

**TriService Nursing Research Program Final Report Cover Page**

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**Signatures**

PI Signature	_____	Date	_____
Mentor Signature	_____	Date	_____

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of military duty-related separations/deployment for children ages 4-10 years of age. The research questions were: How do children aged 4-10 years of age describe the experience of military separations/deployment? What are parental perceptions of how their children experienced parental absence for military duty/deployment? What are useful strategies parents have found helpful in managing separations/deployments for their children?

**Design:** This study used a mixed methods concurrent embedded qualitative descriptive design

**Methods:** Parents completed demographic forms, FACES IV, a parental stress scale and 30-60 minute interview describing their child(ren)'s reaction to separation/deployment. Children participated in a draw-and-tell conversation and photo-elicitation interview.

**Sample:** 56 children from 38 families, aged 4-10, participated in the study. Of these, 35 families had experienced a separation or deployment within the past 2 years for at least 3 months and three families had experienced shorter separations and served as a comparison group. Twenty-four military members and thirty-four spouses completed the interview/research instruments.

**Analysis:** Instruments were analyzed descriptively. Parental/caregiver interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). Children's interviews were analyzed using linguistic discourse and narrative analysis for major thematic categories (Gee, 2011a, 2011b).

**Findings:** Mothers demonstrated higher stress during the deployment/separation than fathers. FACES indicated a trend toward enmeshed family type for some, but otherwise within normal limits for flexibility and cohesion. Children's drawings provided insight for their feelings and experiences of separation. Parent interviews detailed issues arising across the trajectory of deployment with successful strategies to navigate throughout.

**Implications for Military Nursing:** In military nursing practice, the results of this study will be useful in providing anticipatory guidance and ongoing support with families experiencing separation/deployment. Publications and other resources should reinforce the value of the strategies identified and validated by these families as helpful.

**TSNRP Research Priorities that Study or Project Addresses**

**Primary Priority**

Force Health Protection:	<input type="checkbox"/> Fit and ready force <input type="checkbox"/> Deploy with and care for the warrior <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Care for all entrusted to our care
Nursing Competencies and Practice:	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Quality and safety <input type="checkbox"/> Translate research into practice/evidence-based practice <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical excellence <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge management <input type="checkbox"/> Education and training
Leadership, Ethics, and Mentoring:	<input type="checkbox"/> Health policy <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment and retention <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing tomorrow's leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Care of the caregiver
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Secondary Priority**

Force Health Protection:	<input type="checkbox"/> Fit and ready force <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deploy with and care for the warrior <input type="checkbox"/> Care for all entrusted to our care
Nursing Competencies and Practice:	<input type="checkbox"/> Patient outcomes <input type="checkbox"/> Quality and safety <input type="checkbox"/> Translate research into practice/evidence-based practice <input type="checkbox"/> Clinical excellence <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge management <input type="checkbox"/> Education and training
Leadership, Ethics, and Mentoring:	<input type="checkbox"/> Health policy <input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment and retention <input type="checkbox"/> Preparing tomorrow's leaders <input type="checkbox"/> Care of the caregiver
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Progress Towards Achievement of Specific Aims of the Study or Project

### Findings related to each specific aim, research or study questions, and/or hypothesis:

**The purpose of this study was to describe the experience of military separation/deployment for children ages 4-10 years of age using a mixed methods qualitative descriptive design.**

The research questions addressed in this study were: 1) How do children aged 4-10 years of age describe the experience of military separation/deployment? 2) What are parental perceptions of how their children experienced military separation/deployment? 3) What are useful strategies parents have employed to manage military separation/deployment for their children? and 4) What similarities and differences are there between parents' and children's perspectives of military separations and deployments?

### Demographics

Fifty-six children from 38 families, aged 4-10, participated in the study. Of these, 34 families had experienced a separation or deployment within the past 2 years for at least 3 months and four families had experienced shorter separations (1 month or less) and served as a comparison group. All of the children participated in the draw and tell/photo elicitation interview. Twenty-four military members participated in the interviews/instrument completion and thirty-five spouses (all mothers) completed the interview and research instruments. Two single mothers participated in the study.

For those families who were part of the deployed group, the military member had been on active duty for an average of 11.2 years with a range of 1-21 years (SD 4.33). These individuals represented primarily enlisted ranks of E-5 (n=9), E-6 (n=11); and E-7 (n=6). There were 5 officer families represented at the O-3 (n=4) and O-4 (n=1) ranks. Separations/deployments had lasted from 2 months at repeated intervals for ship assignments to 36 months for an unaccompanied tour. The average length of separation was 8.14 months (SD=6.1). Military members had served in overseas locations to include the Middle East, Africa, Korea, and across the USA (see Table 1).

Table 1: Locations of separation/deployment

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
USA site	6	17.6	17.6	17.6
Shipboard	11	32.4	32.4	50.0
Afghanistan	2	5.9	5.9	55.9
Middle east location	9	26.5	26.5	82.4
Korea	1	2.9	2.9	85.3
Hawaii	3	8.8	8.8	94.1
Africa	2	5.9	5.9	100.0
Total	34	100.0	100.0	

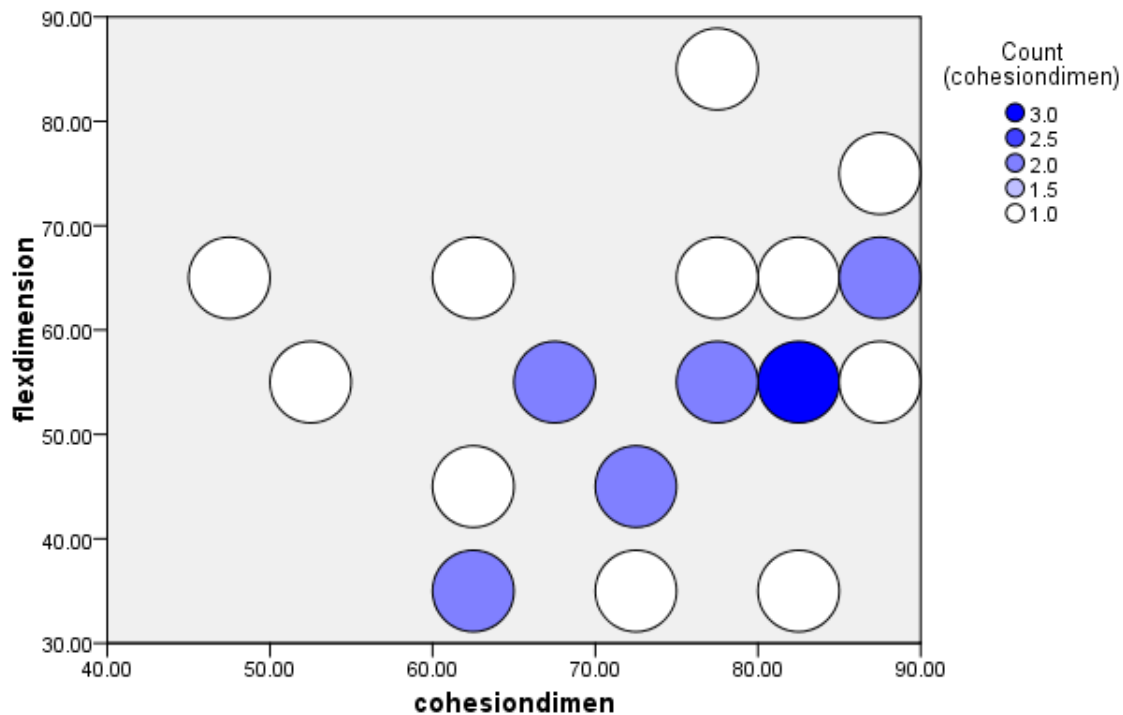
Despite efforts to recruit from all services, the Navy participants predominated with 27 Navy families; 3 Army families; 2 Air Force; and one each from the Marines and Coast Guard. There were 3 dual military families and 2 single mothers. The average respondent age was 33.2 with a range of 24-44 years of age for the primary respondent completing the demographic sheet. Ethnicity was primarily white (n=17), but also included black/African American (n=6); Hispanic (n=2); and mixed race (n=4). Most primary respondents had some college or specialized training (n=12) with eight college graduates and 7 with graduate school completion; four had completed high school and 1 reported AIT as the highest education level. The number of children in deployed/separated group ranged from 1-6 children with families reporting 2 children (n=16) or 3 children (n=8) most frequently.

For the comparison group, the four military members were primarily E5-E-6; all were Navy; and their separations were related to fleet week types of deployments for several weeks at a time but no longer than a month. These individuals had been in the military an average of 10 years with a range of 7-14 years. The primary respondents (mothers) were an average age of 31 years (29-33 yrs range); white (n=1) or black/African American (n=3); with college or graduate education, and had 1-4 children.

Multiple children in a family had the opportunity to participate. Overall in the separated/deployed families, 1-4 children participated in a family depending on age and interest. For the oldest child participants, the average age was 6.5 years of age with a range of 4 -10 years of age at the time of the interview. At the time of deployment, the average age of the oldest respondent was 5.37 with a range of 2-10 years of age (n=30). The youngest children to participate in the interviews were 4 years of age and the youngest age of the participating children at the time of deployment/separation was 2 years of age. All of the children met the inclusion criteria of being between the ages of 4-10 at the time of the interview.

Each parent was asked to complete the parental stress scale reflecting on the level of stress currently and that during the most recent separation/deployment to be used descriptively and as a potential comparison point with qualitative data. Looking at just the deployed/separated families, comparisons were used to explore if there were differences between the level of stress between the military member and the spouse remaining at home with the children as well as between the two time periods for each. Mothers' current stress reflected a mean of 63 (SD 5.440) in their stress level while the military member was deployed averaged 65.45. Using a paired t test demonstrated a significant difference for mothers ( $t=-3.329$ ,  $p=.002$ ) between time periods. For the military members, current and deployed stress levels were also significantly different ( $t=3.887$ ,  $p=.001$ ) however the means were the opposite of the spouse in that the stress when separated was lower (mean=59.11) compared to current stress levels (mean=62.39). Mothers' stress levels exceeded the military members at both points, however this difference was not significant for current stress levels ( $t=-.119$ ,  $p=.906$ ). During the separation however, using an independent t test, mother's stress was significantly higher than the military member's level ( $t=3.040$ ,  $p=.004$ ). For the group of families who served as the comparison group, there were no significant differences between the level of current stress for both parents based on separation ( $t=1.705$ ,  $p=.094$ ) or for just the mother's current stress level between groups ( $t=.543$ ,  $p=.591$ ).

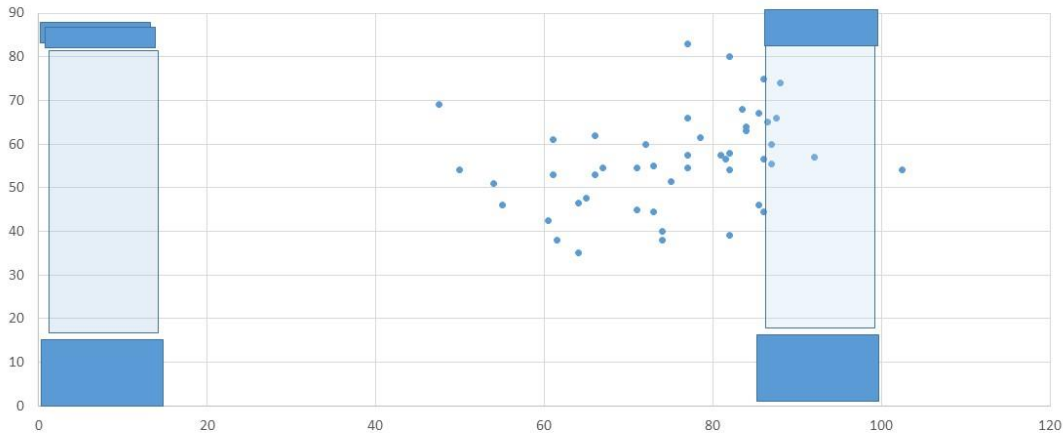
Mothers were also asked to complete the FACES family functioning measure to describe the disruptiveness of the separation/deployment's impact on the family. FACES has an interesting scoring system such that a score is derived for a cohesion (x axis) and a flexibility (y axis) dimensions. These are then mapped on a grid that places the family on a dimension of rigid to chaotic for flexibility and disengaged to enmeshed on the cohesion dimension. Plotting the two scores on the x and y axes then provides an overall picture of balanced or unbalanced family functioning. Using SPSS graphing program, the two scores were entered to map the families as in the following diagram



Matching these values to the instrument's provided grid with the scoring instructions, most of the families fell into the balanced levels. These scores ranged from 16-85 for flexibility and 16-85 for cohesion. There is a shift toward higher scores for flexibility putting those points plotted on the far right more in the enmeshed grid for cohesion scores greater than 85. Few flexibility or cohesion scores fell below the 16 threshold or higher than the 80 cut off for chaotic in the flexibility category. Overall, most families were balanced between the dimensions with a shift to enmeshed for those higher scores in the cohesion dimension. In secondary analysis, these scores will be used to compare the themes from the balanced and enmeshed family groups to determine any differences in their approaches to separation/deployment.

This chart demonstrates the plotting through PowerPoint with the shaded area to the right mapped around the enmeshed category values. The dots within that shaded area represent families scoring high on that dimension.

## Cohesion and Flexibility



### 1) How do children aged 4-10 years of age describe the experience of military separation/deployment?

For this study, there were several data streams that resulted from the interviews with the children and for the purposes of analysis these will be treated separately and then commonalities identified across the data sources. Children were first asked to draw a picture using the draw-and-tell technique developed by Dr. Driessnack. As they prepared and completed the picture, the children were interviewed about their experience with the parental separation/deployment using the picture as a prompt in the discussion. After discussing the picture, children then were asked to view three photos taken from the Internet that illustrated a parent leaving for a separation or deployment; children interacting with a parent while separated; and then a reunion photo. Different photos were used for the photo elicitation to try to match the gender of the military parent; different ages and race; and number of children and ages in the family. Children described the action in the photos and the perceived thoughts and feeling of the illustrated individuals. During the team meeting for analysis, the team meeting determined that the drawings themselves constituted an important source of data regarding the children's coping and perception of the separation. The interviews were analyzed for common themes, but also viewed linguistically and narratively by the anthropologist on the team for additional insights.

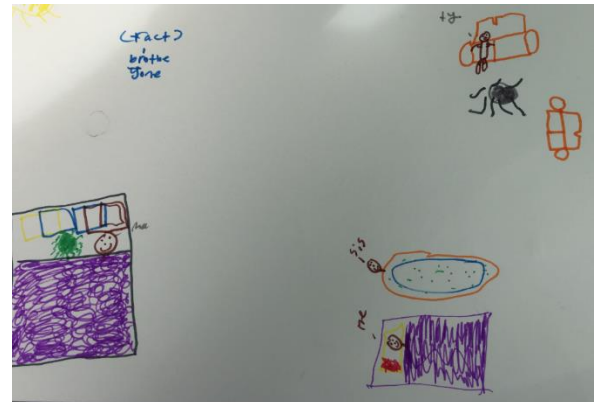
One of the first activities suggested by the linguistic anthropologist in the analysis of the children's interviews was to look at the absolute word usage and related meaning. **HAPPY** and **SAD** were by far the most frequently used – both prompted (interviewer uses first) and unprompted. They followed questions about the photographs, and questions about how the children felt when the parent came home or when the parent left. **HAPPY** was a word identified as suggesting optimism while **SAD** suggested empathy in emotion in relation to the absence of the parent. Overall the use of words in these interviews suggested that these children have been

taught and have learned to trust that the parent is/will coming back. Frequent unsolicited use of numerous words such as “deployment,” “flag,” and “duty” throughout the interviews confirmed that military family children are conversant in the “military discourse.” meaning that the children shared in the “community language” of the military through which members are able to communicate easily and with tacit understandings of mutually recognized and accepted concepts such as “duty.” Based on these interviews, among these respondents, the “military discourse” and the nested “deployment discourse” apparently overlap, and broadly inform children in military families about geography, weapons and weapons use, life on ships, and contemporary means of communicating across far distances (WiFi available or not at particular ports, for example). The use of such terms indicated that these children are mostly well-schooled and nimble in the military discourse, honest, resilient, nostalgic, have good recollection and expression of their and others’ emotions, confident that their (and their contemporaries’) parent/s will come back – and, at the same time, HAPPY and SAD about the lived experience of parental deployment. Other words that were noted with some frequency were **COME BACK** (Suggesting Confidence and Learned/Promised Knowledge); **HOME** (Suggests Love and Family); **MISS** (Suggests Longing); and **MEMORY/REMEMBER** (Suggests Trust).

Using NVIVO to create a word cloud of the children’s interviews resulted in the diagram below. Clearly visible are the words “dad” and “daddy” indicating the topic of the discussion. Some of the actions going on in the interview are also visible such as “draw”, “picture” and “picture”. As well, separation terms were also visible such as “going,” “away”, “back” “work” and “come”. Words of belonging are also prominent such as “mom”, “home” and “family” As noted in the previous comments above, familiarity with the military are also evident in words used such as “deployment” and “military” within the interviews.







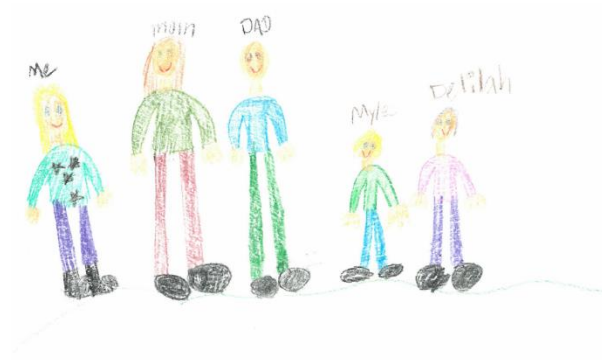
In these drawings of Family 17, the nine year old boy has eliminated the dad with a strikethrough yet preserves the family structure despite the father being on a deployment. He credits the dad with helping picturing him holding a broom and a “ding” on the sparkling floor. The oldest child has changed positions with the dad, in which the team then speculated that that child may be taking on some of the parenting and cleaning duties of the father while he is away.

#### Family 17



A theme of disconnectedness also resonated in some of the pictures. In the Family 32 picture drawn by a 9-year-old girl, a ground line drawn under the other family members anchoring them to the ground. However, the oldest daughter is tipping off to the side and not grounded, symbolically indicating perhaps a view of potentially “falling off a cliff” or feeling disconnected to the main family. Positioning herself next to her mother in the picture indicates perhaps some alliance with the mother or helping to taking on some of the mothering responsibilities while the father is away.

## Family 32

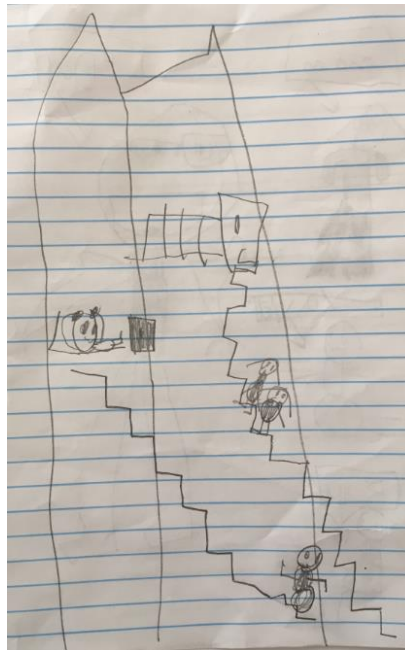
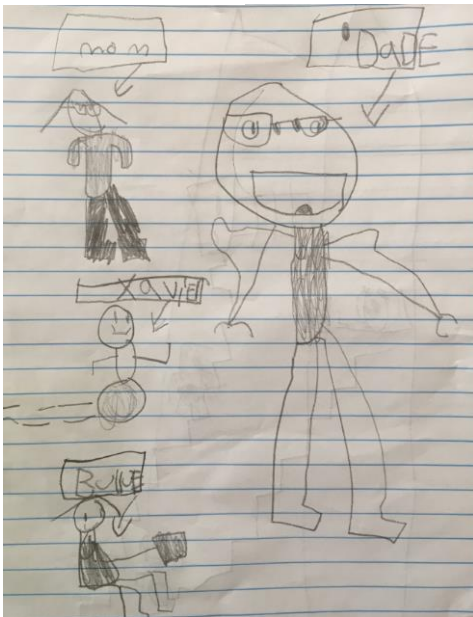


The team also noted that the child was drawn first in the picture along with a more prominent picture of mother indicating perhaps her more dominant role in the family especially during the father's absence.

The theme of illustrating parental dominance in positioning was also present in other drawings indicating importance of the parent in the child's life. In the picture from a 5-year-old, mom is prominent in his picture (Family 19) and in another child's picture, dad is prominently

positioned by his 6 year old son taking up the right side of the drawings with the mom and children arrayed on the left. Interestingly these parents were in the process of divorcing and were already living apart and this was depicted in the picture he prepared for when we asked for a drawing when dad was away. Rather than drawing anything related to the military assignment, separation to this child represented the current living arrangement and is depicted in the drawing below. It appeared that he was waving good-bye to his dad at his townhouse as he stands on the bottom step of the side by side homes depicting the separation.

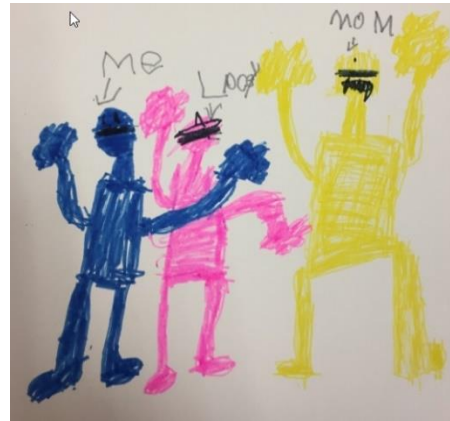
## Family 19



One particularly poignant picture was drawn by 7 year old boy in Family 5 who had experienced multiple long deployments and separations from his father. In his first drawing he depicts the

family standing together as stick figures holding their arms in the air cheering the reunion with his dad. However in the drawing where the father is away, the picture is much more detailed featuring a larger than life mother as the pink Power Ranger, while he and his sister are the other gender-correct Power Rangers, he as blue and the other female yellow Ranger. The team noted the closeness depicted between brother and sister in both drawings. His sister had some developmental issues so the closeness here could represent some protectiveness on his part and support provided when dad was either away or at home.

### Family 5



The drawings additionally depicted emotional responses experienced by the children. When asked to draw pictures of when the military parent was deployed, several depicted unhappiness or sadness in their pictures. For example, tears are evident on the face of this 8 year old boy in Family 10 and 6 year old boy in Family 30. In other drawings, the child or other family members are depicted with sad faces on the drawings when the military member is away (Family 20).

### Family 10



### Family 30



### Family 20



When the single parent left her daughter in Family 14, the 8-year-old and mom are smiling through their tears as the mother says good-bye as she is leaving. The mother is depicted as

leaning toward the door indicating an imminent departure while the door stands open. In her companion drawing, the daughter depicts her mother's return bringing a present back from her shipboard deployment to the Middle East. The tone of the drawing is celebratory. Mom's hair is loose and her package is colorful. The daughter stands with her arms wide and is saying "yay you are back." Smiles are evident on both faces.

### Family 14



Other emotions were identified in the drawings as was the theme of reunion. In this drawing (Family 13), both departure and reunion are depicted with large smiles evident greeting the return and a downturned mouth on the dad as his ship prepares to depart. Interestingly, according to the art therapists on the team, the proliferation of hair evident in both drawings demonstrates feelings of anxiety in the child.

### Family 13



Other drawings pinpointed the anxiety directed at concern for the parent's safety as in Family 16 where the child imagined the father "catching the bad guys" as he portrays the father holding an enemy at gun point.

### Family 16



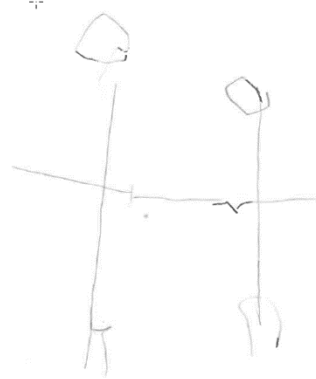
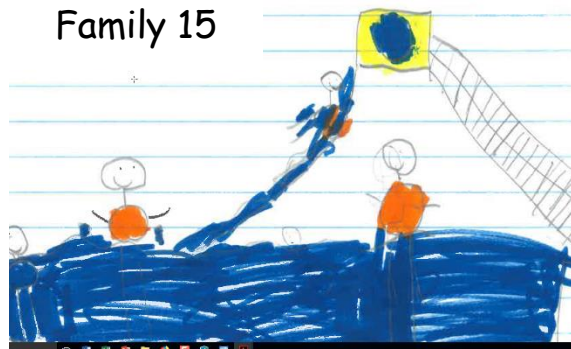
Very few children shared that they accompanied the parent to the point of departure. Many conveyed that they would say their farewells at home and then the military parent would go to the ship or plane to join the unit for the actual departure. In this picture, however, the child in Family 25 envisions the plane waiting for the parent and noting the sadness throughout the family to include the sun and family pet. The picture, like others, was placed on two panels, showing the family at home and in the other imminently embarking with suitcases in hand.

### Family 25



A final major theme that emerged from the drawings was the memories of special activities that were shared with the military parent upon departure or those that they did together upon return. In Family 15 with four boys, the departing parent took each individually for a special activity prior to leaving for his first one-year deployment. The boys described a variety of activities that were one-on-one with the father from going to the pool together and going to an indoor commercial playground. The children shared these activities in the interviews also indicating

how pervasive and important these memories were in connecting with the absent parent. The significance of the stick figure Family 15 picture was that it depicted just the youngest child and father in the activity together, a special memory for him.



The oldest son was particularly focused upon missing doing things with his father. In the interview, the mother shared that the kids had viewed a commercial for a chicken carryout advertising a special family of 4 dinner. With dad gone, the boy depicted going to the restaurant in his drawing as something the family could do while dad was away since they were a family of 4 while he was absent. As mom noted, “They saw a commercial for the family four pack of chicken and there are five of us so when [dad was gone], they’re like “can we go to Kentucky Fried Chicken because it’s for four people” which I thought was hysterical. We didn’t get the family four pack because they don’t all eat the same thing but that was sort of their thing. “There are four of us now so we can go do that.” Of note are the sad faces as the family goes to the restaurant with the caption “the family without dad.”



## Interviews

2) What are parental perceptions of how their children experienced military separation/deployment?

Within the study, each parent who was available participated in an interview to elicit their thoughts as to the child(ren)'s experience from their viewpoint. The interviews usually followed a temporal pattern beginning with preparation for the separation and moving through the actual separation to coming home and adjustment following the separation. For some interviews, parents were together while others were conducted with each parent separately depending upon their preference and availability. For the purposes of answering this research question, differentiation between the parents' perceptions will be made where appropriate to illustrate differences where they occurred.

Parents related that the way they prepared the children for the separation/deployment varied based upon the ages of the child(ren) and their experience and reaction to previous separations. Timing also varied based upon the child(ren)'s age and ability to comprehend. As one mother discussed this quandary about deciding when to start preparation for dad's departure:

Family 2: And how soon to tell them, how far out -- because we've noticed if we tell them too far in advance, then they're constantly worried that he's leaving tomorrow, is it today, is it tonight? So then too soon, then they're upset because they feel like they didn't get any, enough notice that Dad's leaving. So really the most thing we do is tell them Dad's going to go to hotel work tomorrow. Tomorrow night he's leaving and he'll be back and show them the calendar. That's a big thing, the calendar. He wants to know how many days, so every night it's how many days until he comes back. And if he's coming back Saturday, is Saturday tomorrow? No, no. It's not tomorrow.

A couple fathers echoed this dilemma letting age somewhat dictate the timing.

Family 21: Well, because a lot of them are so young, I really didn't actually try to prepare them, but just kind of distanced myself prior to leaving....So I didn't actually tell them I was leaving. They just knew just one day they woke up and I wasn't here, but they didn't know how long I would be gone for. At that age, they can't judge time, as far as months and years.

This father evidently had been experiencing some pressure from his wife in making the decision of when to impart the information:

Family 30: She would always ask me, have you talked to them? Have you talked to them? Have you talked to them? So I started mentioning it a few months ahead of time, just once in a while just mention it to them. Hey, I'll be leaving in a little bit. And as the time got closer, sit and really explain to them what was going to happen, that I would leave for about six months, and that I need you all to help your mom....

The actual preparation often involved sitting down with the children to share the information regarding the separation accompanied by reassurance that they would be in contact with them during the time gone and that they would return. This was evidenced in quotes such as:

Family 10: Just letting them know. My kids are a little older than when I deployed the first time. The oldest was only two at the time or he was about to turn two so he didn't

really understand as much. Now he's eight so he kind of understood a little more, a little better that hey, daddy is going to be gone for a while. The five year old, I had to talk to him as well and let him know, kind of sit him down and talk to him and let him know hey, daddy is going to be gone for a little bit but I'll still talk to you as much as I can. Luckily I had a chance to Skype with him a lot so it was kind of like it I got to be part of their lives and everything.

Family 38: ...just tell them I'm going to be gone for a long time, but I'll be back, and I'm going to talk to them every chance I get, I'll be thinking about them all the time, that kind of stuff,

The parents emphasized that they were careful not to give too many details, but to also provide an honest explanation of the impending separation.

Family 34: We just talk a lot about Daddy going out on the ship. They think it's cool that, you know, this ship. They think it's cool that he flies airplanes. We took them to see the ship also so they knew what it was and saw it drive by and had context, and like when he went out for a good period of time, I took the kids, and we watched the ship drive by. Drive by. Sail by

Family 5: Before he gets ready to go, I explain to the kids that he's leaving on deployment so that way they know the difference between dad is at work and dad is deployed because work means he's coming home at the end of the day and the deployment means he's not coming home for a long time. They understand to prep themselves for it just being mom time and then when he gets ready to go, the kids are usually pretty good because he is gone so often that they understand he'll come home and they know the risks and everything because we talk about them before he leaves.

Family 16: We tried to talk about it in general terms that dad was going to go away but it's okay. She seemed to understand but she didn't know really. She had never been separated for that length of time and she was only almost five at the time.

Family 13: Mostly just talked to them about it. We didn't shy away from the fact that it was happening, we didn't try and smooth it over. We made it just a matter of fact that it was going to happen and just something that was coming, that way we didn't feel like they were blindsided by it. They weren't -- it wasn't worse than they might've expected, we just kind of faced the reality of it and talked about it and prepared them.

The parents mentioned the stress of the actual preparation such as completing powers of attorney, wills, packing, and completing house repairs. Several of the moms were pregnant at the actual time of separation/deployment so dads were enlisted to help with tasks such as installing baby gates, purchasing equipment, and helping bring in a parent or in-law for support for the duration or time of delivery especially if the mom was already caring for other children. Specific preparations for the children, depending on age, included making recordings, purchasing Daddy dolls, and other security items that reminded them or reassured them regarding the return of the military parent. Others set up time telling activities such as paper chains, bowls of

kisses/hugs, or countdown calendars.

Family 25: Daddy's going to be going away, but we're going to do certain things. I told her about the kisses, we did the Hershey kisses -- a kiss a day -- and she has a Daddy doll and we told her we'll still have Daddy doll and we can talk

Family 31: So, but more than for me, I try to help prepare for the kids. So I try to make sure he has books that have recordings of his voice and everything, and I try to make him like videos, things like that, before he leaves so that I can still have Daddy around without actually having Daddy around.

Family 8: Videos, you know, with me reading stories to him and stuff like that so that this way -- cause that's something that we're big on, just reading to him and just talking to him. So I did videos for him, this way he could see my face and hear me read to him and stuff like that.

In addition, to the verbal preparations of the children, a particularly important part of the preparation that became reflected in the children's interviews and drawings was the "special" time spent with the children, and often each child individually prior to the separation, referred to by one mother as "memory making" activities.

Family 25: I mean, for the family, just, you know, try to do stuff beforehand, try to do stuff after, so that way they'll have those good memories to look back on

Family 35: We spent a lot of time with them beforehand, explained to them multiple times like where I was going, what I was doing, just talked a lot about it and tried to spend as much time as we could together before then.

Family 26: We just spent a lot of time together beforehand. We spend as much time together trying to do as many fun or memory making things to kind of cement that yes, this sucks, but it's not going to last forever, and to kind of give ourselves things to remember and to look forward to again.

As evidenced in the children's drawings, these moments had a decided poignancy eliciting memories of fun and special times with the military parent and were marked in the variety of the experiences that were "memory making" for the child. Walks with the family, visits to the pool or inside gym, wrestling matches, and visiting the ship were recalled by the children as some of the activities that stayed with them during and after the separation/deployment.

Anticipating the deployment, moms shared concerns that they had prior to the military members' actual departure. Some related that just the responsibilities without the husband's support seemed overwhelming in anticipation of the separation. Examples of the prescient feelings included:

Family 22: How I was going to do it. Yes, with two kids on my own and two dogs.

Family 24: : Being here with the juggle of all four children.

Family 21: Just I was worried. I was worried on how I was going to do it. How was I going to operate?

Those families who had previously experienced separation/deployment were more sanguine.

Family 37: Now, I'm kind of pretty much used to it. I know it's the name of the game.....

Family 9: It's probably sad, but I think they're pretty used to us deploying, and from us rotating, that they usually don't have too much to say.

Specific concerns prior to the deployment/separation were related to the military member missing significant events such as the birth of a child and holiday events as well effects of the separation on the children's school performance and activities.

Family 9: And I think the hard time will probably be holidays, birthdays, and stuff like that, but so normally what I do if he's gone during a holiday or birthday, -- I think he was gone one Christmas, so we took a Christmas vacation, and we just went away, got them a hotel, let them go out and have a good time, and then he'll call and talk to them.

Family 23: My concerns were just how the kids were going to kind of react. At the time, the oldest one was in school last year, so that was difficult. He just -- yeah. They would have functions, and he wanted his dad to be there and obviously, he wasn't able to be, so that upset him a lot.

And realistically, the moms worried about the effects upon their own relationship with the military member as in this statement:

Family 26: My biggest concern is because it was such a long length of time for us to be apart from each other is growing apart from each other. We have to work really hard to communicate with each other to keep things kind of going and to almost not lose interest in what's happening in each other's life. When you're like this, it's very easy for you to start living two completely separate lives.

The military members interviewed, mostly dads, had similar concerns for the burden that was being placed on their spouse during the absence. An additional concern was the effect that the separation would have upon their relationship with their children. Quotes such as a father who had been away "almost like three years. It was spotty for a long time so it was just my concern was about would she hate me and what would she be like when I got back because I had missed three birthdays. I left when she was about three and came back right around her turning six and what was it going to be like with us being together" (Family 14) and echoed by another father from Family 3 who asked, "will my daughter recognize who I still was after being gone for as long as I was? Cause I was gone for nearly, you know, I was gone for nine months, so I had no idea she would still recognize who I was after I got back from deployment." Other

fathers raised concern for leaving their spouse with so much responsibility (Family 24:” being able to juggle everything that she needed to do. Four is a lot of kids to have and it’s a lot of different schedules, right?”) and that their role as parent was being interrupted as observed by these dads::

Family 38: I want to be there, be involved in their life as much as possible. If I’m away, it’s hard. I can talk to them, but as far as like, -- I can’t be here to teach them discipline, things like that. When I’m away, I can just do, you know, hey, you’d better listen to your mom on the FaceTime, but you know, that’s it.

Family 12: Just the day-to-day things that you would miss, as far as being around for the family, seeing them grow up and go through different stages of their life.

Family 21: not being home anymore and missing a lot of memories that we normally create together. You can’t get....you can get photo-shopped into a picture but you can’t get photo shopped into a memory.

And they also worried about not being at home in case of a crisis, as described by this dad:

Family 34: It seems like every time I go away something bad happens to the house, or like our giant tree branch falls down or a tree falls across the lane, or the power goes out, and like every single time I go away, something happens. So I was always waiting for an email or something like that saying, oh, well, a tree just fell, and I got them. Tree fell across the lane. Luckily my parents were there, and my dad helped clean it up.... like, what would you do if there was a giant tree down across our lane. You couldn’t get out of our house in Washington without going down the lane. So that kind of stuff.

Once the deployment/separation began, some of the anticipated issues occurred, others did not, and other events came as a surprise. Interestingly, one mom (Family 32) made an observation that “it’s funny because the things you worry about are not usually what ends up happening”. It was all the things that could not be anticipated that probably stressed the stay at home parent the most. During the actual period of separation, car troubles/accidents, child and family member illnesses, deaths, and house problems were cited most frequently as the unexpected challenges that occurred during deployment/separation. As one mother, from Family 5 related:

So our third deployment, our deployment right before this one, he left. Right before he left, our water heater blew so I’m sitting at home with a water heater that leaked throughout my whole entire house, talking to the insurance company about getting my floors fixed, my carpets replaced, my water heater done. As the water heater is out, I had let the dogs out. We had a nice, big yard. Somebody let our dogs out of our yard so we lost one dog. Our dog that we still have lost her eye. She got brought home later that night. She had to have her eye surgically removed. Then later that week, the vacuum cleaner blew and my car stopped working all within the same like week and a half.

With the help of family and friends, the family made it through the house and dog crisis. One interesting question that was asked of the moms was whether, when crises occurred on the home

front, did they share this information with the military member primarily because of literature that notes that those in the field can become distracted from the mission when burdened with challenges from home. This question elicited a mixed response from those who shared everything to those who “filtered” what was communicated.

Family 30: And you do not get to worry or burden him with things that he need not worry. The less he knows, the safer in my mind he is. As long as he feels his family is safe and hunky dory, he can do what he has to do, but I make it a point to never burden, unless like one of our children -- like our oldest had cancer. That would be the only time I would ever really say anything about anything to him. I don't feel that's wise at all.

Family 2: I think there are a lot of families that do that. I know a lot of friends who try not to share with their spouse, make sure they're not worrying about them. But my husband has expressed like that doesn't help him if he thinks everything's okay and it's not. We can't have conversations. So we share everything .... So I don't subscribe to the not sharing because of stress, but he knows I've got it. I can share with him, but he knows I've got it under control.

Family 6: I usually let him know what's going on, because we haven't really had anything bad, but if something bad were to happen I probably wouldn't tell him unless it was necessary, cause there's no need to cause unnecessary stress when he's already gone and he can't do anything.

Comments such as these really illustrated the resilience of the stay at home parent and the can-do attitude most adopted to get through the toughest parts of the separation. Most found some source of support within either their civilian or military community during the separation citing sources to include family, neighbors, friends, community resources, and church families.

Family 33: We have a really good support system from our church and we got a lot of help from them. They brought meals. They did [inaudible 06:17] after the baby was born. We had someone from the church cutting our lawn. Someone came to fix the ceiling

Family 16: So it was mostly friends and we became friends with some good neighbors so they were able to be supportive.

Family 23: I just kind of contact my family. It's more of they're like my backup.

### Perceptions of child(ren)'s reaction to deployment/separation

Parents were asked about how they thought the children handled the separation/deployment and the hardest parts for them. A theme of resilience resounded within the parental comments. Despite some adjustments at first, most of these children seemed to take the separation in stride resuming their usual activities.

Family 13 noted that having short deployments prior to the longer deployment was helpful in preparing the child for a seven-month deployment.

It was definitely hard to transition to him not being home every night, but we did have that period of time where he left that he did do Underways, so he was gone for small periods of time. So it kind of eased us into it instead of him just walking out the door one day for seven months. So it was hard but I think it transitioned well, and so she was able to kind of get a feel for it after all...

But even with this preparation, the weight of repeated separations took a toll.

Family 13: ....it's always just been something that's been happening in his life, so he just kind of knows it, but it does feel like it's a little more within the past year that he's been feeling it a little more.

Some families noted that there were concerns with the anticipation of the separation however, once the deployment occurred, the reality of the separation seemed to hit all at once.

Family 21: Even when it was time to go, once we got to the airport they still -- it took a lot for them to actually get it, like okay, and when he got on the plane that's when the tears came and like okay. So we tried to do a lot of prepping, talking, but nothing really outweighs the actual going through it, so.

Family 33: It didn't really hit them until he was gone and it hit them all in different stages. Before he was gone, it wasn't really an issue for anyone. We didn't really talk about it. The oldest was upset for about a week and then after about another week then the second one kind of figured out and then the next week then the third one kind of figured out it was going to be a while and it took, it was kind of stages as they figured out dad was going to be gone for quite a while.

Children expressed their concerns in different ways. Moms noted that children would comment upon missing the military parent or that tears appeared more frequently. Children at times had some inaccurate perceptions about where the military parent was or what they were doing.

Family 20: Well the baby was sad because she still to this day believes he lives on a plane because he had to leave on the plane so she's like "is he still on the plane" and I'm like "no" but that's her thing.

Family 30: There was [sic] a couple times she thought the bad guys were going to get him, and I had to reassure her the biggest thing you have to worry about is Daddy falling off the boat.... I didn't want them to ever think that somebody was coming to actually hurt him. And we would act like, you know, well Daddy can swim, so if he fall off the boat, he's fine. Well what about the sharks, and that's when the sharks came up, and I was like, I'm sure Daddy will punch them in the face. I tried to minimize that aspect of the deployment

Even so, for some, there was an underlying resilience that came from previous experiences so while there was an initial sadness, there was also an underlying understanding that this too shall pass.

Family 31: I mean, just the usual, you know, I'm going to miss you; it kind of makes me sad. But this deployment was the shortest we've ever been through, so we're kind of like, oh, that's not so bad. That's only three months. We can do this. You know?

Family 35: Honestly, and I hate to say it, they're kind of used to it. They're just really used to him hardly ever being home

For the most part, mothers communicated that children appropriately expressed their feelings of missing the military parent and especially the activities that they would do together with the dad or family.

Family 16: She would say that she missed him, she can't wait to see him and to wrestle, kind of the fun stuff they would do together but there were no real like challenges of "I want my dad" or "my dad is not here, he left me." There was no kind of outburst or challenges.....For the most part, she seemed to just adjust to the fact that he was gone.

Family 17: They missed him because we just do a lot of things as a family together when we're together and then being able to have them on my own, we weren't able to do all the same stuff so we wouldn't go out as much.

Family 11: They kept asking where he was and every time I said that he was out on the boat they were like "okay."

Mothers communicated that they handled children's concerns in different ways. For these families, just doing daily activities without focusing on dad's absence was the best way for the child.

Family 23: He had concerns. He was pretty -- it was like general concerns like, "Oh, is he okay?" or "Is he going to be home soon?" Like, the typical normal concerns, but we tried to -- for the first couple of months, we didn't talk about things because talking about it actually would make it worse, so I kind of just let him go at his pace. If he had a question, I would answer it.

Family 26: They hit a certain point where they're cognitive that Dad's going away or Mom's going away, and they hit a certain point in time. She's very aware of what's going on, so she wakes up, and she puts on the news, and she sees what's happening in the world, and some of that's okay. Some of it she should know about. Some of it is hard to shield her from, but she wants to know what's going on, but that sometimes instills a little bit of fear in her as well. When that happens, generally we talk about the situation and her dad's position within the military and what that means for him, whatever current event she wants to talk about. Most of the time it doesn't affect him.

Most of these strategies appeared dependent upon the child's age and level of understanding coupled with previous deployment/separation experiences. And the types of fears seemed to be unique to the type and location of the deployment/separation.

Family 30: There was [sic] a couple times she thought the bad guys were going to get him, and I had to reassure her the biggest thing you have to worry about is Daddy falling off the boat. That's why they kept saying. I didn't want them to ever think that somebody was coming to actually hurt him. And we would act like, you know, well Daddy can swim, so if he fall [sic] off the boat, he's fine. Well what about the sharks, and that's when the sharks came up, and I was like, I'm sure Daddy will punch them in the face. I tried to minimalize that aspect of the deployment. It's easier when you're on a ship, but when you're boots are on the ground, it's -- the talk I think would have been very different in that aspect.

Family 15: Part of it is just like boy stuff. Everything is a weapon and it's cool that dad has a gun and isn't that awesome and how come he can't bring it home. Part of it is I don't think they understand how dangerous guns can be but it's super cool that dad has got a weapon.

On the part of the military members, mostly the dads, there were some more rosy perceptions since they were not dealing with the day to day coping by the child(ren).

Family 12: : I think he handled it pretty good. He was very lively and excited and stuff. And once he got a chance to see me again, he was -- didn't want to let me go.

Family 14: She's really, really adaptable. Like to me it's crazy because as a grown person, I feel like I get flustered and frustrated when I have to do a lot of changes but she's just like "hmm, alright, cool."

Most of the dads, echoed that of Family 25, "I think they handled it very well" when asked about the child's coping with the separation.

Families were asked what the hardest part of the deployment/separation was for the children as a follow on to the question about how they handled the separation. Sometimes it was just missing the dad generally and other times in relation to specific activities or events. For example, the mom in Family 13 observed:

I think just like the random bouts of missing him, just something will spark their -- they'll miss him and it will just be kind of random. You know, they'll see something or they'll hear something and sometimes it's just even a random thought and then they'll just miss him. And it's hard because there's not anything you can do about it, that's not something you can fix. And so that's really hard.

Events such as holidays and birthdays seemed to bring on feelings of sadness or acting out behaviors as the child missed dad's presence.

Family 26: I think it's hard for her to see kids. Their dads come to things like donuts with dads, and Fathers' Day celebrations or even just like Christmas is coming up. There will be all her, a lot of her friends will have their dads there, and she's going through these milestones and he's not there, and it visibly makes her angry. She's been angry a lot lately.

Some moms attributed some of the challenges to the "survival mode" they went into while the military member was away and this put some stressors on the children comparing mom's parenting style to that of the dad's.

Family 23: Oh, just their Dad being gone in general, just anything, yeah, just having -- I guess it's dealing with mom for months and not having the fun parent around because I'm not the fun one. I'm the more strict one.

Family 20: I'm the punisher. With him, he's like "oh they're too cute. They're not in trouble. Just don't do it again." Me I'm like "you're on punishment. You need to clean this. I'm not doing this for you. You need to do this." For them it's just like they're probably like I can't get away with nothing. So many times, it's like "can we do this," "no," "my dad will let me," "so, he's not here." I think for them they can't get away with murder anymore.

Parents were also queried on what they identified as the hardest part of the separation for them individually and as a couple. Fathers cited missing out on the everyday activities as well as the special moments such as milestones and holidays. They also noted that during the deployments they were often so busy that they can separate themselves from the emotions of the separation.

Family 20: We work 12 to 20 hour days...it's not as hard for us because we are away from it. We can pull our minds away because we're not at home with all the stress

Family 3: Just missing all the key moment with my kids growing up. I missed a whole lot of it with my first child and I missed it with these, with the last two as well....

For the moms, the hardest parts seemed to be shouldering the responsibilities and not having the support that would normally be there.

Family 16: The hardest part for me was just doing it all, it all being on my shoulders and everything relying on me and not really having a breather or feeling like I could take a break...

Family 11: Not having my best friend....he's the person I unload everything on and so not having him to unload on

Parents were additionally asked about any health difficulties or effects that they noted related to the deployment/separation. Most frequently anxiety was mentioned related to worries about the parent's health and well-being or concern that the parent was headed out for another separation.

Family 20: Every deployment you can see anxiety. I quit putting my uniform on when I go to work because you can see it in their faces as soon as I put that uniform on. Where I might be going, or if I'm coming back home that afternoon, or if I'm going to work for the next three days.

Family 13: I think they have a lot of anxiety issues, but I also have a lot of anxiety, depression in our family history. So I'm not sure how much of it is genetic and how much of it is situational.

Several moms mentioned that they too had felt quite anxious at times during the separations attributing it mostly to the stress of responsibility and worries about the health of the military member.

Both parents and children mentioned how helpful frequent communication reduced the feelings of stress and anxiety. Most of the military members had access to either phone or Internet based communication modalities such as Skype. Communication was frequently mentioned as a major coping strategy and will be discussed in detail in the next section of the report.

The final questions for the parents focused upon the preparations for the return of the military member and adjustment after the reunion. The returning military members, most often the fathers, mentioned attending preparation classes as part of the reintegration. Cautions included not trying to reinsert themselves immediately but to transition slowly and with respect for family routines that may have changed during their absence.

Family 16: I needed to slowly work my way back into the family

Family 21: it was just a process of getting acclimated again, greeted back into the whole [family] because roles had changed. While I was gone, she was being the mom and dad, and my oldest was doing some of the more masculine things I do around the house, but now I was out of the picture, so be back and get reintegrated into the everyday routine of the family as a whole.

Many of the families avoided using countdown calendars or similar devices due to the changes of dates in the actual arrival of ships or planes.

Family 3; I'm not sure what my wife tells the kids. She just tells them that, hey, we're going to see Daddy very soon, and that's about all she told them. She doesn't give them an exact date because the last time she had a date it got extended, not once but twice, so.

Family 8: Cause we had already ran into that problem, like we were scheduled to come home and then they extended us for 30 days. So we already knew, hey it's a possibility, let's not get too carried away with dates,

The countdown calendars took a variety of formats. Some families used actual calendars while others with younger children used more visual representations such as a kiss, bubble gum, or

jellybean jar that diminished daily or linked chains that were cut off daily to get shorter as the homecoming neared.

Often moms would either wait to tell the children a day or two before the military member came home, or provide cautions that there could be a change at the last minute.

Family 13: And so I told them, you know, this is our date, but be aware that things have changed in the past, so until like we see him walk off the boat, make sure you have that awareness that things could change. So keeping them flexible, as well, letting them know that all possibilities are there. But yeah, kind of a balance between excitement and keeping them grounded, making sure they knew that it could change.

Some of the moms would mention that they would help the children prepare welcome home signs or other celebratory activities as the date neared, however, others tried to keep things low key in deference to the military member wanting time to reintegrate quietly.

Family 16: The one thing that we did was like decorate the house and kind of make it a fun thing to welcome him but that was about it. I didn't really do too much.

Family 23: I kind of left that up to the kids, asked them what they wanted to do, and they wanted to get balloons, and make little signs, and stuff for him.

Other preparations were more mundane such as making sure the house was clean, cupboards were stocked with favorite foods, and his side of the bed was cleared off. Having the military member take back over parenting and household duties could be fraught with anxiety and tension. Moms were careful not to "dump on him" but to pace the reintegration, or as one mom described it, "I just wanted him to feel comfortable at home, not kind of throw anything out of proportion or bombard him with any issues that we may be having, just kind of let him get a sense of himself back" (Family 4).

Family 1: I think that was one part I found uncomfortable was him stepping back into that discipline role after having been away for a while. Even the kids -- I don't know how they responded to that. I think they responded to his discipline like they probably did before, but I think I was more nervous about it.

At the same time however, moms did try to prepare the children for accepting dad's role as parent as he returned to the family.

Family 5: We talk about how daddy is going to come home and they have to listen to him because he is still in charge and they have to know that he can do what he needs to do as dad.

After discussing the preparation and anticipated issues from reintegration, the parents were asked about the actual adjustments needed after coming home. Some families chose to take a trip right away to ease the transition in just being together again or planned special activities like Family 16 who had a "big nerf fight" and "big wrestling matches" that were activities enjoyed prior to

the separation. Asked how smoothly the transition home went, parents reported smooth aspects and those that were more challenging. There was a pull for the returning parent to desire some quiet or alone time feeling bombarded by the stimuli of the home environment after a more restricted shipboard or deployed environment while the family, and children, wanted some reassurance of a continued presence after being absent.

Family 11: It was difficult because as much as I miss my kids and I wanted to spend time with them, I wanted to get some time alone and go out and ride my bike and so on and so forth but it was them kind of adjusting back to me and me adjusting back to home life plus adjusting to us. It was difficult.

Family 20: ...you come out of deployment, and your whole mindset's gone. You roll into the combat mindset. When you're home, you have to be able to turn that off, and it's very difficult to turn that off when you've been doing it nonstop for months at a time. So as soon as you hit the deck, it's difficult sometimes because you can let your anger out [during] deployment. You can go in your room and be alone. When you get home to your family, there's no more alone. There's no more being away from people. You have to be able to deal with it on the spot, and I'm not saying we're not trained to deal with it on the spot, but we're trained for other things that we have to do when we're out here.

And for some, the experience was a difficult transition, probably even more difficult than anticipated as evidenced by the military member in Family 30:

It took some time to readjust. Being gone that long, it was different when I only had one child, but having two, three, four, it's different because now you have to readjust in more than just the one way. You have to readjust her and to the kids, well to each of them. So it...that definitely took some time...Almost, to be 100 percent honest, almost like being a stranger when you first come home, that's kind of what it feels like for the first couple of days.

Questions also included those focused on the child(ren)'s adjustment to the returning parent and whether the separation had affected the relationship. Some of the tension emerged from the military parent's reassertion of the parental role and place in the family.

Family 14: it was a lot of power struggle, more of like "hey, I need you to do this," "I don't want to." It was I felt like more of a big sister than her mom when it was all of us together and so we had, it was like that was an issue and then me maybe feeling like bribing her like "hey, do you want to do this, do you want here, do you want to go here" and it was like even when she wasn't listening, it's like "well let's just go do this, we can go do this, we can go do this" and it just took a while to get into the groove of hey, I'm the parent. We're going to have to get these roles together.

Family 20: You forget the foods they like. You've been gone for so long that you've changed. The girls, they've gone through emotional changes. They're grown up. They're a year older. You missed out on a lot, a lot of things that normal families bond

with that you don't get that option to. So [relearning about the] kids over and over again every single deployment.

Family 5: they're not happy about him taking charge so for the first couple of weeks, we try to slowly put him back in charge because the first time he came home when she was old enough to really realize that he was trying to tell her what to do, she was about four or five and he came home and told her that she needed to be quiet and she turned and looked at him as serious as could be and she goes "you can't tell me what to do. You're not the boss of me." I had to tell her "yeah, he is the boss of you." She's like "no." It takes a little while.

This particular parent really illustrated the frustration this process can produce as the children get used to their return and the parent adjusts to the differences between military and civilian responsiveness.

Family 34: With the kids? Just getting back into with realizing that I don't like, -- I'm only a part of their decision matrix. I can't make them do things if they don't want to do it. So going back, -- going from being on a ship or being in a squadron and like, hey, man, I need you to do this, and if they don't do it, I'm like, I told you to do this. Now it's like, okay, I have to beg, borrow and steal to get them to pick their shoe up and bring it into the other room. It's like, oh my god, how many different ways do I have to tell you to do this?

Other parents noted behavioral cues of the child's adjustment such as more clinginess (Family 18), or preference of consulting the stay at home parent. As one mother noted, "I wasn't that he would not talk to you. He just would come to me with problems and things after you came home." so she would "redirect him" with statements such as "okay daddy can help you with that. Go ask Daddy" and that seemed to help with getting him back to talking to Daddy" (Family 11). Many families noted that in the excitement of having the parent home, the children responded positively showing off accomplishments and wanting to pick up familiar activities. As noted by Family 33, "For the first day or two, they were all excited, "dad, let's do this," "dad, let's do that" and then it got into they wanted to get back into their routine because I've noticed that kids this age, even probably all the way through high school really, work better on a routine and knowing what's coming next. As long as they knew what was going to happen and what was going to come next, we didn't really have any issues." Excited and excitement were words used frequently when asked about the child(ren)'s reactions to the military member's homecoming. Happy and happiness were also frequently used as for example, "they're happy to see me when I come back" (Family 6) and "they're just happy to see me, carrying on like I never left, or they want to hang out with me a lot more because I was gone for so long" (Family 3).

On a positive note, only one family noted some bonding issues between the father and son as he had been deployed for long periods repeatedly throughout the young boy's life. As shared by the mom:

Family 5: ...when he was little, he didn't connect with people so my husband really wanted to have this connection with him and when he got home, there was no connection. Like not even slightly. He took until he came home from the last deployment for him to

even want to do things with his dad and now it seems like he's finally realizing hey, I miss him more and we're hoping that this time when he comes home, it will be a better connection

For other participating families, most commented that they did not notice any effects upon the, most often, father/child relationships in the long term. Some did comment that at times younger children could be shy or withdrawn, but did warm up over time. Fathers, as well, expressed concern that the younger children would not recognize them post deployment, but this did not appear to be a lasting concern once the parent was home for a period of time.

### **3) What are useful strategies parents have employed to manage military separation/deployment for their children?**

Parents were explicitly asked what helped them cope during the separation/deployment and what strategies had they found helpful/not helpful. Communication was cited over and over as the most important part of maintaining the relationship with the child and family cohesion. Both fathers and mothers seemed to recognize the importance of regular connections.

Family 20: The biggest thing is making sure you're finding ways to talk to them. Making sure you're finding ways to still bond with them. That's why I started reading books over video and sending it to them, because if you lose that connection even for a month, for them it's a lifetime. It's just they feel like you don't care about them anymore. The minute you quit connecting with them, it's gone. Families are torn apart because people don't talk to each other anymore.

Skype and other Internet based communications were cited over and over as making a huge difference in children being able to visualize the military parent and their surroundings.

Family 27: The fifteen times were not just via Skype. They were combined with phone calls so yeah, it was less for Skype and being able to see her. It was probably maybe five or six times but of course her reaction was great. She was happy to be able to see me and it was good. It was a good thing being able to see them so.

Family 1: The technology too now makes it a lot easier because you can actually see on Skype and stuff. I think that's a huge difference probably from just even talking on the phone or years ago, I remember my dad and my uncle talk about when their dad came home from World War II, they didn't know who he was. Who is that guy? They didn't know. They literally didn't know who he was. So you don't get that, I don't think, anymore when you can actually see the person,

Family 10: The big thing was I spoke with them all the time. At least once a week I would try to call him at least once or twice a week and then when we actually went to port, I would always Skype with them a lot so they got a chance to see my face. It's one thing to hear my voice but to actually get to see me and they get to show me stuff they're doing, just whatever they had going on at the moment.

These calls were also memorable for the children who spoke about being able to talk with the military parent on a regular basis. Subjects of interest were school and sports activities as well as just answering general questions about life on ship or in the deployed environment.

Family 10: They were always pretty excited. They get to tell me about their day and my son was playing football at the time so he would tell me about how football was going for him and the youngest one, he would get on there and talk a lot. They seemed pretty excited when they got a chance to talk to me though.

In the meantime, moms tried to keep up regular routines to minimize change in the children's lives since dad's departure had already upset the family rhythm.

Family 4: I mean seeing that there's pictures around and just making sure that the house looks the way it's always been and not changing stuff. I felt like not changing the way things looked or felt or the routines in the house made it keep sane.

Family 7: ....a regular schedule, like, I mean, they're little, so I can imagine it would be different if they were bigger, but we really have a routine and expectations throughout the day. And that provides stability for them and for me, just to know that things are going

However, at the same time, they realized that having distractions and staying busy would make the time seem to go faster. Some moms would plan special outings or trips periodically to give the children something to look forward to such as a trip to visit family or even a Disney weekend.

Family 25: I signed her up for a lot of things

Family 20: I put them in a sport for every single day after school, so soccer, gymnastics, whatever.

Family 26: A big fan of distraction. If things are going rough, okay, well, it looks like today we need a trip to the aquarium or the museum or something. It's a way to kind of go, today nothing else matters. We're just doing to do this fun thing. That helps.

Family 5: Keeping them busy seems to work pretty well for them and even though sometimes it stresses me out because I'm trying to get things done, it's what's best for them so they're always going to come first.

In deployment preparation materials and classes, often ideas are presented that help families "count down" the time until the military parent returns or suggests items to use so that the military member's presence is still felt in the home. Recorded videos or DVD's, stuffed animals with recorded voice; "flat" daddies or blow up photos were all mentioned as keeping the missing parent's image and voice accessible. This was helpful especially for younger children. Countdown calendars as mentioned previously were tricky if the date was not fixed. Some moms mentioned they would only find these helpful when used closer to the return date and not from the date of the original departure.

Family 22: I got them Daddy pillows. It's a picture of him on a pillow, and they've slept with those every night. They still sleep with them

Family 31: The first time I got him a Daddy Doll, and then I was looking at recordable books.

Family 33: They really liked doing the paper chain. That was a really big one for them. On shorter ones, we've done the kiss, the Hershey kisses, a kiss from dad and they really look forward to that every day. We have lots of pictures. They really liked seeing the pictures in the house and they would just say "oh, there's dad" and "dad's coming back" and "that's when dad was here" and they really liked seeing pictures of him just around every day.

Despite doing the best they could at keeping the children engaged, stresses did occur and when they did, the stay at home parent could feel stressed and need their own stress relief. As well, this parent had to find ways to reassure the children when they reacted to the military parent's absence. These actions included taking a break from each other, giving emotional support, and just spending time listening to their concerns.

Family 26: we do cool off periods. When things get too rough between us, we're starting to argue, we're snipping, or homework is going the wrong way or anything like that, we cool off. We go take ten minutes into our, -- we go to our rooms, and that's our quiet space, and that's our safe zone.

Family 13: Friends, they help. During the last deployment we spent a lot of time over at a friend's house, you know, simple things, just like we went over for dinner or we hung out and just kind of that connecting with other people to remind us that we weren't all alone. But also just kind of, you know, being open about it, talking about it, you know, if the kid comes up to me and starts crying because he misses his dad, then I'll listen and he'll sit on my lap and he'll cry and I'll tell him that he's not alone, like I feel that, too. And so it helps to know that we're all kind of in it together, that we have each other through it.

Family 19: Just give her hugs and kisses and ask them what they want to do to make them, you know, coping skills that maybe something that they want to do.

When asked for their best advice for other parents facing deployment or separation, parents advised to keep communication open, stay flexible, and open to change. Stay at home parents cautioned that while communication was great for staying in contact, sometimes too much communication or difficulties connecting could increase the stress so finding a balance was important.

Family 5: back in my first deployment, I wasn't able to actually call and we were using like instant messenger things. And that seems to make it worse honestly, because you

don't get the tone of voice and what not, so you misrepresent what you're reason as being intentionally hurtful when it was meant to be playful.

Sometimes the countdown methods were not helpful either as, at times, it emphasized the actual length of time the military member would be away, or as mentioned previously, shift when the exact return date was unknown.

Family 13: Well, one thing I was thinking of was the countdown chain, like the paper chain. I thought it was just be a brilliant idea, and that deployment, it was his second one, he was gone for 230 days, and it doesn't sound like a lot, like a large number until you put it in little links of a chain. It went like from this corner of our living room like up and then down and then up and then around to the side. And I looked at it when I was done and I regretted it so much...I didn't cut links off of it every day. It would normally be like oh no I haven't cut links off in like eight days, so I'll like cut some off. We don't do countdowns; they don't work for us...for me it just reminds us every day. We do -- during the last deployment we did every 50 days he was gone, we went out to do a movie and like frozen yogurt. So it broke it up into chunks that were manageable, and it was a reward, something we could enjoy together, but it wasn't that many links of a chain.

Family 31: there's things I haven't tried that I've seen other people have success with just because I know personally any of the chain links or the kisses and stuff, because the amount of days is always going to be different. And I'm like, you better have extra bags stashed somewhere to put extra ones on there, you know. So I would really, okay, I would shy away from any kind of countdown stuff, too.

Moms also mentioned that some of the outreach was not helpful either, such as school-based counselors or FRG meetings. For their children and themselves, it was a reminder of whom they were missing, and what could happen during the deployment if the threat level was high.

Family 23: For [child name], they had a military counselor in kindergarten, and they would discuss what was going on. That actually made things worse to the point where he was coming home crying because it was like a constant reminder that his dad wasn't here. I know that it's supposed to be to help kids, and I'm sure it did help some kids, but for [child name], it made things a lot worse, so after we stopped going, he was a lot better. He didn't ask as many questions, but I think that was for him, it was beneficial for him not to go.

Family 35: FRG. We attempted to do a couple FRG meetings when he was in Afghanistan, and it seemed like it made matters worse because everybody wanted to be like, oh, you know, he'll be back. Like downplaying the whole him being gone and I'm like, I get that you guys have been through this. I've been through it also, but at the same time, I didn't like how they downplayed how upset they were or how upset I was like he was never coming back. And we went a couple times, and then after that I was like, no, we're just going to stay busy.

And just as family and friends could offer support, sometimes togetherness was just too much as expressed by this parent:

Family 32: I think for us actually having people come visit for too long, like having family come and help and stay for too long kind of throws out our own family dynamic a little bit.....

Parents were also asked what they might do differently for the next separation/deployment and these suggestions included reaching out more for support; perhaps seeking counseling; and also moving in with family for the duration.

Family 3: Just kind of more depend on family a lot more and try not to handle it all myself. It takes a village so try to use my family and friends a lot more.

Family 34: I think I need to work better on getting a support system. Just somebody to talk to and interface with on a personal level.

Others referenced different ways that they would try to approach the emotionality of the separation.

Family 36: be better about taking more pictures and kind of talking to them more about what it's going to be like when he's gone or how it's going to be.

Family 10: I would probably work more towards my attitude. My attitude changes a whole when he's not here, and it's like they love pushing my buttons, and I be trying so hard to not get upset with them, but sometimes it seem like I have a breakdown, and I'm like, okay, you know what, it's okay to have a breakdown every once in a while, but I always try to keep it together and not break down in front of them. So they never see me cry. So it's like, okay, but I usually get like an attitude if I have to get an attitude with them. It's just so stressful dealing with them.

And finally, parents were asked for what advice they would provide to other parents facing a deployment/separation. Many of the previously discussed issues were re-emphasized, but some particularly cogent quotes are included below reiterating in part themes previously discussed but yet expanding on upon their own experiences.

Family 16: I guess don't be afraid or feel like you are alone. I know I get like that. I want to think I'm alone. I'm kind of afraid to reach out but to not be afraid and you have to really make the effort to find some support and find a group or something to help make the time go by.

Family 26: You're not Super Woman. Don't make yourself feel like you have to be. That's been the hardest thing. That's a struggle for me. I feel like I constantly have to be on. You're not Super Woman, and you don't have to be. Nobody expects you to be. Don't hold yourself to that kind of standard because you're just going to exhaust yourself and frustrate yourself, and talk to your kids frankly and honestly about what's going on,

because I found that when I stopped trying to constantly sugar coat things for her, and just kind of divert her away from what was going on and actually sat down and talked to her about what was going on, she was more receptive to the answer.

Family 30: When it comes to the spouses, suck it up. It is what it is. At the end of the day, you can't call a CO Billy Bob to come home from Dubai because the car won't start. You're affecting [the military member] -- like short of somebody dying, somebody is -- like one of your children and your parents, maybe, that's a maybe for me, leave them alone. They don't need to be worried about what's going on at home. Suck it up. But that's just me.

Family 2: I think just getting in touch with as many resources as the commands are providing for the families -- events, activities -- because you kind of don't want to do that stuff when they're gone. It's harder. You're one adult down. You don't want to plug in. But it's definitely important. It helps your wellbeing and as many of the retreat type of things as the Navy puts out there -- marriage, family, any of that stuff -- has been very beneficial to our family. You can take a lot from it. So I think those are important. And just meeting people, neighbors, making connections, church, so you're not alone. You have backup, because you don't have family when you're so far away. You need a sense of community where you're at, even though it's not with family. And talking to a mentor, somebody who's been in the military longer, and choosing the mentor wisely -- knowing what's good for you and what's not good for you, and getting rid of the relationships that are not. You want to find the optimistic, upbeat person, even though they may annoy you at times, because if you talk to the person who's down in the dumps all the time they're going to take you with them.

In summary, parents offered positive views of the approach to deployment as advice for other parents. Primarily this involved accepting separation as part of military life.

Family 13: Being positive about it, we've been doing it for so long that we know it comes in waves. We do know that there's challenging parts and then there's good parts. We did have the three years when he was home every night, and so we know that it comes in cycles. We know that it has an end to it, we know that it will get better, and then it will happen again. And it just -- we see it as a whole instead of just the separation happening by itself.

Family 10: It's going to be hard. It's rough, but at the end of the day, you'll get through it. You have to take it one day at a time, and the middle of the month, I mean, in the middle of the deployment, it's exhausting, but towards the end it slows down, but then eventually they will be back, and when they come home, it's like, okay, you might want to leave again. It's a roller coaster ride, and that's basically what it is. It's basically a roller coaster ride with that.

#### **4) What similarities and differences are there between parents' and children's perspectives of military separations and deployments?**

In the interviews with the children, their thoughts were often scattered and they were easily distracted by the drawing process or with the photos so these data were not as rich as hoped. In the team meeting, the linguistic anthropologist extracted their responses placing their responses in “child poems” that poignantly echoed some of the themes reported by the parents. The extra space between sentences denotes the removal of the researcher-phrased questions that prompted the response so that the child’s words are highlighted. The children were usually most eloquent in providing advice for other children. In preparing for the parent to leave and trying to understand the purpose of the separation, one child (Family 1) noted:

First I would research it  
 And then I would tell them  
 What it was like there  
 And what they're doing there

For the most part the participating parents were preparing the children well for the separations. They were very cognizant of selecting appropriate timing for informing the children of the impending separation based upon their ages and experience with separation. Due to the large number of Navy participants, many of the children had been exposed to multiple shipboard deployments so that many just took the separation stride, knowing that the deployed parent would be coming home in about 3-6 months and that they would be able to be in contact during the time the parent was away. Several of the children mentioned being able to visit the ship so seeing where the parent lived and worked helped mitigate concern over safety and well being of the separated parent. Many of the parents had participated in deployment briefings and/or Fleet and Family activities and utilized the techniques to prepare and manage separations. For those families living a distance from the base, participating in activities during the deployment was more difficult especially for those activities not offering childcare services. Child 1 in Family 3 noted his ability to say goodbye to his dad on the latest ship departure, “I went up to him...and gave him a hug....Working on the boat “

From the children as well as the parents, being able to communicate during the separation was paramount in alleviating concerns and maintaining a relationship with the family members. Sharing every day events was important in allowing the separated parent to stay knowledgeable about family activities and events taking place while away. Most families avoided goodbye scenes at the dock or airport, preferring to say farewells at home as if to normalize the separation. As noted by this child in Family 9:

Sometimes I go to the ship with my mom  
 And pick him up instead of dropping off  
 But not always

Coming home was acknowledged with special celebrations but not announced until return was imminent to avoid disappointments. Children enjoyed participating in some of the “countdown” activities, but families noted this could be difficult since return dates were often not fixed until the last moment at times. Children exhibited a sophistication regarding technology often using terms such as Skype and wifi as they shared being able to talk with the away parent as well as being aware of connection challenges. Child 2 in Family 11 illustrated this level of dialogue at the time of departure:

We only got to talk to him when he left

Because he was closer to the bay where they had Wi-Fi

But when he went past the bridge

We were still talking to him

The screen just shot off because he had no more [connection]

The child in Family 8 shared some of the dialogue with the absent parent during the photo elicitation interview that reveal the mundane topics covered, but yet so important in assuring the continued participation in the family’s life:

They’re probably talking about things

About what’s going to happen at home

Or things that are going to happen in later in the night

And things that might happen in the morning

Or things that are happening while the kid’s dad is at work

Both parents and children noted it was OK to acknowledge sad feelings and that they would miss the military parent. As noted by a child in Family 11, “I’d say don’t worry it’s okay my dad went away for a long time for seven weeks seven months not eight seven months seven months and I felt sad too don’t worry it’s okay” and from Family 9, the child provided this advice for coping with the separation, ” The best thing I do is don’t keep on thinking about when they’re gone when you’re sad don’t keep on thinking about it and you could FaceTime them overnight to FaceTime the best idea in my mind is just don’t think about it.” The children and parents both shared that it was important to offer reassurance of eventual return as this child in Family14, “hmm I would say it’s okay and they’re going to be back because my parents went on deployment before and I was really sad and they’re going to come back It really takes long but yeah they’re going to come back.”

Another theme repeated by both parents and children was the importance of the special time spent prior to the separation with each child. In the interviews and in the drawings, children shared those events such as trips to the pool, play parks, and zoo as special memories that they

held onto and referred back to as special moments with the absent parent. Communication over the course of separation was important as shared by both the children and home parent. When asked what reassurance they could provide for other children whose parents were going away for military duty, efforts to stay connected through Skype, or other web-based method, calls, and care packages were referenced that helped in staying connected with the military parent. For example the memory for Child 1 in Family 3 was “A water park because I like going there to splash in it”

These thoughts seem to echo the home parents’ intentions in preparation as well. This child went on provide advice regarding staying busy while the parent was away, again similar to how the home parents looked for ways to distract the children during the separation.

I would tell them that a year won't seem as long

Because this year didn't seem as long

For some reason

And if you're old enough that you go to school

It doesn't seem as long

So if they went to school

I'd tell them it wouldn't seem as long as a year

Children had a rudimentary understanding of the work their military parent was engaged in that provided evidence of parental preparation and communication. This “poem” was provided by a 7-year-old in Family 5, who earlier compared himself, sister and mother to Power Rangers when the dad was away.

He has

He’s been for a long time

He’s been gone for a long time

He just works on helicopters

That’s all he does

He’s repairing them and fixing them to see how they work

They fill the engine up and repair

Once he took me on a plane

I said it was boring but it was actually fun

It made me fall asleep

The plane

He was testing it out

He said do you guys want to come with me

And we said yes

And it made me fall asleep

It made me feel real sleepy

It was really cool

It was really cool but we didn't get to jump out

### **Relationship of current findings to previous findings:**

As noted in the grant proposal, children's reactions to military separation/deployment have been studied for a number of years. Most of the early studies occurred after the Vietnam War and during the decades following with a focus upon normative separations such as shipboard duty or extended unaccompanied overseas assignments such as humanitarian missions. Early research focused primarily upon paternal separation as fathers were more likely to be the deployed parent, but since Desert Storm/Desert Shield in the 1980's, mothers are just as likely to be deployed as fathers for military duties (Birgenheier (1993). Approximately 2 million American children and youth under the age of 18 have a parent on active duty and an additional 682,925 whose parents are in the reserve component (DOD, 2017). Best estimates available on the Internet indicate that at least 700,000 children had one or both parents deployed during the most recent conflicts (Clever, 2013). Of these children, it is estimated that children under five years of age represent at least 40% of those with parents who have deployed. Flake and others (2009) note that parental deployments have included 95,187 dual military families, 74,086 single parents, and 102,053 families with special health care needs. Coupled with normative separations expected for training, ship duty, and overseas rotations, military children often experience multiple separations over the course of their childhood.

Many studies are available in the literature considering effects of military separations and deployment on older school-age and adolescent children, but less is known about the effects upon younger children. Most studies that consider younger children's reactions are assessed from the parent's viewpoint, with less known regarding the child's thoughts and feelings regarding the parental separation.

Research regarding the effects of deployment on military children has primarily focused upon quantitative studies of school-aged and adolescent children (Paris, DeVoe, Ross, & Acker, 2010). With the lengthy involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan recently, many publications have appeared in the literature describing the effects of wartime deployments on children (Andres & Moelker, 2010; Applewhite & Mays, 1996; Aranda, Middleton, Flake, & Davis, 2011; Barker & Berry, 2009; Chandra et al, 2009; Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005; Cozza, 2011; Cozza et al, 2010; Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005; Levin & van Hoorn, 2009). Interestingly, few are research-based and those that are either continue to sample the older child or adolescent or seek parental impressions of the effects on the child.

Lincoln, Swift, and Shorteno-Fraser (2011) describe the reactions and response to separation based on age and developmental level in a conceptual article focused on military children. They note that infant response is related to the stress and anxiety displayed by the remaining caregivers. The infant may react “by becoming more irritable and unresponsive, vulnerable to sleep disruption, eating problems, and increased periods of crying.” (p. 987). Toddlers may display more resistive behaviors and perhaps become more clingy. Preschoolers may regress “to behaviors that they have previously outgrown.” (p. 987) School-aged children have more awareness of what is happening and the potential danger faced by the deploying parent. For this reason, perhaps, most studies of military children’s reaction to deployment have focused upon school-aged or adolescents (Lincoln, Swift, and Shorteno-Fraser, 2011; Huebner et al, 2007).

In their review article, DeVoe, Ross, & Acker (2012) note that, in young children, deployments may interrupt normal development and maintenance of relationships with the missing parent. The young child may miss the opportunity to bond with the deployed parent or experience interruption of that bond during the separation. Children in the preschool years, due to the magical thinking common in this age group, may feel responsibility for the deployment separation related to perhaps some misbehavior on their part or negative thoughts about the deployed parent. (Lester & Bursch, 2011; Lester et al, 2010; Maholmes, 2012) Stress and guilt may lead to somatic symptoms such as stomach aches, or behavior problems. School-aged children may also exhibit behavioral or academic problems in response to the deployment. In their systematic review of nine studies of military children, White, De Burgh, Fear, and Iversen (2011) confirmed that “children of deployed parents are at higher risk than their civilian counterparts, which may reflect the multiple stressors that military children face” (p. 211). Some limitations they noted in the research to date included the retrospective point of view of most studies; garnering only maternal perceptions; usually focused on a limited number of variables without considering confounding variables; primary use of cross-sectional designs; and use of small convenience samples.

There are some earlier studies of separation related to deployments in support of Operation Desert Storm completed during the 1990’s demonstrating unique stressors for children and for their families (Amen, Jellen, Meryes, & Lee, 1988; Black, 1993; Blount, Curry, & Lubin, 1992; Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996; Lester & Bursch, 2011; Lester et al, 2010; Maholmes, 2012; Pierce & Buck, 1998; Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998; White, De Burgh, Fear, and Iversen, 2011; Zeff, & Hirsch, 1997). According to Kelley and others (2001), the degree to which the children experience stress depends upon several factors to include previous experience with separations; the nature of the deployment; the parent’s emotional development, satisfaction with

the military, and stability of the marriage; and most importantly, the developmental level of the child. Interestingly, Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe (1996) found not only younger children experiencing higher depression, but also a marked increase for boys making them especially vulnerable to deployment effects. This study was particularly valuable as the researchers had collected data on the children prior to the war's beginning, allowing them to "prospectively evaluate the impact of wartime deployment by comparing follow up ratings." (p. 373).

More recently, Flake and others (2009) noted that children 5-12 years of age experiencing a separation reacted using more internalizing behaviors such as whining, being anxious, and more frequent crying, rather than externalizing behaviors such as acting out or school difficulties. "Children of younger-aged parents, short duration of marriage, and lower SES were at higher risk for having psychosocial symptoms." (p. 276) With 42% of the parents reporting significant parenting stress, a major finding from this study was that children appeared to pick up on parenting stress such that "the most significant predictor of child psychosocial functioning during wartime deployment was parenting stress." (p. 271) In contrast, Chartrand and others, (2008) reported children aged 3 and over demonstrated higher externalizing behaviors for those whose parent was deployed in comparison to children whose parent was not currently deployed. The authors claimed this was the first to demonstrate "that children aged 3 years or older with a deployed parent exhibit increased behavioral symptoms compared with peers without a deployed parent after controlling for caregiver stress and depressive symptoms."(p. 1009). The inclusion of the effect on younger children and a comparison group for children who did not have a deployed parent was a unique aspect of the study. However, like many studies of military children, data were only collected from parents regarding their perceptions of child behavior as a marker of the effects of the deployment.

On a more positive note, Ryan-Wenger (2002) demonstrated the resilience of military children in comparison with a group of civilian children. Her findings showed no difference in levels of anxiety or psychopathology when considering the threat of war. Comparably, Applewhite and Mays (1996) demonstrated that psychosocial functioning in military children did not differ based upon maternal or paternal separations. While the authors noted the contradictory nature of their findings regarding maternal versus paternal separation, the study was limited by a convenience sample dependent on recall of the child's first extended separation. Despite the work of these researchers, understanding how younger children experience deployment has been limited by the focus on older children; primarily collected from the maternal (or stay-at-home parent's) perception of the child's reaction, and collected during normative separations or for the limited Gulf War separations, and primarily focused on paternal deployments.

Papers published since the review of the literature conducted during the proposal preparation have also tended toward the conceptual using anecdotal accounts and theory-based applications to speculate on the effects of military separations upon younger children. Lieberman and Van Horn (2013) published a conceptual model for intervention based upon:

characteristics of mental health in infancy and early childhood, the developmentally expectable early anxieties that all children experience in the first years of life across cultures and circumstances, and the ways in which these normative anxieties are

exacerbated by the events of deployment, reunification, and associated circumstances that are specifically relevant to young children in military families (p. 282)

This paper was similar to that cited above by Paris, DeVoe, Ross, & Acker (2010). Lieberman and Horn note that there are “no studies documenting whether or how” young children manifest their reactions to a parent’s deployment, but, pulling from developmental theory, extend the thinking that some children may adjust as the separation becomes just a regular part of the family’s life while others may not be as resilient and detach from the separated parent if deployments are repeated or for extended periods of time. They foster the opinion that interventions “designed to help the child maintain an ongoing awareness of the parent are very important to nurture the presence of the parent in the child’s mind” (p 285). This would seem to validate the finding in this study of the importance of the ongoing communication during the separations that were noted by both parents and the children in the interviews. As well, techniques such as recorded books, flat Stanley’s, and countdown activities would also serve to keep the military parent’s presence active within the home. These authors also mention the effect of magical thinking in toddlers whereby they may blame the separation upon their own behavior, ie, “I was bad so therefore my dad left” that was not demonstrated or communicated by parents or children in this study under report here. They pull from previous research to note that medical visits increased for children aged 3-8 during deployment in a study of 640,000 medical records that was an 11% increase, however, parents in this study being reported did not denote any heightened medical concerns for children during the separation. One mother required some psychiatric intervention however, and two delivered babies while the military dads were away.

Panton (2018) cited Lieberman and Van Horn’s review in her article delineating implications for nurse practitioners caring for military children. She breaks her paper into sections based on developmental age and undergirds this information with research conducted by Nguyen, Ee, Berry-Caban, and Hoedebecke (2014) who focused on early child development effects of military deployment recruiting 151 parents with preschool children. Using the Ages and Stages questionnaire and Social-Emotional inventory of the Ages and Stages test bank, parents were asked to rate their children’s developmental progress. Two groups were compared: those whose parent had deployed and those who had not, to determine effects of separation. Within this study, it was suggested that children who had had a parent deployed in their lifetime were more likely to have an adverse developmental screen than those with non-deployed parents. These effects were seen in interpersonal behaviors and in gross motor scores. The interpersonal finding, according to the researchers, was seen as related to the absence of the parent, however the gross motor finding was not able to be explained or related to the deployment status. Since this was measured at one point in time, it was unable to be determined how long these effects lasted or mitigated.

A related conceptual article from 2016 was an interesting adjunct in understanding some of the findings from this study. Carter and Renshaw presented a review of the literature regarding spousal communication during military deployments. As in this study, spouses used a variety of communication media to stay in touch with the military parent during the separation such as email, phone calls, and web-based video calling programs like Skype. According to these authors, different media appear to serve different functions. The synchronicity of phone and video calls have the richness of hearing the voice to ascertain non-verbal communication

more accurately and have been rated as more gratifying by the participants. Recent studies suggest that service members have been able to converse in some form almost daily with the at home family, but that access may be related to rank, service component, and location. Most recent research has questioned what impact such frequent communication may have upon military operations and upon service member functioning. These authors also raise questions as to the value for those in the family other than the spouse as seen in this study and note, research is needed as to the value of communication with military children. Walsh (2017) noted in her study with military mothers, using mechanisms such as Skype and Facetime smoothed “their own and their children’s experiences with deployment and reintegration (p. 94). This study included 12 active duty women with at least one child under age 5. Using qualitative interviews and focus groups, disruption and continuity were the primary themes identified related to the impact upon the parent-child relationship. Disruption referred to the disconnect these participants felt in realizing that the child they had left was not the child they came home to related to the developmental changes that occurred in their absence. This particular theme was not one commented upon by the participants in the study in this report. Possibly related to the shorter duration for most of the shipboard separations, or perhaps to the frequency of communication, military parents more often commented upon the ease of re-integration once they were at home again. Possibly if more participants had had longer deployment periods, this contrast would have been more apparent in this study. Walsh also noted a struggle for these mothers to relinquish control of their motherly responsibilities for the period of deployment. This theme was also noted in the previous military mothers’ study (Agazio et al, 2013), but not really echoed in this one possibly due to having more fathers as the deployed/separated military member rather than the mothers. Quotes from the fathers in this study related to being reassured that all was being handled by their spouses on the home front, so that they could concentrate upon their military duties on ship or in the deployed setting.

Walsh and her colleagues (2014) also focused on military fathers following their deployment as part of a larger study evaluating the efficacy of a group intervention. Fourteen male service members who had deployed within 2 years of the study and had at least one child under the age of 7, participated in a research interview prior to their participation in the intervention. These fathers too expressed concerns for missing key milestones in the child’s life and recognized some of the challenges faced in reconnecting with their children post deployment. Interestingly they commented upon the difficulty of reconnecting with younger children “because young children cannot hold onto the memory of a parent across deployment in the way older children can” (p. 40). In the study being reported, one family commented upon this difficulty as the military dad had been deployed frequently and for long periods of time. As noted by the mom in Family 5,

when he was little, he didn’t connect with people so my husband really wanted to have this connection with him and when he got home, there was no connection. Like not even slightly. He took until he came home from the last deployment for him to even want to do things with his dad and now it seems like he’s finally realizing hey, I miss him more and we’re hoping that this time when he comes home, it will be a better connection because he just doesn’t connect well with people.

Similarly to what Walsh and others reported, this family also struggled with dad's reintegration back in to the family especially around discipline issues. In the same interview, the mom shared,

she was about four or five and he came home and told her that she needed to be quiet and she turned and looked at him as serious as could be and she goes "you can't tell me what to do. You're not the boss of me." I had to tell her "yeah, he is the boss of you."

As reported by Walsh and others, upon returning from deployment, fathers "found it challenging to know what type of responsiveness to expect from their children, how much non-responsiveness to tolerate, and how to address it in developmentally appropriate ways" (p; 41). In the study in this report, the issue was only mentioned in the one family, so it was hard to determine how pervasive discipline represented a challenge across the sample.

Similarly, Pexton, Farrants, and Yule (2018) also examined father separation impact on child adjustment. Collecting data from 52 children aged 8-11 years of age within a school setting the purpose was to compare those whose fathers were deploying to Afghanistan to those leaving for military training. For both groups, the researchers found elevated levels of anxiety and stress, but not any increases in behavioral difficulties or depression. Interestingly, while anxiety decreased overall when the fathers returned, over half of the children in each group continued to report higher levels of anxiety. The study also found that these children had multiple concerns in both groups despite the relative safety of those fathers attending military training versus Afghanistan. These fears included worries that the father would be captured, killed, or injured.

Within the sample of the study in this report, a few of the children indicated some of the fears for the father's safety and the moms also related needing to provide reassurance to children that their dad would be coming home. Within the interviews, this theme was not dominant more often coming in the photo elicitation when asked why they thought the children in the photos were crying. Usually the response was that the children were going to miss the military member versus injury occurring. Like in the Pexton and others study, older children who may have had more exposure to news and reports of other parent's injuries were more apt to express these types of concerns. An example of this theme within the study being reported was a quote from the mother in Family 30:

There was couple times she thought the bad guys were going to get him, and I had to reassure her the biggest thing you have to worry about is Daddy falling off the boat. That's why they kept saying. I didn't want them to ever think that somebody was coming to actually hurt him. And we would act like, you know, well Daddy can swim, so if he fall off the boat, he's fine. Well what about the sharks, and that's when the sharks came up, and I was like, I'm sure Daddy will punch them in the face. I tried to minimize that aspect of the deployment. It's easier when you're on a ship, but when you're boots are on the ground, it's -- the talk I think would have been very different in that aspect.

Communication was also the focus of the work from Houston and others (2013) querying spouses and children (mean age 11 years) to determine frequency and quality of the communication as associated with emotions, behaviors and reactions. The range of children's

ages was not reported in the article, however some of the findings had implications for this study being reported. Those children using more email communication related feelings of anger and negativity than those using the video-assisted modalities and phone calls leading to speculation that the email made it difficult to interpret non-verbal cues for tone and meaning. As well, children who had more frequent communication during the deployment appeared to have less difficulties during re-integration also supporting the need to continue support communication albeit with the most effective medium.

More research has been published since the literature review conducted prior to beginning this current study. Lester and her colleagues have a program of research focused upon parental, family, and child adjustments particularly for younger children in military families. She frequently publishes conceptually-focused articles summarizing some of the concerns and policy implications regarding the effects of wartime service on children and families including Lester and Flake (2013) published after the proposal submission. In a recent study, primary military parents were interviewed by phone and completed a web-based survey focused upon a “focal” child 10 years of age or younger (Lester et al, 2016). The focal child was the child in the family who had had the most recent birthday in those families with multiple children under 10. In the quantitative component, child social and emotional adjustment, anxiety, and emotional and behavioral problems were measured along with parental behavioral health, parental sensitivity, family adjustment, and marital instability. Out of the 1651 eligible families contacted, 680 participated in the interview and 310 military parents completed the survey. They reported that 56% of the “focal” children were under the age of 5 at the time of the study, with 48% experiencing a deployment of the military parent and over 33% separated from the parent for more than a year. Within the sample, compared to the general population, these children were reported to have more anxiety in general, separation anxiety, and total anxiety along with more total and emotionally related difficulties. The report of depression, alcohol misuse, and at risk for PTSD were higher for the military and caregiving parents, but these were not directly associated with deployment. Families of enlisted service members were noted to have poorer family functioning as compared to those of officers. They also identified that greater deployment exposures were associated with impacts upon family functioning. The sample in the study in this report did not find that families were demonstrating poor family functioning, but more tendency toward being characterized as enmeshed, that could possibly be interpreted as a protective factor as the families tended toward more cohesion.

Mustillo, Wadsworth, and Lester (2016) reported further on the qualitative findings from the study described above to address two main research questions. First, does timing and duration of deployments predict child outcomes and second, is parental deployment associated with specific emotional and behavioral problems? The team did not find an association between the length of time for deployment and problematic behavior. Further, they explained “deployment either does not have a negative impact on child development or does not have a strong enough impact to reach the threshold level of problematic development” (p. 88). The team also postulated that perhaps there may be a latency effect meaning that deployment during one developmental stage does not manifest until a later stage, or that the effects could accumulate such that repeated deployments cause an incremental effect or are manifested when associated with other life stressors. The team notes that sampling could have affected the findings such that the effects could have been blurred by the time separating the deployment

from the measurement period. Longitudinal studies are suggested to help tease out immediate effects versus long term.

Wolf, Eliseo-Arras, Brenner, and Nochajski (2017) approached the study of military families' experiences from the viewpoint of service providers using a focus group to elicit issues noted during cycles of deployment. Not specifically focused on young children, it was however interesting to note several themes that were identified to include challenges with family cohesion and connectedness; needs for specific military culture connected programs, and reintegration stability. While a very limited study with only 8 service providers, their findings were cogent to supporting the findings of this study. Communication was cited as an important component of staying connected to the military parent. These providers emphasized age-level preparation for understanding why and what the military parent will be doing while away and perhaps some strategies for how best to communicate with the parent while away. Routines for the stay-home parent and children were also important in providing stability for the children and, as well, was noted in this study being reported. One peripheral issue emerging from this study, and addressed in the Wolf et al research, was the nature of the programs offered to help military families. These authors stress the need for credibility in the providers of programs indicated by being well versed in military culture, and having familiarity with military language and structure. Participants in the study in the study being reported mentioned using Fleet and Family services, but were often discouraged by either repetitive/simplistic content, inapplicable content, or difficulty attending due to the timing of the activities or lack of child care services. This article appeared to substantiate these issues finding similar barriers within Wolf and colleagues' work.

In an earlier paper of Lester's (Paley, Lester, & Mogil, 2013), she calls for more research to provide research-based and validated interventions to promote the well being of military families in preparation for, during, and return from deployments. Several articles were found in the literature describing a variety of programs, yet few have research validating their outcomes. Joy Osofsky, Molinda Chartrand, and Stephen Cozza are names well recognized for their work with military children and their families. At the time of the publication, Future of Children in 2013, programs such as Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families was working to provide materials to help military parents as well as health care professionals. Sesame Workshop also partnered with Walmart to create Talk, Listen, Connect: Helping families during military deployment that produced videos, books, and workbooks to help young children. They also report on the use of child-parent psychotherapy being used to support communication about the experiences with deployment. Masten (2013) also reported on DOD research evaluating programs such as "After Deployment: Adaptive Parenting tools" to help with readjustment within the family system. In addition, major studies have been underway for more comprehensive assessment of deployment effects to include the Military Family Life Project, the Millennium Cohort Family Study, and the Deployment Life Study (Chandra & London, 2013), but results were not accessible in the literature as of yet. From the review, it appears that more studies are needed to determine effects upon younger children.

### **Effect of problems or obstacles on the results:**

This project faced numerous obstacles along the way necessitating two no-cost extensions. Initially, the project was submitted to WRNMMC in April 2013 after funding

notification. Due to furloughs and workload, the IRB at WRNMMC was under direction to prioritize ongoing research continuing review and not to review new protocols. When the budget was approved and furloughs halted, the project was reviewed and determined not to need WRNMMC approval and I was advised to obtain CUA and USU approvals first, and then submit for advertisement approval only. CUA IRB submission was in Dec 2013 and approval granted early Feb 2014 and the USU concurrence was granted as well. When the project was submitted for approval for advertisement only, the personnel change that had occurred in the interim was not aware of the advertisement only process so the finalization did not occur until September 2014. Once this approval was obtained, Fort Belvoir and Bolling also gave approval. At this point, I brought on a research assistant to monitor advertisement dissemination and recruitment at the sites. Unfortunately, she never recruited anyone and moved to the Portsmouth area within the year. We also lost Ms Gada on the study as she took a job as an art therapist and no longer wanted, or had time, to help with the study as well as Dr. Murphy as a co-investigator due to her move to Prince Edward Island (moved into consultant role).

With no participants forthcoming in the DC area and no RA, I received approval from CUA and TSNRP to reach out to other military sites to include Naval Hospital San Diego, Madigan, Brooke, Lackland, Womack AMC, and Naval Hospital Portsmouth. In 2015 LTC (ret) Tom Miller was going to help me with an IRB at William Beaumont but the contact he provided never followed through. Several of these sites were undergoing some revisions to their IRB process so were not encouraging my application to those facilities. In the 2016-2017 period, I discussed activating the study in San Diego to try recruitment there after talking with CAPT King at the TSNRP course. While at the AACN conference in San Diego, I gave a presentation to pediatric and psychiatric residents at Naval Hospital San Diego and kicked off recruitment with some help from CAPT King and Monique Bouvier in the Pediatric Clinic. Monique left a short time later as she completed her PhD and no families were recruited from that site.

At the TSNRP dissemination course, then CDR Cunningham invited me to complete the application to recruit in Portsmouth and with his assistance secured a CRADA and IRB approval. Concurrent with approval there, Danielle Mejia-Amos became available to help with recruitment and she was hired over the summer of 2017. I traveled to Portsmouth in summer 2017 to meet with CDR Cunningham and Danielle and we visited the outlying clinics and I presented to the pediatric and psychiatric medical staff about the study. Recruitment finally took off in August 2017 as Danielle and I teamed up to do the interviews. After several joint interviews and observing her interviews, we began to separate so that any families available during the week when I was not able to come down, she would go ahead and enroll and interview. With her help, we had fairly regular enrollment, however achieved a primarily Navy sample with normative deployments due to the location and timing for recruitment with the current drawdown that may have been a different picture had we been able to recruit earlier and in the DC or other areas.

We had challenges once data collection started in earnest in that initially the military members would agree to participate and then later decide not to take part after we had already enrolled and completed data collection with the spouse and children thus resulting in some incomplete data sets. We also found that multiple children in families would want to participate and therefore we completed interviews on 1-4 children in families when they met the age inclusion criteria. Often this resulted in richer data and the children were more comfortable with

their siblings participating also. We were somewhat surprised by a number of families whose children had Down's syndrome or other developmental challenges when we arrived at the homes, but again included them as there were no criteria to exclude them and they were eager to participate. Some of the younger children (4-5 yr olds) were not as interested in completing an interview or drawing so their results were not as rich or contributory to the findings.

**Limitations:**

There are several limitations to the findings inherent in a qualitative design but also some methodological issues that limit generalizability. As noted above, the sample consisted primarily of Navy families due to the location for most of the recruitment success. As well, due to the delays and recruitment challenges, most of the families had experienced normative separations rather than combat deployments in the time period of the study. These limitations impact upon any generalizability to families in other services and for other than normative separations. In addition, participants included, in some cases, multiple children in a single family, that would also impact upon generalizability.

**Conclusion:**

In summary, this study focused upon the experience of young children during a separation or deployment for their military parent for a period of at least 3 months. The sample consisted of 38 families with both mothers and fathers participating and 61 children. Children completed an interview using the draw-and-tell method and photo elicitation to describe their experiences of the parent being at home and being separated. All mothers participated, and when available, the fathers when they were the military parent. Participating children were all 10 years of age or under. For the most part, the participating families in this study appeared to have been handling deployments and separations as well as they could. Within the quantitative measures employed descriptively in this project, mothers' stress levels were understandably higher during the deployments, but neither parent's level rose to concerning levels. The FACES instrument was used to assess family functioning and interestingly, while most families' ratios fell within what is considered normal limits of flexibility and cohesion, there was a tendency for some shift to enmeshment within some of the families, that could indicate some type of pulling the family together as a protective mechanism due to frequent moves and separations.

Within the interviews, major themes centered around the stages of deployment. Pre-deployment, parents were cognizant of adequately preparing children for the separation, however there was variation based upon age, timing in relation to the departure, and previous experience with separations. Children were encouraged to share their feelings about the separation, and these were evident in the draw-and-tell pictures as tears, sad faces, and slumped shoulders were included in departure illustrations. One strategy that emerged was the importance of special activities that were one-on-one between the children and the departing parent. These activities were demonstrated in the drawings and expressed within the interviews as a special memory to hold on to during the military member's absence. These activities seemed to hold a special place of grounding the imminent return of the parent as the child looked forward to again participating in either the same or different activity.

During the deployment/separation, mothers shared that for the most part, the family life proceeded normally. Strategies in this period that supported coping was keeping the family life within a routine and staying active as much as possible. Again, planning special activities or trips was important in giving the children something to look forward to and as a distraction from thinking about the missing parent. The remaining parent tried to remain sensitive to the child's feelings and addressed concerns as they emerged trying to keep life as normal as possible with school, sports and other activities. Some families were more comfortable in their communities having friends to reach out to or participating in organized support programs. Children intermittently dealt with sadness, concern regarding the safety of the military member, and wanting the parent to come home. Communication through different venues was extremely critical in maintaining the children's connection to the military parent and for the military member to feel connected to the family and their life at home. Devices for counting down the time until reunion were employed based on the child's age and understanding of the flexibility of return dates so often not started until late in the separation if at all. Concerns emerging from the drawings included some where positioning of the oldest child appeared to align with the stay home parent perhaps indicating the child was assuming a parental role to assist with siblings and or feeling disconnected from other family members. Also, during the separation, other pictures depicted some families disconnecting with each other and doing things separately with the military member seen as reuniting the family upon return. Other strategies identified as important during the separation included keeping a positive attitude, taking a break when stress was high, and using the available resources.

With the return of the military member, most families related some type of celebratory activity to mark the occasion. Those who had more experience with shipboard rotations seemed to keep the return as a more routine event and paced their reintegration to give time for readjustment. Some of the sticking points for families was resumption of the military member's role in the home and participation in child discipline that could at time meet child resistance. Children at times demonstrated clinginess with either or both parents seeking reassurance that the parent was indeed home but could also easily slip back into the relationship with the returning parent. By the time of the interviews with these families, most of their lives had settled down post deployment/separation and their shared stories related strategies and experiences that could assist other families in preparing for the experience.

### **Significance of Study or Project Results to Military Nursing**

Looking across the findings of this study, the results may be useful in helping military families preparing for, and experiencing, separation. As the review of the literature demonstrates, studies considering the experience for young children have been limited primarily to parental perceptions so that this study represents one of the few that has included the participation of children between the ages of 4-10 years of age. Considering the obstacles faced in this project, it was clear why this has been so challenging and that research has mainly focused upon the school-aged and adolescent military child when including their participation. This study employed a draw-and-tell and photo elicitation to indirectly elicit the feelings and thoughts of the children. While children eagerly participated in drawing pictures of their families, the differences in the developmental levels made it difficult to interpret the figures and underlying intent of some of the pictures. The project included three art therapists who provided input into

the analysis of all of the drawings, however for the younger children, it was often difficult to elicit the story of the picture during the interview or to keep their attention for the photo elicitation. Therefore, as in other previous studies of young children, more data were collected from the parents' interviews and then matched to that of the children's. In looking at the significance of the project, this study represents an attempt to elicit data from the children's perspective and in that regard it was evident that the children are indeed processing these separations in a way unique to their developmental level and to the relationship they have with their parents. Most demonstrated a clear understanding of what work, and why, the military parent was away from the family and a confidence in their return. They noted their participation in preparation and reunion activities. The pictures highlighted the importance of the special activities to the children in maintaining an emotional connection to the away parent during the separation. The pictures also realistically depicted the emotions connected to the departure, absence, and reunion with the military member demonstrating their connection and identification with their own feelings. Some children were able to represent symbolically their positioning in the family, whether allied with one parent, or disconnection from family members. Developmental indications in the drawings were evident in the completion, detail, and positioning of figures that in most cases were appropriate, but in others perhaps indicating regression or milestones not yet met. These findings had not yet been shared in previous research with younger military children, but more often speculated based upon developmental theory.

In military nursing practice, the results of this study will be useful in providing anticipatory guidance and ongoing support within the clinical setting with families preparing for, or experiencing, a separation/deployment. Within military education for both providers and family members, publications and other resources should reinforce the value of the strategies identified and validated by these families as helpful. Leadership should be more aware of reaching out to those families not situated near or in military housing. Programs available on base, or post, are not accessed at times due to distance and time constraints so there are implications to provide more flexibility in scheduling and including child care to provide a break and support for the spouse and children.. Leadership can also set the tone for supporting families and military members during deployments. Providing timely information and updates are critical in reassuring family members regarding the safety and location (if possible) of their loved ones. Leadership also needs to be more sensitive to the reintegration period allowing families time together without layering on a PCS or other impending duties that will impact on the time the military member would have with the family. Policies need to be put in place to limit reassignments for a certain period of time following a deployment or extended separation. Trying to organize a move right after a return places additional stress on a reintegrating family.

Military courses should include information about the experience of deployment so that this information is ongoing and not prepped just prior to a deployment. Health care providers need to be well versed in understanding the deployment cycle and the issues that may appear in each phase along with helpful strategies to offer to their clients. Appropriate referrals need to be made for family members and the military member if stress points or concerns are not being handled well to get some intervention for these individuals or the system before the family is overwhelmed.

Recommendations for further research include replication of this study with families in other branches in the military and to include more deployment types of separation versus the majority of normative separations included in this project. Parents were often skeptical of the research team interacting with their children so in the replication, it would be best to situate perhaps in a daycare or clinic where the research team could be familiar to the families within the community that would perhaps provide an environment more conducive for recruitment and interview interaction. More research needs to explore the trend to enmeshment seen within this sample. Previous research had considered family functioning, but had not used the FACES in military families with younger children so this would be an area to follow-up. This sample also had predominantly nuclear families with only two single parents included who were mothers who had deployed. Sampling specifically for military mother deployments, dual military families, and single parents would be important to study as they may have a different perspective from those where the father deploys and the mother remains at home with the children. In addition including same-sex parents' experiences with deployment are also lacking in the literature. Researchers should continue to consider innovative methodologies to elicit the experience from the viewpoint of the younger aged child. Simply applying developmental theories is not enough when considering the unique life experiences where one parent may be absent at regular and extended intervals from the child's life. Without research, providers are mainly guessing what the impacts are, and missing the actual experience.

**Changes in Clinical Practice, Leadership, Management, Education, Policy, and/or Military Doctrine that Resulted from Study or Project**

Since the results of this study have not yet been disseminated to the field, there would not yet be outcomes from the findings in practice, leadership, management, education or policy at this point in time.

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**Summary of Dissemination**

<b>Type of Dissemination</b>	<b>Citation</b>	<b>Date and Source of Approval for Public Release</b>
Publications		
Publications in Press		
Published Abstracts		
Podium Presentations	<p>30 April- 3 May 2018, Young children's reactions to deployment/separation as evidenced through draw-and-tell pictures. Triservice Nursing Research Dissemination Course, San Antonio, TX</p> <p>9 April 2019, Experience of separation/deployment for young military children, 4<sup>th</sup> CUA University Research Day, Washington, DC</p> <p>Abstract accepted for podium presentation at the International Family Nursing Association in August 2019</p> <p>Abstract accepted for podium presentation at the STTI Biennium in DC in Nov 2019</p>	

Poster Presentations	<p>Abstract accepted for poster at SNRS Annual Conference for Feb, 2019</p> <p>19 April 2018, poster, Young children's reactions to deployment/separations, Catholic University of America 3<sup>rd</sup> annual research day, Washington, DC</p> <p>28 Oct -2 Nov, 2017, poster, Young children's reactions to deployment/separations, Sigma Theta Tau International Biennial convention, Indianapolis IN.</p> <p>April, 2017, poster, Young children's reactions to deployment/separations. TSNRP Dissemination course, Ellicott City, MD</p>	
Media Reports		
Other		

**Reportable Outcomes**

<b>Reportable Outcome</b>	<b>Detailed Description</b>
Applied for Patent	None
Issued a Patent	None
Developed a cell line	None
Developed a tissue or serum repository	None
Developed a data registry	None

### Recruitment and Retention Table

Recruitment and Retention Aspect	Number
Subjects Projected in Grant Application	60 families
Subjects Available	
Subjects Contacted or Reached by Approved Recruitment Method	*
Subjects Screened	*
Subjects Ineligible	*
Subjects Refused	*
Human Subjects Consented	38 families
Subjects Who Withdrew	
Subjects Who Completed Study	57 children 36 spouses 24 military members
Subjects With Complete Data	56 adults
Subjects with Incomplete Data	19 adults

\* did not track

### Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	
Age (yrs)	35 ±4 (24-44 range)
Women, n (%)	( 38 )
Race	
White, n (%)	18 (56%)
Black, n (%)	8 (25%)
Hispanic or Latino, n (%)	2 (6%)
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, n (%)	( )
Asian, n (%)	( )
Other, n (%)	4 (13%)
Military Service or Civilian	
Air Force, n (%)	2 (5%)
Army, n (%)	3 (8%)
Marine, n (%)	1 (3%)
Navy, n (%)	31(81%)
Coast Guard, n (%)	1 (3%)
Service Component	
Active Duty, n (%)	100% military participants
Reserve, n (%)	( )
National Guard, n (%)	( )
Retired Military, n (%)	( )
Prior Military but not Retired, n (%)	( )
Military Dependent, n (%)	(33 spouses)
Civilian, n (%)	( )

### **Final Budget Report**

The final budget is attached. The reasons for remaining funds are due to the late start to data collection related to recruitment difficulties so that we did not include 60 families as planned but finished with 37 families so all the monies for transcription were not needed. Collecting data so close to the grant closeout we did not get to hold the second team meeting as previously planned so did not use all the travel funds. We also lost some personnel who were supposed to work on the project and had rebudgeted their salaries to support travel once the study took off at Portsmouth but all these funds were not needed. Otherwise, I had tried to be frugal with grant funds when recruitment efforts were not being successful to save funds for when they were eventually needed.



: Agazio, Janice

Report for Sponsored Projects and Grants  
As of: January 00, 1900

Project End Date: 05/31/2018  
26 GVSPR USU-13-TS04

		Chartfields:					
		a	b	c	d = a+b+c	e	f = e-d
		(Requisitions) Pre- Encumbrances	(Purchase Orders) Encumbrances	Actual Expended Amount	Total Pre- Enc, Enc and Expended	Budget	Available (Overspent) Funds
<b>Program Income</b>							
Revenues-Interim Level							
		-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total Expenses</b>							
<i>Salaries &amp; Benefits (Z002)</i>							
0101	Salary-Fac Supplmnt	-	-	14,435.00	14,435.00	-	(14,435.00)
0150	Salary-Research Staff	-	-	115,937.51	115,937.51	-	(115,937.51)
0170	Salary-Staff	-	-	70,607.23	70,607.23	-	(70,607.23)
Z100	Salaries & Wages-Budget	-	-	-	-	200,979.77	200,979.77
		-	-	<b>200,979.74</b>	<b>200,979.74</b>	<b>200,979.77</b>	<b>0.03</b>
<i>Salaries &amp; Wages (Z100)</i>							
0600	Retirement Plan Contrib	-	-	8,504.23	8,504.23	-	(8,504.23)
0700	FICA: Social Security	-	-	11,580.13	11,580.13	-	(11,580.13)
0710	FICA: Medicare	-	-	2,816.54	2,816.54	-	(2,816.54)
0800	Health Insurance Contrib	-	-	12,696.46	12,696.46	-	(12,696.46)
0850	Dental Benefit Contribution	-	-	232.99	232.99	-	(232.99)
0900	Fringes-Budget use only	-	-	1,449.74	1,449.74	-	(1,449.74)
Z101	Benefits & Taxes-Budget	-	-	-	-	39,109.02	39,109.02
		-	-	<b>37,280.09</b>	<b>37,280.09</b>	<b>39,109.02</b>	<b>1,828.93</b>
<i>Fringe Benefits (Z101)</i>							
		-	-	<b>238,259.83</b>	<b>238,259.83</b>	<b>240,088.79</b>	<b>1,828.96</b>
<i>Salaries &amp; Benefits (Z002)</i>							
<i>Scholarships</i>							
1102	Scholarship-UG Continuing	-	-	5,145.00	5,145.00	-	(5,145.00)
1200	Masters/Professional Scholarsh	-	-	12,060.00	12,060.00	-	(12,060.00)
Z301	Scholarships-Budget	-	-	-	-	17,205.00	17,205.00
		-	-	<b>17,205.00</b>	<b>17,205.00</b>	<b>17,205.00</b>	<b>-</b>
<i>Scholarships &amp; Grants (Z301)</i>							
		-	-	<b>17,205.00</b>	<b>17,205.00</b>	<b>17,205.00</b>	<b>-</b>
<i>Scholarships</i>							
<i>Subtotal General Exps (Z004)</i>							
1500	Postage and Freight	-	-	43.25	43.25	-	(43.25)
2000	Materials & Supplies	-	-	9,736.76	9,736.76	-	(9,736.76)
2002	Software Purchase	-	-	3,319.00	3,319.00	-	(3,319.00)
2003	Computer Hardware	-	-	1,717.28	1,717.28	-	(1,717.28)
2100	Printing & Publication Costs	-	-	467.54	467.54	-	(467.54)
2210	Copier Service	-	-	75.60	75.60	-	(75.60)
Z401	Supplies & Genl Exp Budget	-	-	-	-	45,304.91	45,304.91
		-	-	<b>15,359.43</b>	<b>15,359.43</b>	<b>45,304.91</b>	<b>29,945.48</b>
<i>Supplies &amp; General Exps (Z4)</i>							
1900	Travel	-	-	6,417.33	6,417.33	-	(6,417.33)
1910	Travel - Accomodations	-	-	5,069.52	5,069.52	-	(5,069.52)
1915	Travel - Meals & Incidentals	-	-	391.19	391.19	-	(391.19)
Z402	Travel Expenses-Budget	-	-	-	-	24,462.00	24,462.00
		-	-	<b>11,878.04</b>	<b>11,878.04</b>	<b>24,462.00</b>	<b>12,583.96</b>
<i>Travel &amp; Entertainment (Z402)</i>							
1601	Honoraria	-	-	16,925.00	16,925.00	-	(16,925.00)
1604	Payments to Subjects	-	-	250.00	250.00	-	(250.00)
Z403	Contractual Exps-Budget	-	-	-	-	17,175.00	17,175.00
		-	-	<b>17,175.00</b>	<b>17,175.00</b>	<b>17,175.00</b>	<b>-</b>
<i>Contractual (Z403)</i>							
8700	F&A Costs (Indirect Costs)	-	-	129,832.92	129,832.92	-	(129,832.92)
Z601	Indirect Costs (F&A)-Budget	-	-	-	-	130,055.30	130,055.30
		-	-	<b>129,832.92</b>	<b>129,832.92</b>	<b>130,055.30</b>	<b>222.38</b>
<i>Indirect Costs (Z601)</i>							
		-	-	<b>174,245.39</b>	<b>174,245.39</b>	<b>216,997.21</b>	<b>42,751.82</b>
<i>Subtotal General Exps (Z004)</i>							
<b>Total Expenses</b>		-	-	<b>429,710.22</b>	<b>429,710.22</b>	<b>474,291.00</b>	<b>44,580.78</b>
<b>Project Net:</b>		-	-	<b>429,710.22</b>	<b>429,710.22</b>	<b>474,291.00</b>	<b>44,580.78</b>

**Summary:**

Total Expended to date	429,710.22
Total Collected from Sponsor	(427,992.94)
Balance Due (Excess Funds)	<u>1,717.28</u>

Report ID:  
Scope Name:

**! Important: Salaries and benefits are encumbered for the University's fiscal year only; that is, through April 30th of the CURRENT fiscal Year. If you have committed salaries beyond April 30th of the current fiscal year, these are not reflected in the Available Funds.**