Title:
The Experience of Military Separation/Deployment for Young Children and Families

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Session Title:
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Keywords:
deployment, military children and military family

References:


Abstract Summary:
This presentation will discuss the unique perspective of younger children experiencing a parental separation related to military assignments or deployments for at least 3 months duration.

Learning Activity:

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<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
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<td>Describe the family challenges of military separation for younger children</td>
<td>Stages of military deployment Summary of research to date related to children's reactions to deployment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss the findings of research comparing parental perceptions and children's descriptions of separation related to military deployments and separations</td>
<td>Summary of findings to date from current research study collecting data through an art based interview with children and interviews with the deployed and non-deployed parent</td>
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Abstract Text:
To date, few studies have considered the effects of parental separation upon younger children who are part of a military family. The purpose of this study is to describe the experience of military duty-related separations/deployment for sixty children ages 4-10 years of age using a mixed methods concurrent embedded qualitative descriptive design. The research questions to be answered in this study will be: 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? This study will be unique in combining an art-based interview to explore the separation/deployment experience from the young child's point of view with integration of both the absent/deployed parent's experience and stay-at-home parent's (or caregiver for single parents)
perceptions of the child’s reaction to the separation. Both parents will complete demographic forms, FACES IV, and a parental stress scale followed by an interview in separate sessions that will last between 30-60 min to ask them to describe the child’s reaction to preparing for, and their reactions during, and after the separation. Children ages 4-10 years of age will be asked to participate in a draw-and-tell conversation in which they will first be asked to draw a picture of their family. They will then be led into a discussion of the picture and what would be different about their picture before, during, and after their parent’s most recent separation. After this discussion, the children will be shown 3 pictures depicting a parent’s deployment and asked to describe what is going on in the picture and what the child is thinking and feeling in the picture. Demographics, FACES IV, and PSS will be analyzed descriptively. The parental/caregiver interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis as described by Boyatzis (1998). The children’s interviews will be sequentially analyzed, first through linguistic discourse analysis (Gee, 2011a, 2011b) to assess narrative structures within their experience followed by analysis for narrative content and major thematic categories Boyatzis (1998). Finally, findings from across the three interview sources will be compared between parental and child participants for major themes and pattern similarities and differences. Data collection is underway currently.