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

Purpose
To describe the experience of military duty-related separations/deployment for children 4-10 years of age.

Background
- Separation as a cause for family reorganization has most often been studied in relation to wartime or deployment for military duties.
- Previous research on separation primarily from Vietnam/ODDS and focused upon school aged and adolescent reactions and coping with deployment.
- Fewer studies have considered younger child separations and most were related to only father separations, not inclusive of maternal separations.

Design
Mixed methods: Qualitative descriptive with concurrent embedded quantitative measures

Methods
Consent/Assent
Demographic data sheet
Draw and tell/photo elicitation with child
Interviews with non-deployed caregiver and deployed parent
Parental completion of the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale
Parental completion of the Parental Stress Scale

Sample
Active duty or reserve component families who have experienced a wartime or normative deployment lasting at least 3 months and completed within the past 2 years with at least one child currently between 4-10 years of age

Data Analysis
Demographics, PSS, FACES IV descriptive stats
Thematic analysis for parent/caregiver interviews
Linguistic/discourse analysis for the draw and tell/photo elicitation

Significance
Increase understanding of younger children explanations and reaction to separations
Comparison between reactions to normative and wartime separations
Comparison between perceptions of stay-at-home caregiver and military member
Identification of strategies military families may find useful before, during and after separations

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