Families under stress: Using the Double ABCX model to understand attachment relationships in families during military deployment

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ABSTRACT

While extensive research has been done examining stress in families using the Double ABCX model and examining stress management using attachment theory, there is no research combining the model to understand how they might be integrated in understanding stress and coping. The current study uses the Double ABCX model and research on attachment to suggest that attachment relationships will be the primary resource to adjust for military families during deployment. Two extreme case studies were selected to explore the interplay of these two models. The in-depth interviews of the women with a deployed spouse and with children in the home were examined. Exploration of the experiences of the two women informed a model in understanding the synthesis of stress and attachment and understanding the influence of meaning making and adjustment. Therapeutic implications and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

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Table of Contents

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Problem and its Setting

Humans are born with requirements for basic needs that last a lifetime. Water, food, and shelter are traditionally at the top of the list when most people consider these basic needs. However, a growing body of research suggests that another crucial need exists and if not met may affect the infant's development and even survival (Hanson & Spratt, 2000; Tibbits-Kleber & Howell, 1985).

This essential need is the need for attachment to a parent. It matures into a bond and a sense of safety and security which are provided by the primary caregiver. Humans are born immature, unlike many other mammals, and because of this, a human infant requires a connection with a caregiver for survival, and the need for a connection to another human being remains throughout the lifespan.

According to Bowlby (1969), the need to form a connection is not a learned trait; it is something every human being is born seeking. Infants will often display behaviors that are most likely to elicit a response from the primary caregiver, such as crying or laughing, in an attempt to form these connections. The attachment relationship is formed when the child learns whether or not these attempts at eliciting a response are effective in meeting their needs. Later in the child's development, these behaviors to elicit a response are directed towards an individual the child perceives is most likely to care for him (Bowlby, 1969). Internal working models (IWM) of one's self and others are formed in attachment relationships (Bowlby, 1980) and later guide our expectations for romantic attachment relationships. These IWMs become the script for the expectations we have of others in relationships in order to have needs met and to cope under stress.

Because attachment relationships can also be viewed as a resource during times of stress, it becomes important in understanding individual and family stressors. One such stressor is military deployment, a growing area of interest to military groups as it affects not only the soldier, but also the family left behind. Approximately 178,500 troops are deployed to active war zones in Afghanistan and Iraq (The White House, 2007). The deployment cycle within the military varies in length based on branch of the military. However, this cycle typically involves long periods of time deployed to potentially dangerous locations, short periods of time at home and then a long period of time away again. A recent growth in the number of troops that are involved in deployment with the surge to Iraq has increased the number of troops deployed and the amount of time the soldier stays away from home. Because of the cycle of separation and reunion, the security of the attachment relationships within the family, between both wife and husband and between parent and child, may be threatened by the separation. Such threats to attachment can affect the adjustment of the child and parent who are left behind.

Significance

The deployment of a parent is a stressful situation for a child, not only because of the potential death or injury of the deployed parent, but because of additional stressors the child/adolescent faces such as potential changes in routines, responsibilities, and even living situations (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007; Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998). New and stressful situations such as these could activate the attachment relationships within the family experiencing the deployment such that the members of the attachment relationship under stress will be more likely to seek out their attachment partner (Bowlby, 1973).

Because deployment involves the removal of one or more of the family members, the attachment relationships may be strained by the attachment activation. The deployment for the

soldiers involves a significant period of separation from their families. Bowlby's theory suggests that the attachment system of an individual becomes more important and more accessed during times of separation and reunion because it involves a potential threat to the attachment relationship (Bowlby, 1969). Although Bowlby was discussing this process in childhood, other have extended this to adulthood (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Thus the more secure the individual is in his/her attachment style, the better able they are to deal with the stress involved in the separation and reunion (Medway, Davis, Cafferty, Chappell, & O'Hearn, 1995).

The deployment cycle for a military family involves a number of often stressful adjustments emotionally and logistically for the family left behind. According to one study, the amount of delinquent behavior and emotional distress experienced by an adolescent was directly related to the presence of negative life stressors (Overbeek, Vollebergh, Engels, & Meeus, 2005). Therefore, it is important to understand how attachment relationships can impact the adolescent's perception of these negative life events and how, in turn, he/she adjusts.

The deployment cycle is a stressful time for the family as a system and the attachment relationships are often activated during the stressful period, meaning that those in the attachment relationship seek out their attachment figures (Bowlby, 1973). The style of attachment between the child and caregiver, which is based on caregiver availability and responsiveness, mediates the way the attachment activation during times of stress affects the child's ability to have his/her needs met (Bowlby, 1973). The current study will explore how the deployment process affects the stability of the attachment relationships and also how attachment relationships may support coping during the deployment process. Specifically, the current study will explore how the attachment relationship between husband and wife impacts the wife's ability to cope and how the

wife's ability to cope may impact the attachment relationship between mother and child, thus impacting the child's ability to cope during deployment.

Attachment plays a potentially important role in how each member of the family copes during a stressful situation, such as deployment. According to Pierce, Vinokur, and Buck (1998), if interruptions in the life and attachment of a child with a deployed parent can be reduced, then the parent's concerns about their child are reduced, potentially eliminating negative feelings that affect parenting abilities. The implications of other studies (e.g. Medway et.al., 1995) suggest that understanding the reported amount of distress during the separation and reunion cycles involved in deployment could facilitate the support of the children by developing another form of attachment during the stressful period.

Rationale

The current study will use secondary data gathered from individual interviews with mothers and children who have a husband/father who is either deployed or recently returned from deployment. The interview design provided an opportunity for the participants, mothers and children left behind, to describe their feelings regarding attachment and adjustment. The interviews were conducted separately, such that the mother and child were unaware of the others' responses. The interview allowed the individuals to openly express their reactions to questions about the attachment relationship and the effects of deployment. The interviewer asked questions aimed at understanding the impact of deployment on the family and the relationships in the family.

Theoretical Framework

The current study will use an attachment theory framework embedded in the Double ABCX model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) to explore the relationships between deployment

and adjustment in military families. This study is unique in its conceptualization using the Double ABCX model to understand the effects of the compounding stressors on the individual as well as on the relationships between individual family members during deployment. In our model, the attachment relationship is conceptualized as a resource for the individual during deployment, which in turn may also impact how each individual copes with the deployment experience. In this particular study, the A factor is the stressor of deployment, the B factors are the attachment relationships, the C factor is the meaning each family member makes of the experience, and the X each individual's adjustment.

The current study is also unique in its combination of theories. The Double ABCX model provides the theory of stress and resources that is important in understanding the experience of families during deployment. Attachment theory provides a conceptualization of how relationships in the family are impacted during a stressful situation such as deployment. In combining these two theories, it could be said that a securely attached couple will experience the deployment as stressful, but will use the attachment relationship as a resource to enhance meaning making during deployment. This will result in better adjustment for the mother. In turn, the mother will be more emotionally available and responsive to her child, allowing the child to make meaning of the experience and to cope more effectively.

On the other hand, an insecurely attached couple will likely not effectively seek their partner as a resource. Because they are not able to use their attachment relationship as a resource, they might have more difficulty with meaning making and thus, struggle with adjustment. For example, an anxiously attached person might seek their partner as a resource often, but generally in ineffective ways. The mother would become less emotionally responsive to her child and the child will be unable to use their attachment relationship as a resource. For

example, an anxious mother may be intrusive in her child's life and available, but inappropriately so. This could impact the child's meaning making and adjustment.

Purpose of the Study

The assumption of the current study is that attachment relationships are important to all humans regardless of age and that these same attachment relationships are prone to activation and potential disruption during times of stress (Bowlby, 1973). The other assumption of the current study is that attachment can be a resource for the individual during times of stress. These stressors can be of two types: normative or expected stressors and non-normative or unexpected stressors (McKenry & Price, 2000). This study will examine the effects of both types of stressors on the attachment relationships in families during military deployment. The normative stressor to be explored is childhood development, a time of normal stress between the relationship of parent and child. Military deployment is the example of the non-normative stressor to be examined. Understanding the effects of military deployment becomes increasingly important for these families because of the additional effect of combined stressors.

The current study will combine frameworks (see figure 1) by examining the use of attachment relationships as a resource for coping and adjustment during the deployment. Within the Double ABCX model (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983), the current study will compare the experience of adjustment during deployment of two extreme cases, one family doing well adjusting to the stressors of deployment and one family struggling with adjustment during deployment. The goal of this study is to highlight the important role of attachment in predicting both individual and family adjustment.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The current study's focus is on the impact of military deployment on multiple attachment systems within the family. The literature review will provide an overview of attachment and deployment. The potential interactive effect of the adolescent/child-parent attachment and adult romantic attachment systems will be discussed. The potential impact of the military deployment stressor on each attachment system will also be examined.

What is attachment?

When examining the relationship patterns that develop within families, perhaps the most important thing to consider is the connections made between each of the individual members. Although attachment theory was originally developed to explain infant-caregiver interactions, research also includes studies on the persistence of this relationship in parent-child, parent-adolescent, and adult romantic attachments. This review will examine attachment relationships over the life span.

Attachment is the bond that forms during the first year of life between infant and caregiver. The relationship is vital to the infant's survival; however the success of the attachment relationship is contingent on the degree of the caregiver's responsiveness to the infant (Bowlby, 1973). The infant learns through the caregiver's responsiveness how likely it is his needs will be met. For example, if the infant cries for hours without being attended to, the infant will learn his cries do not get his needs met, and thus may stop crying. However, physiologically the infant continues to be as aroused as if he were crying, because his needs go unmet. On the other hand, if an infant cries and the caregiver always responds to the cries, the child learns that crying is helpful in getting his/her needs met (Bowlby, 1969). This "learning" experience forms internal working models (IWM) of self and others which forms the child's prototype for future

relationships. As the infant grows into a child and an adolescent, the child IWM serves as a base to explore and understand the world around him or her. These attachment frameworks continue translate into adult romantic relationships with the emotional responsiveness and availability of the partner seeking the connection through internal working models (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). An attachment partner will respond and react to others around him/her based on the attachment relationships he/she learned from an early age (Hazan & Shaver, 1987).

In the original categories of infant attachment, a relationship was described in one of three ways: secure, avoidant, or anxious (Ainsworth, 1978). A securely attached infant is able to trust that their caregiver will meet their needs and can explore the world around them with confidence. The infant will actively seek out their caregiver when he/she has a need. An avoidant style is characterized by an inability to trust or rely on their caregiver relationships for support. In anxious attachment, there is an uncertainty about how and from whom one's relationship needs will be met (Ainsworth, 1978).

Adolescent's are often classified using the adult attachment models (Allen et al., 2003; Howard & Medway, 2004; Weinfeld, Whaley, & Egeland, 2004). Adult attachment categories are similar to infant attachment. A securely attached adult has a positive view of self and others. He/she has positive views of his/her relationships and is able to balance his/her independence with the intimacy of the relationships (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). These securely attached adults and adolescents describe their relationships as trusting, accepting, and supportive (Shaver & Hazan, 1987).

Insecurely attached adults are described in one of two models. According to Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) insecure attachment fits into one of three categories: ambivalent, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant. An ambivalent adult looks for strong

levels of intimacy and closeness in relationships. He/she often has a strong dependence on others, high emotionality, and often inappropriate self-disclosure (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). For example, in this relationship the person would cling to their partner and be anxious about losing the relationship. The adult with a dismissive-avoidant attachment style believe himself/herself to be self-sufficient and completely independent; he/she believes he/she does not need intimacy or close relationships, lacking emotion and warmth (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This adult would likely turn away from the relationships and avoid feelings of closeness. Finally, a fearful-avoidant adult does not desire intimacy or relying on others for support; they often have low levels of self-confidence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This adult would likely push away from relationships, while still yearning for a relationship.

Shaver and Hazan's (1987) model of insecure adult attachment uses only two: avoidant and ambivalent. The avoidant adults describe fear of intimacy and also jealousy in their relationships (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). This is similar to the fearful-avoidant and the dismissive avoidant adults from Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991). The anxious adults often have a range of high emotions and low emotions. They describe a certain amount of obsession in their romantic relationships. They have a high desire for connection and intimacy, but high levels of jealousy (Shaver & Hazan, 1987). This is similar to the ambivalent attachment in the Bartholomew & Horowitz (1991) model.

Attachment bonds in adulthood and adolescence begin in infancy and remain important throughout the lifespan. Since the bonds in attachment are intense, motivational, and enduring, the responses given by the attachment figure and caregiver become important to consider. A securely attached infant has a caregiver that met the infant's needs in a variety of situations during the first year, while the caregiver of an anxiously attached infant rejects the infant's need

for meaningful physical contact (Ainsworth, 1985). In order for there to be a healthy attachment relationship, the caregiver must be responsive to the child's needs and the care that is given must be reliable and consistent (Kelley et al., 2001). The unavailability, either physical or emotional, of the attachment figure serves as a stressor for the child. Thus, even if an attachment figure is present, the primary attachment needs of the child may still be unmet. When the attachment figure is removed or incapable of providing a safe haven, the child is at a greater risk for losing attachment security when faced with normal or abnormal life stressors (Allen et al., 2004).

One of the most important evolutionary benefits of these attachment relationships is to serve as security and comfort in times of stress. The attachment bond between the individuals, be it mother and child, father and child, or between romantic partners, is most evident when fear is aroused (Bowlby, 1973). In times of stress, the attachment relationships are activated, meaning that the person experiencing the stressful situation will seek out his/her attachment counterpart. True availability can only be present when the attachment figure is easily accessible and appropriately responsive to needs (Bowlby, 1973).

Attachment theory suggests several other ideas that predict behaviors between child and caregiver. When the attachment caregiver is emotionally available and responsive, secure attachment is developed. The notion follows that secure attachment promotes a healthy sense of self as well as a healthy sense of connection in relationships (Ainsworth, 1969). The child then uses the safety and security of the caregiver to explore the world around them. Attachment's evolutionary advantage is the reduction of anxiety. In turn, because the secure attachment allows the individual a certain amount of anxiety reduction, he/she is often better able to handle and adapt to potential anxiety surrounding a novel situation.

Bowlby's theory (1980) also states that the bonds that are formed are so important that when the attachment relationship is threatened, anxiety and depression are often a result. The necessity of maintaining the attachment relationship serves an evolutionary purpose because it increases the chance of survival by having needs met (Bowlby, 1980; Cafferty, Davis, Medway, O'Hearn, & Chappell, 1994). However, when the relationship cannot be maintained, the needs are not met, and the individual will strive to find a means of restoring the relationship. For example, an infant might increase the crying, the adolescent might act out for attention, and the adult might actively pursue his/her partner. If the relationship is restored, the attachment seeking behaviors cease. If the attachment relationship is not restored, efforts to restore the relationship will begin to decrease over time. However, the need for the attachment will return when a stressful situation makes the evolutionary drive for that relationship a necessity again (Bowlby, 1980). When a caregiver is appropriately responsive during times the attachment needs are activated, the infant develops an internal working model that shapes his/her expectation that his/her attachment needs will be met; a secure attachment is formed. At the same time, if the caregiver is unresponsive or inappropriately responsive, the infant's internal working model dictates that his/her needs will not always be met; an insecure attachment is formed.

In a model of attachment activation formed through the theoretical perspective of Johnson and Whiffen (2003), there are two important concepts. The first is that attachment can be hyperactivated, which implies that attachment behaviors are amplified and that attachment figures are more actively sought. Infant attachment behaviors common during attachment activation are attention-seeking and proximity-seeking (Ainsworth, 1978). For example, if a caregiver leaves an infant alone in a room, the infant will cry for attention and if mobile, crawl towards the caregiver. While less important in the current study, the reverse, deactivation or the

decrease in attachment seeking behaviors, is also an important notion (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). For example, in some forms of infant attachment, if the caregiver leaves the room, the infant will not respond or react to the departure. The idea of hyperactivating an attachment style is important to consider because under stress, trauma, or other threatening situations, it is possible that the attachment style will be hyperactivated (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003).

In many cases, the environment within a family is associated with the degree of attachment security of attachment for members within the family (Waters, Weinfeld, & Hamilton, 2000). One study with 101 adolescents suggested that when the mother is removed or incapable of providing a safe haven or a resource, the adolescent is at a greater risk for loss of attachment security when faced with normal or abnormal life stressors (Allen et.al., 2004). This can increase the potential for a change in attachment relationships.

In a longitudinal study examining attachment stability with 205 American families, mothers were recruited during pregnancy (Hamilton, 2000). The infant's attachment classification was assessed at the twelfth month. Families were also interviewed about their experience of negative life events including death of a parent, foster care, parental divorce, chronic and severe illnesses, single parents, parental psychiatric disorder, drug and alcohol abuse, the child's experience of physical or sexual abuse, and prolonged physical separation. Finally, when the infant reached adolescence the attachment style was reassessed. Results from the study found that 63% of the adolescents kept the same style of attachment as in infancy (Hamilton, 2000). The study also found that negative life events were a significant factor in attachment as 4 of the 5 adolescents who changed from secure to insecure attachment reported such life events as did 15 of the 16 adolescents who maintained insecure attachment (Hamilton, 2000). Interestingly, over half of the adolescents who maintained secure attachment also

experienced negative life events (Hamilton, 2000). The results of the study suggest that the experience of negative life events could contribute to the stability of attachment. Because some adolescents could maintain secure attachment despite negative life events, there are possibly other systemic interactions impacting attachment stability.

Other behavioral implications of attachment include the correlation between negative life events, such as marital difficulties, separation, depression, pregnancy, death, and health concerns, and the security of attachment (Allen, McElhaney, Kuperminc, & Jodl, 2004; Howard & Medway, 2004; Kelley, Hock, Smith, Jarvis, Bonney, & Gaffney, 2001; Schumm, Bell, Knott, & Rice, 1996; Waters, Weinfeld, Hamilton, 2000); when a life stressor impacts the attachment relationship, the chance of attachment insecurity increases. Since the bonds in attachment are important and lasting, the removal of an attachment figure for any individual poses a threat to his/her ability to cope.

What is deployment?

The process of deployment that occurs in the military has been studied considerably in order to understand the effects that the separation and reunion have on family dynamics (Cafferty, Davis, Medway, O'Hearn, & Chappell, 1994; Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996; Kelley, Hock, Smith, Jarvis, Bonney, & Gaffney, 2001; Medway, Davis, Cafferty, Chappell, & O'Hearn, 1995; Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998). The deployment cycle occurs in three stages: predeployment, when the military family member is preparing to leave, deployment, the time when the family member is separated, and reunion, when the soldier returns to the family. These distinct phases in the deployment cycle can affect individuals differently. The transitions between each of the phases could also be mediated or impacted by the attachment relationships in the family. Transition from one phase to another is regulated by the previous phase, which

could suggest that a negative initial response to the deployment cycle sets off a series of negative responses.

According to a study which explored the stressors and well-being of 981 spouses of deployed soldiers, emotional stressors, such as missing the soldier and concerns with communication, the soldier's safety, the soldier's living conditions, and the length of the deployment, accounted for a significant number of stressors during deployment (Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1993). Attachment theory suggests that when a wife is feeling stress on an emotional level, she will seek her attachment partner for comfort. However, if she is securely attached to her husband, her primary attachment figure is not physically and often not emotionally available to her when he is deployed. She will likely seek out ways to initiate the attachment relationship during times of stress. If a spouse has an insecure attachment style before the deployment, the distress from separation could result in more distress for the spouse during deployment. Also, a wife's perception of the amount of family distress will create more personal distress such that if she perceives the deployment as stressful, she will report higher personal distress (Medway et al., 1995). In other words, she finds herself in a Catch-22 cycle: the situation is stressful which causes activation of the attachment relationship, but her attachment partner is unavailable, compounding the amount of stress.

A significant stressor for a wife during deployment is often her husband's personal safety (Medway et al., 1995). In a study with 478 mostly Caucasian wives (median age 29 years) of soldiers who had been deployed, the participants were asked if they had experienced a death, a pregnancy, difficulties communicating with their soldier/husband, or loneliness during the deployment and if they experienced the event as a stressor (Schumm et al., 1996). Participants were also asked about marital stability before and after the deployment. One analysis of the

results suggested that wives who experienced loneliness had equal or higher reports of marital satisfaction (Schumm et al., 1996). Results from the wives' reports of their experience of the stressors also suggested that those who experienced the death of a friend or relative had higher levels of marital satisfaction over time (Schumm et al., 1996).

Child/Adolescent-Parent Attachment

Attachment during adolescence brings with it a unique set of challenges. Adolescence is a time of transition because these young people are faced with changes in their social environment including a new range of possible close relationships. They are often considered to be more psychologically self-absorbed because they are struggling to sort through their different ideas of self in an effort to discover who they are (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). Johnson and Whiffen's theoretical perspective (2003) describes the "attachment dilemma" that adolescents face. They are simultaneously trying to maintain a secure base with their parents while exploring and developing new experiences of self and relationships with others. Adolescents struggle with "balancing autonomy and dependence" (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003, p. 241) and this process is facilitated by a secure attachment to the caregiver. The function of parent-adolescent attachment relationships could be to create the emotionally secure base needed for the adolescent to explore different possibilities available when he/she becomes autonomous (Allen & Land, 1999).

While some research has focused on the stability of attachment from infancy to adolescence, much of the recent literature considers attachment to be a more fluid concept because of the possible changes in attachment style, particularly during times of stress (Allen & Land, 1999; Hamilton, 2000; Waters, Weinfeld, Hamilton, 2000). The stability of attachment is directly related to an individual's experience of negative life stressors. Attachment styles mediate coping, but can also cause a change in attachment if the partner is unavailable or

unresponsive during times of stress (Hamilton, 2000). The presence of negative life stressors plays an important role in the parent-adolescent attachment relationship.

These life stressors can cause a disruption in the attachment system, and most adolescents experience these stressors at a developmental milestone, when the child feels vulnerable. Separation and rejection from parental figures are the most common developmental stressors during adolescence (Allen et al., 2004). While a certain amount of stress in development, particularly adolescence is to be expected, some life stressors can prove to be more harmful than others, such as ones that threaten the stability of relationships. According to a study by Allen et al. (2004) with 101 adolescents (mean age of 15.9 years and mostly Caucasian) and their mothers, the participants were assessed for attachment, autonomy with parents, and the mothers were assessed for how they view their adolescent. Adolescents were also assessed for their perception of supportiveness in their mother and the adolescent's depressive symptoms. Participants were assessed initially and then again 2-years later.

Results from the study revealed that when an adolescent reported high levels of maternal supportiveness in the original assessment, they also reported higher supportiveness in the follow-up interview (Allen et al., 2004). Results also suggested that when an adolescent experienced depression, the depressive symptoms correlated with a decrease in attachment security. In the study analysis, the participants were divided into a low risk group, who were not living in poverty and had below mean scores in depression, and a high risk group, who were living in poverty or had above mean scores in depression. The high risk group had significantly lower levels of attachment security from time one to time two (Allen et al., 2004). These results suggest that maternal supportiveness and depression could predict attachment stability.

The possibility that an attachment relationship could change based on negative life stressors makes understanding the consequences of attachment change in adolescence important. According to one study with 568 adolescents between 15- and 19-years-old who were surveyed about depressed mood, attachment to parents, delinquency, and experience of negative life events, the amount of delinquent behavior and emotional distress experienced by an adolescent was directly related to his/her perception of events as stressful or negative. In addition, the attachment to the parent was significantly related to delinquent behavior in the adolescent, and negative life events were associated with depression in the adolescent, behavior problems, and the attachment to parents (Overbeek et al., 2005). The secure attachment configuration was associated with lower levels of emotional distress and fewer delinquent behaviors in adolescents. These adolescents seemed to be able to avoid some of the pitfalls of adolescence by using their parents as a resource and a support. At the same time, the insecurely attached adolescents often expressed feelings of loneliness, depression, and worthlessness or displayed aggressive behaviors towards others (Overbeek et al., 2005).

Howard and Medway (2004) examined how an adolescents' attachment style affected their ability to cope during times of stress. Participants in the study were 75 predominantly Caucasian adolescents with a mean age of 16 years old and one of their parents. Adolescents completed measures of attachment, life stress (including school stress, family stress, and peer stress), and coping (including negative avoidance, family communication, and positive avoidance). The parent completed an assessment of their adolescent's attachment style. Results found that adolescents who had higher reports of attachment security also had higher reports of family communication and lower reports of negative avoidance (Howard & Medway, 2004).

The study also found a significant correlation between higher levels of perceived stress and more insecure attachment configurations.

Because negative life events that trigger the attachment system are a normal part of a family's life, it is important to consider how parent-adolescent attachment affects the coping process. The theoretical views of Johnson and Whiffen (2003) suggest that when attachment security is a part of the parent-adolescent working model, the secure base that the adolescent has established with the parents serves as a trap for the negative events, problems, and traumas that the adolescent experiences. In this way, the adolescent is able to safely explore and experience their new world of autonomy and independence. On the other hand, the insecurely attached parent-adolescent dyad often crumbles in the face of life stressors and the adolescent feels insecure and uncomfortable about his/her relationships and will repress negative feelings in an attempt to keep from pushing the parents further away (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003).

Securely attached adolescents who are able to talk about their autonomy, balance, perspective, and the importance of attachment relationships are less likely to have the behavioral consequences of the adolescents who were insecurely attached (Allen, Moore, Kuperminc, & Bell, 1998). Insecure attachment relationships involve distancing between the parent and adolescent (Allen, Moore, & Kuperminc, 1997), which coupled with the distancing that occurs naturally as adolescents explore their own autonomy, makes threats such as delinquent behavior or internalizing symptoms such as depression more detrimental to the family system.

Insecure attachment seems to signal to the adolescent that his/her attachment needs will not be met or that he/she does not deserve to have his/her needs met which often translates into lower sense of self-worth and more internalizing symptoms such as depression (Kobak, Sudler, & Gamble, 1991). Attachment insecurity can also lead to externalizing behaviors, particularly

delinquent behaviors, because the adolescent's resentment and anger often prevent parents from providing parental monitoring that might be necessary to eliminate the deviant behaviors (Greenberg & Speltz, 1988). Even a strong attachment relationship may not prevent the externalizing behaviors such as delinquency, but it provides the boundaries necessary to limit the delinquent behaviors (Allen, Moore, & Kuperminc, 1997) and could create a sense of socially appropriate behaviors that the insecure attachment relationship lacks (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003).

Development in Adolescence

For the adolescent, the transition from childhood to adulthood can be a difficult one. For an adolescent with a deployed parent, the transition can be even more difficult. During deployment, many families must reorganize the structure of how things must get done in the house and often the adolescents must take on more adult-like roles (Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). This may require an adolescent to become more independent and self-reliant.

According to Erikson's theory of development (1950), the adolescent is experiencing the formation of his/her identity and also the conflict of identity versus identity confusion. For an adolescent with a deployed parent, the attachment and relationship within the family will dictate how the adolescent is able to navigate the identity crisis (Erikson, 1950). If an adolescent is struggling with his/her independence and has little support, the stress of deployment could exacerbate the adolescent's identity crisis. On the other hand, for an adolescent who has a secure attachment relationship with parents, the deployment experience could allow him/her to successfully navigate his/her identity formation. These adolescents are more likely to have a improved self-concept and understanding of the experience (Erikson, 1950).

However, the child's ability to find his/her way through the identity crisis is often a product of how the mother, who is left behind, is able to cope with the separation from her husband. The mother's physical and emotional availability to the adolescent allows him/her the safety and security necessary for a successful identity formation (Erikson, 1950). This finding has implications for the present study in that, for the wife left behind, the process of giving her child more autonomy could be more difficult because their child may become her attachment figure during the soldier's absence. On the other hand, the mother might find that giving her adolescent autonomy is not only easier, but necessary because she relies on his/her independence to be certain that things will get done.

Adolescent Attachment and Deployment

Attachment security or insecurity correlates with the way an individual copes with the separation or loss of an attachment figure (Medway et.al., 1995). A study by Medway et al. (1995) explored the effects of separation on family disruption in 117 National Guard and Army Reserve wives. The women in the study were primarily Caucasian with a median age of 34 and the children of the wives had a median age of 11. The participants completed surveys measuring relationship satisfaction (measured by quality and personal satisfaction), personal distress (such as depression and anxiety), perceived disruptiveness related to the deployment, child behavior, support within the parent-child relationship, and attachment classification of the mothers. The study found that perception of disruption and mother's attachment to husband predicted the most distress, such that the women who perceived the greatest disruption from the deployment and who also had low attachment to their husbands reported the greatest distress. In addition to these findings, the study suggests that the mother's distress is correlated with an increase in child behavioral problems. While the deployment cycle is experienced differently

according to the attachment style of the child and caregiver, because the process involves a change and a loss, the cycle itself can be viewed as a potential life stressor.

The behaviors exhibited by the children of deployed parents could provide another clue about the attachment effects of deployment. In the study by Kelley et al. (2001) which explored behaviors among children before and after the military deployment, fifty-two Navy mothers (mean age of 28, mostly Caucasian) reported more internalizing behaviors among their children after the deployment than a group of thirty-two civilian mothers also asked about their child's behavior. The civilian mothers also reported fewer child externalizing behaviors than did the Navy mothers.

In the Jensen, Martin, and Watanabe's (1996) study, 383 mostly Caucasian families with a deployed member during Operation Desert Storm were surveyed about the experience of separation. Another set of military families who were not experiencing deployment were used as a control group. Parents were asked about their child's behavior and indicators of depression. Parents were also asked about their own depression, marital adjustment, experience of stressful events, coping styles, and social supports. According to the results, parents reported children with a deployed parent as higher in depression but not in anxiety or behavior problems than children who did not have a deployed parent. At the same time, parents experiencing the deployment also reported higher perception of life stressors and higher depression than those parents not experiencing a deployment separation. These findings suggest that children and parents exhibited the depression and anxiety as would be predicted as part of the attachment activation brought on by the loss of a caregiver/partner.

Adult Romantic Attachment

Research on adult romantic attachment suggests the importance of an attachment relationship throughout a person's life. The same styles of attachment seem to be found in adult relationships: secure, anxious, and avoidant (Cafferty et al., 1994; Cassidy, 2000; Feeney, 1999; Shaver & Clark, 1996). However, they have also been referred to in four categories: secure, anxious-ambivalent, dismissive-avoidant, and fearful-avoidant (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). According to Cassidy (2000), Feeney (1999), and Shaver and Clark (1996), the parent-child patterns of attachment tend to be lasting into adulthood and incorporated into one's internal working model of self and others. While adult attachment is often seen as similar to infant-caregiver attachment, there are different functions for the adult romantic attachment system; it is seen as an attachment system, a caregiving system, and a sexual system and the importance of each varies in every relationship (Cassidy, 2000). As with parent-child attachment relationships, the involvement of the partner in romantic attachment relationships is correlated with high satisfaction in the relationship (Feeney, 1999).

In romantic attachment relationships, an avoidant adult is less likely to seek others for help or for physical contact. The avoidant individual is also more likely to try to suppress the support seeking behaviors and often more likely to report his/her mother as cold and rejecting (Cassidy, 2000). An anxious adult is often distressed by a threat to relationships. For this adult, any emotional closeness he/she seeks is unsatisfying and he/she reports much greater loneliness in his/her life (Cassidy, 2000).

Stress plays as an important a role in the attachment relationships of adults as in infant-caregiver relationships. A study found that threats to adult attachment include stressful conditions in the social or physical environment, conditions that threaten the relationships, and

conditions of the individual (e.g. loss of job). In these situations, the threats were hypothesized to increase support seeking behaviors (Feeney, 1999). According to Feeney's study (1999), when coping with stress, the secure adults seek support from others, avoidant adults distance themselves from the threat, and anxious adults focus on trying to make themselves feel differently. Another study found that when separated from their romantic attachment partner, the securely attached adults have less insecurity and anxiety about the separation and less conflict at the reunion (Cafferty, Medway, O'Hearn, & Chappel, 1994).

Coping with separation and loss in adult attachment often manifests different than in parent-adolescent attachment. While the adolescent is using the parent as a secure base through which he/she begins to gain independence and form his/her own sense of self, romantic attachment in adulthood is more of a balance. Each partner is looking for the other partner to meet his/her needs to feel connected and bonded. They have moved from the parent-child attachment relationship to a close attachment relationship with their spouse or significant other. When adults perceive a separation from their romantic attachment partner, they can experience emotional distress. However, the attachment style guides the person's response to the separation. If the adult has an insecure attachment, he/she may experience the emotional distress, but he/she may also lower feelings of self-reliance (Mayseless, Danieli, & Sharabany, 1996). If a person perceives an interpersonal loss within the attachment relationship, the change to an insecure attachment style is more likely (Davila & Sargent, 2003).

Adult Attachment and Deployment

Just as the adolescent attachment system is impacted by deployment, the adult attachment system within the family can be impacted by deployment. Security of attachment in a spousal relationship can impact each partner's ability to cope with the separation. The emotional or

physical removal of one partner activates the romantic attachment relationship. When the romantic attachment partner is not responsive emotionally, especially during the physical separation, anger and anxiety are the most prevalent emotions (Shaver & Clark, 1996). At the same time, a securely attached adult exhibits little to no defensive emotions because of the attachment partner's responsiveness (Shaver & Clark, 1996).

In one study on the effects of deployment on the distress of the wife left behind, 117 Guard and Reserve wives were asked about their experience of the separation (Medway et.al., 1995). According to the results of this study, attachment security was a significant predictor of distress for the wives. Because attachment security or insecurity with her husband is an important predictor of distress, it also becomes important to understand the effects that this potential distress could have on her children and consequently their attachment stability during the military deployment.

Another study with 773 female spouses of deployed soldiers exploring the effects of military deployment on the marriage found several factors that impacted martial adjustment upon the soldiers return: distance between the spouses, perceived closeness between spouses, role sharing upon the soldiers return, independence of spouses, and dependence on each other (Rosen, Durand, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1995). The findings of this study also seem to parallel other features of attachment relationships such as closeness and the independence/dependence balance. When these needs are not met, it often has a negative impact on the ability of the spouse left behind to cope with the separation. In a study exploring the effect of separation on depression, 59 Navy wives reported significantly higher levels of depression than did wives not experiencing a separation (Nice, 1983).

A study on attachment in military situations by Cafferty et al. (1994) examined separation among 145 deployed National Guard and 148 spouses (mostly Caucasian) with a median age of 36 years. The participants reported on their relationship satisfaction with their partner (quality and personal satisfaction), relationship conflict on issues such as finances, affection, in-laws, and sex, perception of disruption, attachment to partner, and emotional affect at reunion. Results suggest deployment is a disruptive experience for both partners and that security of attachment was significantly related to perception of disruption for both the deployed spouse and the non-deployed spouse. In addition, securely attached partners reported more positive emotions at the reunion, females with a preoccupied attachment style reported less relationship satisfaction and increased conflict, and secure men reported increased relationship satisfaction and decreased conflict during the separation experience.

Impact of the Deployment on Families

The effects of deployment can also be seen in the relationships between the family members as a whole. The family with a deployed parent is more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression and be affected by more family stress (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996), suggesting that the symptoms of deployment are not just an individual response, but ones that involve the family as a system. While the symptoms exhibited by the family are not the direct cause of the negative attachment feelings in a single adolescent, it can be suggested that the close relationship between the parent and child helps with the problem and facilitates the resolution (Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996). Another family implication is that the difficulty expressed by a deployed mother in providing care for her child was the strongest indicator of adjustment problems for the child. These difficulties are often multi-dimensional; the mothers expressed

that their concerns for their child were physical, emotional, psychological, social, and economic (Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998).

While the deployment cycle affects mother and adolescents individually, it also affects the connection between the two, which often cycles through to affect the individual. Thus, the parent-child bond and attachment connection is a necessity for the stability of the individual. The relationship formed with the primary caretaker can later transfer to other relationships, such as adult romantic attachment relationships; the attachment behaviors throughout the life of the individual are directed towards the person that is the perceived attachment figure (Bowlby, 1969).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Design of the Study

The current study will use the data collected from a previous study of military families. The responses of mothers about their own relationships and their coping during deployment and their report of their child(children)'s ability to cope with the deployment process will be used to match the patterns expected when combining the Double ABCX model and attachment theory. The matching will focus on relationships, perceived stressors, and the ability to cope and make meaning of the experience for mothers and their children.

Study Participants

Study participants were recruited from a group of National Guard and Army Reserve families who were either currently experiencing a deployment or had recently experienced a deployment. Five families originally participated in the study and all families had children. All families also had the father deployed while the mother and children remained at home. The current study will use the extreme case examples described by Yin (2003) of two of the original five families. These families were selected because their report of the deployment experience facilitated a better comparison. Specifically, both cases were still experiencing a deployment at the time of the interview and they seemed to represent extreme examples of adjustment. Names of family were also changed to protect confidentiality.

Procedures

In order to begin the study, consent was obtained from the mothers and adolescents. After the consent was obtained, an interview lasting 45- 60 minutes was conducted with the mother. Questions were asked about the mother's experience of deployment and her report of

her child's experience of deployment. Children were also asked a series of questions about the relationship with their mother during the deployment.

Instruments

The data was gathered using the 45-60 minute interview with questioning to gather information about the experience of deployment. Demographic questions were asked to gather information about number of children, who lives in the household, deployment status of husband, and occupation of the participant. The next set of questions gathered information about the deployment experience, including what has changed in their lives (including daily household tasks/repairs, financial matters, taking care of health, handling emotions, handling disagreements with spouse, loneliness, fear about safety/health of spouse, legal matters, work matters, coping with child related issues), how they have adapted to the changes (including information about coping strategies and formal and informal supports), their relationship with their child (including how they prepared their children for the deployment, how they have adapted to single parenting, how their children have adapted to the deployment, and description of their relationship with their child), their relationship with their husband, their meaning making with the deployment experience, comparison of their experience of deployments, and any other information they felt was missed during the interview.

Mothers also completed several scales. The one used for the current study was the survey of 26-items from the Air Force Community Assessment Survey (Bowen, Martin, Mancini, Whitworth, & Spera, 2004) aimed at understanding their general well-being. Items included scales of sadness, loneliness, diet and exercise, coping in stress, physical, spiritual, and emotional well-being, managing work, and their relationship with child and spouse.

Adolescents over age 9 were verbally asked the questions in the revised Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment for children (IPPA, Gullone & Robinson, 2005). The 16-questions used the same three-point scale with ratings of "always true"/"sometimes true"/"never true". The scale was aimed at understanding the child's perception of their parents and their relationship with their parents.

Analytic Strategy

The data will be analyzed using the constant comparative method (Corbin & Strauss, 1998) and will be examined for matching patterns (Yin, 2003). Additionally, axial coding will explore some of the possible connections between matching patterns. The current study will examine matching patterns in the qualitative interviews using Double ABCX framework and attachment theory to understanding the stressors, resources, the meaning of these resources in adjustment, and adjustment for mother and child. Pattern matching for stressors will examine reports of how deployment has impacted the family. Pattern matching for meaning-making will look for indicators of how mother and child have used the attachment relationship in adjustment. The pattern matching will examine the mother's report of her adjustment to the deployment as well as her child's adjustment to the deployment, such a behavioral problems, depression, or anxiety.

When looking for patterns in resources, the research with attachment theory and the Double ABCX model suggests that attachment relationships could be an important resource for both mother and child. Attachment pattern matching will explore indicators of the mother's attachment relationship with her husband, including her descriptions of him as a resource for coping during the deployment, descriptions about her relationship with him, and potential changes in their relationship. Insecure attachment between husband and wife will likely include

descriptions of struggles with intimacy and connection or lack of warmth and emotion. Secure attachment will likely include descriptions of commit, trust, and support. The pattern matching will also explore indicators of the mother's attachment relationship with her child including her discussion about the child's access to her for resources, the mother's responsiveness to her child, and the availability of the mother to her child. Insecure attachment between mother and child will likely include descriptions of lack of support and lack of awareness of child's struggles. Secure attachment will likely include descriptions of supportiveness and awareness of their child's adjustment and intentionality in parenting. Additionally, other resources used by mother and child during deployment will be explored and matched according to patterns found.

In addition to these resources, rival explanations will also be explored (Yin, 2003). In other words, if the participants use other resources to cope with the deployment, they will be examined. The current study will also explore the possibility that other resources could be used by both mother and child during deployment. These other resources will be matched according to the Double ABCX model of resources during times of stress.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

Results for the current study will begin with an explanation of quantitative measures of adjustment for both Sarah and Allison and also for Allison's daughter (age 7). Then, the descriptive, qualitative data will be presented. Quotations from each of the mother's interview will be used to explain how their experience matches with the Double ABCX model and with attachment theory. First, the participants' attachment will be suggested through their descriptions about their relationship with their husband and their children. Next, the stressors (A from the Double ABCX model) will be defined by quotations that describe the participants' struggles during the deployment. Their resources (B from the Double ABCX) will be determined by their descriptions of what they used to cope with their struggles. Next, the meaning making (C in the Double ABCX) will be determined through descriptions about the purpose they ascribe to their family's situation. Finally, adjustment will be determined through descriptions about how their behaviors, habits, and ideas have changed during the deployment.

Description of Families

Family A: Sarah is a Caucasian 31 year-old mother with two children, a son (age 5) and a daughter (age 18 months). She and her husband have been married for eight years. Before and during the deployment, she has been employed full-time as a teacher. She also has a post-graduate degree. At the time of the interview, her husband was one month from completing his 15-month deployment to Iraq. Her husband is a senior enlisted who has been with the National Guard for thirteen years but this was his first deployment to an active war zone.

During the deployment, Sarah's mother became very ill and passed away within a few months. Her mother had been living next door to Sarah's family and seemed to have been an

important person for Sarah during the deployment, helping with the children and things around her home. After the death of her mother, her father remained in the home next door and she reports he was helpful at times, but not as helpful as her mother had been, particularly with the children.

At the time of the interview, Sarah had her 18-month old daughter with her. She was able to balance the care of her daughter with the questions during the interview. She was relaxed and matter-of-fact when talking about her experience of this stressful situation. Her home felt "lived in" with piles of boxes in one corner, toys and art projects in certain places, and pictures on the wall. She seemed to be at ease with this bit of imperfection in her home.

Family B: Allison is a Caucasian 34 year-old mother with two daughters (ages 7 and 9). She and her husband have been married for 13 years. She currently works part time at a hospital and has a post-graduate degree. At the time of the interview, her husband was in the 9th month of a 15-month deployment. Her husband had been active duty status for six years and the family had been through a relocation and deployment overseas. For the past 8 years, he has been Reserve status as a senior officer.

Allison's parents lived within a thirty minute drive from her house. She reported that her mother took the children from time to time, but she spent a considerable amount of time talking about how her mother spent most of her time with Allison's brother. According to Allison, her brother had special needs and she seemed resentful about the amount of time and support her mother gave her brother's family versus her family.

Allison was home alone at the time of the interview as her children were still in school. She seemed to become animated when some of the questioning touched on her relationship with her husband and her daughters. Her house was in perfect order and quite elaborately decorated.

Measures of Adjustment

The results from the Air Force Community Assessment Survey (2003) are listed in Table 1. On depression, Sarah scored a 14 on a scale from 0 to 21, where 0 represented little depressed mood during the week and 21 represent depressed mood every day of the week. Allison scored a 6 on the same scale. In set of questions aimed at assessing health maintenance, Sarah scored 13 on a scale from 0 to 30 (0 represented low health and 30 represented high health), and Allison scored 23. The next scale of life satisfaction Sarah scored 11 on a scale of 0 to 20 (0 as the low end of the scale and 20 at the high end of the scale), and Allison scored 14. On a scale of overall health from 0 to 5 (0 as low and 5 as high), Sarah scored 2 and Allison scored 3. The next scale on maintaining balance from 0 to 15 (0 representing low end and 15 representing the high end), Sarah scored 8, and Allison scored 9. On the scale assessing satisfaction in relationship with spouse from 0 to 20 (0 as low end of the scale and 20 as the end of the scale), Sarah scored 20, and Allison scored 17. In overall satisfaction of experience with children, Amy scored 3 on a scale from 0 to 5 (0 as the low end and 5 as the high end), and Allison scored a 4. Additionally, Allison's oldest daughter completed the IPPA. Her score on a scale from 0 to 32 (0 as low in attachment and 32 as high in attachment) was 21.

	Sarah	Allison
Depression	14	6
Maintaining Health	13	23
Life Satisfaction	11	14
Overall Health	2	3
Maintaining Balance	8	9
Satisfaction with spouse	20	17

Satisfaction with children	3	4
Daughter's IPPA	n/a	21

Table 1: Well-being indicators

Indicators of Attachment

Romantic Attachment

Family A (Sarah):

Sarah's report as illustrated by the quotes below is consistent with indicators of a secure form of attachment. She uses her husband as a secure base in times of stress and looks for him when she needs support. While using her husband as a support in times of stress, she also reports a sense of her own independence. Her attachment relationship with her husband also becomes important as a resource which will be reported in the section on "attachment as a resource".

- *"I would definitely say, [my husband] would say that I was definitely more outspoken [now that he is gone] more…not that I was dependent on him, but more independent."*

- *"Just everything, with Mom, with [my husband] being gone, with all the changes that have happened, I'm like, "Uh, this sucks." There isn't any support besides your husband and your family and your friends. You know, with your husband gone, it makes things harder."*

- *"I still rely on [my husband] a lot through email and through phone calls."*

- *"…now it's, I wanna talk to [my husband] on the web cam, so I gotta talk…you know, I want to make time for him 'cause he wants to make time for me…"*

Family B (Allison):

Allison's description of her relationship with her husband is consistent with indicators of an insecure form of attachment. She seems not to rely on him during times of stress. When she does connect with him, their interactions seem to cause more tension and distress. She even seems to have some ambivalence about whether or not she plans to stay with her husband. Additionally, in the content of her conversations, she seems to rely on her husband's help with her children, but does not seem to rely on him emotionally. These seem to indicate that Allison's insecure attachment may an avoidant classification as she pushes her husband away.

- *"I've never been the type of person to really ask for help… you kind of learn when you do ask and you're turned down or you're made to feel guilty for asking that you just don't ask."*

- *"And [my husband] would get really angry with me [about handling the responsibilities] and, you know he'd throw a temper tantrum and I'd throw a temper tantrum…"*

- *"…it worries [my husband] so much to make me happy. I mean, he's just very fixated on making me happy. I know, but it's like sometimes, "You can't. I have to do it," so you know, it's kind of that back and forth."*

- *"I can't tell you how many times I told him...I would be divorcing him. I said…, "What good is this [deployment] for me?" I said, "I am so sick and tired of this," because he told me he would not get back into the military full-time. He told me that, and [after I found out he was getting deployed] I said, "What is going on?"*

- *"[when my husband was home on leave] we did something we've never done before, we went and go matching tattoos… Well we both were like, "Yeah, we are not going to have our names put on their cause what if we don't stay together.""*

- *"...if he would call [from Iraq] I'm like, "You deal with [the girls' conflict]." I don't know what to do. I mean, "I don't know what to tell 'em anymore. I don't know when to tell them you are going to be home. I don't know what to tell them you are going to be doing. I don't know." And he didn't either, and it was, I mean, before he left, even at Christmas time, it was horrible, and I told him, I said "If this is way it's going to be for leave, don't come home." I said, "I don't want you to come home.""*

Child-Mother Attachment

Family A:

Sarah's report about her child's experience and about her relationship with her son suggests indicators of a secure attachment bond with him. She demonstrates intentionality when considering her child's experience and how her own experience and reactions impacts her son. She also indicates a closer relationship with her son. Her son seems to feel comfortable sharing his feelings and struggles with the deployment, and she is able to recognize these struggles.

- *"I don't even think about [my husband being gone], I just start crying and then I'm like, "Why am I crying?"…You know, but it's never in front of [the children]. Just because my job is to be strong for them because their lives have been tough enough, you know with their Daddy gone."*

- *"I think…my son is different cause he's five and everyone always tells him, "Be the man of the house"…"Take care of your mom. Be good for you mom." And so the kid*

relationship I guess, is almost a closer relationship. Not that he is the man of the house,

but I rely on him to do more things. Whereas before [my husband] and I might help him

more. You know, little things like taking a bath and things like that."

- *"I can't even imagine what [my son] is going through…'cause I know what I'm going*

  through. So what is he going through?"

- *"You know, [my son] cries at the drop of a hat. Then he might get angry and I think a*

  lot of it just stems from his dad being gone and of course my mom passing because they

  were close as well, but just everything at once…"

Family B:

Allison seems to focus on her 7-year old daughter when she talks about her children.

Allison's description about her relationship with her youngest daughter appears to

indicate an insecure form of attachment bond. It seems that either her daughter is unable

to express her emotions and connect with Allison about struggles, or Allison is unaware

of their attempts to connect. In both situations, the child's emotional needs go unmet by

the mother. Allison also admits to being physically unavailable for both her daughters

and this implies that her daughters are not able to access the attachment bond with her

caregiver to help with stressful situations and strong emotions.

- *"[My daughter (age 7)] never really showed me much emotion…like the teacher would*

  just hold her for awhile and give her special attention, but she really at home, she

  really never showed that to me. She really never expressed that she was concerned. If

  she did it would be very rare."

- *"I don't know if she's just…I guess somehow quicker to share her emotions sometimes*

  with other people…I mean [my daughter (age 7) is] just strange. I mean I don't know,

I can only just guess maybe she doesn't want to concern me. Maybe she doesn't want to, um, I mean I don't know. I don't know why she's as open as she is with a lot of other people and not to say that she's not open with me…"

- *"I guess it's just, I honestly, I honestly think a lot of it has to do with I'm not, most of the times, I'm not that available…physically I am not that available."*

Stressors – A in Double ABCX

Family A:

Sarah reports her family experienced the deployment as a stressor. She describes their struggles and their difficulties. In addition to the stressor of deployment, her mother got sick and passed away while her husband was deployed. She talked about the stress for her family around these events, too. She also talks about how difficult the experience of deployment and her mother's death has been for her son particularly in trying to explain to him that his grandmother is gone but that his father will return.

- *"I think everything has changed. This is year…I thought it would be alright, I can handle it. You're catching me…My mom got sick in October."*

- *"I guess I think about my mom, I think about [my husband]. I just think, you know when you lay down in bed it's time to think about what he's doing and you have 20 something days left until they actually leave Iraq and I think, "Oh my god, we've been so lucky, what if something happens?" That's when all those thoughts, what if one of them doesn't make it home, or what if this happens to 'em. And I think about Mom, and I think…she was hospice and she was in the house, so I can relive all those last days and being without her. That's the time my mind wanders."*

- *"I would think…I don't know...I think [my son has] had a rough year. I think there's a lot going on and…I think it's really hard on [all of us] especially any child…"*

Family B:

Allison's family also seemed to experience the deployment as a stressor. She talks about how her routines have changed and caused her to re-evaluate the demands on her time every day. She also explains how her daughters experienced even the idea of deployment when it was first discussed as a family as stressful.

- *"...you know we told [the children] that [their dad] had to go to Iraq and I think that's when they asked a lot of questions and it was a couple weeks of breakdowns with the two of them. You know constantly and a lot of questions, "What are you going? What are you going to be doing? Are you gonna be in danger?", and you know, they were, I mean crying and crying and crying and I know when he would be in Richmond, there would be some night they were just so constantly crying…"*

- *"I mean, whereas most evening now I'm not in bed before 11 o'clock because once I get them to bed by 8:30, if we're lucky, then it's you know, I've got the dishes to do, the laundry to do, the straightening to do, you know, the bills on the computer, all that kind of stuff that finally I can take care of once they are to bed, so it's just even longer, more extended hours for me and then you know, just little things come up…"*

Resources – B in Double ABCX

Attachment as a Resource for Mother and for Child

Family A:

For Sarah, her relationship with her husband seems to be an important resource to manage and cope with the stress of deployment. Communication with him, particularly

about the things she is struggling with, is described as an especially important part of their attachment relationship and a crucial resource for her. In addition, the way she has reached out to her husband during the deployment has helped her to realize how valuable and significant her relationship with her husband really is.

- *"...I've had two episodes where I've actually talked to [my husband] and been like "This is cra…" I've call my husband on the phone or I've emailed him and we webcam a lot and I'm like, "I just can't do this. This is horrible." And you know...cause you know, it's my husband. So I mean, I talk to him and I talk to the people, and I think [I] just [do better] staying busy."*

- *"It's a sense of security...ya know, he went to [location in Iraq] for a few days and we didn't have [email]...Where he's at they have internet access in their rooms, have a laptop that are in the same barracks. He's always online, so I can check and if he's online then I'm like, "Ok. He's ok.""*

- *"I think that…you know I hear a lot of women and a lot of them have gotten a divorce. They are getting divorced over there or getting JAG lawyers. I'm like, "What?!" I think I have realized how much I love him and need him and how good we are together. You know, how we are a team and I actually also think I've realized how much he actually cares for me. Cause you know, I'm not one of the wives who calls up and [says], "It's great." I'm like, "Honey, this sucks." I'm not…ya'll…always hear people say, you know, "You gotta make sure they know everything's ok." Well if it's not ok, I'm not…And he listens to me and he supports me, and when he was here I guess I took it for granted and now I realize how important he is."*

- *"I mean there's distance…I still felt [appreciated] when he was sending us emails. I thought, "Oh goodness, he took the time to think of me.""*

While Sarah's description about her parenting and about her relationship with her son does not sound perfect, she does seem to remain a resource for her son, as evidenced by her awareness and intentionality about parenting. She is aware that her son has more pressure and more responsibility than before the deployment and she seems to work to provide more time for him despite her busy schedule. Her son also seems to be more aware of what is going on for his mother as evidenced by his attempts to care for her.

- *"I think [my son] feels a lot of pressure. Like when people tell him to be the man of the house. He's so young, he doesn't need to be…I got a stomach bug at the beginning of the school year in September and I was throwing up in the bathroom and he came in to check on me. And he's five, and he said, "Are you ok, Mommy?" I'm like, you shouldn't have to do that…"*

- *"I guess in a way, like the other day, I guess [my son] was just poking…you know, wanting something and wanting something, I was trying to fix dinner, and I keep telling myself, you know, I need to just give him a second to calm down or do something and I thought, "Wow, I'm doing a really bad job." And I know I have a choice, but I also think in my head, "When [my husband] comes home, it'll get better." And that's all I can do. And every time at night when I go to bed, I'm like, "Alright, I'm going to make time to read [my son] a story. [My daughter] might be fussing, the dogs barking, I gotta feed em," but you know I'm going to sit down and you know, maybe five out of six nights, seven nights I get to do it, and other nights I sit down like, "Oh I forgot.""*

Family B:

Allison's family seemed to present no evidence of the use of attachment relationships as a resource. While Allison describes some conversations with her husband, these conversations lack the emotional support they may need to help with the stressful situations surrounding the deployment. The conversation with her mother seems to suggest that she is not able to access her husband as a resource. In addition, Allison describes no situations in which she acts as a resource for her daughters as they struggle with their own issues around the deployment. Instead she admits to being "physically unavailable" for them. Allison reports that her children use other resources in attempts to manage deployment stress.

- *... you can't argue with [my mother] because you end up feeling like the bad guys, so and she called me...and she's like, "I am not your husband and these are conversations that you would usually have with him," and I'm like, "Well, you know what, I can't call him up and complain to him.""*

Other Resources

Family A:

For Sarah, the military resources were helpful for her. She particularly connected with the other women going through deployment from the Family Readiness Group. These other relationships helped to supplement her relationship with her husband and provide an extra resource for her to manage the stress of deployment

- *"It's really nice to hang out with people that you don't have to explain yourself to. Like [another FRG member will] say something and I'll be like "Oh, I totally understand."...people always ask, "Do you miss him? Are you worried?", you're like,*

"Duh, yeah!" You know, that's a dumb question. To have somebody to sit with and you know, our husbands are in the same unit, so they are totally, and where my husband is they are, and I'm like, "Ok.""

- *"So talking to [others going through deployment], and it sounds dumb, but I was telling this other girl that when she complains to me, I forget how bad it is for me. So yeah, they complain about how hard life is, "I'm like oh yeah, ok. It's not too bad.""*

- *"I accessed Military One Source. It's much easier. Everything else, I mean, when [my husband] left, we got hand-outs [from the military]. Xeroxed copies of pamphlets."*

Family B:

Allison's description of the resources she used suggested that she used these as her primary support during the deployment. She described her relationship with her mother is described as important, but there is also a suggestion that her mother's support is sometimes difficult. Allison mentioned several other supports including anti-depressants, a new dog, and plastic surgery.

- *"I guess I probably just call my mom and vent to her…she's a good talking support person…it's funny, we got into a really big argument one day and she called me back and she's gets very defensive."*

- *"I can't do this [deployment stress] to them again, so that was rough and I finally called the doctor and I said, "I've got to have some anti-depressants."*

- *"...then out of the blue I said [to my husband while he was on leave], "I want a little dog now!" And he's like, "You don't want it. You don't want it. Believe me, you don't. You should wait," and I said, "I don't care. I don't want to hear you. I want a little dog.""*

- *"[The best thing that happened during the deployment is that] I had [plastic surgery]…Momma [raised] two kids and we are gonna fix ourselves."*

According to Allison her daughters also used other resources for support during the deployment. Their resources were primarily other adults with whom they could share their emotions and their struggles. While they did not seem to be able to talk with their mother about some of their issues, they seemed able to find other adults to support them at school, at church, and within their family.

- *"[My daughter (age 7)] never really showed me much emotion. It was a lot at school with her teacher and her friends."*

- *"I mean like for example [my daughter (age 7)] went with my grandmother to church last Sunday and she is just very, you know, like little children's time at in front of the church and she'll say, "You know my Daddy's in Iraq and can we pray for my dad?" So she's very vocal about that."*

- *"…[my daughter (age 9) will] sit sometimes and just talk with my mom and say how much she misses [her father]… So, I guess, you know, whenever she's with my mom, it's definitely a more one-on-one time and they're sitting around talking and doing crafts and that kind of thing."*

Meaning Making – C in Double ABCX

Family A:

Sarah's descriptions about the deployment experience included many examples of the purpose she sees in what she is going through. The purpose and plan for her husband and her family during the deployment seem to be central theme in the way she tries to make meaning. She talks about the meaning she makes from her mother's death, the danger of

the deployment, the greater meaning for her about her husband's actual deployment, and the gains she has made personally and in her relationships because of the experience.

- *"...when your support group dies, well that just sucks. So I guess you step up and you make the decisions and you pick out the things that you wouldn't have had to do before."*

- *"I mean, scared I'm worried, I'm stressed, I'm unhappy, and I guess I let it out for a little bit and then I'm like, "Alright, what am I doing?""*

- *"If I can help other people then I don't feel as bad for myself."*

- *"I said..."I care that my husband is over there and he might be in danger." So the war, you know, I don't even think about that, I just think that it's all about my husband being over there."*

- *"... my job is to be strong for [my children] because their lives have been tough enough, you know with their Daddy gone."*

- *"I definitely think there must have been a plan. There's some higher power here that decided this would happen when it did. Not only for me, but for [my husband], I think, you know, he's learned a lot about himself over there. I guess it's almost like...a time for us that we actually find ourselves. We find ourselves and we can come back together. It's definitely been a soul searching for both of us cause I mean we talk and it's hard for him over there as well."*

- *"[The best thing about this] for me [has been] just seeing what I could do. Knowing that I didn't need someone to help me do it, and I guess just seeing how much...I didn't know how much I would actually love my husband...that sounds so dumb, love him, cause when he's here, he's just here and I take advantage of it and I know he's here, where I've*

actually realized, "Oh my goodness." You know I didn't think I would feel this strongly

for him."

Family B:

As Allison described her experience of the deployment it seems as thought she has

difficulty making consistent meaning of her experience. She has a negative reaction to

the idea of being a military family, seeming to believe the she comes last. Even these

thoughts reveal ambivalence given her reluctance to push for an early military retirement.

When directly questioned about the meaning she makes of the deployment, she replies

that she has none. The meaning she makes about her relationship with her husband

seems to be "out of sight, out of mind" suggesting that she has no meaningful connection

with him while he is deployed. She even describe the timing and logistical complications

around having to take her daughter to the hospital almost as a burden.

- *"So I mean, that's when it really hit me, I guess the stress was that it's never going to*

be my time while he's in the military…And that's the one thing that the military has

shown me time and time again is that my job and my career are so not even first or

second or third, we're like tenth."

- *"I said, "What good is this for me?" I said, "I am so sick and tired of [being*

military]…" because he told me he would not get back into the military full-time."

- *"It's like one more thing that was his job and now I have to do [my husband's] job.*

You're giving me your work because of this deployment… not only is he leaving me here

with two kids and everything else that needs to be dealt with but now I've got to take over

work responsibilities."

- *"I don't [make meaning] because I think [the deployment is] useless. I think it's pointless, I don't like that he's in the military. I think the war is stupid."*

- *"I think I'm a lot like [my daughter (age 7)] when I think about how the deployment has impacted my relationship with [my husband], kind of "Out of sight, out of mind.""*

- *"...so you know rushing [my daughter (age 7)] to the hospital, calling Poison Control, and it was like 10:00pm at night and here I am with [my daughter (age 9)] and she's in bed and then I'm like, I gotta rush to the hospital and take care of the charcoal and I'm trying to get a hold of my mom and I can't get a hold of them and I'm like, you know..."*

Adjustment – X in Double ABCX

Mother's Adjustment

Family A:

For Sarah, adjustment appears to be an ongoing process; she describes it herself as a "cycle". She seems to have adjusted to the idea of her new role in the family, a role where she must make more decisions and take charge of the discipline. She also adjusts to her own strong emotions and cycles between many different emotions, and she learns what she needs to do to deal with her emotions in a way that makes the most sense for her and for her family.

- *"So I guess you step up and you make the decisions and you pick out the things that you wouldn't have had to do before."*

- *"Things like with [my son] and his school, you know making decisions about what teacher, recommend what teacher, things like that, you know before I'd be like "[Husband], what do you think?". Disciplining the kids, where before we would talk to each other or if I'd had it with [my son], you know, they pluck your nerves, and I'd be*

like, *"[Husband], take him."* *Well now there's nobody to take him. So I guess I've learned how to deal with it."*

- *"I guess it's funny, I find myself dealing with things when I'm in the car or when I'm by myself. When I'm here, you get that, um, I'm always...I guess...always happy. At work, you know, can't, you know, you put on a show...it's not really a show, but then when I'm in the car, that's when it hits me, or if I'm...the kids are asleep and I'm watching TV that's when it hits me."*

- *"...I call it a cycle. I actually cycle through the emotions where, like during the week or like for two or three weeks I'm ok, I'm happy, I'm upbeat, and then one week it hits me, and I realize I'm by myself. This is horrible. Then I get down and you get the cycle of being upset and it's just...You can manage for awhile and all of a sudden you'll break down again."*

Family B:

In Allison's case, her adjustment and coping with the deployment seemed to be a bit more matter-of-fact and less emotional. She seems to have almost an adolescent-like rebellion against the some of the responsibilities that are now placed on her because of her husband's deployment. She also appears to struggle as she reports earlier that she is independent and unemotional, and yet she becomes quite emotional when her husband leaves for the deployment. Additionally, she seems to have difficulties with the changes in her relationship with her husband and when he leaves the suggestion of divorce is dismissed because of monetary reasons.

- *"Because I'm completely capable of doing [paying the bills online], but it was just one more thing that I said, I told him, "I'm not going to do it." "We'll lose our house." "I*

don't care." "We'll lose our car." "I don't care." I am not doing it, so I am like, "I am

not going to get on my computer and pay those bills.""

- *"I cried for 24 hours… because I missed [my husband], because I got this dog…and it*

was just…I thought, "What have I done? I should have listened to him,"

- *"And I told him, "You know, the realization has hit me. It's better for me to stay*

married to you because if I'm divorced I get less money.""

Child's Adjustment

Family A:

Sarah talks less about her son's adjustment than she does her own, but in her reports of

her son's adjustment, she talks about his struggles with the deployment. She describes

his struggles as a "cycle" and she seems to be very aware of this cycle. While she

recognizes what her son is going through, she also describes how her son is able to adjust

to take on more responsibility and "being the man of the house" when his mother is ill.

- *"He'll be really good and then have episodes where he's just really sensitive. You*

know, cries at the drop of a hat. Then he might get angry and I think a lot of it just stems

from his dad being gone and of course my mom passing because they were close as well,

but just everything at once and he get confused a lot with if Daddy's coming back, but

Mamsie's not coming back.

- *"And he assumes that like if…I got a stomach bug at the beginning of the school year in*

September and I was throwing up in the bathroom and he came in to check on me. And

he's five, and he said, "Are you ok, Mommy?" I'm like, you shouldn't have to do that…I

think he feels a lot of pressure…"

Family B:

In Allison's descriptions of her daughters' adjustment, there are some similar struggles as with Sarah's son. Allison's daughters have difficulties with their father's deployment and with the concerns about his safety and security while he was away. Allison's daughters also seem to struggle with adjustment even more as evidenced through the descriptions of rage. Her daughters have a hard time with the adjustment to the idea of who they can depend on during the deployment as Allison descriptions their interactions with her especially around meal time. Finally, one could speculate about the accidental overdose as many things, a need for attention, a lack of supervision, or a true accident.

- *"...maybe a couple times a month, where [my daughter (age 9) will] just kinda have a break down and she'll just really cry and how much she misses him, and I guess she's asked me more because, being older, you know, at first, "Is Daddy gonna die? Is he safe? What's he doing?", so we talk about that and whenever he calls, she definitely wants to talk to him, and she doesn't really ask him questions"*

- *"I mean [my daughter (age 7)] has been known for a lot of fits of at times rage and anger. We had her in therapy for quite a while and a lot of her issues came out because [my husband] wasn't around. I mean her family unit was me, [her sister], and her. There was never a father in the picture."*

- *"...[the girls and I have] had a lot of battles lately. A lot of out of the blue, you know "You don't love me. You don't care. You wish you never had us." I mean it's just been really rude, really disrespectful behavior that...I have to say one thing that's really changed for the worse is that when he was home, every night whether it was here or out to dinner we were together as a family. We never eat dinner together because the kids refuse to eat anything I cook."*

- *"...the kids have had a lot more injuries, like [my daughter (age 7)] had an accidental overdose, so I had to take her to the hospital."*

Axial Coding

When axial coding was conducted to explore the relationship among the themes identified in open coding, a new model emerged. When examining the wife's relationship with her husband and the wife's ability to make meaning, it seems that the wife's ability to make meaning of the deployment experience and make meaning of the changes and the struggles she faced is related to her attachment relationship with her husband and whether or not she uses this attachment relationship as a resource. Additionally, this connection between using attachment as a resource and the wife's ability to make meaning of the experience seems to be related to family adjustment. The connection seems to suggest that when the wife has a secure attachment with her husband, as Sarah did, and is able to use this attachment relationship as a resource during deployment, then she is able to make meaning of the deployment, the changes in roles, and the stress she experiences. This, in turn, allows her to provide the emotional available for her child and enhance adjustment for both.

On the other hand, if the wife has an insecure attachment with her husband, as in Allison's case, and she struggles to use attachment as a resource, she will also struggle with meaning making of her deployment experience, the changing roles, and her stress. This seems to be related to her inability to be emotionally available for her child thus contributing to a more challenging adjustment for the entire family.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to use the Double ABCX model combined with attachment theory to create the framework to explore patterns in two extreme case studies of families experiencing a military deployment. One family appeared to cope relatively well with the deployment while the other family seemed to struggle with adjusting to the deployment. Results, defined at length in the previous section, revealed similar patterns in both families to suggest that the Double ABCX model and attachment theory could account for the differences in their experiences. In this chapter, results from this study will be summarized and compared with previous research. A model for understanding the interaction of both theories for predicting adjustment between the patterns will also be proposed. The therapeutic implications of working with families experiencing a deployment will be discussed. Finally, limitations of the study and possibilities for future research will be suggested.

Summary of Findings and Comparison to Previous Research

Romantic Attachment

Sarah's description of her relationship with her husband includes many of the indicators of secure romantic attachment. The way she is able to count on her husband during times of stress is consistent with literature on secure romantic attachment suggesting she is able to emotionally connect with her husband, rely on him for support during times of stress, and also maintain a balance between intimacy and independence (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1986). Additionally, Sarah described little fear of dependence and little fear of abandonment which according to Mayseless, Danieli, and Sharabany (1996) are indicators of secure attachment.

In Allison's description about her relationship with her husband, she seems to indicate an insecure form of romantic attachment. She describes her desire to be self-sufficient and at the same time struggles with her independence. She seemingly has high self-confidence, but reports an inability to rely on her husband during the stressful times. In addition, she appears to have little intimacy with her husband and she describes little warmth between them. All of these, according to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) and Hazan and Shaver (1986), are indicators of insecure attachment.

Child-mother Attachment

Sarah's description of her relationship with her son suggests a secure attachment as she is able to recognize her son's struggles and to adjust her parenting to provide for both her children. According to research on secure attachment in children and adolescents, a securely attached child is able to trust that they will be provided for and that their needs will be met (Ainsworth, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978; Bowlby, 1973). Sarah's son seemed to feel comfortable seeking her comfort and support in times of stress, and Sarah seemed to be intentional and deliberate in providing the care her son needs.

Allison's daughters, however, did not seem to feel the same levels of comfort in sharing their struggles and emotions around the deployment. Previous research suggests that insecure attachment between child and caregiver, in this case, mother, means the child's emotional needs go unmet at times. The child becomes uncertain about who will provide for his/her needs or unable to trust that his/her needs will be met (Ainsworth, 1978). Additionally, insecurely attached children and adolescents have shown more depression, more anger, and a low sense of self-worth (Kobak, Sudler, & Gamble, 1991 as cited in Allen et. al., 1998). Allison describes

one daughter's "fits of…rage and anger" and another daughter's emotional withdrawal, suggesting more anger and depression for her daughters.

Double ABCX Model

Sarah and Allison's descriptions seem to follow the Double ABCX model. Both families' experience the deployment as a stressor, or the A in the ABCX, appears to be consistent with the McCubbin and Patterson (1983) description of a stressor as "a life event or transition impacting upon the family unit which produces…change in the family social system." Both families seemed to be impacted by the stressor in a way that changed their family. The B, or resources, in the ABCX will be described at length in a later section as it relates to attachment theory. However, as it relates to the Double ABCX model, both families appeared to have resources they used as a result of the change and seemingly in an attempt to prevent crisis from the stressor (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

The C in the Double ABCX model, meaning making, seemed critical for both Sarah and Allison. While they had very different ideas about what meaning or definition they made of the deployment experience, both women seemed to have a "subjective definition of the stress and its hardships and how they are affected by them" (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). This meaning making also appears to play an important role in how each family copes, and this idea will be discussed further in a later section.

The X in the Double ABCX model for both Sarah and Allison and for their children seemed to relate to the combination of all previous factors in the form of their adjustment. Again, while both families appeared to have very different outcomes in adjustment, both families appeared to be forced to adjust in an attempt to prevent crisis or to manage the crisis that did occur (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Finally both families reported experience that seemed consistent with the Double ABCX model because of the "pile-up" that occurs (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983). Each of the elements in the ABCX pattern has multi-dimensions for both families, as it includes the combined experiences of mother and child. Additionally, the pile-up is possibly compounded by the fact that the deployment is not the only stressful situation for these families. While Sarah's family had the additional stressful experience of her mother's death, both families seemed to also be undergoing the normal changes and struggles that come with parenting growing children and with managing a household.

Attachment as a Resource

As discussed previously, Sarah and Allison appear to have different characteristics in their attachment relationship that seem to indicate a secure versus an insecure romantic attachment style. Attachment relationships serve an important function during times of stress, as they can provide a sense of comfort and reassurance when the partners are securely attached (Bowlby, 1973). During these times of attachment activation, Sarah and Allison likely relied on their internal working model to determine whether or not accessing this attachment relationship during the times when they were stressed would be helpful or reassuring (Bowlby, 1980). Therefore, because Sarah's descriptions indicate a secure form of attachment with her husband, it would follow that she uses him as a resource because he could provide her with that sense of comfort. Understandably, Allison's descriptions indicate that she does not use her relationship with her husband as a resource probably because it would not provide her with stress-reducing benefits.

Additionally, the distance between partners could possibly complicate the security of attachment. Because the attachment partner is not immediately available or responsive, the

attachment relationship is threatened (Allen et. al., 2004; Howard & Medway, 2004, Kelley et. al., 2001; Schumm et. al., 1996; Waters, Weinfeld, & Hamilton, 2000). Therefore, is it possible that Sarah is at less of a risk because she seems to have a secure attachment to her husband, and that Allison is at a greater risk because she seems to have an insecure attachment to her husband? Or could it be that because Sarah and her husband appear to have such intentionality in their relationship and are able to meet each others needs that they could be in a better position to navigate the stressful situation?

Presenting a New Model

When first exploring the connections between the components of the Double ABCX model and attachment theory, it seemed to be a linear model (see Figure 1). However, as became clear after the exploration of the two extreme cases, some of the connections seem more multi-dimensional (see Figure 2). After first examining the way the Double ABCX model patterns and attachment theory patterns match for both families, another new set of interactions between these patterns began to appear. Because the major differences seem to be the attachment relationships and the way each family adjusts to the deployment experience, a question began to emerge. How does the romantic attachment relationship translate into adjustment for the family?

Our initial assumption was that the romantic attachment relationship is where the interpretation of the stressor began. However, evidence from the cases seems to suggest what meaning was derived from the experience as the key to the family adjusts. Sarah and Allison's description of meaning making highlighted the importance of the way they viewed their experience, and this appeared to be directly related to their romantic attachment relationship. This interaction, in turn, seemed to impact the child's adjustment. Sarah attempts to make meaning of the deployment experience and seems to cope better to the changes and stresses in

her experience while Allison has difficulty making consistent and helpful meaning of the experience and seems to struggle with coping. While we cannot say if the attachment relationships impact meaning making or if meaning making impacts the attachment relationships, it seems that the meaning making or "interpretation" is important in bringing together the pieces of the puzzle in understanding the families' experience.

There also seemed to be clear differences in the way that Sarah and Allison approached their role as parent and as wife that could have had a major impact on the cycle of meaning making and adjustment. For example, when Sarah describes the interactions with her children, she appears to immediately provide explanations of what she likely believes is important for their emotional and physical needs even when the child does not explicitly seek her for these needs. On the other hand, Allison gives examples of how her daughters seemed to approach her several times for emotional support and she seems unable to provide these needs. Perhaps it is easier for Sarah to think about what her children, and even occasionally her husband, needs because her own emotional needs are being met in her attachment relationship with her husband. It could also be that Sarah is more intentional because she is a school teacher, or it could be the age differences between Sarah's children and Allison's children that make the difference.

There appeared to be another striking difference in the way that Allison talked about her relationship with her husband. In several instances, she described how she spoke with him often and how she asked him to handle conflict with the girls. In one way, this action could be interpreted to suggest that she was using the attachment relationship as a resource. On the other hand, it seems that she may be using her *husband* as a resource, but she does not seem to be using their *relationship* as a resource. This suggestion is even more striking because Sarah describes an equivalent number of conversations and contacts with her husband. Yet Sarah's

conversations with her husband seem full of emotional sharing of her experience and discussions that are seemingly important and helpful to Sarah. However, Allison's discussions and conversations with her husband, while similar in frequency, appear to lack the emotionality that Sarah's conversations with her husband seem full of.

Both women talk about the importance of their independence. This discussion about independence seems to be a defining part of their deployment experience. However, there appears to be a difference in the meaning of this independence for both of them. In Sarah's case, her independence seems to come from necessity; she must now take over the responsibilities that her husband had taken care of before he left. She seems to know this independence is necessary for her family's survival. There appears to be a selflessness in her independence. She also talks about how she felt that she did not need the deployment to discover that she could be independent. Allison's independence also seems to come from a place of survival. However, the survival seems to be primarily her own and not a selfless act; there is a certain amount of what she describes as her own "rebellion" in the independence. There appears to be the attitude that she does not need anyone, and her reports seem to indicate that she was this way prior to the deployment. Thus, this independence appears to be a more selfish one. This self-confidence and independence is also indicative of an insecure form of attachment (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1986).

These women in the extreme case studies appear to experience the deployment very differently. The differences in their experiences may be because the secure and insecure attachment styles have become the lens through which they see the deployment on an unconscious level through internal working models. For Sarah, the securely attached lens through which she may view the deployment seems to be related to her positive meaning

making, which in turn may be related to her intentionality as a mother to her children, which could facilitate better adjustment for her and her children. For Allison, the insecure lens through which she appears to view the deployment may prevent her from making meaning of the deployment, which seems to prevent her from providing the physical and emotional needs of her children, which, in turn, could prevent her and her children for adjusting well.

This much even seems clear through the descriptive data. Sarah has fairly average results; she experiences some depression, average health, balance, and satisfaction. Allison reports little depression and above average health, balance, and satisfaction. Sarah's results mirror the quotes from her interview as she describes her struggles and the ups and downs she feels during the deployment. She also scored high in her satisfaction with her husband indicating the importance she places on this relationship which is also consistent with her descriptions about her relationship with her husband. Allison's results seem to vary greatly from her descriptions in the interview. She talks about her own struggles with depression and balance yet she rates herself high on in these areas. Additionally, she rates high in the satisfaction with her husband, yet she talks about divorcing him and struggling with her relationship. All these seem to indicate Allison's ambivalence about her relationships and the deployment in general.

In a way, even the story-telling process seemed to provide answers to questions about their attachment experience and ability to make meaning. According to Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991), a coherent story is an element of attachment security. Sarah's story seemed clear and defined; finding all the patterns and understanding her experience was an easier process. However, Allison seemed to struggle to put together a coherent story; she often contradicted herself and looking for patterns and understanding her experience was a bit more of a challenge. It seems Allison's coherence was related to her insecure attachment relationship

with her husband. Perhaps Allison's struggle with a coherent story was also related to what seemed to be a struggle to make meaning.

Supporting Families during Deployment – Therapeutic Implications

While efforts to assist these families through any form of therapy would likely be helpful, attachment repair seems an important concept to allow the child, mother, and the family the optimal chance to develop a secure attachment relationship particularly as the children get older. When family members are committed to providing a secure environment, attachment repair can provide the environment of healing. Emotion-Focused Therapy (EFT) (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003) and Attachment Based Family Therapy (Diamond, Siqueland, & Diamond, 2003) may help to facilitate healthy attachment relationships.

The EFT therapist has a unique set of interventions. The first is a restating of the emotional events to help focus the session and create a connection between the therapist and parents and adolescent (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). Other EFT technique include, validating the experience and eliciting an open and emotional response. For these families, it would mean talking about the deployment and talking about how it has impacted each family member. This allows the couple and the parents and the adolescent to emphasize certain aspects of the attachment insecurity and therefore elicit more vulnerable feelings about the important aspects of the experience. The therapist also works to help the parents and adolescent expand their experiences of the attachment injury (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). For the families experiencing deployment, it would be important for them to talk about how the separation and the stress has impacted their relationship. This helps to redirect the negative focus of a statement and create a positive and appropriate responsiveness for the couple and for parents and adolescent.

The use of attachment theory in therapy provides unique answers to different questions. The first question attempts to understand how problems manifest themselves in relationships (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). The answer to this question differs with every family, but attachment theory suggests that the root of every problem can be found within the relationships that exist and the potential deficits that are causing the problem. The second question attempts to understand the reason why people behave a certain way within a relationship (Johnson & Whiffen, 2003). When learning about this question, the therapist often discovers that it is the relationships that drive an individual's methods of functioning.

Attachment-based family therapy (ABFT) is a treatment modality that was developed based on EFT and uses structural and multidimensional family therapies and contextual therapy to create a treatment that focuses on repairing negative attachment, conflict, and emotional discord (Diamond et. al., 2002). The ABFT therapist looks at how the past and present attachment transgressions influence the relationship and works to increase trust and create more positive interactions between parents and adolescents. For families experiencing a deployment, it would be important to understand how the separation or the idea of separation has impacted the members of the attachment relationship. Additionally, families need to talk about and understand how to meet each others attachment needs. This not only strengthens the bond, but also increases the adolescent's sense of self-worth and makes the family the teen's primary attachment resource which decreases the internalizing symptoms and externalizing behaviors that the adolescent exhibits (Moran, Diamond, & Diamond, 2005).

It also operates under the idea that attachment is a plastic process for all individuals and that if the attachment relationship has become insecure or if the security of attachment has been threatened, a repair can occur and those without attachment security can develop "earned

security." The security is established by working through negative life stressors and events with the parents and adolescent to create a positive experience for the family system. The goal for all ABFT treatments is to create a parenting relationship that provides a safe haven that the adolescent can learn to use as a resource (Diamond, Siqueland, & Diamond, 2003).

The therapeutic experience for some military families could be especially helpful during the reunion and reintegration process. However, it would be helpful for many families to become educated on how the deployment cycle could affect the child, wife, and family left behind. Therapy that focuses on setting up a support structure before the deployment and therapy that refocuses the support for the entire family on the service members's return could make the separation and reunion cycle less stressful for the entire family.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study that must be acknowledged. The first limitation was that the only interview was from the mother. Information about the child's experience was gathered and understood from the mother's experience. While this provided its own interesting perspective about how the mother experienced her child during deployment, it is secondary information about the child.

Another limitation of the study was one of causality. The purpose of this study was to generate theory and understand how different elements interact. Because of this, no statement about what direction the interaction between attachment relationships and meaning making may go can be made.

A third limitation of the study was the lens through which the data was analyzed. We used the Double ABCX model and attachment theory to try and understand these experiences. However, other interpretations may be possible when considering the data from a different

framework. A final limitation of the current study is that there was no measure of attachment prior to deployment. Because of this, no assumption could be made about how the deployment directly impacted the attachment relationships.

A final limitation of the study was the measure of attachment. While descriptions of the relationship between husband and wife and between mother and child were used to suggest an attachment classification, an empirically validated measure of attachment was not used.

Suggestions for Future Research

Perhaps the most important idea for future research would be to test the model proposed by the current study. In testing the model, data could be analyzed to understand how the attachment relationships and meaning making interactions work on a larger scale. Additionally, more information could be gathered about how these families could be helped before the deployment and where resources could be put to most impact and help these families during the deployment.

The information from the current study led to many more questions about how the deployment experience is impacted by the attachment relationships within the family system. Future research seems limitless in understanding more about how the stress of the deployment impacts relationships, how the attachment relationship could mitigate some of the effects of deployment, and how the experience of the family as a whole is impacted by all of these factors.

One possibility for future research could focus on understanding more about the attachment relationships within the family. More quantitative attachment measures could help to understand exactly what type of attachment relationships each family member has and could also help to understand the differences between securely and insecurely attached family members.

For example, does an avoidant attached individual fare better or worse than an anxiously attached individual?

This could lead to more research on how the deployment itself impacts these relationships. While the current study suggests a model for how attachment relationships can be helpful during the deployment, it seems to be important to understand if the husband's departure impacted their relationship. Additionally, does the husband's return impact attachment relationships? Future research should examine the attachment relationships before, during, and after deployment to understand how the relationships are immediately impacted. Also, does redeployment shortly after the reunion impact attachment relationships, meaning making, and adjustment?

In understanding what happens before, during, and after deployment, it also seems important to understand how meaning making may change when the service member returns from the deployment. Does the story of meaning become more "coherent" when the service member's safety is assured? Understanding this particular part of the deployment could be helpful in providing resources for families.

The current study uses the mother's report to understand the child's experience. Future research could do more interviews and/or measures of the child's attachment to better understand his/her experience and how it is impacted (or not impacted) by the mother's experience during deployment. This could lead to an understanding about how both experiences synthesize and influence each other to create the "family adjustment" during deployment.

Finally, another area that would be interesting to understand is how the experience would be different for the fathers who are left behind. There are many families who have a military mother and understanding how this is different or similar would be important in providing

military support and resources to families. Additionally, there are families who have both parents who are military, and families in different branches of the military. It would be helpful in providing services and helping these families to understand how each experience is the same or unique.

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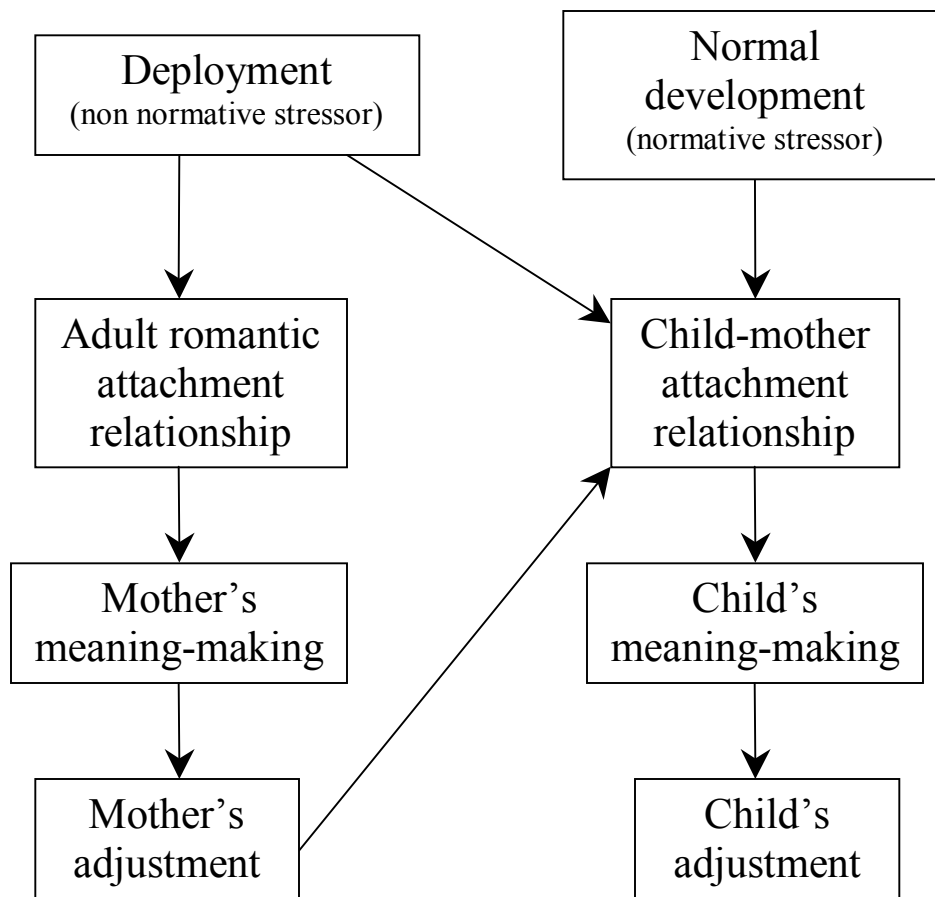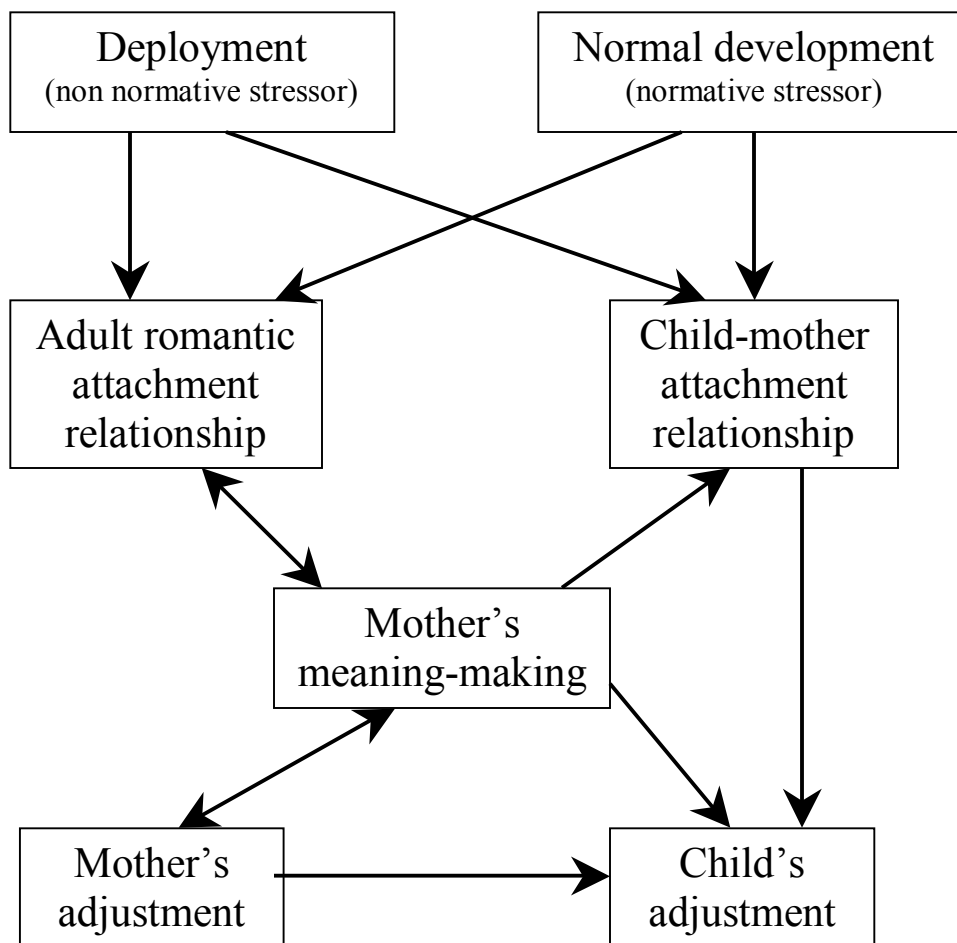
Figure 1: Original Double ABCX/attachment model

Figure 2: New Double ABCX/attachment model