier or soldiers from their family unit for an extended period of time. This period of separation is determined by several variables that may include but are not limited to the following: (a) mission requirements, (b) deployment timelines, (c) availability of manpower and resources, and (d) military job assignment. Military families have reported experiencing active duty parent deployments that can include one or two parents absent from the home for an extended period. Research on the deployment process revealed that each phase of a deployment has emotional and psychological implications that military families may experience (Skomorovsky & Bullock, 2017). Moeller et al. (2015) reported, “Following the 11th September, attack in New York, Service Members faced [sic] increasingly lengthy combat deployments and more woman Service Members were deployed than ever before…” (p. 292). The increase in frequency and longer separation periods of deployments has created a need for additional research to support the military family unit.

Military deployments involve the removal of a service member from their assigned home military installation and to report to a different destination. Deployments to another destination occur based on the needs of the U.S. Armed Forces and can include supporting the following objectives: (a) peace-keeping missions, (b) war zones, and (c) training exercises. De Pedro et al. (2018) asserted that military deployments cause an increase in stress among families.
According to Knobloch and Theiss (2018), the deployment cycle includes the following four stages: pre-deployment, deployment, redeployment, and post-deployment. The pre-deployment phase is noted as an anxious period for the family who receives notice of an upcoming deployment and prepares for an extended absence (De Pedro et al., 2018). Past studies on the rise in frequency and duration of deployment have focused on factors among military families to better prepare for upcoming deployments (Spera, 2009). The deployment phase begins once the soldier leaves the home to report to their new duty station and remain separated from their family for several months (De Pedro et al., 2018). Following the deployment phase, active duty soldiers enter the homecoming process categorized into two sub-stages that includes the redeployment and post-deployment periods. The redeployment period begins one month before the soldier returns home, during this stage, families self-report cycling through emotions of worry and excitement in anticipation of rebuilding connections (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018). Post-deployment begins upon the soldier reuniting with their family and can last for approximately 6 months (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018). With a smaller military force, the increase in length of deployments for active duty personnel may last up to 18 months and experience as many as 4 or more deployments during a military career (Gilreath et al., 2016).

**Social Background**

Military deployments impact the entire family unit. Ohye et al. (2016) reported that research on deployment cycles among military children reveals that a parent’s return is a stressor among children. Military-connected children who are exposed to multiple and prolonged deployments experience cumulative stress caused by repeated parental absence and re-entry into the family (Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015). The impact of military-parent deployments and family reintegration on the emotional and behavioral health of children has been identified as a concern
for families, schools, and healthcare professionals for many years to come (Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015).

Military deployments of active duty parents have historically involved children only having access to a single-parent or designated guardian during the deployment cycle (Cole, 2016). Huebner et al. (2009) identified additional stressors adolescents endure associated with parental deployment to include frequent relocations, changing peer groups, and day-to-day uncertainty regarding whether their parent will deploy. Research by Cederbaum et al. (2014) also suggested that the well-being of young adolescents may be dependent on the ability of the non-deployed parent coping ability with the deployment. Lastly, Cederbaum et al. (2014) asserted, “Adolescents who experienced more familial deployments were more likely to report symptoms of depression and suicidal ideation” (p.676).

An increase in deployments has created an opportunity to expand the literature regarding military families and potentially illuminate to help military-connected children cope with the absence of the deployed parent. Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) found that research on older, school-age children in military families connects children’s emotional and behavioral problems to the cumulative length of a parent’s deployment. Cederbaum et al. (2014) reported that adolescents, in comparison to school-age children, have a better understanding of the consequences of war and its impact on their immediate family. However, Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) suggested that families who talk to their children and reassure them regarding a deployment are more likely to adapt to the absence of a parent.

**Theoretical Background**

The *relational turbulence model* (RTM) served as a catalyst for designing and framing the research questions for this study. The RTM is described by Knobloch et al. (2015) as a model
for how individuals can experience transitions within interpersonal relationships (Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Solomon, Weber, & Steuber, 2010). Knobloch et al. (2015) stated, “The model argues [sic] that transitions are turbulent because individuals grapple with uncertainty about their relationships and encounter interference in their daily routines” (p.321). Baptist et al. (2015) found that adolescent relationships with both parents are determined by the communication of the non-deployed parent and can influence the relationship with the deployed parent while abroad. Subsequently, as research on the military family unit and the effects of deployments continued to grow as the RTM has now evolved into the relational turbulence theory (RTT).

The relational turbulence theory will serve as the conceptual framework for this study. The foundation of RTT suggests both cognitive and emotional forces influence communicative responses within relationship events (Solomon & Brisini, 2019). Military families can experience these forces when reuniting after a deployment and Solomon and Brisini (2019) offer, “Examining associations between relationship qualities and communication behavior also addresses the more prominent role afforded to communication within RTT as both an outcome of and influence of relational parameters” (p. 2421). Lastly, it is important to note that following the completion of this study, findings suggested the selection of another theoretical framework.

**Situation to Self**

My primary motivation for conducting this study was to support the men, women, and families of the United States Armed Forces. I am a former military dependent and traveled across the globe with my family. My father served in the United States Army Infantry for over 20 years. I have had the privilege of serving military families for over 10 years in both my professional career and work closely with military schools. My career experience has included serving military families in both the public and private education sector near military installations for
over 10-years in the United States to include: (a) Fort Bragg, (b) Fort Benning, (c) Fort Rucker, and (d) NC Public Schools. I intended this research to be used for the following: (a) to glorify God, (b) to illuminate issues regarding the lack of knowledge and engagement with deployment resources among junior-enlisted families, and (c) to contribute to the lack of literature regarding junior-enlisted deployment preparations.

For this study, I adopted pragmatism as the paradigm to guide my study and develop the research questions that are aligned to my selection of the following philosophical assumptions: (a) ontological, (b) epistemological, (c) rhetorical, and (d) axiological that are later discussed in this section. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018, para 1) reasserted scholars have embraced pragmatism as the “…optimal worldview or paradigm for mixed methods research”. However, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) asserted that a dialectical perspective or the integration of multiple worldviews in a mixed methods research is appropriate when the design and worldview are explicitly identified within the study. A review of the literature regarding pragmatism from Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) described pragmatism as an approach to include the mixing of both qualitative and quantitative data sets and may utilize a combination of deductive and inductive thinking from the researcher.

The research questions and methods that I utilized in my study are reflective of ontological, epistemological, rhetorical, and axiological assumptions from the pragmatism paradigm. An ontology that is inclusive of the nature of reality is defined to include both singular and multiple realities as the researcher seeks to gather the realities of the participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) described the epistemology of pragmatism as the utilization of a practical approach to collect data by what works to address the research question. The rhetoric assumption within the pragmatism paradigm utilizes both formal
and informal styles of writing regarding the research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Lastly, the axiological assumption within my research provided an opportunity for me to analyze the biased and unbiased perspectives of the research process to illuminate problems surrounding limited knowledge and engagement among junior-enlisted families (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

**Problem Statement**

The problem is a lack of knowledge and engagement with deployment resources among junior-enlisted military families. Troxel et al. (2016) indicated that future research is needed among enlisted families to illuminate what factors or constructs limit family engagement regarding deployment preparations. Military families who utilized deployment resources included behavioral health resources, family readiness groups, and units that were critical to the well-being of the family during a deployment (Goodman et al., 2013). Troxel et al. (2016) affirmed this need and reported that older spouses, officers, active component members, and spouses who indicated experiencing higher marital satisfaction self-reported greater participation in deployment preparation. Collins et al. (2017) indicated that both military families and service members might report one or more difficulties with deployments.

Findings from this study provided insight into the communication patterns that occur between military families as they prepare for a deployment. According to Trautmann et al. (2018), deployments can be a stressful time for families and are associated with a range of adverse mental health outcomes for the military family. Research on military deployments continues to expand within the literature; however, limited to no research exists among junior-enlisted families and their engagement with deployment resources. This research utilized a multimethod approach that included the use of interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires to
study junior-enlisted families and their level of knowledge and engagement with deployment resources.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this case study is to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families endure when preparing for a deployment. A mixed-method research design was used, consisting of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The first approach included the use of separate semi-structured interviews between the military spouse and junior-enlisted soldier. For the second approach I conducted focus groups with both the junior-enlisted soldier and military spouse. I selected a quantitative approach for the third and last method that required all participants to complete the *Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation - Military* (FIRA-M) survey.

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study may fill a partial gap in the literature and illuminate issues that surround a lack of engagement with deployment preparation services by some military families. The deployment of an active duty parent has different implications for all stakeholders who are a part of the active duty soldiers’ deployment, including the spouse, or caretaker, of adolescents, adolescents of deployed parents. The theory guiding this study is the relational turbulence theory as it measures the communication patterns of military spouses and soldiers when preparing for an upcoming deployment and interacting with deployment resources. Military spouses, service members, and children need programs that meet the specific needs of a diverse sub-population. The Research And Development Corporation (RAND) has completed research among military families to study various challenges endured in the Armed Forces. Research from Tanielian et al. (2014) revealed that deployments could negatively affect service
members, spouses, and children. The service member who is physically separated from their family during the deployment is at risk of suffering physical injuries and trauma from combat and strained relationships with both their spouses and children (Tanielian et al., 2014).

Research on spouses of service members reveals that a service member’s deployment can affect military spouses in at least three ways to include anxiety due to separation from the service member for extended periods, changes in routine and absorbing additional household and childcare responsibilities and readjusting to the return of a service member who may suffer from traumatic experiences from the deployment (Tanielian et al., 2014). Lastly, the military child is at greater risk of experiencing difficulties that can include attention problems and struggles in schooling (Aranda et al., 2011). The military community may benefit from research on current support programs and resources targeted to prepare military families for both the physical and psychosocial challenges associated with the deployment of their service members.

Research Questions

The research questions were developed from the purpose and problem statements that guide the work of this study. This study includes one central question and three sub-questions that involves interviewing, conducting a focus group, and completing a survey to illuminate the issues that surround junior-enlisted military families when preparing for a deployment and interacting with deployment resources.

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of military families before and during the deployment of a junior enlisted soldier to include challenges or successes with existing deployment resources and programs?
**Sub-question One**

What are military spouse perceptions before and during the deployment of a junior-enlisted soldier that might address the challenges of limited access and engagement with deployment resources for enlisted military families preparing for a parent-deployment?

**Sub-question Two**

What obstacles do junior-enlisted active duty soldiers endure when preparing their families for an upcoming deployment?

**Sub-question Three**

What is the effectiveness of available resources and programs in creating awareness for military families preparing for an upcoming deployment?

**Definitions**

1. *Relational Turbulence Model* – The relational turbulence model considers how individuals experience transitions with interpersonal relationships (Knobloch et al., 2015; Knobloch & Theiss, 2012; Solomon et al., 2010).

2. *Enlisted* – Enlisted soldiers are the most important part of the Army structure. They carry out orders and complete missions (GoArmy.com, 2018).

3. *Junior Enlisted* – Soldiers who currently hold or have served in any of the following ranks: (a) Private (E-1), (b) Private Second Class (E-2), (c) Private First Class (E-3), (d) Army Specialist (E-4), and (e) Corporal (E-4) (Militarybenefits.info, 2021).

4. *Officer* – Officers are the managers and planners of the Army. There are two types of Officers: traditional commissioned Officers and Warrant Officers. Commissioned officers are responsible for planning missions and operations and commanding units (GoArmy.com, 2018).
5. Senior Officer – Within this study participants defined senior officers as commissioned officers who hold the following ranks: (a) Second Lieutenant (O1), (b) First Lieutenant (O2), and (c) Captain (O3). However, these ranks are considered middle management in the United States Armed Forces (Militarybenefits.info, 2021).

6. Deployment – Military deployment is the movement of armed forces. Deployments may include any movement from a military personnel’s home station to somewhere outside the continental U.S. and its territories. Deployments may last up to 15-months (U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, 2020).

7. Pre-deployment – a time of preparation for the military family that includes: (a) military training, (b) family preparation regarding home and vehicle maintenance, (c) doing wills and taxes, (d) and planning holidays that the service member will miss (Louie & Cromer, 2014).

8. Senior Leader – Commissioned Officers in the United States Armed Forces who hold the following ranks: (a) Major (O4), (b) Lieutenant Colonel (O5), (c) Colonel (O6), (d) Brigadier General (O7), (e) Major General (O8), (f) Lieutenant General (O9), and (g) General (O10) (Militarybenefits.info, 2021).

Summary

The purpose of this case study is to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families endure when preparing for a deployment. Completion of this research will add to existing literature regarding the support of military families during a deployment. This support includes awareness and engagement with deployment resources and programs. Chapter 1 introduces this case study and background information that references the historical, social, and theoretical aspects of this study. The problem, purpose statement, and significance are included
to justify the need for this study regarding military families preparing for a deployment and engaging with existing deployment resources. Lastly, the research questions and definitions are noted and will be further explored in chapter 2.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The literature review expounds upon the research and findings associated with military families and deployments. Chapter 2 is organized into several sections to orient the reader with current and past research that supported this study. The theoretical framework, related literature section, and summary provided an in-depth analysis of current literature on the military family unit and draws comparisons to civilian counterparts when necessary. Lastly, this literature review assisted in the development of the research methods and questions with conducting this study regarding junior-enlisted military families.

Theoretical Framework

The selection of a theoretical framework enabled me to design narrow and intentional research questions to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted families endure with preparing for deployments. This section includes the selected theory for this study and its origins from previous research that dates to the twentieth century. The relational turbulence theory was selected for this study that was developed from two separate theories to describe the interpersonal communication patterns between romantically involved couples. The following section will provide an overview of RTT and its alignment to this study.

Relational Turbulence Theory

Previous research with both the uncertainty reduction theory and Mandler’s theory of emotion led to the development of the relational turbulence theory (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001). Holladay (2016) describes the uncertainty reduction theory as a model to categorize the feeling of uncertainty that people may experience and a lack of knowledge and or predictability as primary motivators for interpersonal communication. Mandler’s theory of emotion is
described by McLeod and Adams (1989) as an inconsistency a person may experience between what is expected and what actually occurs that produces physiological arousal. This study will utilize RTT to conduct a multimethod study to evaluate and identify trends within the communication process between partners to measure the knowledge and engagement levels with deployment resources among junior-enlisted family units.

Prior to the inception of RTT, the theory first began as the Relational Turbulence Model (RTM). Solomon and Knobloch (2001) developed the Relational Turbulence Model to further explain the phenomenon of relationship uncertainty, partner interference, and intimacy within dating relationships. Most recently, RTT has been used in research to identify how military families communicate following a deployment during the reunion period. A synthesis of the literature regarding RTT completed by Knobloch and Theiss (2018), describes the evolution of RTT from the Relational Turbulence model and its potential regarding efforts to study military couples involved in romantic relationships who have experienced transition with the last two phases (i.e., deployment and reunion) of the deployment cycle. Solomon et al. (2016) also explained how RTM addresses theoretical ambiguities within perspective and applies a heuristic framework distributed over 3-domains.

The RTT will be utilized as the theoretical framework for this study to illuminate issues surrounding limited engagement and lack of knowledge with deployment resources among military families. The RTT has been used by several scholars (e.g., Solomon et al., 2016) to study the role of communication, its impact, and how these dynamic influences marital satisfaction between partners. The RTT was also described as advantageous regarding applicability to be utilized by researchers to theorize about the experiences of military couples.
Knobloch and Theiss (2018) describe how RTT addresses the gaps of the Relational Turbulence Model with previous research and state:

Relational turbulence theory addresses this gap by (a) articulating the processes through which relational uncertainty and interference from a partner give rise to reactivity during times of transition; (b) describing the way cognitive, emotional, and communicative reactivity are related; and (c) clarifying how repeated tumultuous episodes coalesce into broader perceptions of the relationship as turbulent. (p. 538)

This study will add to the research literature on RTT and explore constructs among junior-enlisted military families that influence limited knowledge and engagement with deployment resources and support programs before and during military deployments. The following section will provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of populations that experience parent-child separations.

**Parent-Child Separation Populations**

A review of the literature with parent-child separations is one of several constructs analyzed to examine how civilians interact with separations that military families also experience from military deployments. Unlike military families who plan for the return of the deployed soldier, separations among civilians may occur under various circumstances (e.g., divorce, parent incarceration, & foster care). However, military families may also experience unexpected separations due to military deployments and is a contractual obligation of the military soldier. Tiemeyer et al. (1999) also affirmed that while single soldiers may encounter difficulties during deployments, it is enlisted members with spouses or children who experience the greatest stress. The following section will review parent-child separations and the current literature to investigate the experiences that family units experience with separations.
According to Paccione-Dyszlewski (2018), parent-child separations occur when children are abruptly separated from their parent(s), and results in the development of a gap regarding the attachment relationship between the parent and child that includes (a) unmet physical and social-emotional needs of the child, and (b) the breaking of the parent/child trust bond. A review of the literature indicates that parent-child separations may occur due to maltreatment, homelessness, imprisonment, detainment, and separation or divorce of parents (Galatzer-Levy & Kraus, 1999). However, Humphreys (2019) asserted that children whose parents travel for employment, which includes military families and seasonal farmworkers, also experience parent-child separations. Mena et al. (2008) indicated that parent-child separations might have damaging effects on children, especially parent-child separations, that occur for extended periods and advocates for future research. The following sections will discuss other populations of parent-child separations, including parent-child separation due to incarcerated parents, divorce, and foster homes.

**Children of Incarcerated Parents**

Turney and Goodsell (2018) estimate that 2.6 million children, or roughly 4 percent of children under the age of 18, have a parent(s) incarcerated in the United States. Research by Western and Smith (2018) hypothesizes that children and parents may experience difficulties following a release from incarceration that may include (a) economic security, (b) complexity of family relationships, and (c) criminal involvement and drug use. However, Kjellstrand et al. (2018) assert that families that experience the incarceration of a parent do not “destine a child to a life of problems” (p. 1744). Findings from a study completed by Johnson et al. (2018) asserted that implications for youth vary and stated, “Some youth are thriving, some are functioning well, some are both struggling and exhibiting difficulties in a number of settings” (p. 1925).
Challenges that children of incarcerated parents experience include an increase in mental health symptoms, academic struggles, and adverse behavioral manifestations. Johnson and Easterling (2015) illuminate the scant empirical research available that describes how young people cope with parental incarceration. However, Smyke et al. (2017) revealed that young children with incarcerated parents have difficulty with the preservation of parent closeness following the release of an incarcerated parent. Educational challenges that children of incarcerated parents experience include an adverse effect on reading comprehension and math problem-solving skills among girls (Johnson et al., 2018). However, Nichols et al. (2016) reported that many youths appear to be resilient with the incarceration of a parent and succeed with academic, social, and professional lives. Children of divorced parents may also experience parent-child separations. I will examine the literature of children with divorced parents to highlight the challenges experienced by this population.

**Children of Divorced Parents**

Fagan and Churchill (2012) estimate that approximately one million children in the United States experience parental divorce every year. Children of divorced parents may also experience challenges like children of incarcerated parents. Theunissen et al. (2017) indicated that children of divorced parents perform worse in school than their peers with intact families, including an increase in behavioral manifestations, and suffer from low self-esteem that interferes with social relationships. Statistical evidence from Kalmijn (2016) affirmed that strong and significant effects, statistically, indicate that girls who experience the divorce of parents experience more negative effects (i.e., Cohens $d = 0.28$ for girls and $d =0.14$ for boys).

Research with children of divorced parents indicates struggle with academics. Nusinovici et al. (2018) described that poor academic achievement among children of divorced parents
could be a result of intermarital conflict and/or a lack of parental commitment to the child’s education. However, Williams (2002) reported that children whose custodial parents remarried after the divorce also performed worse academically than peers who remained in divorced single-parent families. Yet, statistical findings among boys who have more contact with their non-resident father, also experience greater depressive symptoms if an interparental conflict occurs (Kalmijn, 2016). Subsequently, Kalmijn (2016) suggested that parents who are divorcing or already divorced consider implementing co-parenting models that encourage respect and allows for the non-custodial parent to continue bonding with the child. Limited research exists according to Cummings et al. (2012), whether exposure to marital conflict and emotional insecurity about interparental conflict in early childhood are related to a child’s ability to adjust in later developmental periods. Another population that experiences parent-child separation is children of foster parents. I will examine the literature on children of foster parents to determine if academic challenges, behavioral manifestations, and mental health symptoms exist among this population.

Children of Foster Parents

Oswald et al. (2010) described that children placed in foster care might exhibit an array of complex behaviors influenced by adverse experiences that may include (a) maltreatment, (b) witnessing of violence, (c) parental substance, (d) mental health concerns, and (e) chaotic and/or impoverished living conditions. Tarren-Sweeney (2008) affirmed that foster children might develop mental health problems if they experience instability with long-term placement in the foster care system or experience longer exposure to an adverse environment. Research by Lewis et al. (2007) claimed that the plausibility regarding higher rates of behavior manifestations in foster children might be the result of biological, genetic, or and/or prenatal risks. However,
Brooks and Barth (1998) refuted this claim with research findings that indicates, “…children not placed at birth were six times as likely as children placed at birth to exhibit problem behavior, regardless of placement type” (p. 497). Stovall and Dozier (2000) reported that foster care creates a host of implications for foster children that include (a) radical change in family structure, (b) reformation of relationships, and (c) establishment of relationships.

Osborn et al. (2008) reported that a small percentage of foster children do not achieve long-term placement to include children with histories of severe maltreatment and/or disorderly conduct. Goemans et al. (2018) also affirmed previous studies that have repeatedly identified a correlation between parental stress levels and children’s behavioral outcomes and state, “…higher levels of stress correspond to higher levels of behavioral problems” (p. 991). Emerson & Lovitt (2003) estimated that 50% of foster care children who receive special education services are classified with an emotional and behavioral disorder. However, Parkman and Folkman (2015) argued that under-identification within special education service programs prevents some foster care students from receiving key support services and protections. The following section provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of cultural capital and its influence on research.

**Cultural Capital**

The experiences of families and children who endure a parent-child separation may incur a deficit regarding cultural capital. Cultural capital is described by Bourdieu (1986) as the collective experiences and training that a child received from their parents that enables children to navigate adulthood. Bourdieu (1986) coined the phrase cultural capital to capture three forms: objectified, institutional, and embodied. Hinojosa et al. (2019) said that Bourdieu was “primarily concerned with how forms of capital link individuals to the wider structures of power within the
Hinojosa et al. (2019) described Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital as the assets an individual may possess or incur and provides them with advantages to be successful in society. Hinojosa et al. (2019) defined cultural capital in three domains that include: (a) objectified capital, (b) institutional cultural capital, and (c) embodied capital. Objectified capital is defined by scholars (Hinojosa et al., 2019) to include forms of knowledge, experience, and skillsets to demonstrate understanding. Huang (2015) defined institutional cultural capital as the knowledge of an institution that could be utilized to gain access to institutional commodities such as (a) money, prestige, and power that may provide an advantage within any social construct or field. Shilling (2012) defined embodied capital, as that which is enfleshed in an individual and conveyed as patterns of linguistic communication patterns, posture, and physical abilities.

Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is widely contested among scholars. Interest in Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital is utilized by researchers in education to address and close the achievement gap of subcultures in public school systems in the United States. The findings from prior research suggest that the strongest academic effect was demonstrable in English, “where language skills and cultural capital exerted influence” (Georg, 2016, p. 108). This finding asserts that children performed better academically in language arts than their peers due to cultural capital development including: (a) experiences regarding participation in classical musical concerts, (b) participating in the arts, (c) reading classical literature, and (d) exhibited confidence with the arts.

Research with cultural capital has sought to explain how it is transmitted across generations with transmission occurring from the parent to the child. This transmission of cultural capital includes the collective knowledge of the parent that includes: (a) social, (b) economic, and (c) cultural experiences. However, Fan (2001) argued that parental involvement is
multidimensional and not clearly identified across studies. Research to address gaps in the literature and develop a model to explain this phenomenon was completed by scholars, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) who reported, “We believe that parents become involved because they construe the parental roles as including personal involvement in their children’s education” (p. 313). Harris and Graves (2010) report that the transmission of cultural capital from parents to their children requires an investment of time from the parents to socialize their children to develop competencies and the ability to reach success in education and cultural experiences. Research from Fan (2001) confirms these findings regarding parental involvement as a critical element in child-rearing and the correlation between the academic and educational success of children. Subsequently, limited to no research among military family units and the transmission of cultural capital exists. However, research on the effects of a parent's absence during the deployment period could lead to future research that informs future research. Current research on the transmission of cultural capital includes a focus on affluent families that are not subjected to the same work-related separations as the military community.

I hypothesize cultural capital plays two important functions in military families before and during the deployment. The junior-enlisted soldier and spouse’s own cultural capital experiences transmitted from their parents may influence their ability to prepare, seek, and engage with deployment resources to support their own family with an upcoming deployment. Nagel and Lemel (2019) suggested that the cultural and economic dimensions of a child’s parents present an advantage to attain success with education, occupation, and overall income status. I hypothesize that the physical separation created by a deployment from the parent and child creates a disadvantage for military children and would require additional support from extended family or stakeholders to facilitate the transmission of cultural capital. These
stakeholders may include but are not limited to the following: (a) school personnel, (b) church family, (c) extended network of friends, and (d) deployment resources and organizations that the military family can access immediately. McNeal (1999) analyzed the dropout rate among adolescent children and utilized Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital to illuminate the inconsistencies that exist in research linking parental involvement as a predictor to their child’s academic achievement. Instead, McNeal (1999) suggested that future studies could research what specific forms of social capital affects their child’s academic achievement and analyze the discrepancies between socio-economic and demographic constructs. The military community is comprised of people from a vast array of socio-economic, demographic, religious, and work-related backgrounds. I propose that the level of cultural capital of both the military soldier and spouse influences the level of engagement with deployment resources and may influence the transmission of cultural capital to their children during a deployment. The following section analyzes military opportunities and challenges and provides the reader with an in-depth analysis of the military community and attributes that influence constructs within this subculture.

**Review of the Literature**

This section will provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of the literature regarding the following constructs: (a) military culture, (b) supports to develop adaptability and resilience of the military community, (c) combat deployments, (d) deployment resources, (e) and military deployment cycle. This literature will also provide an analysis of several other theoretical frameworks used to complete the studies that are recorded in this manuscript. However, for this study, the relational turbulence theory will serve as the theoretical framework. Research on the military community has expanded with the increase in military operations across the globe. The following section will provide the reader with a review of the literature regarding the military
culture to define, explore, and record findings from previous studies to anchor this study to the literature.

**Military Culture**

Foronda et al. (2018) defined military culture as the shared belief of common ideas, beliefs, attitudes, teamwork, trust, uniformity, anonymity, and others before self. Redmond et al. (2015) affirmed this characterization of military culture and further defined this construct as unique with its own rules, organizational structure, and framework. Cunha and Curran (2013) further defined military culture and described the attributes of this community stating, “Within military communities, military life provides a structured lifestyle through rules, guidelines, and expectations that frame members’ adherence to core values determined via the branch of service” (p. 92). Anderson et al. (2015) reported that within the U.S. Army, there are various job occupations that each require unique physical demands and skills to accomplish assigned missions. The Department of the Army classifies job occupations into Military Occupational Specialties. Military occupational specialties are then classified as one of three branches that include: (a) combat arms, (b) combat support, and (c) combat service support (Darakjy et al., 2006).

Currie et al. (2011) asserted the importance of understanding military culture- describing that Iraq and Afghanistan have created an environment for service members who are exposed to persistent high risk, increased potential for challenges with mental health, and exposure to missed communication encounters. Studies that include regions of the United States from Maley and Hawkins (2018) reported that cultural factors might influence civilians to join the Armed Forces, which included a large representation of Southerners that has increased in recent decades. Sackett and Mavor (2003) affirmed the notion that cultural factors may lead civilians to
join the Armed Forces but also asserted that normative pressures such as (a) descriptive or (b) injunctive norms could explain this phenomenon.

The Department of Defense estimated that a total of 1.3 million active duty soldiers are currently serving in the United States Armed Forces (Governing, 2020). A report released from the Department of Defense (2011) indicated that 85% of all active duty soldiers are men, and approximately 50% are married. Roles and occupations in the military differ for each service member and are determined by their aptitude, skills, and interests (as cited in Redmond et al., 2015). The Army organizational structure is determined by the military occupational specialty and assigned branch (GoArmy, 2018). Service members can determine if they will serve full-time as an active duty soldier, part-time in the Reserves, or part-time National Guard soldier. Military personnel also select career pathways that determine advancement opportunities, pay grade, and responsibility that is assigned to the service member. Career pathways include enlisted soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and commissioned officers.

Bowling and Sherman (2008) described mission readiness as a military cultural norm that supersedes other traditional cultural norms to include: (a) race, (b) religion, or (c) gender. Castro and Adler (1999) described the military as a warrior culture where service members are in a constant state of combat readiness that includes both physical and psychological preparedness. Reger et al. (2008) affirmed that the military meets the definition of culture and has a language, code of manners, norms of behavior, belief systems, dress, and rituals. The following section will analyze supports that develop adaptability and resilience in the military community.

**Supports to Develop Adaptability and Resilience of Military Community**

The ability of military families to adapt and develop resilience when faced with problems is a critical skill necessary to overcome the challenges of military living. The implementation of
resilient coping skills, to include: (a) effective decision making, (b) collaborative problem-solving, and (c) emotional expression, can better identify problems and problem-solve (Bowles et al., 2015). These findings are confirmed by O’Neal et al. (2018), who asserted that when mothers reported more coping abilities, their children experience greater individual well-being. Eccles and Gootman (2002) also affirmed that youth who are connected to military resources, including involvement in the community and accessibility to programming had been found to promote well-being. O’Neal et al. (2018) also asserted that engagement in community activities and programming serves as a buffer for potential stressors, including the development of relationships even during transitions. Meadows et al. (2017) also suggested that spouses who engage in more frequent communication with their service members during a deployment experience greater marital satisfaction following the completion of a deployment.

A study completed by Knobloch and Thesis (2012) indicated that participants reported mixed results in their marriage resulting from a deployment to include: (a) relationships becoming stronger, (b) difficulties with communication among partners, and (c) problems reconnecting. Research regarding resilience includes analyzing combined turning points and trajectory approaches to identify behaviors and physical actions that influence a family's ability to cope with stress. Parcell and Maguire (2014) reported findings measuring the number of turning points and indicated that 50 Army wives identified 519 turning points across the deployment cycle. McCubbin and Patterson (1983) affirmed that the Family stress theory provides a framework for researchers to understand the military family’s experiences during pre-deployment. Oshri et al. (2015) also urged future research to explore family resilience through the lens of a pattern-based approach that assists in identifying family functioning types that may offer protection or increase vulnerability. I hypothesize that the experiences of the parent and
service member may determine how military families engage with deployment resources and complete their research to secure additional resources that assist their children. The following section will analyze the family stress theory and its focus on research among military families.

**Family Stress Theory**

Sullivan (2015) advocated for the family stress theory to be utilized as a framework in research to understand the experiences of military families to design effective interventions. The family stress theory proposed by Hill (1958) was developed to explain why some families struggle in response to stressors, whereas other families are resilient. Sullivan (2015) completed a case analysis to analyze the contextual model of family stress and the ability to cope, revealed constructs that impact family stress and included the following: (a) precipitating factor, (b) resources, and (c) meaning factor. Meadows et al. (2017) also reported that across the entire deployment cycle, partners become significantly less satisfied with their marriages, and on average, this leads to less psychological and physical aggression. Boss (2001) asserted that the context of family stress should account for cultural and community values, where the family may reside, to understand stress patterns, and how families respond to stress. The following section provides an analysis for the reader regarding the stress theory to study combat deployment-related stressors.

**Stress Theory**

The stress theory (Adler et al., 2005) in research has been utilized by researchers to examine the constructs that produce stress among service members during the deployment cycle. Adler et al. (2005) described stress theory as individuals becoming exhausted and their health negatively affected, after prolonged exposure to a stressor. Research on the effects of combat deployments was reviewed to determine how to maintain a healthy and robust fighting force.
However, Vasterling et al. (2015) asserted that military deployment-related stressors may impact the overall, mission readiness of soldiers and stated, “How deployment-related stress exposures and their psychological consequences may be related to occupational functioning and military retention is relatively understudied, especially among service members who served in a war zone” (p. 524).

Gewirtz et al. (2018) suggested that both the number and length of deployments of the soldier had no significant relationship with their child’s ability to adjust to a deployment. A RAND Deployment life study affirmed these findings that included a longitudinal study, which consisted of 2,724 families who completed a deployment cycle and found no significant effects regarding the outcomes of teens or children (Meadows et al., 2017). A review of the literature reveals a need for future research to examine the constructs that impact military families and service members during a deployment. The following section will provide the reader with an analysis of officers vs. junior-enlisted soldiers.

**Officers vs. Junior Enlisted Soldiers**

A review of the literature indicates that officers and junior-enlisted personnel experience varying working conditions and social-economic credentials. Maclean and Edwards (2010) also affirmed that enlisted personnel are more likely to have completed lower levels of education and report lower levels of satisfaction with military life. O’Neal et al. (2018) completed a study that compared parent military service to adolescent well-being and identified the following differences among military children of officers and enlisted personnel and stated,

...military youth of enlisted personnel were more likely to be a racial minority, have more siblings, attend public school off [sic] the installation and experience longer periods of
parental absence because of work when compared with youth whose military parent was in the officer ranks. (p. 429)

Booth et al. (2007) also asserted that spouses of enlisted personnel reported less likely to feel supported by military support groups.

Everson et al. (2014) completed a study that utilized the Family Inventory of Life Events tool to measure stress levels of spouses among various ranks. Variables included the rank of the deployed soldier, length of deployment, and the total number of deployments completed. Findings from this study revealed that spouses of non-commissioned officers experienced more stress at the three-to-five-month interval and six-to-eight-month interval than both spouses of enlisted soldiers and commissioned officers (Everson et al., 2014). The following section provides the reader with an analysis of the effects of combat deployments and stressors among military families.

**Combat Deployments**

Research on the effects of combat deployment among service members has increased with the deployment of soldiers to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom. An annual report released from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research listed that Army and Marine soldiers experience longer deployments than other branches such as the Air Force and Navy (Connor et al., 2016). Research data from the Department of Defense revealed that 27.7% of all active duty and 35.5% of National Guard reserve service members screened positive for significant and clinical mental health concerns following the completion of a deployment (Gewirtz et al., 2011). These statistics are significant and warrant further research to identify what predictors are related to significant and clinical mental health concerns among service members returning from a deployment. Gubata et al. (2013) stated, “The impact of deployment to Iraq and Afghanistan on
disability outcomes is an emerging area of research. Deployment to combat zones is associated with psychiatric disability among U.S. Army personnel” (p. 708).

A study measuring the stress levels of deployed service members indicated that soldiers who were four months into a deployment experienced less distress compared to soldiers six months into a deployment (Adler et al., 2005). Ritzer et al. (1999) also affirmed these findings and reported that U.S. soldiers deployed to the Balkan region who served the longest deployment period, reported more psychological distress and physical health symptoms than units who served shorter deployment periods (Adler et al., 2005). However, Adler et al. (2005) indicated that findings from their study revealed that there is no relationship between stress duration and deployment length exists among woman service members. Lastly, Hoge et al. (2006) reported that, after 12 months following the return from a deployment, military attrition increased from 13% to 21% in veterans who completed a deployment for Operations Enduring Freedom. A review of the literature regarding the effects of combat deployments among service members illuminates the need for future research to address the needs of service members to maintain a healthy and ready-to-deploy fighting force. The following section will examine the available resources for military families and service members regarding deployments.

**Deployment Resources**

Deployment resources include government and community programs that provide services for military families during a deployment. Huebner et al. (2009) advocated for the expansion of both informal and formal networks to support military families and asserted,

Formal networks in the military context include unit leadership, as well as both military and civilian formal organizations and agencies, focused on family support. However, it is
important to note that formal networks alone do not ultimately change situations for families (p. 219).

However, Goodman et al. (2013) indicated that 71% of study participants indicated that unit support was significant during the deployment of the service member. Deployment resources for military families from the service members’ unit include a pre-deployment briefing to assist families with preparing for a deployment and soldier readiness processing (Collins et al., 2017).

O’Grady et al. (2018) indicated that active duty families that live near or on a base can easily access formal military services and be surrounded by other military families who may provide empathetic support. Van Winkle and Lipari (2015) affirmed this notion and indicated that military wives might also benefit from a social support network for handling the challenges of a deployment, which includes providing stability and resources. Di Nola (2008) cautioned against the sole use of informal networks and stated,

By establishing family support groups, families were thought to be better equipped to handle the challenges of the military lifestyle, up to the point where the support group becomes a stressor. Whether it is the Army’s Family Readiness Group, Volunteer Network, group dynamics within the support system can affect the coping mechanism of the family members. (p. 6)

Huebner et al. (2009) described the benefits of a U.S. Army partnership with the Operation Military Kids program that focuses on community connections and promotes formal networks to strengthen deployment communication and information resources. However, Goodman et al. (2013) also asserted that mothers from a study indicated that information and resources did not meet the needs of nontraditional caregiver roles to include: (a) grandparents or (b) spouses who are men. Everson et al. (2017) advocated for informal and family resources to
overcome stressors associated with deployments to include the following: (a) emotional, (b) relational, and (c) personal resources such as spirituality and positive communication styles. Van Winkle and Lapari (2015) confirmed these findings and inferred that informal community support positively impacts family adaptation to deployments.

Collins et al. (2017) affirmed: “We found no relationship between depressive symptoms and utilization of formal supports such as Family Readiness Groups, chaplains, Vet Centers, or Family Assistance Centers” (p. 311). However, Goodman et al. (2013) reported that mothers and children might experience deployment effects such as depression, anxiety, and poor emotional functioning. These findings are inconsistent with previous research that indicated military service and unit-level supports as helpful among military families (Bowen et al., 2003; Castaneda et al., 2008). Huebner et al. (2009) asserted, “For several years, we have been articulating and endorsing a community capacity approach perspective on family support systems” (p. 218).

Considerations for improving existing resources include a review of family care plans to include the Unit facilitating the completion of such plans to ensure an effective plan is in place before the deployment of the soldier (Goodman et al., 2013). A review of the literature shows that military families may benefit from a combination of formal and informal support programs during a military deployment. The following section will provide the reader with an analysis of the literature regarding the challenges that military families experience with a deployment.

Challenges of Deployments Among Military Families

Research on the challenges of deployments among military families will include analyzing several constructs. Findings on deployment challenges reveal a need for future research to measure the impact of deployment stressors among military families. Gewirtz et al. (2018), asserted that deployment is a family stressor that has the potential to cause anxiety and
stress, because of the extended absence and the dangers that accompany the job-related responsibilities associated with a service member. Wood et al. (2019) advocated for future research utilizing the attachment theory to analyze family dynamics during the absence of the service member and described implications with the service member regarding a deployment that includes: (a) potential dangers and (b) unpredictable threats that can occur with little notice. Research findings regarding stressors are consistent, but also limited from a longitudinal perspective. Collins et al. (2017) indicated that current evidence regarding deployments suggests that most families experience no long-term negative consequences. However, Boia et al. (2018) reported that communication was a critical factor in preparing children for an upcoming deployment. This finding is confirmed by Varcoe et al. (2003), who reported that family members and soldiers might report experiencing anger, confusion, and discouragement during separations. Research regarding deployment challenges also includes analyzing the relationship dynamic between the spouse and deployed service member. I hypothesize that service members and spouses who possess strong communication skills and develop a deployment family plan may experience less stress and anxiety during a deployment.

Another stressor measured in research includes relationship satisfaction among spouses and deployed service members. A decrease in relationship satisfaction was reported by spouses and their deployed husbands and occurred in the pre-deployment to the deployment phase and the deployment to the post-deployment phase (Borelli et al., 2013). Wood et al. (2019) proposed that spouses with significant attachment insecurities may experience a more difficult time adjusting to the separation from their romantic partner. Boia et al. (2018) affirmed that spouses who struggle with separations from their romantic partner might withdraw physically and emotionally and detach from their spouse, in anticipation of the upcoming deployment. A review
of the literature also indicates an inconsistency regarding deployment as a stressor among wives and their deployed husbands (Braun-Lewensohn & Bar, 2017).

A study analyzing the effects of a deployment among spouses with high levels of anxiety revealed a negative association between days separated and relationship satisfaction, $p = .024$ (Wood et al., 2019). However, findings from a study of Air Force families, revealed that individuals in longer-standing relationships reported fewer depressive symptoms (Spera, 2009). Everson et al. (2014) affirmed these findings and illuminates the various variables that influence the experience of a deployment and stated, “Military spouses experience both distal and proximal stressors when service members are deployed. These experiences are influenced by the separation and relative dangers associated with the deployments as well as the changes taking place with family systems during deployments” (p. 425). The National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics reported that since the September 11, 2001, attacks, an estimated 2.6 million soldiers had completed deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq (Gewirtz et al., 2018). It is important that future research analyzes the well-being of military families to identify interventions families can utilize as coping mechanisms during deployments.

Research on the military family unit over the past decade has revealed that repeated and prolonged parental separations combined with distress in either parent, can undermine family communication (Saltzman et al., 2013). The National Military Family Association (2011) advocated for research that seeks to understand the behaviors during a deployment of the non-deployed spouse and strategies for youth to manage stress. Findings from Lester et al. (2016) confirmed the need for additional supports among enlisted families and stated,

Primary caregiving parents living in enlisted families reported greater risk, including increased depression, posttraumatic stress, marital instability, and impaired family
functioning. Relative to officer rank families, increased difficulties in enlisted families highlight the opportunities to implement preventive programs that engage higher risk parents of young children. (p.946)

A study on the quality of life among U.S. spouses during a deployment indicated that military families with lower levels of family coping equivalents experience more emotional and physical strain, which resulted in a lower quality of life (Everson et al., 2017). A review of the literature has illuminated the challenges experienced by military spouses during a deployment. The following section will provide the reader with an analysis of the adult attachment theory that has been utilized in previous research and may explain why some spouses struggle with the absence of their military spouses.

**Adult Attachment Theory**

Hazan and Shaver (1987; 1994) report that the adult attachment theory was developed to explain how motivational systems that drive bonds between an infant and their parents also transfers to bonds experienced in romantic relationships as adults (as cited in Wood et al., 2019). Wood et al. (2019) stated, “In particular, the adult attachment system becomes activated under conditions of general or attachment-related threats (e.g., potential or experienced loss of an attachment figure)” (p.603). Wood et al. (2019) described the relevance of this theory and its connections to the military deployments and stated, “Deployments entail various unpredictable threats and can occur with little notice. In other words, a partner’s availability, and responsiveness, which are the pillars of secure attachment, might be unpredictable” (p.604).

Opportunities for additional research regarding attachment theory and military deployment include: (a) what dimensions of attachment are related to problems in relationships and intrapersonal adjustment across the deployment cycle; and (b) determining when or how
attachment dimensions are pertinent in predicting outcomes in different stages of the deployment cycle (Wood et al., 2019).

The following section provides the reader with a review of the literature regarding the military child and the challenges associated with military deployment.

**Military Child**

Sumner et al. (2016) report the increase in stressors within the military community, “In the past two decades the stressors associated with military service during war have been exacerbated by a shift in the military experience as a result of the U.S.-initiated conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan” (p. 247). De Pedro et al. (2018) asserted that a substantial number of children within the United States are military dependents and stated, “In the United States, nearly four million children and adolescents have a parent (or both parents) who is on active duty, in the National Guard or Reserves” (p. 94). A report released by the Department of Defense (2010) described the family community statistics of the armed forces, “Over half (56.4%) of active duty and just under half (48.2%) of selected reserve personnel are married, nearly half of all active duty military personnel (44.2%) and selected reserve members (43.2%) have children, totaling almost 2 million reported United States military children” (as cited in Sumner et al., 2016, p. 247). To better assist the military family, it is equally important for future research on the military child to identify opportunities to streamline existing deployment resources.

Esposito-Smythers et al. (2011) asserted that military-connected youth who are also exposed to multiple and prolonged deployments might create cumulative stress, caused by repeated parental absence and re-entry into the family (as cited in Bello-Utu & DeSocio, 2015, p. 23). Military families experience active duty parent deployments that can include one or two parents absent from the home for an extended period. Chandra et al. (2010) asserted that gaps
still exist in the literature for military children, “Given the number of military children who experience more months or years of parental deployment, it is increasingly important to understand their health and well-being and to determine if the total time of parental deployment affects child academic, social, and family functioning” (para. 3). Allen and Staley (2007) asserted that the rise in military deployments had left educators reporting ill-equipped to support the special needs of an emotionally distracted child experiencing a deployment.

Research on the military family lifestyle has formed several partnerships with government-affiliated and civilian organizations to develop support programs that reduce stress and anxiety for military families and children associated with military deployments. Studies on the military family have identified deployment-related stressors that contribute to poor mental health outcomes among military-connected youth (De Pedro et al., 2018). Research on the military-connected youth conducted by Elfman (2018) reveals opportunities for supports with military children and stated, “Military-connected students – compared with civilian classmates – have moderately elevated rates of just about all risk factors, including suicidal thoughts, substance abuse, and bullying, according to a University of Southern California (USC) survey of middle and high schools in that state” (p.52). However, De Pedro (2015) described the lack of research among children in military families and reported that research investigating the school experiences of youth began in 2011. In addition, few researchers had developed school-based interventions for military-connected youth and professional development for educators.

With the rise in military deployments, researchers have expanded their scope of research on military-connected children to identify ways to support the military child. Research findings to support military-connected youth reported by Cederbaum et al. (2014) include soliciting the support of mental health service providers, “Providers can be trained to identify warning signs
that an adolescent may be experiencing problems and should be supported with referrals to evidence-based interventions that can reduce the long-term consequences of deployment-related stressors” (p. 676). Stressors directly related to deployments have been shown to contribute to poor mental health outcomes among military-connected youth (De Pedro et al., 2018, p. 94). However, findings from a study conducted by Sumner et al. (2016) indicated, “In fact, it is surprising that military youth do sometimes fare relatively well when compared to their civilian counterparts on key measures of development, adjustment, and conduct given their exposure to stressful life experiences” (p. 248).

The expansion of research with military deployments includes several research studies that support military-connected youth. However, the small sample sizes from qualitative studies make it difficult for researchers to develop school-based interventions (De Pedro et al., 2018). A report released from the National Military Family Association indicated, “Multiple relocations, separation from family, and loss of friends and loved ones are more commonly identified as remarkable stressors” (as cited in Sumner et al., 2016, p. 247). Russo and Fallon (2015) advocated the need for additional research and stated, “There is little research studying the impact of the military lifestyle (e.g., relocation and deployment of their military parent, changes among friends and schools, living outside of the native country) on the approximately 1.1 million children (Department of Defense, 2012) living in military families” (p. 409). A review of the literature indicates opportunities for future research regarding the military child and strategies or coping interventions to manage the deployment of a parent. The following section will analyze the challenges associated with each stage of the military deployment cycle.
Military Deployment Cycle

Allen and Staley (2007) stated, “Military deployment is a temporary assignment overseas or within the United States (such as after Hurricane Katrina); during these assignments, families must live apart from their loved one in service” (p. 82). The deployment cycle includes four stages that include the following: (a) pre-deployment phase, (b) deployment phase, (c) redeployment, and (d) post-deployment. Boia et al. (2018) affirmed, “...pre-deployment starts from the moment the serviceman receives notification of his assignment to the mission and ends when he leaves for the designated Theater of Operations (TO)” (p. 303). Collins et al. (2017) further defined pre-deployment and stated,

First, the pre-deployment stage is the last chance for military and civilian provides to offer family-level preventative services and education before deployment. Service or family members may not be well prepared for deployment if substantial stress or mental health declines are experienced in anticipation of deployment. (p. 303)

However, there is little to no research addressing the proposed notion that pre-deployment is a period of stress for families.

The second stage of the deployment cycle is a deployment where the service member is now separated from their family. Kritikos and DeVoe (2018) described the deployment stage and share insight regarding the new role of the home-front parent and stated, “After the service member has departed, home-front parents are now faced with a new set of parenting challenges, the first of which might be how to respond to the questions and concerns of their children about their service member’s recent departure” (p. 8). McNulty (2005) also reported that the deployment phase is where home-front spouses make experience emotional disorganization that may include: (a) symptoms of depression; (b) sleep disturbances; (c) boredom; (d) helplessness;
and (e) low self-esteem. The redeployment phase occurs the month before the soldier is expected to return home from their assignment (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018). The post-deployment phase begins when the service member returns home and can last up to six months after the deployment (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018). Knobloch and Theiss (2012) reported that military families might experience numerous changes throughout the deployment cycle that includes: (a) growth of marital relationships or (b) valuing the relationship prior to the deployment. Karakurt et al. (2013) also indicated that following the return of the soldier, some military couples have to reintegrate their partner back into the home due to left behind spouse utilizing new sources of support throughout the deployment.

**Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Theory as a Superior Lens**

At the conclusion of this study, I reassessed the value of the relational turbulence theory for investigations such as I undertook here and determined that RTT was of little use for such a study. Perhaps a superior lens, Houston (2017) asserts that Bronfenbrenner’s seminal ecological theory of child development advanced our understanding of how youth develop in their formative years. Research completed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) regarding human development has led to the development of environmental categories and stated, “…there is a striking phenomenon pertaining to settings at all three levels of the ecological environment outlined above: within any culture or subculture, settings of a given kind – such as homes, streets, or offices – ten to be very much alike, whereas between cultures they are distinctly different” (p.4). Houston (2017) reported that social interactions are fundamental to Bronfenbrenner’s work and stated, “Through social interaction, we develop our sense of self, learn to role-take with others, develop skills of empathy and problem-solving and form and sustain intimate relations” (p.56). Lastly, Bronfenbrenner (1979) provided a broader description as to how one could conceptualize
these levels and reported, “The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls” (p.3).

Hayes et al. (2017, p.14) described Bronfenbrenner’s ecological approach and stated, “…he explored the interrelations between the developing person and the changing micro and macro contexts in which development is embedded.” Bronfenbrenner’s first conceptual model was organized into four systems and includes the child in the center of the model (Hayes et al., 2017). The microsystem, exosystem, macrosystem categorizes the various settings and stakeholders that youth can interact with and may have a direct or indirect influence on their lives (Hayes et al., 2017). Hayes et al. (2017) described that the macrosystem includes influences that occur at a cultural level. Hayes et al. (2017, p.16) also shared what influences occur in the exosystem and stated, “…settings that influence the child but in which the child does not directly participate.” The microsystem (Hayes et al., 2017) include experiences and persons that directly influence the child daily. Lastly, Bronfenbrenner (1979) places the child at the center of the model and stated, “At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person. This can be the home, the classroom, or as often happens for research purposes – the laboratory of the testing room” (p.3).
Bronfenbrenner (1979) stated, “The environmental events that are the most immediate and potent in affecting a person’s development are activities that are engaged in by others with that person or in her presence” (p.6). Houston (2017) reiterated the need for a person to
experience positive social interactions with others and stated, “Impoverished interactions, by way of contrast, leads to care and control problems, tarnished identities and insecurity and can eventuate in negative chain reactions with deleterious outcomes for the young person” (p.56). Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.210) defined the process of interacting with others as *intersetting communications* and stated, “These are messages transmitted from one setting to the other with the express intent of providing specific information to persons in the other setting.” Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory may be a more appropriate framework for future research with junior-enlisted military families and is further explored in Chapters Four and Five.

The following section will provide a summary of Chapter Two and literature that aligns this study to current research to fill the gap in the literature that exists among junior-enlisted soldiers and limited knowledge and engagement with resources and programs to prepare their families for an upcoming military deployment.

**Summary**

Chapter Two provided the reader with a conceptual framework and review of research regarding military dynamics to ground this proposed study in the current literature. The research questions for this proposed study include analyzing the constructs that contribute to limited knowledge and engagement with current deployment resources. The theoretical framework selected for this study includes RTT utilized in previous research. The reader should be aware that this theory was utilized to examine the post-deployment phase and communication patterns among service members and spouses. Implications for future research include utilizing this theory to analyze the communication patterns of junior enlisted soldiers in the pre-deployment phase. This research will illuminate the current challenges that enlisted soldiers and spouses experience with preparing for the deployment process.
The construct of parent-child separations was also examined in this literature review to draw comparisons between civilian and military children who may experience extended periods of separations from their parents. The analysis of this construct led to the review of cultural capital that describes the transmission of parents’ knowledge to their children to develop an advantage with navigating institutional organizations as an adult. Cultural capital is an important construct that should be addressed in future research, as military children who are separated from one or both parents from a deployment, do not have an opportunity to receive cultural capital transmissions from both their parents when deployed. The following section in the literature review addressed military opportunities and challenges that include several constructs that have appeared in research. The military culture was explored in this literature review to provide the reader with a contextual background and previous research completed regarding military living.

Adaptability and resilience were also analyzed in this literature review to discuss current findings in research regarding how families cope with deployment stressors in the military community. Within this construct, previous research has utilized the family stress theory as a theoretical framework to examine the variables that influence and promote military family resilience in difficult situations. Research among officers and junior enlisted soldiers was also included in this section to examine the social, demographic, and cultural entities among both subgroups. Literature and research on deployment resources were also included in this review to highlight current social challenges with the deployment process. Research regarding engagement with deployment resources and knowledge is limited among junior-enlisted soldiers and will be measured in this multimethod study. A review of the literature revealed that the stress theory has also been utilized as a theoretical framework and similar in essence to the family stress theory.
A review of deployment resources was also completed in this review to illuminate the current challenges with existing resources. I hypothesize that this study would illuminate challenges among junior-enlisted families that are experienced with the deployment process to develop recommendations for policymakers and future research. Family unit challenges with deployments in the military were also included in this section to provide the reader with current realities. The adult attachment theory is another theoretical framework employed by researchers to explore family unit challenges. Lastly, literature regarding military youth and the deployment cycle was analyzed in this literature review. The literature review provides the reader with an in-depth review of the existing literature and recommended theory that served as a catalyst to pursue this study.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families endure when preparing for a deployment. Chapter Three is organized into nine sections and includes the following: (a) research design, (b) research questions, (c) setting, (d) participants, (e) researcher’s role, (f) procedures, (g) data collection and analysis, (h) ethical considerations, and (i) summary. The data collection occurred over 18 weeks and was divided into two phases. Phase one includes a nine-week timeline for the data collection period.

Volunteers who are eligible to participate in this study include junior-enlisted service members in the U.S. Army and their spouses who have one or more children. Participants can expect to participate in the following research methods: (a) one-to-one interviews, (b) a two-person focus group, and (c) complete the family index of regenerativity and adaptation – military survey.

Design

For this study I utilized a multimethod research design and conducted a case study. Seawright (2016) described that a well-constructed integrative multi-method design allows for a more robust and higher-quality causal inference compared to the triangulation design. This study illuminated the issues that surround the lack of knowledge and limited engagement of deployment resources among junior-enlisted families. Seawright (2016) asserted that a multimethod approach can transform key issues surrounding descriptive and causal inferences into opportunities for empirical debate. I hypothesized that my findings from the one-to-one interviews may reveal larger issues surrounding my participant’s lack of knowledge of engagement with deployment resources. Subsequently, the focus group will be utilized to confirm impressions asserted by both spouses and soldiers in their one-to-one interviews. The data
analysis utilized for the qualitative approaches included axial and thematic coding to generate sub-themes. Lastly, I employed the utilization of a survey as a source of triangulation regarding findings that emerged from the qualitative data sets.

The quantitative method of this study included the use of the FIRA-M and was developed by Hamilton McCubbin (1987). This questionnaire measured the critical dimensions and components surrounding the military family unit and associated stress levels. Military spouses of junior enlisted soldiers completed this questionnaire online. The data analysis techniques for the quantitative method included the use of descriptive statistics. The following section will provide the reader with the research questions that were explored in this study.

Research Questions

Central Research Question

What are the experiences of military families before and during the deployment of a junior enlisted soldier to include challenges or successes with existing deployment resources and programs?

Sub-question One

What are military spouse perceptions before and during the deployment of a junior-enlisted soldier that might address the challenges of limited access and engagement with deployment resources for enlisted military families preparing for a parent deployment?

Sub-question Two

What obstacles do junior-enlisted active duty soldiers endure when preparing their families for an upcoming deployment?
Sub-question Three

What is the effectiveness of available resources and programs in creating awareness for military families preparing for an upcoming deployment?

Setting

The setting of this multimethod study was located in the southern United States, and I solicited participants from several large military installations. A report developed by Smith (2019) indicated that the southern United States has the largest presence of U.S. military installations in the country. These sites were selected in part due to the relatively large size, which enabled me to advertise this study to a large audience of junior-enlisted military families. As a precaution regarding the anonymity of all participants, any installations that appear in this study were assigned pseudonyms to maintain participant confidentiality. Participants were recruited from military installations across the entire continental United States.

Participants

Participant volunteers who participated in this study were recruited utilizing criterion sampling to complete this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) described the three considerations that go into purposeful sampling that included (a) decision as to whom to select as participants, (b) a specific type of sampling strategy, and (c) the size of the sample to be studied. Potential participants for this study will be drawn from the surrounding military community who meet specific criteria set forth by the research. This study will use criterion sampling to select participants for the study. Participants who participated in the study met the following criteria at the time of recruitment: (a) were married, (b) had one or more children, (c) had participated in a military deployment within the last three years or were preparing for an upcoming deployment.
within the next six months. A total of 10 participants were recruited and participated in all three methods.

A review of the literature revealed that extensive research was conducted among senior-enlisted and commissioned officers in the U.S. Armed Forces regarding engagement with deployment resources and preparing families for deployments. Therefore, junior-enlisted soldiers and their spouses who serve in the U.S. Army were recruited to conduct this study. Creswell and Poth (2018) reported, “Criterion sampling works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon” (p.157). The Interview Participant List Table provides an overview of the demographic data for each volunteer. Lastly, it is to be noted that this study does not encompass all races or ethnicities that serve in the U.S. Army.
Table 1

Interview Participant List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym name</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Military Status</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soldier 1- Greg</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Active duty</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier 2- Tony</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Active duty</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier 3- Roger</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Active duty</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier 4- Susan</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Active duty</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soldier 5- Robert</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Active duty</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse 1- Jessica</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Prior Service</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse 2- Vanessa</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>No Service Record</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse 3- Christine</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>Prior Service</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse 4- Danny</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>Prior Service</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse 5- Caitlin</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>No Service Record</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Soldier and spouse couples are indicated utilizing the same number conventions.

The Researcher’s Role

The primary role of the researcher is to interpret the experiences of the participants.

Tonon (2015) asserts,

Qualitative research works on the subjective productions of each of the persons he/she studies and, in the quality of life field in particular, that subjectivity acquires special importance, since quality of life is a concept composed of two dimensions, objective and subjective, the same as social reality. (p. 24)
A role I assumed and exercised throughout this study involved remaining objective and impartial as my participants recounted their past or current experiences and beliefs regarding both the Army and institutional structures currently in place to support military families. I was responsible for interpreting each participant’s experience and the development of themes that captured the participant’s life story.

I have included my experiences with the military community as the research for this study and interpretation of data sets. I am a former military-connected dependent and traveled the world with my parents who spent over 20 years in the U.S. Army. As a military dependent, I attended more than five public and DoDEA schools across four different states and one foreign country overseas throughout my K-12 education. My father served as an infantryman and was deployed quite frequently throughout my youth. I am thankful for both the sacrifices and opportunities that my father’s career provided to our family. I was afforded the ability to see the world and experience other cultures and traditions from around the world and various regions of the United States.

I now serve military-connected families and work closely with military schools in the Southeast United States. As a former military-connected dependent, there was potential for confirmation bias to confirm a preconceived hypothesis. To minimize confirmation bias, I continually reevaluated both the responses and impressions of participants and challenged pre-existing assumptions that I kept in a research journal. I also conducted peer debriefs with my dissertation chair throughout the development of sub-themes and themes. I also reviewed transcripts with participants for accuracy.
**Procedures**

The following section will provide the reader with a step-by-step outline that specifies the actions that I undertook to complete this study. I first had to complete and pass the defense proposal as outlined by the program guidelines by the School of Education at Liberty University. Following the successful proposal defense, I then had to submit all required paperwork to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and secured approval to conduct this study (See Appendix A for IRB approval document).

To advertise my study, I contacted former pastors from past churches that I had attended in both North Carolina and Georgia that serve large military communities. A total of two churches were contacted to secure site permission and share the approved proposal (See Appendix B for Initial Letter). I allotted two weeks initially to advertise my study before sending out reminders to congregation members from both churches (See Appendix C for Follow-up Letter). All participants who were selected for this study received a consent form via email (See Appendix D for Consent Form).

Participants who participated in this study did consent to video and audio recording to create qualitative data sets that were analyzed and later discussed in this section and Chapter Three. Before undertaking this study, permissions regarding copyright and intent to utilize and publish the FIRA-M instrument survey (See Appendix E) were secured from the publisher. Written communication regarding the rights to utilize the Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation – Military surveys were conducted via email with the publisher. A response from the publisher regarding the approval for both the utilization and publishing of the instrument survey in my study are included in the appendix portion of this manuscript (See Appendix F). The primary researcher from the FIRA-M requested that if the instrument survey was translated to
another language other than English to send a copy back to the publisher. I utilized the English version of this instrument survey to complete my research (See Appendix G). Following the completion of the research period, I then completed Chapters Four and Five in preparation to defend the entire manuscript.

Data Collection and Analysis

The following section includes the following three data collection approaches I utilized for this study: (a) one qualitative method in the form of one-on-one interviews, (b) a second qualitative method in the form of a focus group, and (c) lastly one quantitative method in the form of a questionnaire survey.

Interviews

The first sub-question for this study was: What are military spouse perceptions before and during the deployment of a junior-enlisted soldier that might address the challenges of limited access and engagement with deployment resources for enlisted military families preparing for a parent-deployment? One-on-one interviews included five military spouses and five junior-enlisted service members. All one-to-one interviews were be completed via Google hangouts due to limitations that arose with the CoVid-19 pandemic. Interviews were analyzed and transcribed using a computer artificial intelligence online transcription service. Lastly, all interview questions were reviewed by, Dr. David Vacchi, to determine relevance and alignment to research questions.

The one-on-one interviews were analyzed using a semi-structured data collection analysis that was applied to all open-ended questions used during the interview. The semi-structured interview as described by Galletta (2013) provided latitude as the research with both the data collection and flexibility to maintain consistency in both meaning and intent with participant
responses. I learned that some participant responses that were shared with me did not pertain to the focus of this study and chose to not include those scenarios in this study. Following the completion of all one-on-one interviews, I transcribed each conversation and developed subthemes that aligned to the stated perceptions of both military spouses and junior-enlisted service members.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions:

1. Please introduce yourself to me, as if we are meeting for the first time, and provide your background information as you feel comfortable doing so.

2. Please share your experiences as a military spouse or soldier with preparing your family for a deployment.

3. What other experiences were significant in helping you prepare your family for a deployment?

4. How do you and your spouse or soldier discuss what you want to share about the deployment to prepare your children?

5. Describe your family communication plan for how the family will stay connected during the deployment.

6. How do you and your spouse/soldier develop a plan for addressing fears of your child(ren), creating healthy routines, and keeping your child updated during the deployment period? How does this impact your family routine during a deployment?

7. How do you and your spouse/soldier develop a plan for special family times or resources to include taking photographs, making videos, and sharing memories to help your child during the deployment?
8. What behaviors from your youth do you see that concern you regarding the parent-deployment experience?

9. How is your youth functioning at home, school, and with peers regarding the parent-deployment experience?

10. What support do you use from the following: military family members and friends, immediate and extended family, friends, spiritual, and installation-sponsored activities?

11. What resources and program information does the unit provide for families to prepare for an upcoming soldier deployment?

12. Does anything prevent you from accessing military deployment resources to prepare youth before, during, or after parent deployment? If so, please describe these obstacles.

Questions one through five provided an opportunity for the participant to share their experiences and establish rapport with the researcher. Galletta (2013) asserted that the beginning segment of the interview process is the most open-ended portion of the interview and allows the researcher to engage and encourage the participant to provide a generative narrative. Bhattacharya (2017) stressed the importance of utilizing a formal semi-structured approach that requires the researcher to prepare questions in advance and allow for unexpected directions in the interview if it is relevant to the study. Bhattacharya (2017) also went on to further explain that there are various ways of asking questions during an interview; however, the best interview questions generate rich and thick descriptive stories that contributed to an in-depth understanding of the topic. Rubin and Rubin (1995) asserted that the researcher should structure interview questions that utilize three kinds of questions to include: (a) main questions that begin and guide the conversation with the participant, (b) questions that probe to clarify answers or request additional information, and (c) follow-up questions that address the implications of answers related to the main question.
Questions six through nine were deployment preparation related and prompted the participant to further explain how deployment preparation responsibilities are carried out within the home and amongst the family. These types of questions are encouraged by Magnusson and Marecek (2015) and stated, “General follow-up questions encourage the participant to expand upon the subject matter….and could offer important input to your researchable question” (p. 54). Lastly, Castaneda et al. (2008) confirmed that family deployment readiness is regarded as a critical component of preparedness for a service member’s active duty service.

Questions 10 through 12 were sensitive questions that addressed the inner workings of the military family unit. Magnusson and Marecek (2015) reported that it is wise to place sensitive topics later in the interview and allow participants to become comfortable with the researcher before engaging with more difficult questions. Johnson et al. (2014) also asserted that consideration should be accounted when interviewing military families as previous research has shown that recurrent wartime deployments may create difficult and stressful life situations for children and adolescents that include: (a) an increase in anxiety, (b) depressive symptoms, (c) behavioral problems, and (d) academic challenges.

Interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the completion of open coding to develop subthemes for each data set. Guest et al. (2012) described thematic analysis as opportunities for researchers to explore the data, identify keywords, trends, themes, or ideas from the data sets. Guest et al. (2012) also argued that the process of thematic analysis moves the researcher beyond counting explicit words or phrases and rather focuses on identifying and describing implicit and explicit ideas from the data. I found this process to be most helpful when sorting through data sets that enabled me to develop themes that interlinked subthemes together throughout all three methods. Guest et al. (2012) labeled this process as text segmentation to
bind text that assessed the overall quality of data as I explored thematic elements and identified the similarities, dissimilarities, and relationships. From this data analysis technique, I was able to identify relationships and commonalities from all one-on-one interviewees.

**Focus Groups**

The second sub-question was: What obstacles do junior enlisted active duty soldiers endure when preparing their families for an upcoming deployment? To further explore the research question, I conducted five individual focus groups that consisted of one military spouse and one junior enlisted soldier. Active duty soldiers who participated in this study had deployed within the past three years or were preparing to deploy within the following year. The use of the focus group was an opportunity to identify the present awareness, engagement, and level of success with deployment resources and preparing their families for past or future deployments. The utilization of the focus group as described by Kimalski et al. (2017) enabled participants to provide an exchange of experiences, concepts, and opinions within the group to add to the results of the research study.

**Standardized Open-Ended Focus Group Questions**

1. Please introduce yourself and provide a bit of your background in the U.S. Army either as a spouse or soldier.

2. Please share your experiences in the U.S. Army with preparing your family for an upcoming deployment.

3. What experiences during your deployment supported your family while you were away.

   (If this is your first deployment, what experiences or supports do you think would benefit your family during the deployment?)

4. What made/will make them significant?
5. What role should the active duty soldier assume when preparing the family for an upcoming deployment, specifically their youth?

6. What deployment resources are accessible to active duty soldiers to prepare their families for an upcoming deployment?

7. What challenges exist with current deployment resources for active duty soldiers to prepare families for an upcoming deployment?

8. What is the greatest challenge active duty soldiers experience with their families during a deployment cycle (If this is your first deployment, what challenges do you anticipate during the deployment)?

9. What is the greatest challenge active duty soldiers experience with their families after a deployment cycle (If this is your first deployment, what challenges do you anticipate after the deployment)?

10. What resources and program information does the unit provide for children to prepare for an upcoming parent deployment?

11. What limitations prevent soldiers from accessing or engaging with military deployment resources to prepare families before, during, or after a parent deployment?

12. Considering all the issues discussed, which do you feel are a priority to help families with deployment cycles?

Questions one through four provided an opportunity for participants to become comfortable with the researcher and sharing their responses with their spouses present throughout the focus group. Hennink (2014) indicated that there are benefits for researchers with building rapport at the beginning of a focus group and stated, “It is useful to include several introductory questions because it can take 10-15 minutes for participants to feel comfortable in a
group discussion” (p. 57). Again, I kept a focus group log and annotated nuances that couples displayed throughout their focus group. This enabled me to follow up with participants regarding any disagreements between couple participants before moving to the next research question.

Questions five through six provided participants an opportunity to share their experiences in an open forum. As described by Hennink (2014) the use of focus groups gives participants greater control of the issues raised in the dialogue because they are discussing the issues among themselves rather than directly with the interviewer. The use of the focus group was advantageous as I was able to learn more about the logistics surrounding pre-deployment briefings available to military families. Greenberg (2013) confirmed that deploying troops receive pre-deployment briefings to educate soldiers on the nature of traumatic stress and mechanisms for coping with separation from family.

Questions seven through nine provided participants with an opportunity to reflect and report on their challenges when they are away from their families. Couples from the focus group appeared comfortable throughout the focus group and shared their experiences with tragedy and trauma that they or other fellow service members experienced from a deployment. A report from the U.S. Office of the Surgeon General (as cited in Greenberg, 2013) reported, “Substantial fractions of frontline combat troops reported that stress or emotional problems limited their ability to do their job (15%), made them work less carefully (23%) or made their supervisor concerned (13%)” (p. 142). These three questions enabled me to identify challenges that active duty soldiers may endure while deployed and examine current support networks and organizations offering deployment resources for military families.

Questions 10 through 12 were closing questions as participants and captured the barriers that military families may experience when preparing for a deployment. Hennink (2014)
confirmed that closing questions signal to participants that the discussion is coming to an end and that researchers should allocate time for closing questions because they may prompt further discussion. Participants shared in their focus group various challenges that families may endure with accessing or engaging with deployment resources and organizational support networks. Peterson et al. (2014) stated, “Although many resources are found to be helpful to military families, the greatest challenge continues to be synchronizing, synergizing, and integrating these resources in a fashion that allows for accessibility and ease of use” (para. 36).

The focus groups served as an opportunity to bring participant couples together and analyze the influence of dialectical dynamics against individual responses from one-to-one interviews. I was surprised to witness the communication nuances each couple had expressed and adopted to inform their responses in front of their spouse. On occasion, some participants interpreted their spouse during the focus group to interject their thoughts. There were also times during a focus group session that participants would become noticeably uncomfortable as they listened to their spouse’s response. I facilitated one focus group session for each of the two-parent families for a total of five focus group sessions. A table of the focus group couples is included and references the following: (a) family group, (b) solider, (c) spouse, (d) history of dual service, and (e) number of children.
Table 2

*Focus Group Participant List*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family #</th>
<th>Military Soldier</th>
<th>Military Spouse</th>
<th>History of Dual-Service</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soldier 1-Whit</td>
<td>Spouse- Jessica</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Soldier 2- Tony</td>
<td>Spouse- Vanessa</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Soldier 3- Roger</td>
<td>Spouse- Christine</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Soldier 4- Susan</td>
<td>Spouse- Danny</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Soldier 5- Robert</td>
<td>Spouse- Caitlin</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Participants are listed in order of recruitment for the study.

The focus group data was analyzed using comparative analysis (Guest et al., 2012). Findings from the focus group were compared to responses from individual interviews to identify trends, subthemes, and discrepancies. As Guest et al. (2012) asserted, data collection and transcription procedures must include the identification of each speaker and the total number of times a code was applied across all transcripts when analyzing focus group data. All transcripts were coded and analyzed that led to the development of subthemes. The use of comparative analysis was appropriate for this study as I sought to highlight and preserve the meaning, structure, and relationships that exist within each data set relative to the research question (Guest et al., 2012).

**Survey**

The third sub-question for this study was: What is the effectiveness of available resources and programs in creating awareness for military families preparing for an upcoming deployment? The collection of quantitative data was issued through a survey titled the family index of regenerativity and adaptation – military (Meadows et al., 2017). The questionnaire includes six
instruments for a total of 76 items that participants answered regarding stress levels with various scenarios in or outside the home and military living.

**Table 3**

_**Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation-Military**_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instruments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Changes and Strains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Reliance Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Index of Coherence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support Index</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Member Well-Being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Adaptation Checklist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The questionnaire belongs to a group of research instruments known as the Family Indices of Regenerativity and Adaptation.*

All quantitative survey data was analyzed and categorized using descriptive statistics. The results from the survey are included and embedded within Chapter Four via tables and a summary of the results as a means to triangulate findings that emerged from both qualitative methods. Each table included a total count of each response category that participants selected from the associated Likert scale. As described by Frey (2018) the use of descriptive statistics analysis was an appropriate measure for this questionnaire as it accounts for the correlation of different variables measured against the phenomena and enables researchers to determine differences between individual and group responses.
Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations for this study included the use of participant and site pseudonyms to maintain participant confidentiality, securing data storage, and the development of interviewee and focus group ground rules for participants. All physical descriptions of the environment were limited to regional references to eliminate the potential to identify specific military installations as described in this study. Participant confidentiality was also preserved and maintained through the assignment of pseudonyms before participating in interviews and focus groups regarding all data collection, transcriptions, and recordings. Due to the unique nature and timing of deployments, I exercised flexibility when scheduling participant interviews. At times, some participants were unable to complete their commitment due to unforeseen work, family, or unit responsibilities. I learned that exercising flexibility and extending grace during the research phase contributed to building rapport with participants and completing this study.

Summary

The purpose of this case study was to answer the central research question: What are the experiences of military families before and during the deployment of a junior enlisted soldier to include challenges or successes with existing deployment resources and programs? To complete this study, I utilized a hybrid approach and blended two qualitative and one quantitative method to conduct a case study. A total of 10 participants participated in this study and shared their experiences that included challenges, successes, and opportunities for growth with existing deployment resources for military families. The completion of this study illuminated issues surrounding limited knowledge and engagement with deployment resources among junior enlisted families that have not been explored in the literature that will be expounding upon in Chapter Four and Five.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families endure when preparing for a deployment. The problem that junior-enlisted families may face when preparing for a deployment includes a lack of knowledge and engagement with deployment resources. Chapter four includes the following sections: (a) participants, (b) results, and (c) the summary. Participants in this study include U.S. Army soldiers and their spouses who participated in all data collection methods. Data sets that appear in this section is presented in the form of narrative themes and tables and align to each research question. The results section includes findings that address each sub-research question according to the prescribed research method. Lastly, the summary provides the reader with a summary of the entire chapter's contents.

Participants

The section provides the reader with an overview of participants' selection methods, as described in Chapter Three. A descriptive narrative of each participant that is reflective of their personal accounts and experience with military living and the deployment cycle is also included in this section. I built my sample population through partnerships with local and long-distance churches across three states and utilized emails, telephone calls, and advertisement flyers to recruit participants. I also recruited additional participants through snowball sampling, as families from two of the three churches shared research flyers with families in each of their respective communities. I achieved data saturation after interviewing seven participants, as revealed in the data analysis process, and followed through with the final three participants to meet the requirements for the Liberty University minimum sample. Flick (2018) defines data
saturation, or *Theoretical saturation*, as the reference point for assessing the *exhaustiveness* regarding categories’ development.

A total of ten participants from five military families and two-parent homes comprised of one soldier and one military spouse participated in one-to-one interviews. A total of five women participated in the study; four women indicated they were a current military spouse, and one woman indicated that she was an active duty soldier. A total of five men participated in this study; four men indicated they were active duty soldiers, and one man indicated that he was a military spouse. The participant average age was 35.5 years old. I examined each participant's responses and utilized data-analysis techniques from grounded-theory research (Holton, 2007), to determine themes and sub-themes aligned to each interviewee's personal experiences. The purpose of the one-to-one interviews enabled me to illuminate the unspoken and spoken communication dynamics of junior-enlisted military couples to navigate the deployment cycle experience.

In the following section, I included a descriptive narrative for each participant that included their collective experiences in the U.S. Army and their military deployment experiences. Participant order in the following section groups each military family with the military soldier listed first and then their spouse.

**Greg**

Greg, a 43-year-old White man, served as a junior-enlisted soldier and NCO and has more than 20-years of military aviation experience in the U.S. Army. He has completed more than five deployments throughout his career that included both humanitarian and combat experiences. Greg met his wife in the U.S. Army at the beginning of his career, indicating that they both served in the military during the 2000s. Greg described his career as an opportunity to
serve his country and reported that he joined the service in his early 20’s on the cusp of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Greg shared strong convictions regarding strong military leadership as a lynchpin that could be leveraged to assist junior-enlisted families and soldiers with navigating the deployment cycle successfully. Throughout his interview, Greg indicated that his family had adjusted well to the military lifestyle and attributed his success to navigating the military and deployment cycles to his commanding NCO when he served in a junior-enlisted status.

**Jessica**

Jessica, a 41-year-old White woman, served in Army aviation as a petroleum specialist and completed one deployment serving as door-gunner before leaving the Army and assuming the role of a mother and military spouse. Jessica shared that it was the birth of their first daughter that led to her ultimate decision to transition from active duty to a military spouse to care for her and Greg’s daughter. In her interview, Jessica attributed her confidence and ability to navigate the deployment cycle to her prior military service. Jessica described herself as a strong and independent spouse, wife, and mother who cared for her family. Throughout her interview, Jessica indicated that she appreciated her husband's commitment to balancing family time, career obligations, and his love for helping others.

**Tony**

Tony, a 27-year-old White man, reported that he had 10-years of military experience in special forces. During this study, Tony served as a Non-commissioned officer and had completed more than 5-deployment across the entire globe. Tony met and married his wife Vanessa at his present-day duty station and indicated that they had one child. Throughout his interview, Tony affirmed his commitment to leading a Christ-filled life, serving as his household's spiritual leader, and dedication to his military career. Tony also affirmed that his commitment to his
family superseded his personal needs and wants for career advancement and displayed a passion throughout his interview regarding opportunities to streamline deployment preparations for junior-enlisted families and soldiers.

Vanessa

Vanessa, a 25-year-old White woman, indicated she had no experience with the military and expressed challenges associated with navigating the military community as a military spouse. She reported that her family was native to the southern United States. In her interview, Vanessa shared that Christ and their church served as a support network that assisted her family with navigating military living and the deployment cycle. She and Tony mentioned several concerns with locating and accessing early childhood resources at deployment briefings for their daughter. Vanessa mentioned in her interview that while military living can be difficult with long periods of separation from her soldier it has also provided an opportunity for their family to enjoy many luxuries not always afforded to civilian families such as health insurance and housing stipends.

Roger

Roger, a 42-year-old White man, at the time of this study had served in Army aviation for over 15-years as a combat medic. Roger indicated that he had served in both the U.S. Army and National Guard throughout the entirety of his career. Roger joined the Army in the mid-1990s during the Bosnia and Macedonia armed conflicts. Roger completed more than 5-deployments that included both combat and humanitarian missions throughout his military career. In his interviews, Roger indicated that each unit has a support group known as the Family Readiness Group (FRG) whose purpose is to support military families during deployment cycles and provide communication updates throughout the deployment cycle. Roger affirmed in his
interview that a successful FRG network has a positive impact on military families navigating the deployment cycle.

**Christine**

Christine, a 39-year-old White woman and now a military spouse indicated she previously served as both a petroleum specialist and combat medic in the Army and Coast Guard. Christine and her husband Roger have one school-aged child. At the time of this interview, Christine worked for a local school system near her husband's duty station. Christine shared personal experiences throughout her interview that included working with well-organized and disorganized FRG networks throughout various deployments her husband completed. Lastly, Christine attributed her success with navigating the deployment cycle to her experiences in the Army and Coast Guard.

**Susan**

Susan, a 34-year-old Latino woman, reported that she served in the Army and has completed 10-years of military service in military aviation serving as a flight combat medic. Susan shared that she and her husband Danny met in the Army and served together before marrying each other. At the time of this interview, she had completed 2-deployments in a combat zone and participated in various humanitarian missions. Susan also shared that unit leadership is an essential lynchpin in assisting families in preparing and navigating the deployment cycle.

**Danny**

Danny, a 36-year-old White man indicated that he also served in the military before transitioning to the civilian world and now a military spouse. He served in the Army for 5-years and completed 2-combat deployments. At the time of this interview, Danny was pursuing a degree in higher education and completing engineering coursework. Danny asserted in his
interviews that daily communication is key to navigating the emotional and psychological aspects among couples throughout the entirety of the deployment cycle. Danny also indicated that toxic leadership had the potential to impact combat readiness, deployment preparations, and navigating the deployment experience among military families.

**Robert**

Robert, a 43-year-old White man, reported that he had served in the Army for over 15-years in military medicine. At the time of this interview, Robert had completed more than 5-deployments as a combat medic and indicated that he was serving as a surgical technician. He and his wife Caitlin have 4-school-aged children and were married before Robert joined the military. Robert shared that he and his family have always relied ‘heavily’ on their church and neighbors throughout the entirety of the deployment cycle. During his interview, Robert shared that his family benefited from a voluntary, faith-based program hosted by the military installation and local community churches. He suggested during the focus group that all duty stations should partner with community churches to assist military families during a deployment.

**Caitlin**

Caitlin, a 41-year-old White woman indicated that she and her husband, Robert, lived in a small Midwest community and married before Robert joined the Army. Caitlin described Robert’s first duty station and experiences with military living as 'scary' and recounted several difficult and challenging scenarios with navigating the deployment preparation process to include preparing a living will. Throughout her interview, Caitlin affirmed Robert's assertion regarding the benefits of a church partnership program that involved the installation and local community churches connecting with military families at the request of soldiers to assist with navigating the economy and military lifestyle outside the military installation. Lastly, Caitlin
noted inconsistencies that existed across different installations with unit FRG leadership and deployment resource awareness and expressed the need for ‘standardization’ with advertising deployment resources.

Results

The following section offers an in-depth analysis of the development of each theme. Data tables are also embedded with each theme to provide the reader with the axial codes, or subthemes, utilized to generate each theme, followed by narrative responses aligned to each theme from participants. Quotes from participant interviews and focus groups along with the survey data were utilized to triangulate findings that surfaced in this study. The research question response section provides the reader with responses to the central and sub-research questions.

Theme Development

This section will provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of themes formulated from the data analysis. A theme development table organized by subgroups and outlier axial codes that did not align with any subthemes within the overarching theme is also included. The data-analysis process I utilized in this case study drew from grounded-theory data analysis techniques (Holton, 2007), that included the following steps: a) line-by-line coding; b) axial coding; and c) thematic coding. The themes are utilized in this section to address the research questions and illuminate the issues surrounding the phenomena among junior-enlisted military families regarding the lack of knowledge and lack of engagement with deployment resources.

The three themes that emerged from this study were developed from one-to-one interviews and five focus groups conducted among ten participants. I completed line-by-line coding for each interview and focus group. From each of these data sets, patterns began to emerge and led to the development of 75 axial cluster groups to represent 15 datasets. Next, I
completed a third data analysis coding session to searched for patterns among the 75 axial cluster groups to condense the data sets and led to the emersion of nine subthemes. I then completed a peer debrief with my dissertation chair to check for researcher bias and followed with a fourth level of data analysis to develop the three themes that emerged in this study. Lastly, survey data was collected from all participants and served as a method to triangulate participant findings that emerged from the interviews and focus groups.

**Theme 1**

The *Junior-Enlisted Military Lifestyle* theme is comprised of three subthemes, which are included in the table below. These subthemes encapsulate the experiences of junior-enlisted service members and their families, regarding the deployment cycle, military community, and work demands. Participants highlighted challenges experienced while navigating deployment preparations, as junior-enlisted service members in the Army. Some of these challenges included difficulties with raising children alone, having conversations about death, seeking help from others, and rearranging work schedules to attend predeployment briefings.

**Table 4**

**Theme 1 Junior-Enlisted Military Lifestyle**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme 1</th>
<th>Subtheme 2</th>
<th>Subtheme 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Soldier Experience</td>
<td>The Military Spouse Experience</td>
<td>The Military Family Unit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Subthemes generated from soldier and spouse one-to-one interviews and focus groups.*

**The Soldier Experience.** The subtheme *The Soldier Experience* emerged from the one-to-one soldier interviews completed in this study. Soldier participants indicated that pre-deployment field training requirements presented challenges with accessing deployment resources and required strong leadership to navigate these obstacles. Lastly, soldier participants
illuminated challenges with deployment briefings and spouses should receive scripted narratives that provide an overview of deployment resources and frequently asked questions.

Susan asserted that leadership should assist military families and soldiers with navigating military living and deployments. She explained:

I have been fortunate enough to have good leadership that allows the soldiers that time if they have, you know, personal issues that they need to take care of…as long as it is not conflicting with something like super important that’s been planned out far in advance…Ah, I feel like… some units do not necessarily have like the best leadership.

Greg also affirmed the value of strong leadership and served as a non-commission officer during this interview and shared, “It is on the NCO and the leadership to let that new soldier know, ‘Hey, we have Army Community Services, your wife can access while you are deployed and pay for that when you get back.’” Greg’s perspective as a non-commissioned officer illuminated and affirmed Susan’s experiences as a junior-enlisted soldier and the need for strong military leadership. The impact of military leadership and its ability to prepare and assist military families navigating the military living and deployment cycle is an opportunity for future research.

Susan’s experience with strong leadership enabled her and her spouse to prepare for deployments and navigate military living. Susan expressed the benefits of preparing her family for an upcoming deployment and shared:

If my husband has something that he needs to take care of, that’s like, under my name, or you know, something for the house, or, you know, electric or water. Or that he is able to do that without having to, you know, get a hold of me to do it, you know, because the time differences, and then maybe you are somewhere you do not have really good connectivity. Or you are somewhere where you cannot like talk to the other person. So, if
there is like an emergency, they are able to handle it on their own without you.

Roger also affirmed the need for preparing financial paperwork prior to deploying and affirmed that not having this paperwork can cause challenges for spouses who remain behind. He stated,

There is always going to be some sort of complications when we look at deploying. I tried to prepare her with a list of logins, you know, paying the bills. I am the one that does that with our family, I make sure everything is done on time.

Roger asserted that units provide a deployment outline for soldiers, however, is not a comprehensive list that families may need to prepare prior to deploying.

Tony asserted the need for narrative-scripted resources to assist military spouses while soldiers are deployed. He explained:

The Army works off scripts all the time. Like if you have questions, and if they ask this question, you say this answer immediately. Of those [resources] it could be when you call this number you say your name and these things. That would let the person know how to handle your phone call or how to handle your situation.

Tony’s wife, Vanessa affirmed his assertion and reiterated, “Also, I think that we need to have a webpage that lists who I can contact.” Vanessa expressed that it could be quite challenging as a military spouse to have to rely on her deployed husband for an answer who is deployed across the globe and separated by several time zones.

**The Military Spouse Experience.** The subtheme *The Military Spouse Experience* was developed from one-to-one interviews with military spouses. The emersion of this theme encapsulated the realities that military spouses experience in their transitions from a two-parent to one-parent household and back to a two-parent household following the completion of the deployment. I learned that more than half of all families that participated in this case study
reported that their dual-military experience was of benefit to their families with navigating the challenges associated with a deployment.

Caitlin recounted the unexpected challenges she and her husband faced when he had joined the Army. She explained that she was from a rural town. Caitlin indicated that adjusting to military living was difficult and stressful at times as she and her husband began to prepare for their first deployment. She reported,

Well, I mean, it was in the height of two giant wars going on and lots of casualties. I am sitting here thinking I am 21 years old and going to be a widow with a brand-new baby that never really gets to see his dad. What is my life gonna be like?

Caitlin described in her interview that navigating the military lifestyle and deployment cycle was an initial challenge; however, had improved over time.

I was not surprised to learn that both the military and deployment processes were challenges for families new to the military. Caitlin also indicated that she relied on other military families to navigate the deployment cycle and stated,

Honestly, really connecting with some, I will say with 'veterans, spouses, and people' who had gone through it before, to kind of calm my nerves and explain how everything was going to happen and really just kind of connecting to those people who had been through it before.

Caitlin's experiences served as an affirmation regarding the need for support among junior-enlisted families with accessing deployment resources. I noticed throughout the interview process that Caitlin appeared confident not only in her responses during the interview but also in engaging in conversations with unfamiliar people. Throughout the interview, Caitlin's posture and tone indicated to me that she was comfortable with navigating complex social interactions.
She spoke confidently and shared that she did not rely on help from the unit, but rather relied on her local church who assisted her with navigating military living and deployments. Survey data affirmed the findings shared from participants regarding the ability to plan and navigate military living. A table is included below and includes data and indicates that four of ten participants indicated that they feel that their family cannot plan pretty well in advance for military assignments in the military.

**Table 5**

*FIRA-M Survey Response Question 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant response total</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Survey item; Our family can pretty well plan in advance for military assignments in the military.*

Caitlin’s experiences may serve as an affirmation to other military families who may also look to older families within the military to learn the various intricacies and norms surrounding military living and deployments. Caitlin did not mention in her interview or focus group seeking assistance from her soldier’s unit or the family readiness group that functions as a support network for military families. These organizations have resources and may offer military and family life counselor opportunities to support military families with navigating deployments and military living. This insight serves as an affirmation for future research regarding constructs that prevent or encourage engagement with organizational resources and support programs among military families.

Jessica indicated the need for independence throughout the deployment cycle. She stated, “I grew up in a family where the men were always gone due to work. I was always raised, head
up, do not wait for anybody.” Jessica asserted the military is a choice and requires a strong mindset to navigate deployments successfully. She explained:

I joined the military and I deployed, and then I married my husband. He started deploying without me when I got out, I just had that mindset where this is our life, we signed up for this lifestyle. Do I miss him? Yes, of course, but this is a lifestyle.

Christine asserted that life does not stop after her soldier deployed and stated, “It is not like we stopped while you were gone, and we need you [soldier] to start it back up. It is still going.” Christine shared in her interview that she and her husband had to relearn each other’s habits and routines following the redeployment phase. She shared, “We were newly married and had not yet had a kid, so we were navigating a lot of news. He loads the dishwasher wrong; I do not say anything about it, I just go change it.” Christine and her husband Roger had also indicated that they both served in the military and were successful with navigating the deployment experience, despite their disagreements.

The Military Family. The subtheme The Military Family is comprised of participant narratives from both spouses and soldiers. Participant narratives and findings that formed this theme may suggest that military families may benefit from a revised predeployment checklist that includes deployment resources available for military youth and spouses. Participants who had spouses who formerly served in the military expressed relief with not always having to explain every aspect or terminology to their spouses. Greg explained, “It’s honestly military jargon, she gets it. If I say we have to do a big whack at the Ah hah, she understands that.” Greg’s wife, Jessica confirmed this assertion and added,

I see a lot of soldiers; they get stressed because they don’t want to stress out their spouse at home. They lie, ‘It’s not bad, it’s not bad,’ and those are the spouses that are watching
the news, and say, ‘oh yeah, you are lying to me, I heard this on the news.’ I just ask him how his day was, and he does not have to lie or sugarcoat anything. I just get it.

Greg and Jessica’s dual-military experience may enable them to maintain a transparent and honest communication dynamic throughout the entirety of the deployment process. Jessica later shared with me that it was the birth of her first child that ultimately led her to not renew her contract with the Army. Jessica shared that she could not imagine having to leave her child to complete a deployment and stated, “I have never, I cannot. That is why I got out. I cannot imagine leaving my children and he has done it a lot.” Participants also asserted that junior-enlisted families may benefit from guest speakers from behavioral health or family-oriented organizations during predeployment briefings to learn more about existing deployment resources for military youth and spouses.

Soldier participants recounted scenarios from previous deployments and confirmed that junior-enlisted soldiers they had supervised as non-commissioned officers were *young and immature* and would not complete predeployment preparation for families without supervision from unit leadership. Some soldier participants shared testimonies from recent deployments that involved having to pull junior-enlisted soldiers off their phones as they argued with their spouses and became indisposed and unable to complete missions while deployed. Greg shared,

I have always told my guys when they were fighting with their spouse or something…

‘let us get a cigarette and go out to the smoke pit.’ They tell me their issue and all that, I let them get it off their chest, because that is what they need right then. I look at them and say, ‘if you were standing right in front of her, is this something you would be screaming at her about?’ I get them thinking, they tell me, ‘No.’ I tell them don’t let the frustration of not being together ruin your marriage, because it happens.
Other soldier participants shared their testimonies and recounted the stress and frustration they endured with their spouses who were unable to pay utility bills because the Power-of-Attorney did not include the correct information when the service member was halfway across the world. Greg and his wife, Jessica, recalled a time that they filed for the incorrect POA and stated, “A lot of soldiers forget to put their wives on a power-of-attorney and now they are halfway around the world, and they cannot sign for the bill. That would be nine months overdue when they get back.” Junior-enlisted families who are young and immature may benefit from participating in a sponsorship program that is facilitated by the FRG and includes career military families who volunteer their time to mentor younger military families.

Christine, who is an Army veteran and military spouse, shared that the Family Readiness Group is an organization that exists within the soldier's unit to assist military families. Christine shared her experiences with various FRG's and reported,

Now I have had the opportunity to experience different units and different FRG's, and I can definitely tell the difference. In those [FRG's], it is really dependent on the bias of the individual itself, leading that FRG, where some may be much more involved than others. It is clear to me, according to the testimony of my participants, that there is no consistent framework or standard for FRG support networks across military installations. Christine asserted that the FRG should be a support network that supports and shares resources with military families to assist them with navigating the military and deployment cycles.

Participants reported challenges with the junior-enlisted work schedule and highlighted the stressors that it places on both the soldier and family. Vanessa revealed her frustrations with the military work schedule and their ability to plan quality-time and family events and stated,

For example, right now they have where they work a lot of reverse cycles, they work a lot
in the evening times...So, you cannot really fully make a plan because it can always fall through, and that is very frustrating.

Vanessa indicated that she and her spouse rely on constant communication to navigate the military and deployments. She stated, "I have learned to have grace with myself and my husband because I know that he cannot control that...So taking advantage of every four-day weekend that we can get...and just doing something family-oriented and fun for us." Vanessa also indicated that she and her husband are Christians. Throughout her interview, she testified that she and her husband would exchange bible verses when they would find themselves in difficult positions or heated conversations. Vanessa shared that these biblical practices were helpful and enabled Tony and her to focus on the problem at hand, as opposed to becoming lost in the emotional aspects of physical separation and extended absence from the deployment.

**Theme 2**

The *Deployment Resources and Organizational Supports* theme illuminated challenges that included accessing deployment resources and locating deployment resources for families and children. Three subthemes encapsulated the central tenet held among participants regarding resource awareness and lack of engagement with deployment and organizational resources. Participants recounted personal experiences in both the interviews and focus group sessions and raised concerns regarding the lack of consistency with deployment resource offerings across military installations both stateside and overseas. Lastly, the Family Readiness Group was recommended by participants as an organization that could potentially fill the gap with securing family and children deployment resources.
Table 6

*Theme 2 Deployment Resources and Organizational Support*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme 1</th>
<th>Subtheme 2</th>
<th>Subtheme 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource Infrastructure</td>
<td>Deployment Resources</td>
<td>Accessibility and Limitations with Resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Subthemes generated from soldier and spouse one-to-one interviews and focus groups.*

**Resource Infrastructure.** The *Resource Infrastructure* subtheme emerged from interviews completed by military spouse participants in this study. Participants asserted the challenges that junior-enlisted families must navigate when preparing for deployments to include a) engagement limitations and b) support network limitations. Spouses from two of the five families shared how they benefited from the church during a deployment cycle to include: a) health and wellness checks, b) running errands, and c) providing a support system coupled with bible studies and Sunday worship services. Lastly, military spouses illuminated gaps that existed with deployment resource offerings across military installations and reported that not all predeployment briefings offer the same type of deployment resources.

Christine shared her insights regarding the utilization of the Family Readiness Group’ that is a support network for military spouses during deployment cycles, she stated,

> I feel as a spouse…you are highly encouraged to lean on your FRG…with each unit.

> With that being said, it is all about the logistics, timing…What resources are available for you as a spouse back home while your soldier is gone?

Christine reported that the FRG is an effective support network for military families and spouses when strong leadership is present within the unit. Christine also advocated for more resources for children throughout the deployment cycle. She reported, “I think there could be a lot more emphasis put on the family dynamic and how it affects children and their mental health as
opposed to ‘Hey, here is your checklist.’” Christine also mentioned in her interview that she has a master’s in psychology and an advocate for mental health resources. The checklist that Christine mentioned is issued to soldiers and must be completed before deploying that is comprised of 3-categories: a) Legal Paperwork, b) Financial Paperwork, and c) Family Care-Plan. However, additional resources or support networks are not included on the deployment checklist utilized by units to prepare military families for an upcoming deployment. A table is included below that includes a checklist published by Military OneSource.

**Table 7**

**Predeployment Soldier Checklist**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paperwork Type</th>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Document</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>Power-of-Attorney</td>
<td>Living will</td>
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<td>Financial</td>
<td>Residential Leases</td>
<td>Credit Freeze</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Care</td>
<td>Guardianship</td>
<td>DOD Identification</td>
<td>DEERS</td>
</tr>
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*Note: Information collected from militaryonesource.mil*

Christine affirmed that the FRG could be utilized to fill the gap among military families by engaging and accessing deployment resources. She stated,

> I think that the FRG’s could ask an MFLAC or someone from family mental health to come speak openly and provide information and handout books and pamphlets. ‘Here are some suggestions…not everybody is going to experience the same thing, but here are some common things that happen. Here is our number, here is how to reach us.’

Christine’s husband, Roger, also affirmed that military families experience difficulty with navigating deployment resources and shared,
I mean, I think all the resources are out there, and I think they’re available. But I do think there are limitations to people as far as what they pay attention to…sometimes we miss some things when it comes to pre-deployment briefs…you know, our brand is ‘go, go, go.’

Lastly, Christine provided insight with challenges other military families may experience and added,

You know, I think sometimes people want to act like, ‘Oh, I can do it all myself…I have my moments, I have my breaking point. I might not tell anyone I am going to reach out, but I might reach out. But if I do not know how, and I am already nervous about reaching out. If it is not readily right there for me, I am not gonna go search for it.

Christine’s ability to recognize that some families may struggle with internal challenges prior to a deployment illuminated barriers that may be a potential challenge with military families engaging with current deployment resources available for deploying soldiers and their loved ones.

**Deployment Resources.** The Deployment Resources subtheme illuminated soldier and spouse limitations and lack of knowledge with deployment resources for families and children. Soldiers shared in their interviews that a variety of resources were, in fact, available to junior-enlisted families; however, highlighted challenges that prevented families from accessing prior to their soldier deploying. I was also surprised to learn from participants their varying levels of awareness with deployment resources offered by organizations such as the USO, Military Coalition Education of Children, and Army OneSource varied across several duty stations.

Deployment resources are available to military families who can navigate the institutions and protocols at military installations. However, participants illuminated the barriers and
challenges that may prevent military families from engaging with and accessing deployment resources. Vanessa and her husband, Tony, shared opportunities for growth with existing resources and distributing information to military families. Vanessa cited that it can be difficult for working military spouses to attend unit briefings offered to military families. Quantitative data captured from the FIRA-M survey results affirm that five of ten participants indicated that they agreed or strongly agree regarding work and family schedules that are up in the air due to the military. A table is included below that presents these findings regarding the ability to plan weekly events.

**Table 8**

*FIRA-M Survey Response Question 10*

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<th>Participant response total</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Survey item; Our work and family schedules are always up in the air because of frequent TDY’s, long work hours, etc.*

Tony also indicated that childcare should be accessible to military families during deployment briefings and when completing pre-deployment appointments and paperwork. Tony shared, “It becomes what seems like a very simple appointment turns into a major, major function to make it to that appointment, or to access those resources.” Tony also urged the designation of a point-of-contact who can provide deployment resource information to military families who are unable to attend pre-deployment briefings. Tony stated,

If they cannot access those resources, then the number one thing they are going to look too is the connection with the unit and how reliable that connection is. So that is my reason making that unit communication a priority.
Vanessa also affirmed that some units could develop website portals for military spouses and upload non-classified information and deployment resource information to the portal. She stated, 

I think that would be a great way to relay information to families because it is easy to update a website. I do it for my job all the time. If we had a website that he gave me that I could go back to and regularly check for information. You know, keeping it private for only the spouses.

Tony also indicated that the FRG could manage and develop the website and further explained, 

So, it looks like a username and logon that is created by the application of the FRG and it can even be something as simple as you know, checking the FRG roster, you’re new to the company, we created a logon application for your wife, this is how it goes.

Tony also asserted that the portal could be used to advertise appointment information. Tony and his wife, Vanessa, are both comfortable with operating and navigating technology and affirmed that younger couples may benefit from integrated technology applications that advertise deployment resources.

**Accessibility and Limitations with Resources.** The subtheme *Accessibility and Limitations with Resources* illuminated challenges and limitations with deployment resources and support networks available to junior-enlisted families. Military couples reported that the deployment briefings are made available to service members and their families before deploying. Participants illuminated challenges that exist with facilitating deployment briefings, limited resources for families, and engaging with support networks.

Jessica and her husband, Greg also asserted that pre-deployment briefings included too many unfamiliar people and appeared unintentional and disconnected in the presentation of deployment information. Jessica suggested, “Like instead of doing like brigade level, where it is
like, alright here is predeployment for the families. Let us send 1000 people in the gym together and we will just go over some basic information.” Jessica was intentional about noting that this type of briefing was not personal and did not provide participants with a voice to *speak up* in large gatherings. She described her feelings from a pre-deployment brief and stated,

> I think it needs to be more personal. It is not personal; you feel more like a number, and you don’t have the voice to speak up. But you know the military says, ‘family first’ but I feel like it is Army first, family second, and I feel like that really fails the Army because your soldier is only as strong as the family behind it.

A table is included below that presents these findings and affirmed Jessica’s assertion regarding the notion of *Army first, family second*. I was surprised to learn that participants with more than 15 years of experience in the Army indicated that communication is a challenge between senior leadership and junior-enlisted families. As reported in the FIRA-M half of all participants *disagree* that the Army does not treat its members and families justly and fairly. This presents an opportunity for senior leadership within the Army to survey their junior-enlisted families and members and develop a corrective course of action.

### Table 9

**FIRA-M Survey Response Question 11**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant response total</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Survey item; The military treats its members and their families justly and fairly.*

Christine shared throughout her focus group that pre-deployment briefings are only focused on the soldier and preparing them to deploy. She asserted that a balance must be found to include preparing families for the deployment and stated, “But yeah, I think more of an educational
perspective, and what to expect, how can you overcome those, and how you can help your children during that time would be greatly beneficial.” Jessica’s husband, Greg, also affirmed the need for family supports and suggested the establishment of mentorship programs among non-commissioned officers and junior-enlisted families when units are not deployed. Greg shared, “The best that I have seen, as far as getting a family ready, is, again, referring back to the NCO, they are the ones that getting their soldiers ready for this [deployment].”

Susan also provided a unique vantage point that included limitations and challenges that may occur when interacting with a unit FRG as a woman and a soldier. She had spoken with frustration and recounted her experience with a previous unit FRG and stated, “Sometimes they don’t like other soldiers who are also women in their unit because…I do not know. It just happens to be like that sometimes.” Her frustration was also accompanied by angst with attempting to make sense of why it was difficult for her as a woman and a soldier to connect with the unit FRG that is comprised mainly of military spouses who are also women.

Susan’s husband, Danny, also provided a unique experience as a man and military spouse who also previously served in the Army. Danny shared his experience and hesitation with interacting and engaging with the unit FRG as a man and a spouse. He shared, I have had no interaction meaningful with the FRG. They have me on an email list and I get emails randomly from them…As far as that was concerned. I just saw no real reason to interact with the wives of deployed servicemembers. As you may imagine, so I opted out of many of their events.

Susan also indicated that including the military family for briefings could also be a solution for engaging and accessing deployment resources. She recounted an experience from a prior installation and unit she was assigned to and stated,
I was like, highly encouraged you [to] bring your family because the leadership would be
able to brief everyone and let everyone know…what’s going on. Because sometimes
people are not good about communicating the correct information, and they might leave
their spouses kind of in the dark on stuff.

Susan asserted her concern for her husband and his lack of engagement with the FRG. She
described her husband as a recluse and rarely wants to engage with others. The insight that Susan
and Danny shared regarding their experiences with the FRG is an opportunity for future research
to determine how to support military spouses who are men in a predominantly women-led
support network.

**Theme 3**

The third theme *Navigating the Deployment Cycle Experience* encapsulates the
experiences of military families with the deployment cycle. Participants agreed with their
spouses in the focus group sessions regarding the redeployment phase as an opportunity to
support military families. Participants indicated that the redeployment phase was a challenge for
their families. This finding has been supported in previous research (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018)
and surfaced during my literature review that included responses from commissioned officers
and military spouses who also indicated challenges with the redeployment phase. Lastly, military
families affirmed in their focus groups the need for developing a support network throughout the
deployment cycle in their immediate communities.

**Table 10**
Theme 3 Navigating the Deployment Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subtheme 1</th>
<th>Subtheme 2</th>
<th>Subtheme 3</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Deployment Experience of Military Families</td>
<td>One-Parent Households</td>
<td>Deployment Cycle Preparations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Subthemes generated from soldier and spouse one-to-one interviews and focus groups.

The Deployment Experience of Military Families. The subtheme The Deployment Experience of Military Families is one of three subthemes that surfaced from individual interviews. Participants reported successes, challenges, and barriers their families faced with past deployments. Soldier participants had indicated the need for more resources that enabled them to easily connect with their families while deployed. However, several spouse participants expressed their desire for independence regarding decision-making in the home during deployments. Participants reported that daily communication was essential to maintaining relationships with families. Soldiers also reported the need for technology and developed norms, and protocols amongst their families to maintain communication throughout the deployment cycle.

Roger, who served as a non-commissioned officer at the time of this study, also asserted the need for support with resources and support programs for junior enlisted soldiers and officers. He explained:

Yeah, first time out of college, first time, you know, deployed, and they're just trying to figure it all out. Yeah. So, it's as much a struggle for them as it is for the, you know, private, specialist, or even sergeant, for that matter.

Roger attributed his success with navigating the deployment cycle to both his family and friends. Roger shared that he draws from his family for strength and carries pictures of his family that, “I
can put up in my own personal space, which helps me feel more, I guess, at ease, deployed.”

Roger also mentioned the camaraderie that he experiences in his job was helpful and served as a coping mechanism to manage deployment stressors, he stated,

There is great camaraderie in my job that I have within the Army and I have definitely had a lot of friends in that regard. So that helps, too. Especially when you’re…dealing with all the stress…and, you know…how am I going to wrangle this ball of wax?

Quantitative data from the FIRA-M survey revealed that six of ten participants indicated that they ‘disagree’ and reported that the military does not make every effort to understand why hardships occur for military families. A table is presented below that includes all participant responses for this survey item.

**Table 11**

*FIRA-M Survey Response Question 15*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant response total</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Survey item; Even though being in the military creates hardships for us, the military makes every effort to help us understand why.*

Roger’s notion that junior-enlisted soldiers and officers benefit from on-the-job camaraderie and support networks aligns with findings that surfaced in Theme 1 regarding the need for strong and informative leadership. Roger’s affirmation regarding the need for support networks to navigate the deployment cycle and military living is a suggestion for future research among military families that I would like to complete after this study.

Danny explained the significance of communication between the soldier and military family unit in preparing and navigating the deployment cycle. He explained:
So, if you are not in the military, and you are a spouse of someone who is in the military, you are basically relying on your military spouse as a source of communication to all of the ins and outs of the actual process and all of the resources that are available…So if there are many tiers to this communication process…it is not always direct as you hope.

Danny's previous experience as an active duty soldier provided insight into the intricacies surrounding the present-day deployment preparation process and advertising of military resources. Danny also asserted the need for *intentionality* with supporting military families and soldiers following the post-deployment, he stated, “When you get back, they practically shove these things down your throat to sort of retro-actively take care of you…not really a whole lot of the family stuff, but just services for the soldier specifically.” Susan affirmed the need for both communication and support of the military family with the deployment cycle and predeployment briefs and stated,

…I mean, you can’t really make it mandatory for families, you can only make it mandatory for the soldier…So, I guess just like highly encouraging…you know, maybe providing some pamphlets that the soldiers can take home, you know, to their families.

Susan’s insight regarding pre-deployment briefing requirements and is an indication as to the benefit of involving the family unit with the predeployment briefing to learn more about deployment resources and streamline communication protocols to the benefit of military families. Military organizations and support networks such as the unit FRG and Rear-D attachment provide retroactive services and communications to military families throughout the deployment cycle. Future research regarding the overall structure and actional support services provided by both support networks could be of benefit to military families by engaging and learning more about deployment resources.
One-Parent Households. The subtheme, 'One-parent households,' emerged from the military spouse interviews. Participants shared personal accounts that included navigating the deployment cycle as a one-parent household. Deployment preparations for their children included co-facilitating age-appropriate conversations, identifying child-separation coping mechanisms, and dedicated weekly family time before deploying. Lastly, interviews among spouses who had previously served in the military expressed sentiments of navigating the deployment cycle with ease and often relied on their soldiers to assist with preparing their children for an upcoming deployment.

Robert recounted his additional responsibilities during his time served as a combat medic attached to a special forces unit and was deployed across the world before transitioning to a surgical technician during Operation Iraqi Freedom and described his experience as, “…kicking down doors and doing all that fun stuff.” He reported completing multiple back-to-back deployments early on in his military career during Operation Iraqi Freedom. His wife, Caitlin, affirmed that family friends who also served as combat medics, ‘completed four-or-five deployments over a six-year contract.’ Robert also recounted experiencing separation challenges with his son who was unable to recognize him after returning from a long-term deployment. Robert described this experience as a difficult transition that required several days of brainstorming to convince their son that Robert was his father. Robert explained, “We didn’t have that closeness, that relationship that you like to have…I am gone for, you know, eighteen months of his life…And it took us quite a while once I got back to really get that relationship level back.” Robert’s wife, Caitlin, assisted her husband with attempting to restore the father-son relationship after several failed attempts following his return home. Robert shared,

It was my wife’s idea. She literally said, ‘You know, well, hey, he sees you on the
computer all the time. What if he saw you on the computer and then saw himself with that person on the computer, and maybe you would click, and it just happened to work.’

Robert expressed relief following his son’s ability to recognize Robert as his father. Robert shared, "But when we did the computer thing like he looked up at me, 'my dad', and then after that it like clicked for him." This experience shared by Robert is an affirmation regarding the need for additional research supporting the needs of military children throughout a deployment cycle.

Greg also indicated the need for deployment resources focused on supporting the needs of his children before completing a deployment. He shared his concern with navigating deployment conversations with his children and described a particular scenario with his oldest child that he encountered during his most recent deployment and stated,

Once I get on a bus and head toward, you know, one of these countries. Yes, I am still a father, but now I am a soldier…You know, my oldest daughter is now 10. Now the questions are getting a little bit more…I do not need them to be worried, especially, while I am still in the military.

Greg’s heightened concern for his children illuminated challenges that can be experienced by junior-enlisted family members. Greg shared that he relies on his wife to facilitate conversations and questions that his children may have after he has left the country. His wife, Jessica stated,

It’s the question randomly driving to the mall a week later. Those are the ones I feel like we are not prepared for…’Why do people want to hurt Daddy? Why does he have to do that?’ And so, I do not think you can prepare for those questions, you know, they are very common. If my husband is not there, I will answer the question the best I can.

Jessica who is now a military spouse also served in the military before meeting and marrying her
husband. Jessica attributed her success with navigating the deployment cycle and military living to her prior military service. Jessica reported that they do not rely on any friends, family, or support networks to navigate the deployment cycle. Jessica also indicated that her dual-military experience that she and her husband share empowers them with confidence to navigate the deployment cycle alone.

**Deployment Cycle Preparations.** The subtheme *Deployment Cycle Preparations* emerged from the focus group sessions that included military soldiers and spouses from the same family unit. Every couple’s focus group revealed the same notion that unit leadership was a lynchpin in the deployment preparation process for military families. Participants also indicated that the family readiness group is another organization that worked in tandem with military leadership to assist military families throughout the deployment cycle.

Robert affirmed that a traditional deployment often requires the completion of pre-deployment training to prepare soldiers for a combat zone. He stated, “Sometimes, you know, for several months out that, ‘Hey, we are going to…the National Training Center in August.’ And we found this out in you know, May, so you have a couple of months to prepare the family…” I was not surprised to learn that all participants indicated that *time with family* and *communication* were important and interconnected to the emotional challenges that military families could potentially endure throughout any given deployment. Participants described the deployment cycle as a series of challenging events that families must endure over several months. Tony affirmed this assertion and described the need for families to discuss *communication protocols* before deploying to avoid undue stress associated with communication blackouts during a deployment cycle. He explained,

When your family, especially your wife is you know, accustomed to... daily moments
when you can talk and then suddenly there is nothing for 24-hours...She got a little worried...She did not spin out of control because... she knew, 'Oh, I have not heard anything from official channels of communication.'

Tony's recognition of his wife's need for confirmation enabled him to communicate with his wife and establish communication protocols they utilized prior to deploying. This enabled Tony’s wife, Jessica, to not panic and eliminate potential escalations that may occur when a spouse does not hear from their deployed soldier for an atypical amount of time they are not accustomed to during a deployment.

Throughout his interview, Tony affirmed his need for Christ and shared his church experiences and faith-based living with his family that guided decision-making with upcoming deployment and career decisions. Tony’s wife, Vanessa, affirmed their decision regarding faith-based living and shared, “So going to church and spending time with our church family…actually helps me get through the deployment…the FRG does a pretty good job…I know not all units are like this.” Vanessa and Tony’s faith-based living was identified as a successor that assisted them with navigating the emotional challenges of a deployment cycle. Tony also labeled his families ‘faith-based living’ as unique and stated,

   Our family unit is centered on Christ. So, which is, you know, unique in and of itself, and especially unique for military families. And so, you know, that even though that we are separated…we are connected in a way…that transcends physical boundaries.

The church and faith-based resources were highlighted by four of the ten participants as helpful with navigating the deployment cycle, however, it did not surface as a subtheme. This is an opportunity for future research to illuminate support mechanisms employed by churches and faith-based organizations to support military families.
Greg also affirmed challenges with the deployment experience and the overall impact on the family structure. He claimed, "It does not matter if you are in California at the Holiday Inn, after six-or-seven months, you miss your family, and it is very taxing." The deployment experiences of soldiers are determined by their job responsibilities and can result in several back-to-back deployments. Greg’s notion that indicated separation and time as a stressor and its impact on combat readiness is a construct that could be analyzed in future research. Prior research regarding the rise in frequency and duration of deployments among service members and their families has been completed to prepare families for future deployments (Spera, 2009). The increase in the number of deployments was also affirmed by several participants in this study to include serving multiple back-to-back deployments during the Operation Iraqi Freedom military campaign.

**Research Question Responses**

The following section provides answers to the central research question that was the focal point of this study: What are the experiences of military families before and during the deployment of a junior enlisted soldier to include challenges or successes with existing deployment resources and programs? The three sub-research questions captured the views of participants regarding the ability to locate deployment resources, engage with other key stakeholders in their community, and troubleshoot existing shortcomings with accessing deployment resources. These answers surfaced from the data to compile recommendations for military policymakers and leadership at installations across the southern United States.

**Central Research Question**
The central research question for this study was: What are the experiences of military families before and during the deployment of a junior enlisted soldier to include challenges or successes with existing deployment resources and programs? Participants recounted their experiences and challenges with engaging with existing deployment resources when preparing for a deployment. The interviews and focus groups provided an opportunity to analyze the communication habits of junior-enlisted couples regarding the engagement and access of deployment resources. Military couples indicated that time is a constraint when attempting to access deployment resources due to field trainings and exercises that take soldiers away from families. Vanessa shared, “I think his work schedule sometimes when he does come home, it’s immediately back into another training event. That makes it difficult.” Military couples also asserted in the focus group that younger junior-enlisted families should seek help from senior-enlisted military families when preparing for a first-time deployment. Greg reported, “This is gonna happen, this is how we dealt with it. Here is my number. As an NCO I have to reach that new soldier and prepare them.” Lastly, participants indicated a need for restructuring the pre-deployment briefing to include an intentional focus on family and child deployment resources.

Sub-Research Question 1

The first sub-research question was: What are military spouse perceptions before and during the deployment of a junior-enlisted soldier that might address the challenges of limited access and engagement with deployment resources for enlisted military families preparing for a parent-deployment? Participants responded to interview questions to share challenges and limitations with navigating the deployment cycle. Throughout the interview process, participants provided insight and experiences that shaped their habits for locating and engaging with deployment resources. Several participants affirmed the need to restructure existing military
entities such as the FRG and pre-deployment checklist to include family and child deployment resources. Lastly, participants revealed the lack of consistency among unit leadership and unit FRG support groups across military installations and advocated for standardization to ensure equitable access to deployment resources and support networks for all military families.

**Sub-Research Question 2**

The second sub-research question was: What obstacles do junior-enlisted active duty soldiers endure when preparing their families for an upcoming deployment? Participants provided suggestions to streamline existing protocols and processes for disseminating predeployment information that may or may not always include deployment resources for families. It was evident from my conversations with both spouses and soldiers that a lack of communication between spouses may be a challenge for junior-enlisted families who both work and may not be able to attend or relay pre-deployment information and resources to the spouse. Some military soldiers also asserted that the type of deployment may pose a challenge for preparing families for a deployment.

**Sub-Research Question 3**

The third sub-research question was: What is the effectiveness of available resources and programs in creating awareness for military families preparing for an upcoming deployment? Quantitative data was elicited from participants to provide a source of triangulation to support findings that surfaced in participant responses from interviews and focus group methods. Quantitative findings affirmed the following findings: a) family planning, b), work-demands c) equity, and d) strong leadership and provide opportunities for future research. Survey responses align with assertions made by participants and affirm the need for restructuring ‘how, where, and when’ deployment resources are advertised to junior-enlisted families to increase engagement
and awareness of deployment resources. Military spouses primarily advocated for deployment resources for military youth when the soldier was deployed to assist with improving family morale. Some military soldier participants also asserted that organizations should consider developing a script for spouses to utilize when contacting the agency for support.

Summary

Chapter Four provides an in-depth analysis of responses from participants to examine why junior-enlisted soldiers may have trouble with accessing or a lack of knowledge with deployment resources. Participants participated in one-to-one interviews, a focus group with their spouse, and responded to a survey. An overview regarding the development of the themes and correlating subthemes was presented along with a description of each theme. Each of the participants provided narrative responses that were a representation of their individual experiences and embedded within each theme. Lastly, responses to the central research question and sub-research questions provided a conclusion to the chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this case study is to illuminate the challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families endure when preparing for a deployment. The following chapter Five provides the reader with both an analysis and interpretation of the findings that emerge from within this study. The Overview is one of six sections that comprise Chapter Five and includes the following sections (a) summary of findings, (b) discussion of the empirical and theoretical findings, (c) implications section, (d) outline of the study delimitations and limitations, and (e) recommendations for future research. Lastly, a summary ends the chapter to review suggestions for military policy makers regarding opportunities to increase engagement with existing deployment resources among junior-enlisted families.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings provides a concise summary regarding the findings that emerged from this study. Findings are aligned to the themes that were illuminated by participants regarding supports for preparing junior-enlisted military families for deployments. Participants who have served in the U.S. Army shared their experiences regarding the challenges, successes, and needs of junior-enlisted military families when preparing for and navigating a deployment. Three themes: (a) junior-enlisted military lifestyle, (b) deployment resources and organizational supports, and (c) navigating the deployment cycle experience illuminate how Army leadership, senior leaders in government organizations, and non-profit organizations can address the challenges and needs of military families. Based on my findings, junior-enlisted military families may benefit from the following supports: (a) deployment resources for families that provide talking points for preparing children for a deployment, (b) predeployment briefing flexibility for
both working and large families, and (c) the development of a deployment resource index that lists all available resources to families regardless of duty station. These supports may provide junior-enlisted military families with the tools, resources, and pathways to preparing families for a deployment and may result in an increase regarding the combat readiness of the U.S. Army.

**Interpretation of Findings**

This section includes a discussion of both the empirical and theoretical findings that emerged from this study. This in-depth exploration of the findings provides the reader with a comprehensive overview regarding the alignment between the findings and my conclusions as an emerging scholar. Lastly, findings that emerged within this study are also aligned with findings from previous research, as noted in Chapter Two of this manuscript.

**Empirical Discussion**

The findings in this study add to the literature and research completed on military families and fill the gap with research regarding the deployment preparations of junior enlisted soldiers and families. Results from this research include one of three themes as described in Chapter Four: (a) *Junior-Enlisted Military Lifestyle*, (b) *Deployment Resources and Organizational Supports*, and (c) *Navigating the Deployment Cycle Experience*. Lastly, the need for strong leadership and its subsequent effects on junior-enlisted soldiers, as supported by the results of this study.

**Junior-Enlisted Military Lifestyle**

The military lifestyle is a complex and dynamic network involving several moving parts to protect the security and national interests of the United States. Those who volunteer for the military should expect a high mobility rate throughout their entire career. Military families may move once every three-to-four years to meet the interests of the United States Government.
Families endure long periods of separation from their soldiers who are called to the front lines to participate in a variety of long-term deployments that may include but are not limited to the following categories: (a) humanitarian, (b) combat, and (c) deployment field training exercises. Some soldier participants who have served as junior enlisted soldiers and NCOs indicated that junior-enlisted soldiers might be young, immature, and overwhelmed with navigating the military and newly married. One participant described challenges that junior-enlisted soldiers and families may face when first joining the Army, “All of a sudden you go from a small town in Louisiana, and you are in this big city. It causes so much strain on military families.” However, other participants with dual-military experience indicated that they were comfortable and able to navigate the challenges of military living and deployments as young couples. One participant described deployments only became challenging when she and her husband began having children, “The hardest thing as a future deployment to me personally is the children,” and asserted the need for more resources to support their children as they continue to grow older and mature into young adults. These findings suggest that young military families may benefit from a sponsor program that connects new military couples with veteran couples within the soldier’s unit to support incoming military families navigating the military installation, pre-deployment preparations, and deployment cycle. Lastly, it may be of interest to those in leadership positions within the military community to consider soliciting military families with dual-military experience to facilitate predeployment family briefings for families within the unit separate from the unit pre-deployment briefing.

The junior enlisted soldier and their families may face several challenges when joining the Army and preparing for deployment simultaneously. One participant described this process as a moment of freaking out, “I am sitting here thinking, I am 21 years old, and gonna [going] to
be a widow with a brand-new baby that never really gets to see his dad” when preparing for their first deployment after completing basic training and serving for less than one year. This military spouse participant also shared that she relied heavily on a local church that other veteran families from the unit had attended and partnered with them to navigate and prepare for a deployment. Another military spouse participant confirmed that the church was her support network during her soldier’s deployment cycle, “That helps me get through the deployment.” Other participants who did not report utilizing the church indicated that they relied on networks that consisted of neighbors, family friends, and other military families to help them with preparing for a deployment. All participants within this study indicated that they would benefit from additional resources that target supporting military youth throughout the deployment cycle. Some participants also asserted that children might benefit from deployment workshops sponsored by Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC), Schools on the installation or in the local community, or the soldier’s unit inviting guest speakers to pre-deployment briefings for families with children.

Other participant couples indicated that junior-enlisted soldiers might have several job responsibilities that require working nights and weekends that are not placed on senior-enlisted personnel or their commanding officers and is a challenge for young couples who may not have an extensive support network within the military community. A military spouse shared that she could not make plans with friends and family because of an ever-changing work schedule and field training to meet the needs of the soldier’s company before deploying or while not deployed. The military spouse explained, “I have learned to plan, not to make plans. Even just as simple as hanging out with friends on a Friday, you know, you cannot fully rely on that because something always comes up.” This military spouse also reported that she and her family relied on their
church and her parents to help with any challenges before, during, and even after a deployment cycle. However, not all families may have a church or support network that they can lean on during a deployment cycle.

The deployment cycle is a mission-essential and career-based responsibility that all military families must endure in the military community. Several affirmations emerged from this study regarding the need for additional resources with navigating conversations with military toddlers, youth, and adolescents from participants. Kritikos and DeVoe (2018) also affirm this finding in previous research regarding the need for additional deployment resources to navigate conversations and concerns that military youth may have with their parent's absence and overall deployment. Some couples in this study described their overall approach for navigating conversations with their children. However, they did not mention utilizing any specific deployment resources or support networks. Several deployment resources and organizations have designed both parent and child resources to assist families with navigating conversations centered around the deployment cycle. The Military Child Education Coalition is an organization that includes several programs, resource guides, and nationwide initiatives in support of military-connected children. This organization also provides partnership opportunities among local school systems both on and off the military installation.

A military spouse participant reported that her soldiers FRG group sponsored free child-care services to families who needed to complete deployment preparations or run errands before the unit deploys. However, the spouse was informed that the child-care facility was packed, and they would have to complete paperwork to be placed on a waiting list and then be contacted when space was available. The spouse later learned that although this program was advertised to all families within the unit, that special priority was granted to single-parent families taking
precedent over a two-parent working family with children. The soldier participant reported that he was not interested in pursuing child-care through the unit and was concerned about the vetting process utilized by the childcare facility on military installations and preferred to enroll their daughter in a childcare facility in the local community was well established. The military soldier reported, “I do not know how secure the location is, or you know who is going to be coming and going out of the building.” This scenario confirms the need for an increase in either or both funding and family resources to assist military families and units with preparing for an upcoming deployment.

**Deployment Resources and Organizational Supports**

Participants advocated for other youth and redeployment deployment resources to assist families with periods of transition throughout the deployment cycle. However, the concerns and experiences that participants shared with me are confirmation that military families continue to struggle with a lack of knowledge regarding available deployment resources for military youth and their families. Deployment resources for youth and spouses are available through non-profit or U.S. Government organizations to include but are not limited to the following: (a) The Military Child Education Coalition, (b) MilitaryKidsConnect, (c) USO, and (d) Military Installation Family Centers. I attribute this lack of knowledge among military families and unit leadership that may transpire due to the high rates of transition within the military community and the personal initiative of those in leadership positions and their ability to facilitate relationship-building opportunities between program coordinators and military leadership across all military installations. I was surprised to learn that although many participants indicated they were confident in their ability to navigate the deployment cycle also
echoed concerns for their children and spouses and their inability to locate deployment resources for their families throughout the entirety of the deployment cycle.

Soldier participants did indicate that stigmas promoted within a unit regarding behavioral health are barriers for soldiers and families who may need time off from work to access health resources such as behavioral health and family counseling. No consistent findings emerged from this study regarding access or lack of knowledge with mental health resources. It may be that it is the unit, company, and battalion leadership that set the expectation or battle rhythm for service members and determines to what level (or degree) that soldiers can request time off to access these resources. There were three findings that soldiers indicated were challenges with accessing mental health deployment resources. Some participants indicated that they were fearful of being reprimanded by their commanding leadership with requesting leave time from work to receive behavioral health services. These same participants expressed concern with being viewed as weak and incapable of serving in the Army by their peers. Other soldier participants asserted that they were fearful that their leadership would discipline any soldier for malingering for seeking help services. Lastly, other soldier participants indicated that it was the type and length of a deployment that created barriers to accessing behavioral health. Participants reported that deployments that lasted more than six months or required several short trips to complete field training before deploying made it difficult for soldiers and families to complete pre-deployment checklist requirements and access deployment resources. The stark contrast regarding leadership perception with soldiers accessing behavioral health resources varies across military installations was not surprising to me. One soldier participant asserted that this leadership and commanding officers encouraged their subordinates to engage with behavioral health resources to maintain physical health and morale within the unit. After reviewing the military occupational
specialty (MOS) of all participants who served in the military, I was surprised to learn that regardless of the participant's MOS, access to behavioral health resources and perception was perpetuated by the soldier’s leadership.

Participants indicated that junior-enlisted families might struggle with learning about deployment resources due to dual-working families, limited transportation, and lack of childcare. Junior-enlisted families reported that they could access resources when the military leadership permitted the time to access all available or required resources. These requirements included completing legal paperwork with the Judge Advocate Group and other organizations located on the military installation such as Self-help, Soldier Readiness, and Family Advocacy Program. Participants indicated within this study that they need additional resources for family health, children, and post-deployment. These resources are available to military families. However, there is a disconnect that has emerged from this study. Deployment resources developed for military families are not trickling down to Military Leaders and FRG leaders. This disconnect includes the following stakeholders: military family, military leadership, and government organizations that develop deployment resources. A potential recommendation for future research would include uncovering how organizations such as the FRG and Rear-D unit liaison promote or advertise upcoming deployment resources and acquire new deployment resources. It may be that those in military leadership positions, regardless of their location, may have more knowledge with existing deployment resources and is an opportunity for standardization to some degree across the Army and military. However, expanding awareness of deployment resources may depend on those in positions in leadership or military leaders to meet the continuously changing needs of military families.

Navigating the Deployment Cycle Experience
Most participants indicated that they felt successful preparing their families for deployments after completing two to three deployment cycles. I was not surprised to learn that participants felt more comfortable after completing several deployments. The military utilizes pre-deployment checklists to provide families with reminders of what specific paperwork must be completed before the soldier deploys. However, I am concerned for junior-enlisted families who are completing a deployment for the first time and are not familiar with the protocols and norms required to complete the checklist. All participants reported some difficulty completing the checklist for the first deployment that often resulted in challenges that spouses would have to resolve after the soldier deployed. A military spouse participant mentioned, “sometimes you just got to suck it up, buttercup,” while describing a challenge she and her soldier faced when they realized they did not apply for the correct power-of-attorney document to enable the spouse to manage their finances while the soldier is deployed. The soldier described that bills were often late due to the eight-hour-time zone difference and inability to always call during operational hours stateside while deployed across the globe. It may benefit junior-enlisted soldiers and their families to meet with military families who have completed several deployments to review checklist items and provide an informational seminar that provides specific examples regarding completing paperwork for soldiers to complete before deploying the soldier’s company or unit sponsors that.

Some participants attributed their success with navigating the military living and deployment cycle to their parents. Both Jessica and Christine recounted similar scenarios that involved their fathers raising them with an independent mindset and attitude. More specifically, Christine expressed her comfort level with having to move forward with raising her son should her husband not return from a deployment. Both participants spoke highly of their fathers and
expressed an interest in their children’s education and affirmed previous research findings and assertions regarding the transmission of cultural capital facilitated via the parent-to-child bond. Harris and Graves (2010) reported that the transmission of cultural capital from parent to child requires an investment of both times and obtaining success with educational, cultural, and social competencies. This finding may suggest that both participants experienced several episodes with transmissions of cultural capital from their childhood that contributed to their mindset and confidence regarding their ability to navigate complex challenges and barriers in the military community. The transmission of cultural capital has received the attention of several researchers (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Hoover-Dempsey, & Sadler, 1995; Fan, 2001), all of which advocate for more research regarding what attributes from cultural capital influence student achievement. I was surprised to learn that both participants advocated for additional deployment resources for their children despite indicating that they were confident navigating and preparing for deployment cycles. I attribute both participant's assertions regarding the need for additional youth deployment resources may be attributed to their independent mindsets and intentions to develop strong and independent young adults who can navigate complex challenges and barriers that they too may endure within their lifetime.

Many examples of resiliency described by all participants with navigating and overcoming challenges that occurred may have occurred throughout any portion of the deployment cycle. All participants reported utilizing and leaning on their support network during deployments and always stressed the need to remain calm. Each participant’s narrative is reflective of several strategies and best practices that are indicative of a growth mindset and contributes to their abilities to navigate complex situations in both the military community and the deployment cycle. This finding corroborates previous findings cited by Bowles et al. (2015)
that defined Christine expressed her comfort level with having to move forward with raising her son should her husband not return from a deployment. and coping mechanisms to include the ability to a) collaboratively problem solve, b) execute decision making, and c) regulate emotional expressions. These healthy habits utilized by participants are a confirmation regarding previous research with factors that influence resiliency and may benefit young military families. However, participants also asserted the need for solid NCO leadership to support junior-enlisted soldiers and families in navigating pre-deployment preparations, deployment cycles, and military living. I identified a potential organization named F*O*C*U*S that provides resources such as video webinars, training presentations, and couple’s video conferences to assist with the development of resiliency-based habits for military families. However, upon further research, I learned that this resource is a contract-based service and only available to families at specific military installations worldwide.

The redeployment phase and return of the soldier back to their family unit can be a difficult transition period for the military family unit and has been studied extensively in previous research (Knobloch & Theiss, 2018). Participants within this study also indicated difficulty with the redeployment phase that involves reuniting the soldier with their family following the completion of deployment. This finding is an affirmation of prior research conducted by Karakurt et al. (2013) that included participants reporting the need for additional resources to assist with the reintegration of their soldiers into family and household routines following their return from a deployment. Several participants recounted their experiences with the redeployment phase and cited the lack of information available to spouses to support their soldier when returning from a deployment. However, other soldier participants and couples with dual-military experience did not provide this same narrative and indicated that their previous unit
leadership was solid and supportive. This finding serves as a confirmation of previous findings that have emerged within this study aligned to the research question and serves as an opportunity for future research.

Theoretical Discussion

The selection of the relational turbulence theory was the guiding framework regarding the development of my research questions and methodology. As noted in Chapter Two, this theory was adopted to examine the contributing factors that influence communication habits among military families during periods of transition or, in the study referenced in the literature review, the reintegration phase of a deployment cycle. The focus of this previous study provided a springboard and catalyst regarding the development of my research questions and exploring the phenomenon regarding limited engagement and access with deployment resources among junior-enlisted soldiers and their families in the Army. Research completed by Dr. Knobloch emphasizes that communication patterns are lynchpins that can assist military families in navigating the reintegration phase of the deployment cycle. Recommendations for future researchers include selecting an alternative theoretical framework further to explore the relationships within the military community and agencies and further expound upon in the theoretical discussion section of Chapter Five.

The relational turbulence model has been applied to previous research to analyze transitional periods among military couples during the deployment cycle, specifically the redeployment phase described within the theory; these transitional periods that military couples experience may influence or alter families' everyday routines. What was illuminated from my research extended far beyond the everyday routines of military families during transitional periods and included the influence of support networks, experiences with
organizations, and relationship-building utilized by the military leadership to assist military families with preparing for a deployment cycle. This finding again is an affirmation to utilizing Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory to explore further these interconnected dynamics and their influence with engagement and limitations with awareness and access of deployment resources.

The original selection of the relational turbulence theory (Solomon & Brisini, 2019) assisted me with a general sense of direction with locating research from the literature regarding military families and deployment cycles. The relational turbulence theory, as utilized by previous researchers, sought to examine the communication patterns of military couples during periods of transition such as the redeployment and post-deployment cycle. During this study, I found relational turbulence theory to be of marginal utility and questioned my use of this theory. I could have utilized a more appropriate theoretical framework that shifts the focus from the communication patterns between the soldier and spouse to the interactions of the military family unit with various systems on and off the military installation. I came to this realization after several peer debriefs with subject-matter experts who have either served in or been a part of the military community. I recommend Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory that has been used in prior studies to analyze the interactions with young adults and the various systems they interact with daily (Leonard, 2011). While my committee confirmed the findings that emerged from this study, it is clear relational turbulence theory had no influence in framing or determining my findings. The use of ecological theory to conduct future research may illuminate other factors that influence the junior-enlisted family with navigating and engaging with deployment resources.
The selection of the relational turbulence theory to examine the communication patterns of military couples during periods of transition initially was an appropriate selection to conduct my research. As an emerging scholar, I sought to examine the communication patterns of military couples during the predeployment phase that constitute a period of transition for military couples. However, throughout this study, I have learned that military couples' communication patterns are one of several microsystems that interact with innumerable other microsystems in the military community. The findings that emerged from this study suggest that military couples must navigate several communication patterns within the family unit, military community, extended support network, and organizational stakeholders. Lastly, it may be Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory would bring clarity to the phenomenon and would enable researchers to examine the communication patterns at all levels within the ecological model that military families must navigate as they complete pre-deployment preparations.

Prior research among military families indicated that families might struggle with deployment resources to include engagement and accessibility. However, two attributes emerged from the research drawn from the participants' narratives and include relationship building and perseverance and is a fundamental attribute that may increase engagement and access of deployment resources among military families.

**Implications**

The following section provides an analysis of the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications. The theoretical implications add to the research literature regarding junior-enlisted families. The empirical implication furthers the research regarding the next steps for future researchers to select an alternative theoretical framework. Lastly, the practical implications
provide a short narrative for leaders in both the military and government agencies regarding the next steps with supporting military families.

**Theoretical Implications**

RTT served as the theoretical framework for this qualitative case study and illuminated limitations regarding my selection of the theoretical framework to guide this study. However, the RTT provided an entry point for accessing available literature with junior-enlisted families but did not yield any significant findings from this study. Participants within this study reported successes with navigating transitional periods with their spouses during a deployment cycle, as discussed in the RTT model among military couples. However, participants’ experiences agreed with scholars' assertions regarding the need for additional research with military couples and the reintegration phase. Some military spouses who participated in this study asserted the need for deployment resources to assist families with the transitional period during the reintegration or redeployment phase when soldiers reunite with their families following their return from a deployment. Implications for scholars regarding research completed on junior-enlisted families may benefit from utilizing Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory to conduct future studies.

Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory provides a detailed and analytical explanation regarding the various interactions that military families endure throughout the entirety of the deployment process. Halpenny (2017) completed research that utilized Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model illuminating the interworking’s of human development and interactions among youth, “…to explore the interrelations between the developing person and the changing micro and macro contexts in which development is embedded” (p.14). The emergence of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model surfaced after conducting a series of peer reviews with both my dissertation chair, Dr. Vacchi, and colleague, Dr. Worley. The Bronfenbrenner ecological
model (Halpenny, 2017) includes the following systems: (a) microsystem (i.e., family, school, peers, church group), (b) mesosystem (interconnections between two or more settings), (c) exosystem (i.e., friends of family, neighbors, legal services, social welfare services, mass media), (d) macrosystem (i.e., attitudes and ideologies of the culture), and (e) chronosystem (i.e., sociohistorical conditions and time since life events) (p.14-16). As reiterated by Halpenny (2017), Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model places a participant within a framework of systems that include stakeholders at various system levels that may provide a rationale regarding how often a person may engage and the level-of-comfort interacting with various stakeholders across different systems. This finding may assist scholars who complete future research among junior-enlisted families to gain a deeper insight into challenges and barriers regarding engagement and lack of knowledge with deployment resources.

**Empirical Implications**

The empirical implication furthers research among junior-enlisted families with deployment resources and includes the following themes or findings: (a) junior-enlisted military lifestyle, (b) deployment resources and organizational supports, and (c) navigating the deployment cycle experience. Much of the literature regarding junior-enlisted families primarily emphasizes the need for additional supports for military families with the redeployment phase of the deployment cycle when the soldier returns from combat. While this study addresses the lack of knowledge and engagement with deployment resources – opportunities for further research may seek to examine the communication patterns of junior-enlisted families who are successful with navigating rapid deployments. The participant findings that emerged from this study include using another theoretical framework, which adds to the research literature regarding junior-enlisted families and deployment resources.
This research will also inform military leaders, non-profit organizations, and government agencies that interact with and support military families. Most participants indicated that strong leadership might benefit military families who struggle to complete the predeployment checklist or access deployment resources throughout any phase of the deployment cycle. Military leaders who provide oversight to family morale, soldier support, and collaborate with government organizations on the military installation may review the findings from this study to enact change and develop systemic and systematic practices to support military families with accessing and learning more about existing deployment resources. Several participants asserted the need for additional deployment resources for military youth and spouses to assist families with a limited support network. In conclusion, military leaders and senior leaders in government organizations should know that the needs of military families vary and should implore methods that seek to build rapport and relationships with senior-enlisted leaders and, at large, the military community to support the needs of military families.

**Practical Implications**

The practical implications of this case study include recommendations for senior commanders in the U.S. Army and policy makers to support the needs of junior-enlisted families when preparing for a deployment. Participants identified inconsistencies with predeployment briefings that varied from installation-to-installation and at times at the same installation. Military couples indicated that the effectiveness of the FRG for spouses varies and suggested that success is largely driven by the FRG leader. This study’s participants suggested that predeployment briefings should be standardized. Potential resolutions asserted by participants involved battalion and company commanders collaborating with FRG leaders to secure and share deployment resources for families left behind. Military couples specifically mentioned the need
for more family resources including, but not limited to, the following: (a) morale and well-being, (b) student academics, (c) counseling, and (d) accurate point-of-contact lists.

Additional practical implications for senior commanders include reviewing the equity and accessibility by which behavioral resources for soldiers and families are advertised before and after deployments. Volunteers who participated in this study indicated variances with soldier perception accessing and utilizing behavioral health resources across U.S. Army installations across the Midwest and Southeastern United States. Robert describes an interaction during his interview involving one of his commanding officers with attending therapy sessions and stated, “I’ve had first sergeant’s say, my office is open all the time, except for Wednesdays at two o’clock. I am talking to my therapist so I will not be in the office at that time.” As noted previously in this chapter, other participants indicated they were fearful of requesting time off to access behavioral health resources and may be viewed as weak by others. These variances with accessing and the utilization of behavioral resources by soldiers may be attributed to the stigma created by senior U.S. Army leadership and warrants future exploration by military command.

Lastly, participants identified challenges and barriers with communication between the military unit, FRG, and families. Some military couples indicated that training schedules that were emailed to families often became obsolete after a week or two and created confusion among the spouses when a lack of FRG leadership occurred within the unit. Spouses and soldier participants indicated that the FRG serves as a support network to assist families throughout the deployment cycle. This presents an opportunity to develop organizational goals to standardize the operations and supports that FRG leaders provide to spouses during deployments. Vanessa and Tony shared in their focus group that military families may benefit from scripts that were accessible to spouses when they had questions about locating services or resources provided on
the installation and stated, “The Army works up scripts all the time. Like if they [spouse] asks this question, you would say this answer immediately. That lets the person know how to handle your phone call and the situation.” Participants confirmed in their interviews and focus groups that communication with the FRG also varied from installation-to-installation within the U.S. Army and may warrant future exploration to improve the timeliness and accuracy of information shared with families. This information includes the following: (a) deployment resources available to families, (b) training information, (c) communication with FRG leaders, and (d) point-of-contacts for accessing deployment resources.

**Limitations and Delimitations**

Several communication limitations surfaced throughout this study with the onset of the pandemic caused by the Coronavirus. Military personnel reported that installation guidelines prevented them from traveling off the installation and expressed concern for their family’s health and safety. I could not complete the interviews and focus group sessions in person with participants and relied on web-based platforms to communicate with participants throughout the study. I did not encounter any difficulties with connecting with participants through web-based platforms. I attribute this to the relative ages of participants who may be accustomed to interacting with technology for personal and professional-related tasks. A lack of diversity was also a limitation in this study, with nine of ten participants reporting their race as White. This study does not include all races or ethnicities that serve in the U.S. Army and junior-enlisted ranks.

The military community’s complex and sensitive work environment presented a challenge regarding my ability to secure potential participants who agreed to participate in my study. I discovered early on in my advertising period that potential participants displayed
apprehension with participation in my study. To overcome this obstacle, I revised my communication methods and made the following changes: (a) increase the participants’ decision-time, (b) make myself available to answer additional questions from participants, and (c) assure them of taking their time with their decision. After finalizing my data-analysis research segment, I inadvertently realized that investing time in building a rapport with participants may have contributed to a higher level of confidence among participants and may have enabled them to share their testimonies regarding everyday living and challenges faced in the Army. In future research with the military community, developing relationships and rapport with research participants should occur in tandem with research requirements to capture current realities, including difficult dialogues surrounding personal and sometimes difficult experiences that participants shared with me throughout this study.

A total of three delimitations were selected to conduct this study regarding the selection of participants. All participants volunteered for this case study and were or have served in a junior-enlisted rank within the Army in the last three years. The original intent for this study was to interview junior-enlisted families; however, it was brought to my attention that some participants were recently promoted to Sergeant (E-5) and Staff Sergeant (E-6) and expressed interest in participating. I decided that it would be appropriate to include these participants within this study to capture the experiences of soldiers who had both recently served in a junior-enlisted rank and completed a deployment. The three delimitation components that served as a framework for this study is included in this section.

The first delimitation included selection parameters to only solicit participants from junior-enlisted ranks that included soldiers with the following ranks: (a) Private (E-1), (b) Private Second Class (E-2), (c) Private First Class (E-3), (d) Army Specialist (E-4), and (e) Corporal (E-
4). As described above, exceptions for soldiers who were recently promoted to the ranks of E-5 or E-6 within the past three years and completed deployment within the past 3-years at the time of this study were eligible to participate in the study. However, an E-5 or E-6 are not considered junior-enlisted ranks, soldiers who serve in these senior-enlisted ranks also previously served in junior-enlisted ranks. Prior research completed among military families focused on military officer ranks and did not include the perspectives of junior-enlisted soldiers and families. This finding was also a determining factor that influenced my decision-making with choosing not to solicit feedback from military officers. Military commissioned officers serve in senior leadership positions and not responsible for the immediate supervision of junior-enlisted service members and job tasks. However, junior-enlisted service members are considered the military workforce and primarily responsible for performing work tasks that include manual labor. It would not be appropriate to solicit feedback from military commissioned officers who do not directly supervise junior enlisted ranks.

The second delimitation included the deployment completion timeline among junior enlisted soldiers and families. The original parameters for this case study included only selecting participants who were preparing to complete a future deployment within a year. However, the timing of this study in tandem with the onset of the world pandemic caused by the Coronavirus led me to expand the initial timeline parameters. At the time of this study, I had learned from some participants and social-media outlets that all military operations ceased to include military deployments, temporary duty yonder, and permanent change-of-stations as a safety precaution for the health and well-being of military families. My selection of the three-year parameter enabled me to conduct this study still and capture relevant perspectives from participants who were able to recall specific experiences from their deployment preparations vividly.
The third and final delimitation I employed to conduct this study included selecting junior-enlisted service members who were married and had at least one child. I determined that it was necessary to employ the same theoretical framework and participant requirements as reported in prior research to support scholarly findings and claims. Literature regarding previous research can be found in Chapter Two of this manuscript and provides a synopsis of previous research asserting the need for future research among junior-enlisted service members and families regarding access to deployment resources. The timeline window was widened and allowed for participation from families who had also completed a deployment within the past 3-years at the time of the study.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Findings regarding the lack of racial disparity emerged from this study as nine of the ten participants identified as White. The lack of minority participants precluded findings that might illuminate challenges and barriers minority families may face regarding access and engagement with existing deployment resources. Future research among minority junior-enlisted families should seek out voluntary Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander. Scholars could conduct research utilizing a qualitative case study methodology. However, researchers may consider conducting a *phenomenology study* that employs interviews, observations, and survey methods and utilizes Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model as a theoretical framework to build upon findings with this study.

Additional opportunities for future research include examining elements or factors that influence support networks, relationship-building, and perseverance among junior-enlisted families who overcome hardships during a deployment cycle. Although participants confirmed that they were able to prepare for deployment, there are at times challenging scenarios that can
occur during a deployment cycle to include but not limited to the following: (a) infidelity, (b) death of a spouse or family member, and (c) addictions that negatively impact the family unit. These challenges that may occur during a deployment cycle create a destructive cycle for the affected family unit and may pose a hardship on the soldier’s unit and impact combat readiness. Lastly, this may assist the military community with developing resources or streamline existing protocols to assist families that can prepare for deployments successfully; however, they may endure hardship at any given time in the deployment cycle.

Summary

This qualitative case study contributes to both the research field, military families and leaders, and organizations in support of the military to streamline support mechanisms and the availability of deployment resources for families. Participants within my study identified challenges and barriers with existing deployment resources that serve as opportunities for military leadership and organizations to implement their respective installations. Spouses and soldiers indicated that both the unit and FRG are two entities designed to serve as support networks that may assist families throughout the deployment cycle. The FRG, in partnership with other installation organizations, should develop a systematic and systemic process to present and update families with new resources available to military families.
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II. BASIC PROTOCOL INFORMATION

1. STUDY/THESIS/DISSERTATION TITLE (2)
Title: Preparing Americas soldiers and military families for deployments: An applied dissertation study for military and educational leadership.

2. PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR & PROTOCOL INFORMATION (2)
Principal Investigator (person conducting the research): David Estrada
Professional Title (Student, Professor, etc.): Student
School/Department (School of Education, LUCOM, etc.): School of Education
Phone: [ ] LU Email: [ ]

Check all that apply:
- [ ] Faculty
- [ ] Online Graduate Student
- [ ] Staff
- [ ] Residential Undergraduate Student
- [ ] Residential Graduate Student
- [ ] Online Undergraduate Student

This research is for:
- [ ] Class Project
- [ ] Scholarly Project (DNP Program)
- [ ] Faculty Research
- [ ] Master’s Thesis
- [ ] Doctoral Dissertation
- [ ] Other: [ :

If applicable, indicate whether you have defended and passed your dissertation proposal:
- [ ] N/A
- [ ] No (Provide your defense date): [ ]
- [ ] Yes (Proceed to Associated Personnel Information)

3. ASSOCIATED PERSONNEL INFORMATION (2)
Co-Researcher(s):
School/Department: [ ]
Phone: [ ] LU/Other Email: [ ]

Faculty Chair/Mentor(s):
School/Department: [ ]
Phone: [ ] LU/Other Email: [ ]

Non-Key Personnel (Reader, Assistant, etc.):
School/Department: [ ]
Phone: [ ] LU/Other Email: [ ]

Consultant/Methodologist (required for School of Education EdD/PhD candidates):
School/Department: [ ]
Phone: [ ] LU/Other Email: [ ]

4. USE OF LIBERTY UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANTS (2)
Do you intend to use LU students, staff, or faculty as participants OR LU student, staff, or faculty data in your study?
- [ ] No (Proceed to Funding Source)
- [ ] Yes (Complete the section below)

# of Participants/Data Sets: [ ]
Department/Source: [ ]

Class(es)/Year(s): [ ]
Department Chair: [ ]
Appendix B

June 10, 2020

Dear Church-member:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. The purpose of my research is to learn more about deployment preparations among junior-enlisted families, and I am writing to invite eligible participants to join my study.

Participants must be 18 years of age or older, married and have 1-or-more children, must currently serve, or married to a soldier in the U.S. Army and who holds a rank of E-1, E-2, E-3, E-4 and completed a deployment within the past 3-years or preparing to complete a deployment in the next 6-months. Participants, if willing, will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview (30-45 minutes), a focus group (30-45 minutes) consisting of you and your spouse/soldier, and the completion of 1-online survey (military spouses only- 30 minutes). Names and other identifying information will be requested as part of this study, but the information will remain confidential.

In order to participate, please (https://bit.ly/3baCKc3) complete the attached survey (5-10 minutes).

A consent document will be given to you via email to complete 3-days after receiving your screening survey. The consent document contains additional information about my research. Please sign the consent document and return it to me at the time of the interview.

Sincerely,

David Estrada, Jr.
Principal Investigator
Appendix C

June 16, 2020

Dear potential participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction. Last week an email was sent to you inviting you to participate in a research study. This follow-up email is being sent to remind you to complete the screening survey if you would like to participate and have not already done so. The deadline for participation is July 1, 2020.

If you and your spouse choose to participate, you will each be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview (30-45 minutes) and a focus group with the researcher and your spouse (30-45 minutes). Military spouse participants will additionally be asked to complete an online survey (30 minutes). Your name and other identifying information will be requested as part of your participation, but the information will remain confidential.

To participate, click on the following link and complete the screening survey: https://bit.ly/3baCKc3. All potential participants who complete and submit the survey and are determined as eligible to participate in study will be contacted by researcher via email.

A consent document will be sent to you by email if you are deemed eligible to participate. The informed consent document contains additional information about my research, please sign the informed consent document and return it to me by email prior to your scheduled interview.

Sincerely,

Mr. David Estrada
Principal Investigator
Appendix D

Consent

Title of the Project: EXPLORING THE DEPLOYMENT PREPARATIONS OF JUNIOR-ENLISTED SOLDIERS AND THEIR FAMILIES: A MULTIMETHOD STUDY OF U.S. ARMY FAMILIES

Principal Investigator: DAVID ESTRADA JR., Seeking PhD. (Curriculum and Instruction), LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

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Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, married, have at least 1-or-more children at the time of deployment, must currently serve or have a spouse who currently serves in the U.S. Army, soldier must hold a junior-enlisted ranking (E1-E3), and preparing to complete a deployment within the next 6-months or have completed a deployment within the past 3-years (If deployment is complete- junior-enlisted rank is required at the time of deployment). Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

---

What is the study about and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to identify opportunities to improve deployment resources for junior-enlisted families. This study will utilize feedback from junior-enlisted families to assist with developing recommendations for future deployment-resources. A 1-hour presentation will be developed and made available to military families to support the pre-deployment and deployment needs of our U.S. Army junior-enlisted families.

---

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in a 1-on-1 interview. The interview will be conducted in-person or virtually through Google Hangouts and will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will be audio and video recorded for transcription purposes.
2. Participate in a focus group with the researcher and your spouse/soldier. The focus group will be conducted in-person or virtually through Google Hangouts and will last approximately 30-45 minutes. The focus group will be audio and video recorded for transcription purposes.
3. [Military Spouse Participants Only] Participate in the completion of an online survey that will take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

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How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Benefits to society include illuminating issues that surround current deployment resources and assist junior-enlisted military families with deployment preparations. Research will develop a 1-hour presentation to share with military community within a 2-hour commuting distance from
researcher’s current duty-station. Participants will receive an information flyer from researcher to virtually join the live presentation (google hangouts or cisco meetings).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What risks might you experience from being in this study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How will personal information be protected?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data collected from you may be shared for use in future research studies or with other researchers. If data collected from you is shared, any information that could identify you, if applicable, will be removed before the data is shared.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Participant responses will be kept confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Interviews and Focus Groups will be conducted in a location where others will not easily overhear the conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Data will be stored on a password-locked computer and in a locked filing cabinet and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted, and hard copy records will be shredded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interviews and focus groups will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in focus group settings. While discouraged, other members of the focus group may share what was discussed with persons outside of the group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How will you be compensated for being part of the study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants will not be compensated for participating in this study.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is study participation voluntary?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but your contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if you choose to withdraw.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researcher conducting this study is Mr. David Estrada. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him at [redacted] or [redacted]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. David Vacchi, at

You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. David Vacchi, at
destrada6@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher’s faculty sponsor, Dr. David Vacchi, at
destrada6@liberty.edu.

**Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

**Your Consent**

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ The researcher has my permission to audio-record and video-record me as part of my participation in this study.

_________________ ___________________
Printed Subject Name

_________________ ___________________
Signature & Date
[External] RE: Permission to utilize FIRA-M for graduate-level study

Jason Sievers
Wed 3/11/2020 9:02 AM
To: Estrada, David

[EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and trust the content.]

David—

You have our permission to use the FIRA-M measure for your dissertation. You can find the measure and all of its information at https://www.mccubbinresilience.org/measures.html. If you translate the measure into a language other than English, please send us a copy.

Respectfully,

Laurie “Lali” McCubbin, PhD
Jason A. Sievers, PhD
Hamilton I. McCubbin, PhD

Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project
Email: mccubbinresilience@gmail.com
Website: www.mccubbinresilience.org

Sent from Mail for Windows 10

From: Estrada, David
Sent: Tuesday, March 10, 2020 2:13 PM
To: mccubbinresilience@gmail.com
Subject: Permission to utilize FIRA-M for graduate-level study

Good afternoon,

I am writing to inquire with the publisher regarding the utilization of the FIRA-M assessment for a graduate-level (doctoral dissertation) study. I am a doctoral student with Liberty University and able to provide additional information regarding my dissertation proposal. Are there any requirements for utilizing this assessment tool in my dissertation proposal? Thank you for your time.

V/r,
David Estrada

https://outlook.office.com/mail/inbox/id/AAqkADZ1YNjNWFkLWUJ5YjMNGiyZ1hZmY4LWNIODg8YmQ2OTYyMwAqAe1sB1hGJHkbi9vGpOtsxp4U%3D
Appendix F

RE: [External] RE: Permission to utilize FIRA-M for graduate-level study

Jason Sievers
Tue 5/18/2021 1:45 PM
To: Estrada, David

David –

We grant you permission to publish the FIRA-M survey and those results that appear in your manuscript.

Let us know if you have any questions.

Laurie “Lali” McCubbin, PhD
Jason A. Sievers, PhD
Hamilton I. McCubbin, PhD

Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project
Email: mccubbinresilience@gmail.com
Website: www.mccubbinresilience.org

---

From: Estrada, David
Sent: Tuesday, May 18, 2021 1:28 PM
To: Jason Sievers; mccubbinresilience@gmail.com
Subject: Re: [External] RE: Permission to utilize FIRA-M for graduate-level study

Good afternoon,

Thank you again for allowing me to utilize the FIRA-M. I have completed my writeup of my manuscript and preparing to publish. I am required by the university to secure permission to publish your survey that I utilized to conduct this study. I am writing to request formal permission to publish the FIRA-M survey and those results that appears in my manuscript. Thank you all so very much again for allowing me to utilize the FIRA-M for my dissertation.

Respectfully,
David Estrada
PhD Candidate
Liberty University, 2021

---

From: Jason Sievers
Sent: Wednesday, March 11, 2020 9:01 AM
To: Estrada, David
Subject: [External] RE: Permission to utilize FIRA-M for graduate-level study

[ EXTERNAL EMAIL: Do not click any links or open attachments unless you know the sender and... ]
Appendix G

The Resilience, Adaptation and Well-Being Project

Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation - Military

FIRA - M

Email: mccubbinresilience@gmail.com
Website: www.mccubbinresilience.org
FIRA-M: 
Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation-Military

Overview
The Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation for Military Families (FIRA-M) was developed by Hamilton McCubbin (1987b).

The use of self-report family systems assessment measures in military family research is based on the premise that family processes interact with the military community as well as individual family members' psychological and physiological processes in discernible and predictable ways. Clearly, the military system is but one of a host of interrelated environmental influences which can and does have a profound impact upon the military member and other family members, as well as the military member's job performance. But the research to substantiate these relationships is in an embryonic state of development. The jury remains in session deliberating the merits and generalizability of past as well as current research.

Until such research has been accumulated to guide family life education programs and family oriented clinical and health focused interventions, the training of family educators, nurses, social workers, ministers, outreach specialists and physicians serving the military community and families within will continue to be guided by faith, experience, clinical insights and unconfirmed assumptions. To advance research to address these educational and clinical issues about the military family system, family assessment measures have been developed and tested. This chapter is devoted to sharing current information about family assessment, particularly as it relates to the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation as it applies to military families.

Development of FIRA-M
To facilitate research in the study of military family systems, their transitions, adjustment and adaptation, as well as their impact on family members, we have made an effort to develop a cluster of military family measures designed and selected to assess the critical dimensions and components of this family stress model. This series of research instruments has been called the FIRA Series, the Family Indices of Regenerativity and Adaptation.

Conceptual Organization
FIRA-M, The Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation Military is designed to obtain 6 indices of family functioning (Table 30.1). Specifically, FIRA-M, which is patterned after the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation, is designed to obtain reliable and valid indices of Family Changes and Strains (A/AA factor), Self Reliance (BIBB), Family Coherence (CCCC Factor), Social Support (BIBB Factor), and two indices of family adjustment and adaptation-Member Well-being (XIXX factor), and Family Distress (XIXX factor).

The Family Changes and Strains Index (FCSI) (H.I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1982c), a 15-item inventory, was developed on the basis of FILE, the Family Inventory of Life Events and Changes, as a reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .79) and valid index (see R.I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1983c) of the pile-up of family demands and as an index of family vulnerability. This is a measure of Pile-up (A/AA factor) and Vulnerability (V factor).
Table 30.1
Overview of FIRA-M, Family Index of Regenerativity and Adaptation—Military

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Dimensions</th>
<th>Primary Instrument</th>
<th>Number of Items</th>
<th>Resiliency Concepts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Changes &amp; Strains</td>
<td>FILE</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pie Up (M)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Reliance</td>
<td>SRI</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family Resources (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Coherence</td>
<td>FIC</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Family Appraisal (CC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support (BIBB)</td>
<td>SSI</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Family Resources (BB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Well-being</td>
<td>FMWB</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Adaptation (XXX)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Distress</td>
<td>FAC</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Adaptation (XXX)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Self Reliance Index (SRI) (H.I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1982), a 9-item inventory, was developed as a reliable (Cronbach's alpha=.88) and valid (see H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983) index of the degree to which a family member felt capable of managing children, finances, decisions, and hardships in the absence of a military member. This is a measure of Family Resources (B/BB factor).

The Family Index of Coherence (FIC) (H.I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1982), a 17-item inventory, was developed as a reliable (Cronbachs's alpha=.85) and valid (see H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983) index of the degree to which the family members feel they can predict the immediate future of work and family schedules, the degree of commitment the family has to the military mission and lifestyle, the degree of control the family feels it has in shaping its future, and the degree to which the family feels it can count on the military to help in time of need. This is a measure of Family Appraisal (CCC/CCC factor). Additionally, Coherence has been used to create a family typology of Regenerative Families (see H.I. McCubbin, A.I. Thompson, Pirner, & M.A. McCubbin, 1988) and thus may also be listed as an index of the T factor.

The Family Social Support Index (SSI) (H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Glynn, 1982), a 17-item inventory, was developed as a reliable (Cronbach's alpha=.82) and valid (see H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983) index of the degree to which the family unit provides support to its members in terms of caring and giving of love and affection, listening and understanding to communicate esteem support, as well as provide appraisal support and the general sense of belonging. This is a measure of the Social Support (B/BB factor) of the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation.

The Family Member Well-being Index (FMWB) (H.I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1982) an 8-item inventory, was developed as a reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .86) and valid (see H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983) index of the degree to which the family member is adjusted in terms of concern about health, tension, energy, cheerfulness, fear, anger, sadness and general concern. This is a measure of the well-being of the family member, in general and a measure of the Adjustment (X) or Adaptation (XX) factors.

The Family Adaptation Checklist (FAC) (H.I. McCubbin & Patterson, 1982a), a 10-item inventory, was developed as a reliable (Cronbach's alpha = .82) and valid (see H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983) index of the degree to which the family may be distressed. The checklist focuses upon hospitalization, the need for professional help, injury, separation or divorce, financial hardships, physical abuse, substance abuse, considered or attempted suicide, and conflict with the law. This is a measure of family adaptation as reflected in major indices of family deterioration or symptomatology indicating family members with difficulties. This is an index of the XXXX factor.

Reliability
The reliabilities (Cronbach's alpha) for each of the instruments have already been presented as part of the description of each. In summary, the Family Changes and Strains Index had a reliability index of .79, the Self Reliance Index had a reliability of .88, the Family Index of Coherence had a reliability of .85, the
Family Social Support Index had a reliability of .82, the Family Member Well-being Index had a reliability of .86, and the Family Adaptation Checklist had a reliability of .82.

Validity
The full report of the validities of each of these instruments may be found in the publication One Thousand Army Families (H.I. McCubbin, Patterson, & Lavee, 1983). A summary of the salient indices of validity presented in Table 30.2 would be helpful in highlighting the psychometric properties of FIRA-M.

Table 30.2
Summary of Validities for FIRA-M Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIRA-M Measures</th>
<th>Well-being</th>
<th>Distress</th>
<th>Satisfaction with Lifestyle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family Changes &amp; Strains</td>
<td>-.27†</td>
<td>.20†</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Reliance Index</td>
<td>.29†</td>
<td>- .30†</td>
<td>.24*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Index of Coherence</td>
<td>.39†</td>
<td>- .27†</td>
<td>.52†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support Index</td>
<td>.40†</td>
<td>- .17†</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significantly related for Officers
† Significantly related for Enlisted Personnel

Test-Retest Reliability
No additional studies to report at this time.

Additional Validity Checks
No additional studies to report at this time.

Scoring Procedures
The scoring for FIRA-M may be viewed as relatively routine, with a few exceptions to be noted. The list below describes the procedure used for scoring each individual instrument. For each of the instruments in FIRA-M, each item is assigned a score of the response circled (i.e., 1 = No Problem, 2 = Yes, Small Problem, 3 = Yes, Big Problem, 4 = No Children). Reversals (i.e., 0 – 3, 1 – 2, 2 – 1, and 3 – 0) are needed for some of the items in the Family Index of Coherence, Social Support, and Family Member Well-being Indexes in order to ensure that all items are weighted in a positive direction for analysis and interpretation. These are noted in the right hand column below and are marked with an asterisk.

Family Changes & Strains Index
Sum items then divide by 5 for total Family Changes & Strains score
Items 1 through 15

Self Reliance Index
Sum items for total Self Reliance Score
Items 1 through 9

Family Index of Coherence
Sum items for total Family Coherence score
Items 1 through 17 Reverse Items 1*, 2*, 6*, 7*, 8*, 9*, 10*, 16*

Social Support Index
Sum items for total Social Support score
Items 1 through 17 Reverse items 7*, 9*, 10*, 13*, 14*, 17*

Family Member Well-being Index
Sum items for total Family Member Well-being score
Items 1 through 8 1*, 2*, 5*, 6*, 7*, 8,

Family Adaptation Checklist
Sum items for total Family Adaptation score
Items 1 through 10
There is a 25-item version of the Social Support Index available which includes a social desirability scale not used in analysis. Items to be reversed in the 25-item version include: 9, 11, 12, 15, 17, 22, and 24.

**Norms and/or Comparative Data**
Comparative data are only available on families in the Department of the Army. The families selected for the investigation were part of a sampling plan designed to meet the requirement for surveying 1,000 families in the United States Army located in Western Europe. The sampling strategy was based on the premise that a representative sample of families in the U.S. Army could be obtained. The sample, which involved an 85.7% participation rate, was in fact determined to be representative of the Army as a whole. It approximated the profile of married male military personnel in the U.S. Army.

The comparative data are presented in the form of summary tables which can be used as references for the military researcher, educator, and counselor. Given the assumed differences in family responses on the basis of military rank (an index of differences in social class and income; officer and enlisted military personnel), ethnicity (African-American families and Caucasian families), and by life cycle stages (couples without children, preschool and school age, adolescent and launching, empty nest), where appropriate and available the comparative data are presented according to each of these categories (Table 30.3).

To round out our comparative data each of the indices in FIRA-M is presented according to ethnicity (African-American and Caucasian) and general category of military rank (Enlisted and Officers) (see Tables 30.4 through 30.19). The statistics presented include the general mean, standard deviation, quartiles comparisons and percentile comparisons.

**Instrument Utilization for Research**
The FIRA-M instrument is currently being tested within the Family Stress, Coping and Health Project and by other investigators. The few studies that have included this instrument have already been cited in the validity section of this chapter and are included in the references. Therefore, a summary table of related publications is not available at this time.

**Notes**
1. The earlier writings on this instrument included a comprehensive description of the instrument's development. For the sake of brevity we limited the chapter to the basic information that users have requested and needed. If you desire a copy and are unable to find our earlier publications, either the 1987 or the 1991 edition, please write to us at the Center for Excellence in Family Studies, Family Stress, Coping and Health Project, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1300 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706 or send email to manaul@macw.wisc.edu. There will be a charge for these additional materials.

FIRA-M

FAMILY INDEX OF REGENERATIVITY AND ADAPTATION-MILITARY

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*English Version*
FIRA-M
FAMILY INDEX OF REGENERATIVITY AND ADAPTATION-MILITARY©
Hamilton I. McCubbin

Family Changes and Strains
Self-Reliance Index
Family Index of Coherence
Social Support Index
Family Member Well-Being
Family Adaptation Checklist

© 1987 H.I. McCubbin
**FAMILY CHANGES AND STRAINS**

Hamilton I. McCubbin | Joan M. Patterson

_During the past 12 months, did any of the following happen in your family?_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Yes Small Problem</th>
<th>Yes Big Problem</th>
<th>No Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Family member appeared to have emotional problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Family member appeared to depend on alcohol or drugs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Remarried and/or added a child to the family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Child member became pregnant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Incurred financial debts due to the use of credit cards/loans/more expenses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Purchased or built a home</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Spouse became seriously ill or injured</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Child became seriously ill or injured</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Close relative or friend became seriously ill</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Child died</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Death of husband’s or wife’s parents or close relative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Close friend of family died</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Incidents of extreme anger and/or physical abuse in the family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Family member was arrested by the police</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Family conflict over whether to stay in or leave the Army</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Total_
## SRI
**SELF RELIANCE INDEX**

Hamilton I. McCubbin  Joan M. Patterson

When your military spouse is away from you (field assignments, temporary duty, etc.) how well are you able to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Problem</th>
<th>Yes, Small Problem</th>
<th>Yes, Big Problem</th>
<th>No Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Handle/discipline the child(ren)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Get jobs done at home (cook the meals, do laundry, do maintenance work, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Get to and use military (Army, etc.) and civilian stores and services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Offer support and encouragement to your child(ren)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Handle family finances</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Keep busy and do things you value and are interested in</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Make decisions for the family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Maintain a “positive attitude” toward your spouse being away</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Handle emergencies (medical, major breakdown in household equipment, theft, etc.)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total

© 1982 H.I. McCubbin and J. Patterson, Family Stress, Coping and Health Project
### FIC
**FAMILY INDEX OF COHERENCE**
Hamilton I. McCubbin   Joan M. Patterson

**Please rate the following statements as they apply to your family.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. If there is a conflict between the family’s needs and the military’s needs, there is no question that the military comes first.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The military seems to dictate to spouses of military members what they should not do.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Our family can pretty well plan in advance for military assignments in the military.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. If we have problems or special needs in our family, we feel confident we can get the help we need.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Our family feels we have some say about future military assignments (when and where).</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. My family and I are unsure whether we will stay in or leave the military.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Military life makes planning for family member’s education and work almost impossible.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. The military member’s career will be hurt if our family voices any special needs or frustrations.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Our family is unsure when our military member will be home or gone.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Our work and family schedules are always up in the air because of frequent TDY’s, long work hours, etc.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. The military treats its members and their families justly and fairly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Our family shares a commitment to the life-style and mission of the military.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. When we face problems in our family, we have the ability to look on the brighter side of things.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The military really does take care of its families and wants us to be all that we can be.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Even though being in the military creates hardships for us, the military makes every effort to help us understand why.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. There is no way that being in the military can ever be good for our family.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Within our family we have fair and just rules that keep things running smoothly.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**SSI**

**SOCIAL SUPPORT INDEX©**

Hamilton I. McCubbin  Joan M. Patterson  Thomas Glynn

 Directions:

Read the statements below and decide for your family whether you: (1) **Strongly Disagree**; (2) **Disagree**; (3) **Neutral**; (4) **Agree**; (5) **Strongly Agree** and circle that number.

Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your community and family:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Family Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Support Score 1

© H.I. McCubbin and J. Patterson, & T. Glynn, 1982 Please continue on other side.
Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your community and family:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Family Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Members of my family seldom listen to my problems or concerns; I usually feel criticized.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>My friends in this community are a part of my everyday activities.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>There are times when family members do things that make other members unhappy.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I need to be very careful how much I do for my friends because they take advantage of me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Living in this community gives me a secure feeling.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>The members of my family make an effort to show their love and affection for me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>There is a feeling in this community that people should not get too friendly with each other.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>This is not a very good community to bring children up in.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I feel secure that I am as important to my friends as they are to me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I have some very close friends outside the family who I know really care for me and love me.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Member(s) of my family do not seem to understand me; I feel taken for granted.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Social Support Score 2

Social Support Score 1

Social Support Score Total

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For each of the eight statements below, please note that the words at each end of the 0 to 10 scale describe opposite feelings. Please fill in the response along the bar which seems closest to how you have generally felt during the past month.

**Example:**

| Not CONCERNED at all | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Very CONCERNED |

1. **How concerned or worried about your health have you been? (During the past month)**

2. **How relaxed or tense have you been? (During the past month)**

3. **How much energy, pep, and vitality have you felt? (During the past month)**

4. **How depressed or cheerful have you been? (During the past month)**

5. **How afraid have you been? (During the past month)**

6. **How angry have you been? (During the past month)**

7. **How sad have you been? (During the past month)**

8. **How concerned or worried about the health of another family member have you been? (During the past month)**

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FAC
FAMILY ADAPTATION CHECKLIST©
Hamilton I. McCubbin  Joan M. Patterson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Yes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visited dispensary/hospital as an outpatient for an illness</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been admitted to the hospital for treatment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had an accident involving a person injury which did not require medical attention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought professional help (Chaplin, counselor, etc.) for a marital or family problem</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taken any steps for a marital separation or divorce</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had difficulty paying bills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a problem with anger and physically abused another</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had a problem with overuse of alcohol or use of drugs</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considered or attempted suicide</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Been in trouble with the German, Italian, or military police</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total

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