

Behind Family Lines

**Family members' adaptations
to military-induced separations**

Behind Family Lines

Family members' adaptations to military-induced separations

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de Universiteit van Tilburg,
op gezag van de rector magnificus, prof.dr. Ph. Eijlander,
in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van
een door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie
in de aula van de Universiteit

op vrijdag 29 januari 2010 om 14.15 uur
door

Manon Daniëlle Andres
geboren op 4 november 1980 te Breda

Promotor: Prof. dr. J. Soeters

Copromotor: Dr. R. Moelker

Promotiecommissie: Prof. dr. M. Kalmijn
Prof. dr. M.J.D. Schalk
Prof. dr. M.W. Segal
Prof. dr. M. Junger
Prof. dr. A.L.W. Vogelaar

Cover illustration: 'Letters home from the war', written by Lloyd Maywood Staley during World War I to Mary Beatrice Gray, reproduced with permission of the Staley family.

Photo credits: Rob Gieling/Defensie beeldbank (photo 1), John Moore/AP (photo 2), and Hennie Keeris/Defensie beeldbank (photo 3).

Cover lay-out edited by Eric Franken.

Publisher: Broese & Peereboom, Breda

ISBN: 987-90-8892-024-0

© M.D. Andres, 2010

All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced in any form or by any means without prior written permission of the author.

Preface and acknowledgements

Just imagine... that a loved one will be sent abroad for months, fulfilling his or her duty in a (post) conflict area. How would you feel? I believe *anyone* can envision what that would be like. Though for a great number of people this goes beyond imagination. This is real; an inevitable part of military life. This thesis serves to acquire knowledge of the effects of such military-induced separations on family life. This research project brought me to the homes of many families, partners of service members in particular; each having their own stories and experiences. Notwithstanding people's unique circumstances and feelings, I also observed that many experiences are shared and recognizable to others. Hence, in addition to contributing to existing scientific knowledge, this study aims at drawing attention to noteworthy (policy) points of interest. Although this thesis is the result of four years of research, *military families* is a subject I will not grow tired studying; if only because its significance and relevance. There are still many venues open to research regarding families' adaptations to military-induced separations.

Without making comparisons to military missions, I believe conducting a PhD research project is also some sort of mission. You start on something, perhaps not fully aware what is awaiting you, and pursue a specific end. For a long time, this ultimate goal seems far off. And whilst being confronted with various startling turns along the way – advantageous events but also obstacles to overcome – the challenge is not to lose sight of your objective and to ultimately attain this end.

Given that a mission usually is not something you accomplish on your own, I hereby would like to thank a number of people whose contributions have been indispensable in the shaping of this research and the dissertation that lies in front of you. Special thanks go to the ones who acknowledge the elementary matter of studying military families in the course of military operations and were involved in the commencement of this research project. First of all, Prof. dr. Joseph Soeters (Tilburg University and Netherlands Defense Academy), dr. René Moelker (Netherlands Defense Academy) and Lieutenant General Hans Leijh (Chief Director Personnel), who acknowledged and emphasized the need for complementary research in continuation of previous conducted

studies, formulated a research proposal, and created opportunities for realizing the project. Sjo and René, whilst supervising this research project, thank you also for your continuous confidence and support, for the pleasant chats and constructive feedback on my work, and for providing opportunities for me to participate in activities in addition to this project, including cooperating in an international comparative study, participating in giving lectures and supervising theses, and giving presentations to various audiences, which made the past four years even more valuable and enjoyable. Furthermore, drs. Jos Weerts (head of the Center for Research and Expertise of the Dutch Veterans Institute) who in practice took notice of the issue of military deployments and family relations. I also gratefully acknowledge the support I have received from The Hague, in particular from Brigadier General Leanne van den Hoek (former Commander Personnel Command, current Chief of Staff of the Army) and Lieutenant Colonel Skip Springer (former Chief Cabinet Personnel Command, current Policy Advisor Ministry of Defense).

Furthermore, I would like to thank the thesis committee, Prof. dr. Mady Segal (University of Maryland), Prof. dr. Marjanne Junger (University of Twente), Prof. dr. Matthijs Kalmijn (Tilburg University), Prof. dr. René Schalk (Tilburg University), and Prof. dr. Ad Vogelaar (Netherlands Defense Academy) for reviewing the manuscript. I also sincerely appreciate the contributions of drs. Jurgen Gruson (Netherlands Defense Academy), who has read and commented parts of this thesis.

I thank Corry van de Vall and Major Frans Metsemakers (formerly) working at the Bureau Home Front Support for providing me the information I needed in the earlier stages of the project, which was essential in successfully carrying out this research. They also brought me in contact with Rianne Uijtdewilligen. Rianne, your help in conducting the interviews was invaluable. Thank you also for your logistical assistance related to sending the questionnaires, and accompanying me on ‘farewell’ and ‘welcome home’ ceremonies, information meetings, and other home front activities. I owe a special thanks to everyone who has been so willing to participate in this study, by filling out questionnaires and giving interviews –in particular the ones who so warmly welcomed me or Rianne in their homes; for openly sharing their deployment experiences. They are the ones who made this research possible.

In the course of conducting this research, my colleagues, and fellow-researchers in particular, were there to discuss research-specific issues and share experiences, or to just take a break and have a chat; at times during non-work-related (though sometimes military-related) activities and social gatherings. Special thanks go to my (former) roommates Femke, Bart, and Roos. Thank you for your support, sharing all research experiences, and for the pleasant conversations; at work and out of it. Femke and Bart, thank you also for being my paranimphs and standing by me during the defense and promotion ceremony. Tessa and Eric-Hans, thank you for the pleasant talks, whether it was research-related or just fun. ‘Neighbors’ Erik and Tom, thank you for the amusing chat-moments and sharing all ‘thesis-completion-experiences’.

Last, but surely not least, I thank my family and friends, but in particular my parents Lorenz and Wilma, Lorenz and Evelien, and John and Ria for their continuous support. Thank you so much for your involvement and empathy, for all the phone calls, always asking how things are going, for your encouragements (e.g., when I had a presentation the next day, or a deadline to catch), for just the pleasant relaxations, and for lending me your cars when I didn’t yet have one myself and needed to travel all over the country to conduct interviews! Ingmar, I owe a separate thanks to you. You have been of great importance during this project –and beyond. I thank you for your interest, always wanting to hear all the ins-and-outs of my work, for your ideas and the pleasant chats during our rides home, for just allowing me to let off steam now and then and your pep-talks, and for your infinite understanding and patience (especially during the last weeks before finishing this dissertation!). Thank you for your support!

Manon Andres

September 2009

Table of contents

Preface and acknowledgements	V
Table of contents	IX
List of tables	XV
List of figures	XVI
List of textboxes	XVII
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Two societal institutions and the ways they interconnect	3
1.1.1 The military – in transition	3
1.1.2 The military family – intimate environment and social institution	10
1.1.3 The work and family interface	12
1.2 Research design	14
1.2.1 Aim of this study	14
1.2.2 Research framework	14
1.2.3 Research questions	16
1.2.4 Attempted contributions	17
1.2.5 Analytical framework	18
1.2.6 Definition of key concepts	21
1.2.7 Research approach	23
1.2.8 The sample	24
1.3 Dealing with sensitive topics	30
1.4 Validity and reliability	32
1.5 Thesis outline	33
<i>References</i>	37
<i>Notes</i>	46

2	Standing strong together. A longitudinal study into social support, work-family conflict, psychological distress, and relationship satisfaction in the course of job-induced separation	47
	<i>Abstract</i>	48
2.1	Introduction	49
2.2	Theoretical framework	51
2.3	Literature review	55
2.3.1	Work-family conflict	55
2.3.2	Work-family conflict, psychological distress, and relationship satisfaction	56
2.3.3	The role of social support	58
2.4	Method	59
2.4.1	Sample and procedure	59
2.4.2	Measures	61
2.5	Results	62
2.5.1	Descriptive results	62
2.5.2	Test of the proposed model	66
2.6	Conclusion and discussion	69
	<i>References</i>	73
	<i>Notes</i>	78
3	There and back again. How parental experiences affect children's adjustments in the course of military deployments	79
	<i>Abstract</i>	80
3.1	Introduction	81
3.2	Literature review on temporary parental absence	83
3.2.1	Imprisonment	83
3.2.2	Work-related absence other than military deployment	85
3.2.3	Parental military deployment	86
3.3	The longitudinal study among Dutch military families	89
3.3.1	Sample and procedure	89
3.3.2	Measures	92

3.4	Parent-child separation	94
3.4.1	Parents' concerns before departure	94
3.4.2	Children's responses to father's absence	95
3.4.3	Different ages, different experiences	96
3.4.4	Parents' experiences during the separation	98
3.5	Parent-child reunion	99
3.5.1	Children's responses upon reunion	99
3.5.2	Fathers' reunion experiences	100
3.6	Factors predicting children's adjustment difficulties	100
3.6.1	Factors predicting children's adjustment difficulties during separation	103
3.6.2	Factors predicting children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion	103
3.7	Discussion	106
	<i>References</i>	111
	<i>Notes</i>	116
4	Parents' voice. The intergenerational relationship, worry, appraisal of the deployment, and support among parents of deployed personnel	119
	<i>Abstract</i>	120
4.1	Introduction	121
4.2	International studies into parents of deployed soldiers	124
4.3	The Dutch study	126
4.4	The parent-child relationship	128
4.5	Parents' worries	130
4.6	Parents' appraisals of their child's deployment	131
4.7	Parents' support: the issue of legitimacy	138
4.8	Conclusion and discussion	140
	<i>References</i>	143
	<i>Notes</i>	145

5	Sweethearts or strangers? Couples' reconciliation following military deployment	147
	<i>Abstract</i>	148
5.1	Introduction	149
5.2	Military deployment	150
5.3	Reunion and reconciliation	151
5.4	Relationship quality following deployment	153
5.5	The role of active communications	154
5.6	Study design	156
5.7	Sweethearts or strangers?	158
5.7.1	The homecoming	158
5.7.2	Reconciliation	159
5.8	Couples' interactions	160
5.8.1	During the separation	160
5.8.2	Following reunion	163
5.9	The effects of active interactions	164
5.10	Summary and discussion	169
	<i>References</i>	172
	<i>Notes</i>	175
6	Conflicting work-family demands and turnover intentions	177
	<i>Abstract</i>	178
6.1	Introduction	179
6.2	Theoretical framework	181
6.2.1	Work-family conflict and well-being	182
6.2.2	Work-family conflict and relationship outcomes	185
6.2.3	Well-being and relationship outcomes	187
6.2.4	Work-family conflict, well-being, and turnover intentions	188
6.2.5	The hypothesized model	189
6.2.6	Alternative models	190

6.3	Method	191
6.3.1	Sample and procedure	191
6.3.2	Measures	193
6.4	Results	195
6.4.1	Descriptive results	195
6.4.2	Model testing	197
6.5	Conclusion and discussion	205
6.5.1	Reflection on the findings	205
6.5.2	Theoretical and practical implications	207
6.5.3	Limitations and avenues for future research	208
	<i>References</i>	210
7	Conclusion and discussion	217
7.1	Introduction	219
7.2	Main findings	220
7.2.1	The partner's perspective	220
7.2.2	Children	221
7.2.3	Deployed service members' parents	222
7.2.4	Couples	223
7.2.5	Service members	224
7.2.6	To conclude	225
7.3	Theoretical considerations	226
7.4	Practical implications	229
7.5	Reflection and future research	234
	<i>References</i>	240
	<i>Notes</i>	244
	Appendixes	245
A	Overview of nonresponse	247
B	Description of the sample	248
B.1	Description of the sample partners and service members	248
B.2	Description of the sample parents	249

Table of contents

C	Scales used	250
C.1	Work-family conflict	250
C.2	Relationship satisfaction	251
C.3	Psychological distress	253
C.4	Social support	255
C.5	Loneliness	256
C.6	Turnover intentions	257
D	Items used to measure children's adjustment difficulties	258
D.1	During the separation	258
D.2	Upon reunion	258
E	Items used among parents	259
E.1	Parent-child cohesion	259
E.2	Parents' worries	259
E.3	Parents' support for the armed forces	260
F	Items used to measure couples' active verbal interactions and reconciliation	261
F.1	Active verbal interactions during the physical separation	261
F.2	Active verbal interactions following reunion	261
F.3	Couples' reconciliation	262
G	Drop-out analyses	263
	Summaries	265
	Summary	267
	Samenvatting (summary in Dutch)	273
	About the author	281

List of tables

Table 1.1	Overview of respondents	26
Table 2.1	Descriptives and intercorrelations among the study variables at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3	63
Table 3.1	Participating partners and service members in the longitudinal study	91
Table 3.2	Intercorrelations among children's difficulties, control variables, separation characteristics, and maternal well-being	102
Table 3.3	Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting children's adjustment difficulties during the separation	104
Table 3.4	Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion	105
Table 4.1	In which way and how often did you have contact with your son or daughter during the deployment?	129
Table 4.2	Parents' sources of emotional support	133
Table 4.3	Family and deployment characteristics and parent-child cohesion, parents' worry, and appraisal of the deployment predicting parents' support for the military and its operations	139
Table 5.1	Means and standard deviations of the variables	164
Table 5.2	Intercorrelations among the study variables	165
Table 5.3	Active interactions as predictors of service members' and partners' reconciliation	166
Table 5.4	Active interactions as predictors of service members' and partners' relationship satisfaction	167
Table 6.1	Descriptives of and intercorrelations among the study variables at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3	196
Table 6.2	Fit indices of the tested models	204

List of figures

Figure 1.1	Research framework	15
Figure 1.2	Thesis overview	36
Figure 2.1	Hypothesized relations among variables	53
Figure 2.2	Proposed longitudinal model	54
Figure 2.3	The effects of social support, work-family conflict, and psychological distress on relationship satisfaction in the course of job-induced separation	68
Figure 3.1	Proposed model (controlling for age of youngest child and number of children)	89
Figure 4.1	How long has your son or daughter served in the armed forces?	127
Figure 4.2	Parents' information sources in the course of their child's ISAF/TFU deployment	135
Figure 4.3	Parents' information sources in the course of their child's EUFOR deployment	135
Figure 4.4	Did you participate in activities and gatherings that were organized for relatives of deployed soldiers?	136
Figure 6.1	Hypothesized interrelations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions	190
Figure 6.2	Stability relations of work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separation	199
Figure 6.3	Stability and cross-lagged relations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separation	203

List of textboxes

Textbox 1	Newspaper headlines regarding deployed service members' families	9
Textbox 2	Partners' relationship satisfaction, psychological distress, work-family conflict, and social support	65
Textbox 3	Service members' work-family conflict, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions	198

Introduction

“He left on September 9th. I hadn’t been able to work for two weeks; it had completely slipped my mind. We just wanted to be together for a while. Our families also wanted to see him before he would leave. Suddenly, he had to depart earlier than expected, at short notice. It was very hectic. We didn’t know if and when he would be on the plane till eighteen hours in advance. Our entire life was upside down. He actually had to leave that day. (...) The period of his absence will be long, which also has to do with the children. You can never sufficiently prepare your children for this. They are my greatest concern.”

Quotation of an interviewed woman (conducted in October 2006),
whose husband had just departed for a six-months deployment.

1.1 Two societal institutions and the ways they interconnect

The above mentioned quotation illustrates a family’s preparations, togetherness, disorder, and concerns brought on by military deployment. The experiences reported by this woman are far from unusual. It has long been recognized that military deployments affect family life in some way. Internationally, the effects of military deployments on diverse aspects of family life are high on the research and policy agendas. This study aspires to contribute to filling some of the voids in existing knowledge. Before going into the core of this research, this first chapter will provide a sketch of the context in which this study is embedded and the conceptual and technical design of the study that have laid the foundation of this thesis.

1.1.1 The military – in transition

With its structure, culture, and tasks, the military is an inimitable institution in society. Pursuing a military career is challenging, though the military lifestyle is also demanding with respect to recurrent transfers to new work environments, long and unpredictable workdays, frequent separations from the family (as a result of deployments and training), and the risk to be wounded or even killed in action (e.g.,

Booth, et al., 2007; Segal, 1986). Serving the armed forces, therefore, demands the utmost of military personnel *and* their families. Over the past several decades, various trends and developments (of which some are briefly described in this section) have changed the character of the military and with that have (had) profound implications for the work environment and working conditions experienced by military personnel and their families.

First, a shift in institutional and occupational characteristics of the armed forces has affected the nature of military organization and with that the work environment perceived by military personnel and their families. Moskos' (1977, 1986; Moskos & Wood, 1988) well-known Institutional/Occupational model has been important in studying changes in the military. The institutional model is characterized by a collective good for which service members are willing to sacrifice themselves (i.e., the collective good surpasses self-interest) and moral incentives prevail over material ones. In this model, military families are integrated in the military community, which itself functions as an extended family. The military families usually live on post, or near the base, and the hierarchical structure of the military is mirrored in the community, with wives deriving their personal identities from the military, 'adopting' the ranks of their husbands. In this institutional orientation, "military and personal life tend to overlap, transforming the job into a part of communal life" (Soeters, Winslow, & Weibull, 2003, p. 241). The institutional model is associated with high levels of commitment, towards the military and the military community.

The occupational model, on the other hand, is characterized by individualistic motivations rather than the collective (or organization's) good and is associated with financial rewards. Families' ties to the military are less strong and integrated given that the families usually live dispersed across the country (i.e., separation of work and residence), having their own employments and social networks, independently of the military. Commitment and relationships are assumed to be more calculative, based on self-interest and costs-benefits analyses. According to Moskos' model, institutional and occupational characteristics can coexist within a given organization (Nuciari, 2003) and most contemporary military organizations encompass elements of both models (Alpass, Long, MacDonald, & Chamberlain, 1999). Many military

organizations (to a higher or lesser degree) have bended towards a more civilian model of organization in which the military profession is perceived not so much as a way of life anymore, but being just another job.

Still, the military –just as the family– makes strong claims on the devotion of its members. This is elaborately expounded in the well-known work of Segal (1986), who applied Coser's (1974) concept of greedy institutions to both the military and the family because of their demanding characteristics.

Second, the end –or deferment, to be more precise– of conscription in many countries (in the Netherlands in 1996) and the subsequent change to a professional or all-volunteer force has altered the composition of the workforce. The proportion of personnel being married and having children has increased given that military conscription usually implied large proportions of young unmarried men (Segal & Segal, 2003). In several respects, the military has become more diverse (Soeters & Van der Meulen, 2007; Richardson, Bosch, & Moelker in this volume specifically address diversity in the Dutch armed forces). It attempts to mirror society, encompassing more women and employees with care-giving responsibilities, for instance. Furthermore, a professional or all-volunteer force implies that military personnel have consciously chosen a professional career in the armed forces and that military organizations have to compete in the labor market for qualified personnel. Hence, they find themselves faced with the challenges of recruiting, selecting, and retaining competent personnel, whose families (e.g., their support or objections) may be paramount in their decisions to join or stay in the military.

Third, shortly after the end of the Cold War, the nature of military missions moved towards operations other than war, including peacekeeping, peace enforcement, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace building, and humanitarian assistance. This development changed military roles and spheres of activity, and made the military more expeditionary (e.g., Kümmel, 2003; Nuciari, 2003). Even newer missions are perceived as diverse, complex, and dangerous, involving profound cooperation with civilian organizations, establishing local security and stability, rebuilding a nation (e.g., governmental and economically), and fighting *invisible* and *asymmetric*

enemies. In order to effectively perform these missions, many military organizations mix and match units “into tailor-made expeditionary task forces” (De Waard & Kramer, 2008, p. 537). The character and organization of the new missions imply that military personnel face increasingly demanding challenges and must be highly trained. Intensive (predeployment) trainings (e.g., on mission-specific skills and tasks, cross-cultural competences, and team-building) (e.g., Soeters & Bos-Bakx, 2003; Wisher, 2003), necessitate service members to be away from their families (even more) frequently.

Fourth, a trend of downsizing and organizational restructuring is discernable in many Western armed forces (Manigart, 2003). At the same time, the growing participation in international operations increases the number of deployments and the rate at which these deployments occur, compelling the same service members to be deployed on successive missions (Adler & Golembe, 1998), implying more frequent family separations. Nowadays, at any given moment, in total over 2,000 Dutch servicemen and women are deployed to mission areas all over the world, such as Afghanistan, Congo, Chad, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. In consequence of the increased deployment load, the changed nature of deployments, and the higher levels of perceived risks involved, attention to families of deployed personnel has grown. Whether it is considered a moral obligation or benefitting the organization, military organizations have increased their efforts to support military families helping them cope with the stressors of deployments and promoting the well-being of families and military personnel (Op den Buijs, Andres, & Bartone, 2010). This in turn is assumed to affect organizational outcomes, such as morale, readiness, and retention (Booth, et al., 2007). In many countries, family support systems originated. An international comparative study we conducted into family support systems and arrangements in seven different nations, revealed that these systems differ in the ways they came into being (e.g., bottom up or top down) and are organized (e.g., the degree to which the support systems have been co-opted by the military organizations and its structures). Nevertheless, effective and efficient support systems are generally characterized by matching the specific societal, cultural, and geographical requirements of that nation (Moelker, Poot, et al., 2008, p. 207).

Research on military families dates back to the aftermath of World War II, to the well-known work of Hill (1945, 1949, 1958) on wartime separation and reunion. As of that time, military families had occupied an important place on policy and research agendas internationally (see, for instance, Adler, Bartone, & Vaitkus, 1995; Booth, et al., 2007; Dandeker, French, Birtles, & Wessely, 2006; Delveaux & Moreau, 2008; Figley, 1993a; Manigart & Fils, 2006; McCubbin, Dahl, & Hunter, 1976; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002, 2003; Rosen, Teitelbaum, & Westhuis, 1993; Segal & Segal, 1993; Segal & Harris, 1993, for research on military families in diverse countries). In the Netherlands, in 1993, it was officially recognized in policy documents that the Ministry of Defense had a responsibility in providing support to service members and their families before, during, and after military deployments (Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2003). Moreover, in the Netherlands, from the 1990s, the organization of family support and military families' adaptations to military-induced separations became subject to scientific research (e.g., Dirkzwager, Bramsen, Adèr, & Van der Ploeg, 2005; Moelker, 2000; Moelker, Ambaum, Overbeek, & Schipper, 1999; Moelker, Andres, & Poot, 2008; Moelker & Cloin, 1996a/b, 1997; Moelker, Poot, et al., 2008; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002, 2003; Molenschot, 2003). These studies – predominantly conducted among service members' partners– provided significant knowledge on, among other subjects, mental and physical health, coping, children's responses, families' supports, and the quality of relationships. In a general sense, even though the majority seems to cope well with the stressors of deployment, military-induced separations are a burden to families. For instance, a rated group suffered from mental or physical health complaints during or after deployment (Dirkzwager, et al., 2005; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002, 2003) and correlations were found with indicators of relationship quality (Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002, 2003). Several studies have emphasized the importance of social support and partners' communications in the course of military deployments (Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002, 2003; Molenschot, 2003).

The increased deployment load and perceived risks involved –particularly following the Dutch parliament's decision to send troops to the southern province of Afghanistan, Uruzgan– made family support even more vital and necessitated more knowledge on families' adaptations. The Dutch Ministry of Defense acknowledged the

need for research in continuation of the previously conducted studies and commissioned this research project, encompassing whole cycles of deployment (i.e., before, during, and after the separations). Apart from its design and the increased sense of risk associated with today's military deployments, this project is distinguishable from previous research as it was conducted in a time in which the media perceived the issue with close attention (predominantly in consequences of this increased sense of risk).

The fifth, and final trend discussed here, relates to the changing character of societies in which military organizations are embedded. For instance, "in the process of modernization, Western societies became ever more individualistic", which among other things is typified by people pursuing individualistic values and preferences, having freedom of choice and greater ability to act independently (Veenhoven, 1999, p. 158). Generally, more emphasis is placed upon quality of life. More specifically, "increasingly, military members (and their spouses) are making comparisons with the quality of life perceived to be available in the civilian society" (Martin, 2000, p. 261). This underlines the importance of employers (e.g., in order to retain competent personnel) to assume responsibility for satisfactory conditions and meeting the needs of their personnel and families, thereby ensuring the quality of (military) life.

Furthermore, media (e.g., television, internet, newspapers) play a prominent role in today's societies by drawing attention to all kinds of issues, including military related subjects. "We are witnessing increased public attention to military operations" (Segal & Segal, 2003, p. 231). As an illustration, box 1.1 presents just a selection of headlines that appeared in Dutch newspapers in the course of this research project, representing a growing attention to military families. Even television series and movies have been dedicated to the lifestyles and grieving of military families, among which 'Army Wives', 'The Unit', 'Grace is Gone' (2007), Stella's War (2009; a Dutch movie originally called 'Stella's oorlog), and 'Brothers at War' (2009), which are just a few examples. Sociologist Morten Ender (2005) devoted a study to the portrayals of military children in forty-six cinema films produced between 1935 and 2002.

HOME FRONT URUZGAN IS GETTING READY

(NRC Handelsblad, June 16, 2006)



BETWEEN PROUD AND FEAR

(BN DeStem, February 11, 2006)



A LAST EMBRACE BEFORE MISSION TO URUZGAN

(NRC Handelsblad, March 15, 2006)



WAITING FOR A POSTCARD FROM URUZGAN

(Vrij Nederland, July 1, 2006)



URUZGAN / WORRIES AND DOUBTS BY HOME FRONT

(Trouw, November 5, 2007)



‘WHEN THEY HAVE A MISSION, WE HAVE A MISSION’

(Vrij Nederland, March 3, 2007)



QUEEN APPEARED AT FAMILIES OF URUZGAN-SOLDIERS

(De Volkskrant, June 4, 2008)



HOW THE ARMY TEARS LOVE TO PIECES

(NRC Handelsblad, May 24, 2008)



MY DAUGHTER IS A SOLDIER IN AFGHANISTAN

(Telegraaf VROUW, May 10, 2008)



FOREVER OUR HERO

(De Volkskrant, April 26, 2008)

Moreover, book shops have never before been filled so much with books touching upon military operations abroad (predominantly the ones in Afghanistan), including service members' home fronts' experiences.

The media also play a prominent role in influencing and carrying out public views and opinions. Hence, the public –including military families– has become more vocal, more critical, and more organized, potentially becoming an influential group, demanding immediate attention to certain needs. This was, for instance, illustrated by a lengthy and intense debate in the Dutch media and parliament regarding the parliament's deliberation –and ultimate decision– to send Dutch military personnel to the hazardous Afghan province Uruzgan (see also Brinkel, Moelker, & Westmaas, 2009). The support of military families and society at large is vital to the well-being of military organizations.

1.1.2 *The military family – intimate environment and social institution*

Social and demographic developments and trends have also affected the structure of the family. These developments and trends relate (but are not limited) to prolonged life spans, people entering into matrimony and parenthood later on in their lives, decreased incidences of marriage and remarriage, increased incidences of divorce and separation, diminishing numbers of children per family, transitions from traditional (patriarchal) to more egalitarian family relations (with more equally divided household and childcare tasks), and increasing numbers of dual-earner couples (De Graaf & Kalmijn, 2006; Dykstra, 2004; Dykstra & Komter, 2004; Kalmijn, 2007). Hence, a diversity of family structures exists in addition to the ideal typical *nuclear family*, defined as a married couple with children running a household together. Single parent households, gay couples (with or without children), childless couples, and other family structures are quite common nowadays. In the Netherlands, the majority of the private households (64.2 per cent) are multi-person households, including married couples with children (37.0 per cent), married couples without children (34.3 per cent), unmarried couples with children (6.7 per cent), unmarried couples without children (10.8 per cent), single parent households (10.1 per cent), or other (1.1 per cent). The average size of the households is 2.2 persons (Statistics Netherlands, 2009).¹

The family is seen as a dynamic and variable social group, an intimate environment, and a social institution that possesses an identifiable structure –characterized by biologically and socially defined kinship– made up of positions and roles and relationships and interactions among the occupants of this structure (Gelles, 1995). The family is distinguishable from other social groups given the “deep emotional attachment” of all members, the ratio of time spent together, the range of activities shared, the intensity of involvement, the right to influence, the age and sex differences included in the small group, and the involuntary membership (Gelles, 1995, p. 22). Because of its intimate nature, the family is perceived a private institution and, therefore, knowledge about the family and family functioning is limited to what individual family members are willing to share (e.g., in questionnaires or interviews) (Gelles, 1995). This study focuses on military families, which we define in this study as a family –following the aforementioned definition– in which at least one member serves in the military.

When we mention ‘family’ in this study, we specifically refer to (one of) the following forms:

- ❖ A couple (married or not) with children, of whom at least one of the partners serves in the armed forces;
- ❖ A couple (married or not) without children, of whom at least one of the partners serves in the armed forces;
- ❖ A parent (married or not) with at least one son or daughter serving in the armed forces.

Today, the Dutch armed forces have employed 42,139 military men (91.1 per cent) and 4,125 military women (8.9 per cent), serving the Army (46.9 per cent), Navy (20.4 per cent), Air Force (20.4 per cent), or Military Police (12.3 per cent). Their average age is 33 years and over one third (36.7 per cent) of them are married.² At any given time, over 2,000 service men and women participate in military operations abroad, thereby being separated from their families for several months. Research has shown that the demands inherently associated with military life –and the stressors associated with military deployments in particular– have the potential to produce

stress in military families (e.g., Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006; Castro, Adler, & Britt, 2006; Hill, 1949; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983; Rosen & Durand, 2000). In this study, we refer to deployments as military-induced family separations as a result of service members taking part in military operations all over the world and families not being allowed to accompany them. These separations range in duration from several weeks to several months. As a rule, the maximum duration of Dutch service members' deployments is six months (with a two week rest and recuperation leave during a six-month absence) and, as a rule, service members are deployable again after a period of twice the deployment duration (i.e., a six-month deployment is followed by twelve months nondeployable time). Widely acknowledged stressors families (may) face in the course of military deployments are, among other things, a disruption of life patterns and routines, uncertainty and concerns about the service members' safety, unclear time frames, managing household and childcare responsibilities all alone, cumulative life stressors, and worrisome news reports (Adler, et al., 1995; Bartone & Bartone, 1997; Figley, 1993a, 1993b; Op den Buijs, et al., 2010).

There is, however, less knowledge on how the stress associated with separation and the stressors involved evolves over time and how it affects relationship outcomes. Although "stressors are often viewed as harmful to relationship functioning" (Story & Bradbury, 2004, p. 1145), there are no precise statistics given that studies into the effects of military deployments on intimate relationships show mixed results (Chapter 2 provides a more detailed description of these findings).

1.1.3 The work and family interface

While in bygone days work and nonwork were assumed to be segregated, at present the interdependency of the work and family domain is widely recognized. Economic and social developments (e.g., the increasing numbers of women in the workforce, the rising numbers of dual-income families, and more egalitarian distributions of family responsibilities) have fundamentally altered work and family roles and have introduced "new challenges for balancing work and family life" (Story & Bradbury, 2004, p. 1140). In most contemporary Western societies, both men and women face the challenges of managing work obligations and domestic responsibilities and

boundaries between work and family life dissolve. Work experiences are likely to spill over to one's family experiences (or vice versa) –an interpersonal process of work and family transferences– or even crossover to one's partner at home –a dyadic, or intrapersonal process of transmission (Westman, 2001). Demanding traits –or the greedy nature (Coser, 1974; Segal, 1986)– of both the work and family domain (e.g., requiring a member's time, presence, and commitment) underlie these processes of work and family life affecting each other.

When participation in one domain (e.g., family) is made more difficult by participation in the other (e.g., work), work-family conflict occurs. This is defined as the demands of work and family being incompatible in some respect (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Work-family conflict is a bidirectional construct, distinguishing work interfering with family life (i.e., work-family conflict, or WFC) from family interfering with work (i.e., family-work conflict, or FWC). Multiple studies have shown that there is a higher prevalence of work conflicting with family than vice versa, suggesting that family boundaries are more permeable than work boundaries (Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle, 1997; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998).

Work-family conflict has become a widely studied construct in various disciplines. Research has demonstrated that work-related (e.g., the number of work hours, work schedule, job related transfers, and travel) and non-work-related antecedents (e.g., parental demands or having elder care responsibilities) can produce work-family conflict (e.g., Aryee, 1992; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Premeaux, Adkins, & Mossholder, 2007; Voydanoff, 2002). This in turn can serve as a precursor to work-related (e.g., absenteeism, job satisfaction, performance, turnover) and non-work-related (e.g., health and well-being, relationship, family, and life satisfaction) outcomes (e.g., Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Demerouti, Bakker, & Bulters, 2004; Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001; Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Rode, Rehg, Near, & Underhill, 2007; Voydanoff, 2005). "Work-family conflict is a salient issue across different groups of employees" (Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001, p. 224). Research into differences in the prevalence of work-family conflict and its effects among men

and women does not show unequivocal results. Furthermore, literature suggests that conflict between work and family demands is not limited to individuals with children only. For instance, a study by Galinsky, Bond, and Friedman (1996) conducted among a large number of United States workers, revealed that 58 per cent of the parents and 42 per cent of the childless workers reported at least some conflict, whereas 17 per cent of the parents and 12 per cent of the childless workers experienced (quite) a lot work-family conflict.

1.2 Research design

1.2.1 Aim of this study

Having described certain trends and developments that affected the character of the military, the family, and the work-family interface, the significance of studying families in the course of job-induced separations has become evident. Above and beyond the widespread prevalence of work affecting family, work is especially likely to bear upon family life in the course of job-induced separations. Therefore,

The aim of this study is to enhance knowledge on job-induced separations affecting family life, by examining military families in the course of military deployments, the factors that are associated with families' (mal-) adaptations, and their interrelations.

1.2.2 Research framework

The reasoning regarding achieving the aforementioned objective is visualized in the following research model (Figure 1.1). This model schematically (and roughly) represents the steps that are undertaken in the research process. First, this study employs a multidisciplinary approach, drawing on theories and perspectives of sociology and psychology. More specifically, family stress theory, family resilience theory, theory on single parenting, and military sociological perspectives provide the analytical framework of this study (which is elucidated in more detail in section 1.2.5). This framework defines the angle (or *spotlight*) from which military families are observed (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 1999). Gaining knowledge on families

suggests studying families from multiple perspectives, given that families comprise multiple members, each having their own stories and experiences. In all, the results of the study provide knowledge of job-induced separations affecting family life, thereby realizing the research objective.

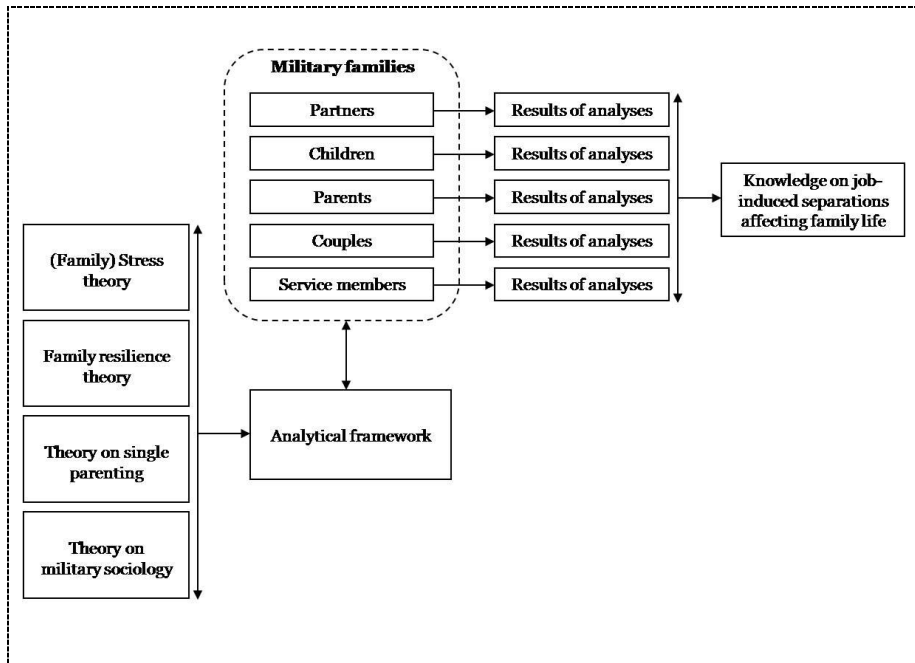


Figure 1.1 Research framework

1.2.3 Research questions

The following, overarching, central research question guides this study:

**How do military-induced separations affect family life
and how can the (mal-) adaptation of family members be explained?**

To answer this central research question five subquestions have been formulated, more specifically defining the focus of this study. Each subquestion addresses a different family perspective (i.e., partners, children, parents, couples, service members) with congruous variables of interest (e.g., the partner relationship, the parent-child relationship, well-being, turnover intentions).

Subquestions:

- 1 *How does work-family conflict relate to partners' perceived social support, well-being, and relationship satisfaction in the course of military-induced separations?*
- 2 *How can the experiences of children in the course of service members' deployments be described and what factors predict children's adjustment difficulties during parental absence and upon reunion?*
- 3 *How do parents appraise the deployment of their son or daughter with respect to the parent-child relationship, concerns, and need for support and how does this appraisal affect their support for the armed forces and its missions?*
- 4 *How do service members and partners maintain their intimate relationship during the separation (through active verbal interactions) and how does this affect reconciliation processes and evaluations of the relationship afterwards?*
- 5 *How does work-family conflict relate to service members' well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of military-induced separations?*

1.2.4 *Attempted contributions*

This research endeavors to contribute to existing knowledge in several ways. First and foremost, this study aims at portraying families' experiences in the course of military-induced separations from various angles (i.e., from different family members' perspectives, assessing congruous variables of interest), resulting in a comprehensive representation of the state of affairs. Remarkably, up till now, the eyes of researchers studying military families were principally fixed upon spouses and children. Hence, service members' parents' experiences have hardly been studied before. Apart from that, this study includes data collected among couples –service members and partners– which, among other things, allows for the examination of couples' shared perceptions.

Second, knowledge in the work-family field predominantly relies on research employing cross-sectional designs (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007; Dikkers, 2008). For instance, Casper and colleagues (2007) conducted a review of the methods used in work-family research published in industrial-organizational psychology and organizational behavior journals between 1980 and 2003 and found that, of the 225 studies reviewed, only 24 studies (11 per cent) employed longitudinal research designs, whereas 201 studies (89 per cent) were cross-sectional. Of the 77 studies specifically addressing work-family conflict, only 5 (6 per cent) were longitudinal and 72 (94 per cent) were cross-sectional. Although these cross-sectional studies have generated much valuable information, they have certain limitations, for instance regarding their inability to provide information about relations over time (see also Kalmijn, 2008).

Third, only few studies have touched upon the work-family interface in the course of stressful events or, more specifically, job-induced separations. Usually, measurements of prestressor conditions at the very moment they occur are hard to realize, given that stressful events rarely can be anticipated. The context of job-induced separations, and in particular military deployments, sets conditions –and provides excellent opportunities– to study the effects of work-family issues in the course of such events. Among other things, this study aims at providing information

about how perceptions of work-family conflict, relationships, and attitudes and behaviors towards the organization evolve in the course of such events.

1.2.5 *Analytical framework*

Several theoretical insights underlie this research given that not one (single) theory suffices for examining military families from the various aforementioned perspectives. Together, these theories form the analytical framework, which throws light upon military families in the course of military-induced separations defining what will be studied and what not. Different aspects of the framework are employed in the different studies (described in more detail in the following chapters). A brief description of the overarching analytical framework is provided below.

Family stress theory has laid the foundation for much of the research into families experiencing stressful situations. Notwithstanding the manifold stress models that have been developed by various researchers, family stress researchers continue to rely on the (Double) ABCX model, which “has guided hundreds of studies over the five past decades” (Lavee, 1997, p. 1). With the ABCX theory of family stress and crisis, Hill (1949, 1958) attempted to explain families’ (mal-) adjustments and adaptations to stressful events, represented by war separation and reunion. McCubbin and Patterson (1983) refined this model by adding that families struggle with the pile-up of stressors and that preconditions (or functioning) are important precursors to subsequent post conditions (or functioning), which resulted in the Double ABCX model. The model has been applied to divergent situations and in spite of suggested revisions or modifications made by researchers, the basic assumptions and elements (i.e., the A (stressors), B (resources), C (perceptions and appraisals), and X (consequences or outcomes)) remain unchanged, that is, families’ adaptations in times of stressful situations can be predicted by the event(s), families’ perceptions of the event(s), and families’ available resources. The X component of the model (i.e., families’ adaptations, or crisis) is often operationalized in terms of stress, strain, or disorganization. Hence, despite its continual application and its strengths, the theory falls short in explaining or describing interpersonal relationship processes in times of stress or the effects of stress on relationship outcomes (Lavee, 1997). The Family Stress Model of Conger and colleagues (Conger, Rueter, & Conger, 2000) provides a

valuable replenishment in specifying the relation between distress and relationship outcomes. This model postulates that families or couples experiencing difficulties may become emotionally distressed, which ultimately adversely affects relationship satisfaction. Although the model originally focused on economic difficulties, it may also apply to other types of stressful events, such as job-induced separations, or military deployments in particular.

Advancing the work of Hill, McCubbin made significant contributions to **family resilience theory** (e.g., McCubbin & McCubbin, 1996). “A resilience lens shifts perspective from viewing distressed families as damaged to seeing them as challenged, affirming their potential for repair and growth” (Walsh, 2006, p. 3, 4). Resilience can be defined as the ability or capacity to rebound from major life stressors to a level of functioning equal to or better than before (Van Breda, 2001; Walsh, 2006; Wiens & Boss, 2006). In short, resilience theory focuses on individual- or family-level outcomes after exposure to significant risk, and the protective mechanisms (or factors) that prevent adverse outcomes. These factors influence whether families will be resilient while under pressure or vulnerable to the stress of the event (i.e., the separation) (Wiens & Boss, 2006). The close linkages between family resilience theory and family stress theory have been illustrated by Patterson (2002). Briefly worded, the important elements of both perspectives are (a) certain stressors, demands, or risks families experience, (b) families’ perceptions (stress theory) or meanings (resilience theory) of the event/stressor/demand, and (c) families’ resources or protective mechanisms related to (d) the outcomes.

The theories were not specifically developed to describe the work-family process (e.g., they predominantly focus on the family domain), but can be useful in describing the impact of work (e.g., placing demands) on family (Adams, Jex, & Cunningham, 2006). A theory that provides additional understanding of work and family relationships and “builds on the conceptual strength of the ABCX model” (Schumm, Vranceanu, & Hobfoll, 2004, p. 35) is the Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989; 2001; see also Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), which is a comprehensive stress model postulating that “resource loss is the principal ingredient in the stress process” (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 337). The Conservation of Resources theory presumes that the

perceived or actual loss of valued resources as well as the lack of resource gain will produce stress (Hobfoll, 1989). It is suggested that stressful events or circumstances, such as interrole conflict, are likely to threaten one's resources and therefore produce stress and strain outcomes in varying contexts, i.e., individual-, non-work- or family-, and work-related contexts.

Even though **theories on single parenting** –just as family stress and resilience theory– also focus on the adjustment and adaptation of family members, theoretical insights regarding single parenting add to the foregoing in specifically addressing the absence (or addition) of a person in the household, which considerably changes the family structure (Ihinger-Tallman, 1986). This particularly pertains to military deployments as these create temporary single parent households. Corresponding to family stress and resilience theory, factors involved in the restructuring and adjustment process relate, among others, to families' perceptions and resources. The contributions of the theoretical perspectives on single parenting for this study lay in its differentiation between parents' (i.e., the residential and/or nonresidential – temporarily– single parent) and children's adjustments and their interrelations.

Finally, theoretical insights in the field of **military sociology** provide a significant basis for studying work and family relations in military contexts. In particular, this study relies upon perspectives regarding the institutional/occupational features of the military (Moskos, 1977, 1986) and the framework of viewing the military and the family as greedy institutions (Segal, 1986, 1989) (see section 1.1), which, up till now, remain important founders for much of the research in the field.

Together, the theories –briefly outlined in the foregoing, but put forward in more detail in the following chapters– provide a valuable and comprehensive framework for studying military families in the course of military-induced separations from the different perspectives brought forward in the research questions (section 1.2.3).

1.2.6 *Definition of key concepts*

The research questions and analytical framework have put forward some key concepts that herewith will be defined in order to provide intelligibility about what in this study is understood by:

Active verbal interactions: engaging in open, constructive, and in-depth verbal communications. This includes, among other things, sharing experiences, involving the partner in discussions, and inquiring how the partner feels (inspired by Coyne & Smith's concept of active engagement; see also Story & Bradbury, 2004).

Adjustment: the ability to meet the demands (face the challenges) placed upon the family while maintaining positive functioning, in terms of social and emotional well-being, interpersonal relationships, and attitudes and behaviors towards the organization (Booth, et al., 2007).

Children's adjustment: lack of health, behavior, and interaction problems (Ihinger-Tallman, 1986).

Distress: “an unpleasant or disorganized state which arises from an actual or perceived imbalance in family functioning and which is also characterized by a multidimensional demand for adjustment or adaptive behavior;” (...) “stress becomes distress when it is subjectively defined as unpleasant or undesirable by the family” (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983, p. 9, 10).

Reconciliation: partners reestablishing a close relationship, adjusting, harmonizing after temporary separations.

Relationship satisfaction: the subjective evaluation of satisfaction with multiple aspects of the dyadic relationship with one's significant other (i.e., partner). Aspects of intimate relationships refer, among other things, to needs being met, conflict resolution, leisure time, communication, intimacy, and role responsibilities (Fowers & Olson, 1993).

Resilience: the ability or capacity to rebound from major life stressors to a level of functioning equal to or better than before (Van Breda, 2001; Walsh, 2006; Wiens & Boss, 2006).

Social support: the relations people have with others from which they derive help and assistance and through which they fulfill needs. This includes, for instance, advice or information, and emotional and tangible assistance.

Stress: “a state which arises from an actual or perceived demand-capability imbalance in the family’s functioning and which is characterized by a multidimensional demand for adjustment or adaptive behavior” (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983, p. 9).

Stressors: demands or life events impacting upon the family that produces, or has the potential of producing changes in the family system (McCubbin & Patterson, 1983).

Turnover intentions: the degree to which the employee thinks about leaving or is planning to leave the current workplace.

Well-being: the subjective evaluation of a (physically and psychologically) positive and sustainable state (McAllister, 2005).

Work-family conflict: “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect.” That is, participation in one domain is made more difficult by virtue of participation in the other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). More specifically, in this study, we refer to the degree to which military job demands interfere with family life.

1.2.7 *Research approach*

To gather knowledge and data on the study object (i.e., military families), various sources have been applied. Apart from literature (e.g., books, journal articles, scientific papers) –which contains relevant information, such as theoretical insights and empirical findings– and documents (e.g., policy documents, research reports), the main data were provided by people. Service members, partners, and parents were asked to participate in the study and served as respondents, providing information regarding their experiences, perceptions, opinions, and thoughts. Service members and their partners also served as informants (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 1999), providing information regarding their children as an alternative to collecting data among children themselves. The latter is complex and requires special skills and techniques, given that it may be difficult for children –especially the younger ones– to express and formulate their experiences. Parents are assumed to be capable of conscientiously providing information regarding their children's conditions. Therefore, it was decided to collect information on children through parents' reports.

Three parallel lines of data collection were conducted:

Part I: Collecting quantitative data among service members and their partners by sending questionnaires before, during, and after deployments. Given that much of the existing knowledge relies on cross-sectional data, sometimes relying on retrospective measurements, there was a need for repeated assessments and concurrent data collection. Therefore, a panel research design was employed, comprehending whole cycles of deployment, that is, during the preparation phase, the separation phase, and the reconciliation phase after reunion (with a four to five months time lag between each data wave). This design enabled us to take into account scores on the variables at each time (i.e., during each phase of the deployment) and to examine within-person changes over time. Although a major advantage of survey research is the ability to collect data among a large amount of people, disadvantages can also be identified, including the impersonal nature of questionnaires and the limited depth as a result of standardized questions and answers (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 1999). Part II has been initiated to meet these drawbacks to some extent.

Part II: Collecting (additional) qualitative data by interviewing a randomly selected subsample of the aforementioned partners. The qualitative interview data served to enrich the quantitative survey data, by providing more depth, examples, and explanations. The interviews were semi-structured as the questionnaires guided the conversation, but respondents were left free to add and elucidate things and to bring up subjects they wanted to share (subjects which, in some cases, had not been anticipated).

Part III: Collecting quantitative data among service members' parents by sending questionnaires after their son's or daughter's return. Given that the experiences of parents regarding their child's deployments have rarely been studied before, a cross-sectional design was employed as this was expected to produce a satisfactory amount of valuable (and new) information to start with.

1.2.8 *The sample*

The respondents in this study were all involved in deployments to either Bosnia-Herzegovina or Afghanistan in 2006. At the onset of this study, a large number of Dutch military service men and women participated in the international peacekeeping force in the Balkan (Bosnia-Herzegovina; European Union Force, or EUFOR). The armed forces had sent military personnel to this area for over ten years and the security situation had become relatively stable. Right after the start of this study, at the beginning of 2006, the national government decided to send Dutch troops to the international peace support operation in the southern province of Afghanistan, Uruzgan (Task Force Uruzgan, or TFU, which is part of the international ISAF operation). The security situation of this mission area differs substantially from the one in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Service members increasingly face ambushes and violent attacks and families are confronted with numerous worrisome reports in the media.

Given that these two missions were the ones to which the largest numbers of Dutch military personnel were deployed at that time, it was decided to limit the data collection to these two missions, from each of which two rotations were included, that is, EUFOR 4, 5, and TFU 1, 2. Respondents were selected on the basis of the following

criteria: a) military personnel listed to participate in one of the aforementioned rotations, and b) who had registered their partner and/or their parent as contact person. Initially, 911 service members and partners (i.e., couples) met the selection criteria, all of whom were sent a questionnaire. However, 44 addresses appeared to be incorrect as the envelopes returned unopened, resulting in a corrected sample frame of 867. Various reasons caused reduced sample frames at the subsequent data waves, including –in sequence of occurring most– refusal to participate, cancelled or delayed deployments, unreachability (e.g., as a result of moving house during data collection procedures), dissolved relationships just before the deployment or during data collection procedures, both partners being deployed, repatriation of the service member, partners not being Dutch (language problems in filling out the questionnaires that were in Dutch), and two service members had deceased in the course of data collection procedures (and we believed it was not appropriate to send follow-up questionnaires to the families).³ The questionnaires for service members at the second data wave (i.e., during the deployment) were sent to the mission area. As we were not able to locate all the service members in the mission area, the number of service members included in the sample frame at time 2 (i.e., 788) was slightly less than the number of partners (832). Additionally, the aforementioned criteria brought forward 2000 parents, of whom 1098 completed and returned the questionnaire. Table 1.1 presents an overview of the respondents in this study.

The first part of the table presents the numbers of partners and service members to whom questionnaires were sent before, during, and after the deployment, the numbers of partners and service members who returned the questionnaire, the number of couples that participated in each data wave (in parentheses), and the response rates among partners and service members at each time. In all, 4624 questionnaires have been sent, of which 1913 completed questionnaires have been returned, resulting in an overarching response rate of 41 per cent. Despite the fairly large number of respondents participating in this study, the table also displays that this study suffered from attrition, which is a long-recognized problem in longitudinal research (Deeg, 2002).

Table 1.1
Overview of respondents

	Sample frame		Response			Response percentage	
	Partners	Service members	Partners	Service members		Partners	Service members
<i>T1 (before)</i>	867	867	453	303	(284)	52.2%	34.9%
<i>T2 (during)</i>	832	788	386	353	(198)	46.4%	44.8%
<i>T3 (after)</i>	635	635	235	183	(162)	37.0%	28.8%
Total	2334	2290	1074	839		45.2%	36.2%
	4624		1913			41%	
<i>Participation in multiple data waves</i>	T1 & T2		T2 & T3		T1 & T3	T1, T2, & T3	
	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>P</i>
	297	176	174	130	192	111	153
	Sample frame		Response			Response percentage	
	<i>Parents</i>		<i>Parents</i>			<i>Parents</i>	
	2000		1098			54.9%	

Note. Number of couples in parentheses; *P* = partners, *S* = service members; T1 & T2 = number of partners or service members who participated during the first and second data wave, T2 & T3 = number of partners or service members who participated during the second and third data wave, and so on.

Doing research on military families is assumed to be even more difficult compared with civilian families, among other things because of the difficulties locating and accessing these families, the specific conditions in which they engage, and the amount of media and research attention to military personnel and their families as a result of which they feel reticent about filling out questionnaires or are just research-tired. Moreover, repeatedly asking participants to invest time and efforts during a challenging situation that requires all their time and efforts brings along the risk of respondent dropping out in the course of data collection procedures. The lower number of service members participating at time 1 compared with time 2 (usually, the first data wave produces the highest amount of respondents) can be explained by the time at which the first questionnaires were sent, that is, just within one month prior to departure. This was unavoidable given the processing and completion of the address lists of to-be-deployed military personnel and their contact persons (after which we received a copy), which is usually finished just a few weeks before departure. These last few weeks before actually leaving are filled completely with training and preparations. Several partners who filled out the first questionnaire wrote down that their partners (i.e., the service members) were not able to complete their questionnaires, simply because they lacked the time. Furthermore, the decline in participation among service members and partners at time 3 is presumably due to research tiredness among the participants or to the sudden attention to this study in the media just before this final data wave (see also section 1.3).

The second part of the table displays the numbers of partners and service members who participated in multiple data waves. For various reasons –of which some have been described in the foregoing– it is very likely that respondents have not filled out the questionnaire at a certain time. Additionally, respondents may not have filled out all questions presented to them in the questionnaire. Both phenomena cause missing data. In the analyses, we have applied the method of pairwise deletion, which means that observations that had a missing value that was needed for the particular calculation were excluded. The SEM⁴ computer program Amos does not use such methods for incomplete data and computes maximum likelihood estimates even in the presence of missing data (Arbuckle, 2005; Kline, 2005). Therefore, in conducting

structural equation modeling analyses, we preferred to include all observations, rather than using methods such as listwise or pairwise deletion or data imputation.

Finally, the third part of the table reports on the response among service members' parents, who received a questionnaire one month after their son's or daughter's return. Appendix B provides a more detailed demographic description of the samples of service members, partners, and parents. The average age of the parents is 54 and participating mothers are in the majority. More often than not, they have a son deployed and the average age of their deployed child –who mostly is not their only child– is 26. For the greater part, the service members (i.e., the parents' deployed children) are enlisted men and, on average, they serve the military for six years. Little more than half of the parents had not experienced a deployment before, a quarter had experienced a deployment once before, and about one-fifth had experienced a deployment of their son or daughter at least twice before. The average duration of the current separation was five months.

Regarding service members and partners, the samples predominantly include male service members and female partners. The proportion male and female service members in this study somewhat differs from the aforementioned percentages among the entire military personnel of the Dutch armed forces, that is, 91 per cent male and 9 per cent female (section 1.1.2). This can be explained by not having samples fully representative of the entire population because of the focus on couples, that is, service members who are engaged in serious relationships (which was one of the selection criteria). This research is predominantly explanatory; therefore, the generalization question is less vital, given that relations among phenomena are assumed to be relatively stable when comparing diverse samples (Philipsen, 1969). Furthermore, on average, the service members and partners are in their thirties and little more than half of them have children and are married. The majority of partners being employed indicates a large number of two-income families. Given our focus on the missions EUFOR and TFU, which are predominantly filled with Army personnel, this study principally reports on Army families. Enlisted men are in the minority, about half of the respondents are noncommissioned officers, and nearly one third are commissioned officers. For over a quarter of the service members and partners this

was their first deployment, about one third had experienced a deployment once before, and forty per cent of them had experienced a deployment at least twice before. The average duration of the current separation was five months.

As was mentioned before, it is very likely that service members and partners have not filled out a questionnaire at a certain point in time (e.g., some respondents expressed that the preparations took up all their time and attention, being unable to fill out the questionnaire; others expressed such reasons during the separation; and some might just have dropped out along data collection procedures). As a result, the composition of the samples might slightly differ between the data waves. For instance, Table B.1 in Appendix B reveals that particularly the respondents without children, the ones who are not married, and the enlisted service members are somewhat underrepresented at time 3 compared with time 1. We have tested whether the scores of service members and partners who dropped out along data collection procedures (i.e., who participated in the first data wave but did not in the final data wave) differed significantly from retained respondents' scores on the study variables. They did not, except for service members' levels of turnover intentions at time 1, which were significantly higher among the group that dropped out compared with the group that stayed in the study (chapter 6 deals with this in more detail; see page 208).

Considering the specific conditions in which military families engage, this study did not include a control group. Although such study designs enable researchers to more evidently assign findings (effects) to the deployment, it is extremely difficult to carry out in samples of military families. Ideally, people should be randomly selected and assigned to each of the groups (the deployment-group or the control group), which is not possible in these conditions. Moreover, people/families in both groups should be identical (or as similar as possible), except for the deployment. Given the rising frequency of military deployments at present, currently nondeployed service members are likely to anticipate a deployment in the nearby future or may just have returned from one; they may not be deployed because of social-medical reasons; or they may be employed in nonoperational functions and therefore have very dissimilar working conditions. All this is very likely to affect their scores, making it very hard to obtain an unbiased control group. Previous research, conducted among partners of

Dutch service members, employing a cross-sectional design with a control group (Ambaum, 1999) revealed that partners of deployed service members reported significantly less stressors and stress disorders than did partners of nondeployed service members! However, the researcher urged on caution while interpreting these results because of a possible selection-effect and emphasized the need for research that includes an a-select sample of partners of deployed service members; which underlines the difficulty of employing such research designs in these contexts.

1.3 Dealing with sensitive topics

We were conscious of the intimate nature of the family (see section 1.1.2) and the sensitive nature of certain subjects that were raised in this research –subjects one might be reluctant to share (in particular the theme on relationship quality) yet were inevitably linked to the research questions we attempted to answer. Therefore, this research was conducted after carefully considering all possible sensitivities and drawbacks and how to manage these. As mentioned before, the family is perceived a private institution and knowledge about the family and family functioning is limited to what individual family members are willing to share. Hence, family members were approached with prudence and were told that participation in this study was voluntary. The questionnaires were sent with an enclosed letter that conveyed the purpose and course of the study, stressed the importance of filling out the questionnaires independently, emphasized that participation in this study was voluntary, and urged on the anonymous and confidential processing and analyses of the data. In the questionnaires, it was repeated (at several places) that one was free to participate in the study, free (not) to answer any question that was presented, and that anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed. Moreover, the questions regarding relationship functioning were presented at the end of the questionnaire, taking the view that people who agreed to participate in the study but were unwilling to fill out these questions would just leave these items unanswered. The instruments that were used –including the ones that hold the most delicate questions– are derived from previous international scientific research, conducted in civilian and military contexts.

Initially, identification codes were assigned to the questionnaires sent to service members and partners as it was imperative, in order to follow the respondents (and assess within-person changes) over time, to match the data of the three measurements. Using identification codes (i.e., giving respondents a numerical designation) is a commonly used procedure in longitudinal research (Lee, 1993). The identification codes in this study were devised and solely known by the researcher. By using an invented code, rather than soldiers' registration numbers for instance, there were no chances that answers could be traced back to identifiable individuals. The codes solely allowed the researcher to re-contact respondents on subsequent data waves to send follow-up surveys and to link the data completed by the same individuals collected during the different data waves. The key was kept in a separate and secure place, accessible only by the researcher. The purpose of the identification codes was expounded in the accompanying letter. However, as a consequence of the sudden attention to this study in the media and parliament in the midst of data collection procedures (i.e., between the second and third data wave), we had to decide to remove a number of questions from the final questionnaires, including the identification codes. In order to still be able to realize one of the main objectives of this study (i.e., to examine how perceptions of work-family conflict, relationships, and attitudes and behaviors towards the organization evolve in the course of military-induced separations; thus, to examine within-person changes over time), we had to match the respondents on key demographic variables, such as age, number and age of the children (if applicable), length of the intimate relationship, number of prior deployments, and so on. Only when all variables appeared equivalent and exclusively one solution was possible, data from time 3 were matched to data from time 1 and time 2.

About one year after completing the data collection procedure, by the time that the data had been analyzed, information packages have been sent to each family on the initial address list (i.e., couples and parents). No distinction was made between the ones who had participated in the study and the ones who had not –with the exception of those who had made known that they did not want to be approached anymore. The information packages informed the families about the findings of the study.

Moreover, a presentation has been given to the general staff of Defense to report findings and points of interest.

1.4 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are two major criteria that provide an indication of the quality of the study. Several indicators determine the validity of the study –that is, the extent to which the study actually measures what it attempts to measure– and several strategies have been applied improving the validity of this study. The use of international scientific scales and operationalizations positively influences the construct validity, referring to the degree to which a variable and the instrument used to measure the construct capture the concept it is intended to measure. The scales applied in this study have been widely used and proven to be valid and reliable in diverse settings. For some scales, shortened versions have been used in order to limit the length of the questionnaires. Estimates of the internal consistencies of the scales used in this study are calculated and reported in the following chapters (an overview of the scales and the corresponding Cronbach alpha coefficients is provided in Appendix C). Furthermore, several types of triangulation have been used to enhance the validity of the research findings, including theoretical triangulation (using multiple theoretical viewpoints), data source triangulation (using multiple data sources: literature, documents, people; service members, partners, fathers, mothers), methodological triangulation (using multiple methods to collect data: quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data), and investigator triangulation (multiple investigators have conducted the interviews).

Internal validity involves the causality of the relationships found, that is, the degree to which the independent variables actually produce the observed outcome and alternative explanations can be ruled out. Causality is a very delicate phenomenon and extremely difficult to ascertain. In this study, we are interested in the interrelations among certain variables (within and across time frames, if applicable). The models we test are based on theoretical insights, but even theorized cause and effect has its constraints in describing the nature and direction of relations (see

chapters 2 and 6). Prudence is imperative in establishing unidirectional cause and effect relations. Longitudinal designs have the advantage of providing some information regarding the relations between variables over time. Nevertheless, we sought to be very careful in adopting ‘causal language’. On the basis of the findings of this study, we cannot assert that an independent variable causes the outcome, rather we strive for providing information about how the variables interrelate.

External validity refers to the degree to which the sample is representative of the population and to which the findings of the study can be generalized to other persons in other places at other times. This has already been discussed in section 1.2.8. One should be conscious of the Dutch conditions in which this study has been conducted. For example, the maximum duration of military deployments in the Netherlands armed forces is six months, which is very different from the deployment duration in the United States, for instance, which can run up to 15 months. Nevertheless, being aware of certain specific conditions of the samples, we believe the findings of this study provide knowledge not only to (other) military families, but to a larger population of individuals and families. Given the increasing incidence of organizations expanding activities globally, more and more families are confronted with job-induced separations. These families find themselves faced with the challenges of managing work and family demands and family (re)adjustments as a result of family separation and reunion. It would be interesting to examine whether replication of this study among military families in other places and times and families confronted with job-induced separation in other occupational groups produces similar results.

1.5 Thesis outline

The five substudies, each addressing one of the research questions that were presented in section 1.2.3, are elaborated in the chapters 2 up to 6. Each chapter revolves around military families’ experiences in the course of military-induced separations from a different perspective, that is, partners, children, parents, couples, and service members –examining corresponding variables of interest.

Chapter 2 examines quantitative data collected among partners of military personnel at the three points in time: before, during, and after service members' absences. Structural equation modeling was used to test a model, simultaneously assessing the relations between work-family conflict, psychological distress, relationship satisfaction, and social support in the course of the separation.

Chapter 3 delineates the experiences of children and their parents in the course of service members' deployments and examines the factors that predict children's adjustment difficulties during parental absence and upon reunion. Hence, this chapter comprises a descriptive and a predictive part (employing multiple regression analyses). Quantitative and qualitative data were used, collected among partners and service members with children, before, during, and after the separation.

Chapter 4, then, throws light upon service members' parents' experiences during their son's or daughter's deployment. This chapter is somewhat of a stranger in the midst of this research due to its cross-sectional research design and its focus (which is, apart from worries, social supports, and parent-child relationships, strongly directed to legitimacy and support for the military and its operations). This is described in more detail in chapter 4. Quantitative data have been collected just after the service members' returns. The chapter is predominantly descriptive, but contains a predictive part as well (using multiple regression analyses).

Chapter 5 centers upon couples' patterns of reconciliation following reunion and the process of sustaining the intimate relationship during the separation through active verbal interactions. Quantitative data used were collected among service members and partners during and after the separation. Additionally, qualitative data were collected among a subsample of the partners. The descriptive part of the study delineates couples' communication patterns during and after the separation just as couples' reconciliation experiences afterwards. The predictive part (using multiple regression analyses) examines the degree to which these communications affect reconciliation processes and evaluations of the relationship following reunion.

Subsequently, chapter 6 examines quantitative data collected among service members at the three points in time, that is, before, during, and after their absences. Structural equation modeling was used to test a model, simultaneously assessing the relations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of the separation. Together chapters 2 to 6 provide an answer to the central research question formulated in section 1.2.3. Chapter 7 describes the main findings and provides a general conclusion of the study. The chapter, moreover, reflects on the study (and its findings), and describes theoretical considerations, practical implications, and avenues for future research.

Figure 1.2 presents an overview of the thesis. As the chapters are written as independent articles, submitted for publication in international books or journals, some overlap might occur (for instance, regarding descriptions on data collection procedures), just as some inconsistencies in terminology. In some chapters, grey text boxes have been added, which serve to provide additional information –relevant to this thesis– that was not part of the original texts submitted for publication.

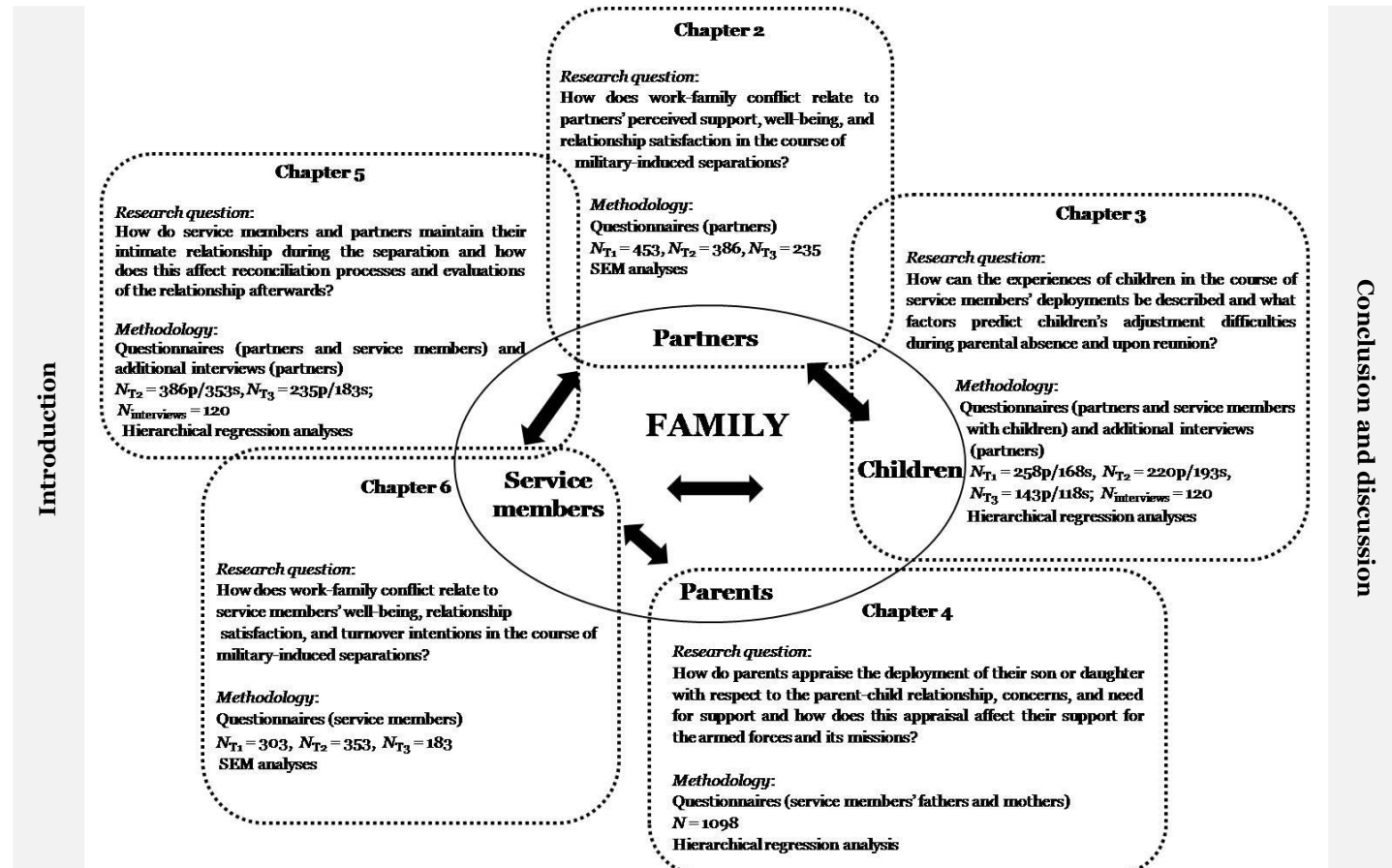


Figure 1.2 Thesis overview

References

- Adams, G. A., Jex, S. M., & Cunningham, C. J. L. (2006). Work-family conflict among military personnel. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life. The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family*. Westport: Praeger.
- Adler, A. B., Bartone, P. T., & Vaitkus, M. A. (1995). *Family stress and adaptation during a U.S. Army Europe peacekeeping deployment*. U.S. Army Medical Research Unit, Europe.
- Adler, A. B., & Golembe, E. H. (1998). *The impact of Optempo on soldiers and families*: U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Research report 25.
- Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 5, 278-308.
- Alpass, F., Long, N., MacDonald, C., & Chamberlain, K. (1999). The Moskos institutional-occupational model: Effects of individual work related perceptions and experiences in the military. *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 27, 67-80.
- Ambaum, J. (1999). *Stress bij partners van uitgezonden militairen*. Den Haag: Militair Psychologische Sociologische Dienst.
- Arbuckle, J. L. (2005). Amos 6.0 user's guide. SPSS Inc.
- Aryee, S. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict among married professional women: Evidence from Singapore. *Human Relations*, 45(8), 813-837.
- Bartone, J. V., & Bartone, P. T. (1997). *American army families in Europe: Coping with deployment separation*. Brussels: Royal Military Academy.
- Booth, B., Segal, M. W., Bell, D. B., Martin, J. A., Ender, M. G., Rohall, D. E., & Nelson, J. (2007). *What we know about Army families: 2007 update*: Report prepared for the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command by Caliber.
- Brinkel, T., Moelker, R., & Westmaas, S. (2009). Politiek-militaire betrekkingen. Recente ontwikkelingen met betrekking tot het primaat van de politiek

- [Political-military relations. Recent developments with relation to the primacy of politics]. In R. Moelker, J. Noll & M. De Weger (Eds.), *Krijgsmacht en samenleving. Over de inzet van een geweldsinstrument: bestuurlijke, politieke en veiligheidsaspecten* (pp. 163-189). Amsterdam: Boom
- Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., & Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military life style demands on well-being, Army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society*, 33(1), 43-58.
- Casper, W. J., Eby, L. T., Bordeaux, C., Lockwood, A., & Lambert, D. (2007). A review of research methods in IO/OB work-family research. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(1), 28-43.
- Castro, C. A., Adler, A. B., & Britt, T. W. (Eds.). (2006). *Military life. The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family*. Westport: Praeger.
- Conger, K. J., Rueter, M. A., & Conger, R. D. (2000). The role of economic pressure in the lives of parents and their adolescents: The family stress model. In L. J. Crockett & R. K. Silbereisen (Eds.), *Negotiating adolescence in times of social change* (pp. 201-223). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Coser, L. (1974). *Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment*. New York: Free Press.
- Coyne, J. C., & Smith, D. A. (1991). Couples coping with a myocardial infarction: A contextual perspective on wives' distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 404-412.
- Dandeker, C., French, C., Birtles, C., & Wessely, S. (2006). *Deployment experiences of British Army wives before, during and after deployment: Satisfaction with military life and use of support networks*. Paper presented at the NATO RTO-MP-HFM-134 symposium on "Human dimensions in military operations". Brussels, Belgium. from <http://ftp.rta.nato.int/public//PubFullText/RTO/MP/RTO-MP-HFM-134//MP-HFM-134-38.pdf>
- De Graaf, P. M., & Kalmijn, M. (2006). Divorce motives in a period of rising divorce: Evidence from a Dutch life-history survey. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(4), 483-505.

- De Waard, E. J., & Kramer, F. J. (2008). Tailored task forces: Temporary organizations and modularity. *International Journal of Project Management*, 26(5), 537-546.
- Deeg, D. J. H. (2002). Attrition in longitudinal population studies: Does it affect the generalizability of the findings? An introduction to the series. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 55, 213-215.
- Delveaux, S., & Moreau, P. (2008). *Soutien psychosocial des proches du personnel participant à des opérations (gestion des crises, aides humanitaires) 2007-2008*. Gent University, Belgium.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., & Bulters, A. J. (2004). The loss spiral of work-pressure, work-home interference and exhaustion: Reciprocal relations in a three-wave study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64, 131-149.
- Dijkers, J. S. E. (2008). *Work-home interference in relation to work, organizational, and home characteristics*. Tilburg University, Tilburg.
- Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Bramsen, I., Adèr, H., & Van der Ploeg, H. M. (2005). Secondary traumatization in partners and parents of Dutch peacekeeping soldiers. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 19(2), 217-226.
- Dykstra, P. A. (2004). *Het zit in de familie* Oratie: Universiteit van Utrecht. Also in: *Bevolking en Gezin*, 33(1), 3-28.
- Dykstra, P. A., & Komter, A. (2004). Hoe zien Nederlandse families eruit? *Demos, bulletin over bevolking en samenleving*, 20(10), 74-78.
- Eagle, B. W., Miles, E. W., & Icenogle, M. L. (1997). Interrole conflicts and the permeability of work and family domains: are there gender differences? *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 168-184.
- Ender, M. G. (2005). Military brats. Film representations of children from military families. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(1), 24-43.
- Figley, C. R. (1993a). Coping with stressors on the home front. *Journal of Social Issues*, 49(4), 51-71.
- Figley, C. R. (1993b). Weathering the storm at home: War-related family stress and coping. In F. W. Kaslow (Ed.), *The military family in peace and war* (pp. 173-190). New York: Springer.
- Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(2), 176-185.

- Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1992). Prevalence of work-family conflict: Are work and family boundaries asymmetrically permeable? *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(7), 723-729.
- Galinsky, E., Bond, T., & Friedman, D. E. (1996). The role of employers in addressing the needs of employed parents. . *Journal of Social Issues*, 52, 111-136.
- Gelles, R. J. (1995). *Contemporary families: A sociological view*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Grandey, A. A., & Cropanzano, R. (1999). The Conservation of Resources Model applied to work-family conflict and strain. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 350-370.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2001). Consequences of work-family conflict on employee well-being over time. *Work & Stress*, 15(3), 214-226.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Ensher, E. A. (2001). An examination of work and personal life conflict, organizational support, and employee health among international expatriates. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25, 261-278.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *The Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76-88.
- Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., Singh, R., & Parasuraman, S. (1997). Work and family influences on departure from public accounting. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 249-270.
- Hill, R. (1945). The returning father and his family. *Marriage and Family Living*, 7(2), 31-34.
- Hill, R. (1949). *Families under stress*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hill, R. (1958). Generic features of families under stress. *Social Casework*, 49, 139-150.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513-524.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2001). The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: Advancing conservation of resources theory. *Applied Psychology: An international review*, 50(3), 337-421.
- Ihinger-Tallman, M. (1986). Adjustment in single parent families: Theory building. *Family Relations*, 35(1), 215-221.

- Kalmijn, M. (2007). Explaining cross-national differences in marriage, cohabitation, and divorce in Europe, 1990-2000. *Population Studies*, 61(3), 243-263.
- Kalmijn, M. (2008). De toegenomen aandacht voor dynamiek in de sociale wetenschappen en het tekort aan panelsurveys [The increased attention to dynamics in social sciences and the shortage of panelsurveys] *Dynamiek in de sociale statistiek. Nieuwe cijfers over de sociaaleconomische levensloop* (pp. 11-22). Voorburg/Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Kinnunen, U., & Mauno, S. (1998). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict among employed women and men in Finland. *Human Relations*, 51(2), 157-177.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (second ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kossek, E. E., & Ozeki, C. (1999). Bridging the work-family policy and productivity gap: A literature review. *Community, Work & Family*, 2(1), 7-32.
- Kümmel, G. (2003). A soldier is a soldier is a soldier!? The military and its soldiers in an era of globalization. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 417-433). New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.
- Lavee, Y. (1997). *Beyond ABCX: Understanding changes in marital relationships under stress*. Paper presented at the Theory Construction and Research Methodology Workshop, National Council on Family Relations, Arlington.
- Lee, R. M. (1993). *Doing research on sensitive topics*. London: Sage Publications.
- Manigart, P. (2003). Restructuring of the armed forces. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 323-343). New York: Kluwer.
- Manigart, P., & Fils, J.-F. (2006). *The Belgian concept of social-psychological support of families of military personnel deployed in crisis response operations*. Paper presented at the NATO RTO-MP-HFM-134 symposium on "Human dimensions in military operations". Brussels, Belgium. from <http://ftp.rta.nato.int/public/PubFullText/RTO/MP/RTO-MP-HFM-134/MP-HFM-134-37.pdf>
- Martin, J. A. (2000). Afterword: The changing nature of military service and military family life. In J. A. Martin, L. N. Rosen & L. R. Sparacino (Eds.), *The military family. A practice guide for human service providers* (pp. 257-270). Westport: Praeger.

- McAllister, F. (2005). *Wellbeing concepts and challenges*. London: Discussion paper prepared for the Sustainable Development Research Network (SDRN).
- McCubbin, H. I., Dahl, B. B., & Hunter, E. J. (Eds.). (1976). *Families in the military system*. Beverly Hills/London: Sage.
- McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983). The family stress process: the Double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. In H. I. McCubbin, M. B. Sussman & J. M. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and developments in family stress theory and research*. (pp. 7-37). New York: The Haworth Press.
- McCubbin, M. A., & McCubbin, H. I. (1996). Resiliency in families: A conceptual model of family adjustment and adaptation in response to stress and crisis. In H. I. McCubbin, A. I. Thompson & M. A. McCubbin (Eds.), *Family assessment: Resiliency, coping and adaptation: Inventories for research and practice* (pp. 1-64). Madison: University of Wisconsin.
- Moelker, R. (2000). Geschiedenis van de thuisfrontzorg [History of family support]. *Kernvraag*, 123(1), 9-17.
- Moelker, R., Ambaum, J., Overbeek, E., & Schipper, M. (1999). Beter luisteren, meer sex? [Better listening, better sex?]. *Militaire Spectator*, 168(2), 98-104.
- Moelker, R., Andres, M. D., & Poot, G. (2008). Supporting military families. In A. Weibull & B. Abrahamsson (Eds.), *The heritage and the present. From invasion defence to mission oriented organization*. (pp. 243-268). Karlstad: Swedish National Defence College.
- Moelker, R., & Cloïn, G. (1996). Gezinnen bij uitzending [families during deployment]. In R. Moelker (Ed.), *In-, door- en uitstroom van personeel* (Vol. 6, pp. 43-60).
- Moelker, R., & Cloïn, G. (1996). Tussen twee gulzige instituties [Between two greedy institutions]. *Maatschappij en Krijgsmacht*, 17-21.
- Moelker, R., Poot, G., Andres, M. D., Jelusic, J., Juvan, J., Parmar, L., et al. (2008). News from the home front: Communities supporting military families. In G. Caforio, G. Kümmel & Bandana (Eds.), *Armed forces and conflict resolution: Sociological perspectives*. (pp. 187-214): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2002). *Partneronderzoek. Wat partners vinden van de uitzending van hun militair. [Partner research. How partners feel about the deployment of their soldier]*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Gedragswetenschappen
- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2003). Military families and the armed forces. A two sided affair? In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 201-223). New York: Kluwer.
- Molenschot, C. J. M. (2003). *Kwaliteit van de relatie tijdens de reïntegratiefase. Een onderzoek naar de kwaliteit van de relatie tijdens het eerste jaar na thuiskomst van UNPROFOR-veteranen [Relationship quality during the reintegration phase. A study into the quality of relationships in the first year following the return of UNPROFOR-veterans]*. Utrecht University, Utrecht.
- Moskos, C. C. (1977). From institution to occupation. Trends in military organization. *Armed Forces & Society*, 4(1), 41-50.
- Moskos, C. C. (1986). Institutional/occupational trends in armed forces: An update. *Armed Forces & Society*, 12, 377-382.
- Moskos, C. C., & Wood, F. R. (1988). *The military: more than just a job?* New York Pergamon-Brassey's
- Nuciari, M. (2003). Models and explanations for military organization: An updated reconsideration. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 61-85). New York: Kluwer.
- Op den Buijs, T., Andres, M. D., & Bartone, P. T. (2010). Managing the well-being of military personnel and their families. In J. Soeters, P. Van Fenema & R. Beeres (Eds.), *Managing Military Organizations. Theory & practice*. London: Routledge (in press).
- Patterson, J. M. (2002). Integrating family resilience and family stress theory. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 349-360.
- Philipsen, H. (1969). *Steekproeven*. Oratie: Leiden.
- Premeaux, S. F., Adkins, C. L., & Mossholder, K. W. (2007). Balancing work and family: A field study of multi-dimensional, multi-role work-family conflict. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28, 705-727.

- Richardson, R., Bosch, J., & Moelker, R. (2007). Diversity in the Dutch armed forces. In J. Soeters & J. Meulen van der (Eds.), *Cultural diversity in the armed forces. An international comparison*. (pp. 200-214). New York: Routledge.
- Rode, J. C., Rehg, M. T., Near, J. P., & Underhill, J. R. (2007). The effect of work/family conflict on intention to quit: The mediating roles of job and life satisfaction. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.
- Rosen, L. N., & Durand, D. B. (2000). Coping with the unique demands of military life. In J. A. Martin, L. N. Rosen & L. R. Sparacino (Eds.), *The military family. A practice guide for human service providers* (pp. 55-72). Westport: Praeger.
- Rosen, L. N., Teitelbaum, J. M., & Westhuis, D. J. (1993). Stressors, stress mediators, and emotional well-being among spouses of soldiers deployed to the Persian Gulf during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 23(19), 1587-1593.
- Schumm, J. A., Vranceanu, A., & Hobfoll, S. E. (2004). The ties that bind: Resource caravans and losses among traumatized families. In D. R. Catherall (Ed.), *Handbook of stress, trauma, and the family* (pp. 33-50). New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Segal, D. R., & Segal, M. W. (Eds.). (1993). *Peacekeepers and their wives*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Segal, M. W. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society*, 13(1), 9-38.
- Segal, M. W. (1989). The nature of work and family linkages: A theoretical perspective. In G. L. O. Bowen, D.K. (Ed.), *The organization family: Work and family linkages in the US military* (pp. 3-36). New York: Praeger.
- Segal, M. W., & Harris, J. J. (1993). *What we know about army families*. Alexandria: U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.
- Segal, M. W., & Segal, D. R. (2003). Implications for military families of changes in the armed forces of the United States. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 225-233). New York: Kluwer.
- Soeters, J., & Bos-Bakx, M. (2003). Cross-cultural issues in peacekeeping operations. In T. W. Britt & A. B. Adler (Eds.), *The psychology of the peacekeeper. Lessons from the field*. (pp. 283-298). Westport: Praeger.

- Soeters, J., & Van der Meulen, J. (Eds.). (2007). *Cultural diversity in the armed forces. An international comparison*. . New York: Routledge.
- Soeters, J., Winslow, D. J., & Weibull, A. (2003). Military culture. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 237-254). New York: Kluwer.
- Story, L. B., & Bradbury, T. N. (2004). Understanding marriage and stress: Essential questions and challenges. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, 1139-1162.
- Van Breda, A. D. (2001). *Resilience theory: A literature review*. Pretoria, South Africa: South African Military Health Service.
- Veenhoven, R. (1999). Quality-of-life in individualistic society. A comparison of 43 nations in the early 1990's. . *Social Indicators Research*, 48, 157-186.
- Verschuren, P., & Doorewaard, H. (1999). *Designing a research project*. Utrecht: Lemma.
- Voydanoff, P. (2002). Linkages between the work-family interface and work, family, and individual outcomes: An integrative model. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(1), 138-164.
- Voydanoff, P. (2005). Social integration, work-family conflict and facilitation, and job and marital quality. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 666-679.
- Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience* (Second ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Westman, M. (2001). Stress and strain crossover. *Human Relations*, 54(6), 717-751.
- Wiens, T. W., & Boss, P. (2006). Maintaining family resiliency before, during, and after military separation. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life: The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family*. Westport: Praeger.
- Wisher, R. A. (2003). Task identification and skill deterioration in peacekeeping operations. In T. W. Britt & A. B. Adler (Eds.), *The psychology of the peacekeeper. Lessons from the field*. (pp. 91-109). Westport: Praeger.

Notes

- ¹ <http://statline.cbs.nl/StatWeb/publication/?VW=T&DM=SLNL&PA=37312&D1=a&D2=a,!1-4,!6-7&HD=090817-1334&HDR=G1&STB=T>
- ² Source: Netherlands Ministry of Defense, Behavioral Sciences Services Centre, The Hague. The numbers or percentages of military personnel engaged in a serious relationship and / or having children are unknown to the researchers.
- ³ These are non response reasons announced to the researchers. For the greater part, reasons for initial nonresponse and panel attrition are unknown. Appendix A provides a more elaborate overview of the nonresponse.
- ⁴ Structural equation modeling.

Standing strong together.

***A longitudinal study into social support,
work-family conflict, psychological distress,
and relationship satisfaction
in the course of job-induced separation.****

* Andres, M.D., Moelker, R., & Soeters, J. Standing strong together. A longitudinal study into social support, work-family conflict, psychological distress, and relationship satisfaction in the course of job-induced separation. Manuscript submitted for publication in *Community, Work & Family*.

The authors would like to thank drs. Jurgen Gruson (Netherlands Defense Academy) for his feedback on an earlier draft of this chapter.

Abstract

Although more common in today's globalizing world, little is known about how work affects family life in the course of job-induced separation. The present study tests a model, simultaneously assessing the relations between work-family conflict, psychological distress, relationship satisfaction, and social support at three time periods (using SEM analyses). Partners of Dutch military personnel were followed along the stages of deployment and filled out questionnaires preceding the service members' departures ($N = 453$), just past midway the separation ($N = 386$), and again after reunion ($N = 235$). The results reveal that relationship satisfaction declined slightly but significantly in the course of the separation. Perceived conflict between one's partner's job demands and family life is an important antecedent to relationship satisfaction, which is partly mediated by psychological distress. Moreover, distress during the separation affects relationship satisfaction afterwards. Furthermore, this study demonstrates the unequivocal (direct and indirect) beneficial effects of social support from relatives, friends, and others. In addition to the hypothesized relations, we have found that higher levels of work-family conflict before the separation predict lower levels of perceived social support during the separation. The results of this study provide knowledge to researchers, organizations, and families who are confronted with job-induced separations.

2.1 Introduction

As the interconnectedness of work and family life is no longer subject to debate, there is an increasing interest as to how to combine these two essential domains in life so that they can be *allies* (providing enrichment) rather than *enemies* (producing conflict) (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). Although work can be rewarding in diverse ways (e.g., financially, socially, emotionally) (Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1988), there is considerable evidence that demands or conditions of the work environment can adversely affect the employee, such as causing distress, emotional difficulties, or even disrupted family relationships. Moreover, work may not only put stress on the employee, it may also affect the family or partner (Jackson & Maslach, 1982; Jackson, Zedeck, & Summers, 1985; Roberts & Levenson, 2001). For instance, “work schedules that involve unusual hours or extended business-related travel [are] likely to put stress on family relationships and to create disagreements between spouses over child care and housework” (Angrist & Johnson, 2000, p. 41). Apart from this, it can also create disagreement over the time spent together. Thus, “experiences and conditions encountered in the workplace can influence the intimate relationship of the worker and the worker’s spouse” (Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996, p. 62). In particular, this may apply to families who are confronted with job-induced separations. Various jobs in different industries and occupations involve job-induced absences from the family (e.g., oil platforms workers, fishermen, and expatriates). Likewise, military personnel and their families frequently have to deal with temporary separations. However, absence on the basis of military deployment differs from the foregoing in being more life threatening for soldiers and causing more stress for the families. Although a deployment can be hazardous to a greater or lesser extent, separation in itself is considered a stressful experience that requires (re)adjustments from all those involved, both during the separation and after reunion.

Hence, the military not only exerts pressures on its personnel, but also on their families (see also Kohen, 1984). Segal (1986) applied Coser’s (1974) concept of greedy institutions to both the military and the family. Generally, the family may even be greedier than before, in view of the socio-demographic changes that have occurred

over the past decades. In many countries, including the Netherlands, the number of dual-income families has grown and equally divided household and childcare responsibilities are quite common nowadays. The latter is not feasible when one partner is absent for a considerable period of time. Considering this as well as the rising frequency of deployments, the question of how to combine and integrate a professional career and family life in such a way that tensions are manageable becomes even more interesting. After all, tensions between work and family life are neither beneficial for organizations nor families.

As far as we know, only few studies have focused on job-induced separations and intimate relationships (e.g., Fisher, 1998; Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992; Roehling & Bultman, 2002) and the existing knowledge mainly relies on research employing cross-sectional designs, sometimes applying retrospective measurements. The present study extends previous research in several ways. First, employing a longitudinal design with matched data enables us to examine within-person changes over time. Moreover, assessing conditions at the very moment they occur prevents bias that occurs as a consequence of asking respondents about past perceptions. Prestressor conditions usually are difficult to measure, as it is hard to predict when a stressful event will occur. The context of job-induced separations, and in particular military deployments, sets conditions to study the effects of work-family issues on the intimate relationship in the course of temporary separations. Second, we focus on perceptions of interference of one's partner's job demands with family life, which differs from many previous studies assessing the outcomes of the absence, such as combat-related stress, affecting the intimate relationship. Examining the extent to which the demanding features of one's partner's job affect one's relationship satisfaction is important to a larger population of individuals and families who are confronted with job-induced separations.¹ Third, we include social support into the model, thereby aspiring to contribute to present knowledge, which holds inconclusive findings regarding the role of social support.

Aiming at enhancing the understanding of the impact of interference of one's partner's job demands with family life (i.e., work-family conflict) in the course of job-induced separation, the following research questions guided this study: (a) to what extent does work interfere with family life in the course of job-induced separation, (b) what are the relations with partners' psychological distress and relationship satisfaction, and (c) what is the role of social support?

The context of this study took definite shape when the Dutch government decided to deploy a large number of military service(wo)men to Uruzgan, a province in southern Afghanistan, contributing to NATO's International Security Assistance Force, in February 2006. The mission is an extensive one in a hazardous area, with ambushes and violent attacks by Taliban forces. Nowadays, at any given moment, in total over 2,000 Dutch servicemen and women are deployed to mission areas all over the world, such as Afghanistan, Congo, Chad, and Bosnia. As a result of the increased participation in international peacekeeping missions, military personnel and their families are more often confronted with military-induced separations, and, therefore, work-family conflict seems inevitable.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Consistent with recent articles in the field (e.g., Hill, 2005; Voydanoff, 2002), family stress theory and family resilience theory –which have close linkages (see for instance Patterson, 2002)– provide the theoretical foundation for this study. It is a useful framework for understanding individual and family related outcomes during stressful or challenging situations and the factors that affect these outcomes, as well as their interrelations. Regarding family stress theory, we rely in particular on the (double) ABCX Model (Hill, 1949; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) and the Family Stress Model (Conger, Rueter, & Conger, 2000). In short, the ABCX model posits that the interplay of a stressor (A), a family's available resources (B), and the family's perception of the stressor (C) affect X (i.e., crisis or distress). The double ABCX model expands this theory by adding the effects of the piling up of stressors (Aa), resources (Bb), and perceptions of the stressors (Cc). The interplay of A(a), B(b), and C(c) may function

either favorably (e.g., adaptation promoting) or unfavorably (e.g., crisis inducing). More specifically, the Family Stress Model of Conger and his colleagues (Conger, et al., 2000) postulates that families or couples experiencing difficulties may become emotionally distressed, which ultimately negatively affects relationship satisfaction. Although the model originally focused on economic difficulties, it may also apply to other types of stressful events. Family resilience is about “doing well in the face of adversity” (Patterson, 2002, p. 350). Family resilience theory focuses on family-level outcomes after exposure to significant family risk, and the protective mechanisms that prevent adverse outcomes.

Drawing upon this theoretical framework, this study considers: (a) job-induced separation (the condition in which this study has been conducted) as the main stressor; (b) partners’ perceived work-family conflict as perception (stress theory) or meaning (resilience theory) of the stressor, that is, all participants experience the same stressor, or demands from their partners’ job (i.e., the deployment), but the degree to which they feel the job demands interfere with their family life (i.e., work-family conflict) will vary; (c) partners’ available social support as main resource (stress theory) or protective factor (resilience theory) preventing them from adverse outcomes; and (d) certain outcomes, in this study, we focus on relationship satisfaction and the mediating effects of psychological distress.

This theoretical framework has led us to formulate the following hypotheses (depicted in Figure 2.1):

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Hypothesis 1:</i> | Levels of work-family conflict are positively related to levels of psychological distress. |
| <i>Hypothesis 2:</i> | Psychological distress is negatively related to relationship satisfaction. |
| <i>Hypothesis 3a:</i> | Work-family conflict adversely affects relationship satisfaction directly. |
| <i>Hypothesis 3b:</i> | Work-family conflict adversely affects relationship satisfaction indirectly via increased levels of psychological distress. |

- Hypothesis 4a:* Social support indirectly enhances relationship satisfaction by reducing levels of work-family conflict.
- Hypothesis 4b:* Social support indirectly enhances relationship satisfaction by reducing levels of psychological distress.
- Hypothesis 4c:* Social support directly enhances relationship satisfaction, regardless of levels of work-family conflict or psychological distress.

These hypotheses will be elaborated in the following sections.

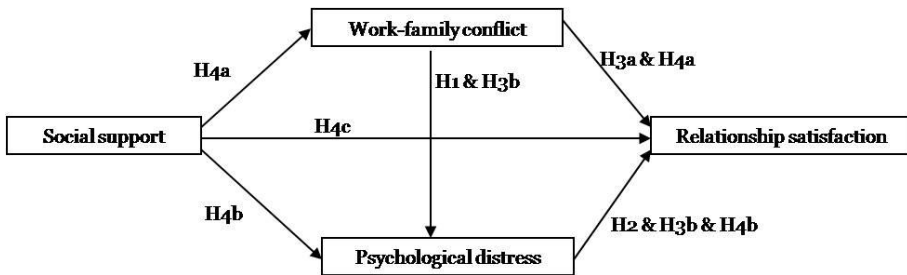


Figure 2.1 Hypothesized relations among variables

The hypothesized relations presented in Figure 2.1 form the principal model in this study, which will be tested longitudinally in order to assess the relations among the variables within and across time frames. Moreover, the longitudinal model enables us to take into account reports on social support, work-family conflict, psychological distress, and relationship satisfaction in preceding time frames, representing the cumulative effects (the piling up) suggested by the double ABCX model. We propose that levels of psychological distress before the separation partly account for levels of psychological distress during the separation. Hence, our final hypotheses are:

- Hypothesis 5:* Levels of perceived social support at one time period are positively related to levels of perceived social support at subsequent time periods.
- Hypothesis 6:* Levels of work-family conflict at one time period are positively related to levels of work-family conflict at subsequent time periods.
- Hypothesis 7:* Levels of psychological distress at one time period are positively related to levels of psychological distress at subsequent time periods.
- Hypothesis 8:* Levels of relationship satisfaction at one time period are positively related to levels of relationship satisfaction at subsequent time periods.

All variables have been assessed at Time 1 (before the separation) and Time 3 (after reunion). Time 2, however, does not include the dependent variable, since the partners were physically separated at this time. Our proposed longitudinal model is presented in Figure 2.2.

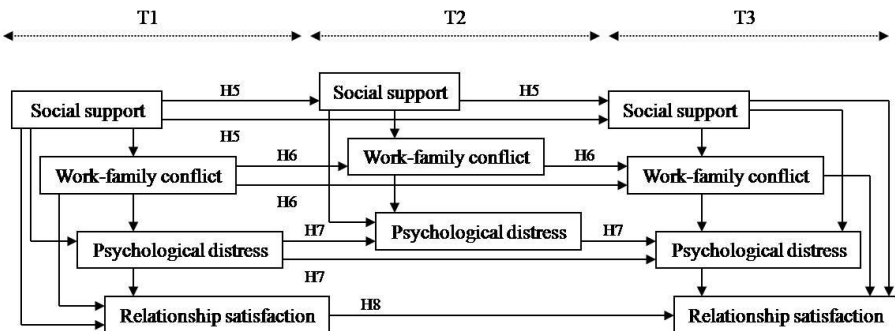


Figure 2.2 Proposed longitudinal model ²

2.3 Literature review

2.3.1 Work-family conflict

Various mechanisms have been identified through which work affects family life and vice versa (for an elaborate description see Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). Both work and family are demanding, yet these demands are not always compatible. The competing demands of work and family have been identified as an important link between work experiences and family functioning (Matthews, et al., 1996). Conflict between work and family life has been defined as “a form of interrole conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). It is considered a multidimensional construct (Rode, Rehg, Near, & Underhill, 2007), distinguishing work roles interfering with family roles (work-family conflict, or WFC) from family roles interfering with work roles (family-work conflict, or FWC). Many researchers have demonstrated positive relationships between job and family stressors and conflict between work and family demands (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Ilies, et al., 2007; Vinokur, Pierce, & Buck, 1999). Generally, it is assumed that work-family conflict is produced by features of the work environment (i.e., job stressors, such as long working hours), whereas family stressors, such as having children, may underlie family-work conflict. Yet, there is some evidence suggesting both job stress and family stress produces work-family conflict (e.g., Westman & Etzion, 2005). For our purposes, we focus exclusively on work-family conflict, that is, the extent to which military job demands interfere with family life.

Three forms of conflict between work and family life can be identified. First, conflict may arise when performing demands in one domain is time consuming to such a degree that it impedes role performance in the other domain. This is referred to as *time-based conflict*. The military profession is characterized by frequent separation from the family due to exercises or deployment. These events absorb the entire service member’s time for an extensive period of time, thus interfering with “the rhythm of family life” (Matthews, et al., 1996, p. 63) and hampering the service member from spending time with the family. Second, *strain-based conflict* occurs when meeting the demands of one domain produces strain that complicates meeting

the demands of the other domain. Thus, irrespective of work being time-consuming, one's job can be stressful and the employee might arrive home exhausted or tensed, being unable to adequately fulfill family duties. Finally, *behavior-based conflict* concerns behavior developed in one domain interfering with the behavior that is required to properly perform role responsibilities in the other domain (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). For instance, one's job can involve certain rules of conduct, such as strictly obeying orders, which may be considered undesirable in family life.

The outcomes of work-family conflict are diverse (e.g., Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Durand, Burrell, Stetz, & Castro, 2003). A large body of research focuses on job-related outcomes, such as job dissatisfaction, work-related withdrawal behaviors, and intention to quit (Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Rode, et al., 2007), which is beyond the scope of this study. Another extensive line of research is directed at health outcomes of perceived conflict between job and family demands (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001; Noor, 2003; Vinokur, et al., 1999). The effects of work-family conflict on the intimate relationship, on the other hand, have been investigated less (Matthews, et al., 1996; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999).

2.3.2 Work-family conflict, psychological distress, and relationship satisfaction

In general, "growing evidence indicates that stressful environments affect marriages" (Story & Bradbury, 2004, p. 1140; see also Neff & Karney, 2004). More specifically, in recent years, more and more concerns have been expressed about rising divorce rates in the military (e.g., McCone & O'Donnell, 2006), in particular, as a result of military deployments. Therefore, the effect of deployment on the intimate relationship of military personnel and their partners is of increasing interest. However, research shows divergent results. For instance, using ten years of service personnel records (1996-2005) of the entire United States' military, Karney and Crown (2007) conducted a study into the effects of deployment on divorce rates (i.e., marital status) and found that, except for enlisted members and officers in the active Air Force, "effects of deployment were either insignificant or beneficial—i.e., those deployed more days while married were at significantly lower risk of subsequent marital

dissolution” (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. 158). To the contrary, Burrell, Adams, Durand, and Castro (2006) showed that separations were negatively related to spouses’ marital satisfaction (and well-being). Moreover, in a study conducted among families of Gulf War soldiers, Angrist and Johnson (2000, p. 41) found that deployment led to “a large and statistically significant increase in divorce rates.” These effects, however, only apply to female soldiers, suggesting that “deployment of female soldiers was stressful for marriages, while the wives of deployed men were able to adapt to their husbands’ absences” (Angrist & Johnson, 2000, p. 55). Gimbel and Booth (1994), who focused on veterans, studied the ways in which combat decreases marital quality and stability. Their results revealed that combat indirectly affects the intimate relationship through antisocial behavior or through combat-related stress resulting in antisocial behavior. By using questions of a retrospective nature, Solomon et al. (1992) interviewed wives of Israeli Lebanon War veterans about their relationship at four points in time: at marriage, before the war, shortly after the war, and six years after the war. Results demonstrated that wives of veterans with combat stress reactions “reported significant reductions in marital cohesion and satisfaction and an increase in conflict during the immediate post-war period” (Solomon, et al., 1992, p. 323). However, reports regarding the final time period suggested that relationships steadily returned to pre-war levels. Accordingly, considering the emotional cycle of deployment (DeSoir, 2000; Logan, 1987; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994; Vormbrock, 1993), family relationships are presumed to have stabilized around three months after reunion.

Studies that investigated the ways in which work-family conflict affects the intimate relationship often focused on the indirect nature of the relationship, mediated through variables such as psychological distress (Matthews, et al., 1996; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). This is consistent with hypotheses 1 up to 3 of the present study. Conflict between the competing demands of work and family life can distress workers and spouses in diverse ways. Duties preventing individuals from adequately fulfilling family responsibilities or preventing them from spending time together with the family can produce feelings of discord in both partners. Matthews et al. (1996) have shown that work-family conflict is related to psychological distress of both the employee and the partner. Others have demonstrated the effects of husbands’ job

demands, or job stressors, on wives' distress (Jones & Fletcher, 1993; Rook, Dooley, & Catalano, 1991). This distress, in turn, "may make an individual a less desirable marriage partner, thus lowering the couple's marital quality" (Matthews, et al., 1996, p. 65). Some studies exclusively found support for the mediated model (Matthews, et al., 1996; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). In Mauno and Kinnunen's (1999) study among Finnish dual-earner couples, work-family conflict affected marital satisfaction via its effects on job exhaustion and psychosomatic symptoms.

2.3.3 The role of social support

Many researchers already emphasized the beneficial effects of social support (Cutrona & Russell, 1987; Patterson, 2003; Unger & Powell, 1980) in decreasing the impact of stress. In relation to work-family conflict and its consequences, social support can have a direct, indirect, or a moderating (buffering) effect (Daalen, 2008). First of all, the direct-model is built on the assumption that social support and stressors act independently from one another. Thus, social support will (positively) affect the outcome variable regardless of the levels of perceived work-family conflict. In contrast, the indirect-model assumes that social support indirectly affects the outcome of the stressor by reducing the strength of the stressor (Daalen, 2008). Various studies have demonstrated that social support reduces reports of work-family conflict (Ciabattari, 2007; Premeaux, Adkins, & Mossholder, 2007; Wadsworth & Owens, 2007), which in turn will affect levels of relationship satisfaction. Finally, the stress-buffering model assumes that social support reduces the impact of stressful experiences and, therefore, acts as a moderator.

This means that people with higher levels of social support experience the impact of work-family conflict on relationship satisfaction less strongly. It is stated that the stress-buffering model "assumes that social support is only effective under high stress conditions" (Daalen, 2008, p. 23), which may explain the significant number of recent studies that failed to find this buffering effect.

Although, generally, researchers agree on the beneficial effects of social support, the three theoretical models described above as well as inconclusive findings in previous studies regarding the role of social support indicate that unanimity is lacking, and the role of social support is still under debate. In this study we focus on the direct and indirect effects of social support (see hypotheses 4a, b, and c).

2.4 Method

2.4.1 Sample and procedure

Data used in this study were part of a more extensive longitudinal study of military families, focusing on a wider range of topics. Participants were selected via the military personnel department on the basis of the following criteria: (a) service members participating in either the European Union Force (EUFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina or the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) in Afghanistan in 2006, who (b) have their partner registered as contact person. The first criterion clearly defined the target population, whereas the second brought out those service members engaged in serious relationships.

The longitudinal study includes three measurements: preceding the separation (Time 1), approximately halfway through the deployment (Time 2), and three months after reunion (Time 3). Initially, 911 partners met the inclusion criteria, all of whom were sent a questionnaire. However, 44 envelopes were misdirected and returned unopened, which resulted in an initial sample size of 867. In the course of data collection procedures, partners were excluded from further data collection when –in sequence of occurring most– they refused to participate (and announced that to us), the deployment was cancelled or delayed, both partners were deployed, the relationship was ended just before the deployment, or the participant lived abroad. This reduced the sample frame to 832 at Time 2 and 635 at Time 3. The questionnaires were directed to the partners and sent to their home addresses. An accompanying letter was enclosed, which explained the purpose and course of the study and emphasized confidentiality.

At the first data wave, a total of 453 partners returned the questionnaire, resulting in a response rate of 52.2 per cent. At the second data wave, 386 partners agreed to participate and 235 partners filled out the final questionnaire, resulting in response rates of 46.4 and 37.0 per cent respectively. “The maintenance of respondents in a longitudinal study is a long-recognized problem” (Deeg, 2002, p. 213) and likewise, this study suffered from attrition. It is even more difficult to contact military families than civilian families and repeatedly asking participants to invest time and efforts during a challenging situation that requires all their time and efforts brings along the risk of respondent drop out in the course of data collection procedures. Scores of partners who dropped out along data collection procedures (i.e., who participated in the first data wave but did not in the final data wave) did not differ significantly from retained respondents’ scores on the study variables (see Appendix G). Special multivariate estimation methods are available in the computer program AMOS as a result of which maximum likelihood estimates can be computed even in the presence of missing data (these methods for incomplete data are even found to generally outperform traditional methods) (Arbuckle, 2005; Kline, 2005). For this reason, we preferred to include all observations in the analyses, rather than using methods such as listwise or pairwise deletion or data imputation.

The sample is nearly fully composed of women (97 per cent), who have relations with enlisted men (24 per cent), noncommissioned officers (48 per cent), or officers (28 per cent). The partners’ mean age is 33 years ($SD = 9.35$) and they are engaged in long-term relationships, with an average length of 11 years ($SD = 8.53$). Little more than half of them are married (59 per cent) and have children (57 per cent), with on average two children living at home. The majority of the partners (85 per cent) are employed, which indicates a large number of two-income families. On average, the respondents have experienced a deployment at least once before and the average duration of the current separation is five months.

2.4.2 Measures

The questionnaires mainly contained validated scales, a limited number of newly-constructed items, and additional items to assess demographic variables.

Work-family conflict (WFC). The extent to which military personnel's job demands conflict with family life was measured by the Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, et al., 1996). This short, self-report measure, consisting of five items, assesses the degree to which job demands interfere with family responsibilities (e.g., "The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life"). Given that this study focused on the partners of military personnel, the items required slight wording modifications (e.g., 'my work' was changed into 'my partner's work'). The scale included the elements 'general demands', 'time-based' and 'strain-based conflict' and the items were constructed as traditional 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scores were summed, with high scores indicating high levels of conflict between military personnel's job demands and family life. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the work-family conflict scale in the current study were .87 at time 1, .86 at time 2, and .86 at time 3, indicating good internal consistencies of the scales.³

Psychological distress. We have used the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg, 1992) to assess levels of psychological distress. It is a measure for "detecting psychological strain in the general population" (Kalliath, O'Driscoll, & Brough, 2004: 11). The Dutch edition of the shortened version GHQ-12 (Koeter & Ormel, 1991) was included in the questionnaires (e.g., "Feeling unhappy and depressed"). Responses were given on a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 (e.g., *not at all*) to 4 (e.g., *much more than usual*). Higher scores are associated with higher levels of distress. We recoded the scores to a 0 to 3 scale, which enabled us to compare them with standards that report scores between 11 and 12 as typical, scores of 15 or above as evidence of emotional problems, and scores of 20 or above as signs of severe distress. Cronbach alpha coefficients were .84 at time 1, .84 at time 2, and .85 at time 3, indicating good internal consistencies of the scales.

Social support. The overall level of social support available to the partners was measured through the Social Provisions Scale (Cutrona & Russell, 1987). Because of the length of the questionnaire, we used a shortened form of the scale (containing 7 items), including items of the guidance, attachment, and reliable alliance subscales (e.g., “There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it”). Items were responded to on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. Negatively worded items were reversed, so that higher scores reflect higher amounts of social support available. The Cronbach alpha coefficients were .77 at time 1, .64 at time 2, and .77 at time 3, indicating acceptable internal consistencies of the scales measured at time 1 and 3, the internal consistency of the scale measured at time 2 was somewhat lower.

Relationship satisfaction. We used Fowers and Olson’s (1993) ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale to measure satisfaction with different aspects of the relationship (e.g., “I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts”). Answers were given on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and negatively worded items were reversed, so that higher scores reflect higher levels of satisfaction. During data collection procedures, two items had to be removed so that 13 items remained at the final data wave. Additionally, we removed the one item referring to parenting status as it decreased the *N* dramatically (i.e., “I am not satisfied with the way we handle our responsibilities as parents”). For the purpose of comparability of the data, all further data analyses were performed with the remaining 12 items. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scale were .85 at time 1 and .87 at time 3, indicating good internal consistencies of the scales.

2.5 Results

2.5.1 Descriptive results

Table 2.1 presents means, standard deviations, ranges, and intercorrelations among the variables at the three data waves. Moreover, we have performed repeated measures tests to assess whether significant changes have occurred over time.

Table 2.1*Descriptives and intercorrelations among the study variables at Time 1, Time 2, and Time 3*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Time 1</i>														
1. Relationship satisfaction	50.07	7.16	421	26 – 60										
2. Psychological distress	11.81	4.79	446	4 – 36	-.26**									
3. Work-family conflict	13.02	4.83	448	5 – 25	-.23**	.33**								
4. Social support	31.53	4.11	446	14 – 35	.24**	-.22**	-.17**							
<i>Time 2</i>														
5. Psychological distress	12.72	4.95	375	3 – 35	-.12*	.52**	.27**	-.16**						
6. Work-family conflict	13.70	5.35	377	5 – 25	-.21**	.29**	.61**	-.11	.36**					
7. Social support	29.49	4.17	374	17 – 35	.12	-.15**	-.20**	.50**	-.28**	-.21**				
<i>Time 3</i>														
8. Relationship satisfaction	46.31	7.26	218	24 – 60	.55**	-.29**	-.30**	.29**	-.17*	-.24**	.25**			
9. Psychological distress	11.29	5.00	233	3 – 36	-.28**	.49**	.34**	-.19**	.59**	.29**	-.26**	-.47**		
10. Work-family conflict	13.65	4.28	235	5 – 25	-.28**	.40**	.61**	-.13	.25**	.62**	-.22**	-.33**	.29**	
11. Social support	29.57	4.07	230	14 – 35	.19*	-.19**	-.23**	.50**	-.26**	-.12	.49**	.35**	-.26**	-.16*

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

The means display fairly high levels of relationship satisfaction ($M_{T1} = 50.07$, $SD = 7.16$; $M_{T3} = 46.31$, $SD = 7.26$). Yet, a paired-samples t-test revealed that levels of relationship satisfaction decreased significantly from time 1 to time 3 [$t(168) = 8.10$, $p < .01$]. The eta squared statistic (.28) indicated a reasonably large effect size. Mean levels of psychological distress demonstrate that, before and after the separation, partners of deployed service members do not experience higher levels of distress than people in comparable groups in civil society experience, as was shown by the outcomes of the scores of the General Health Questionnaire that indicate scores between 11 and 12 as typical ($M_{T1} = 11.81$, $SD = 4.79$; $M_{T3} = 11.29$, $SD = 5.00$). During the separation, the mean level of distress slightly exceeds these bounds ($M_{T2} = 12.72$, $SD = 4.95$). One-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant effect for time [Wilks' Lambda = .93, $F(2, 144) = 5.56$, $p < .01$, multivariate eta squared = .07]. Further analyses displayed a significant decrease in levels of psychological distress from Time 2 to Time 3. Furthermore, the means demonstrate moderate levels of work-family conflict ($M_{T1} = 13.02$, $SD = 4.83$; $M_{T2} = 13.70$, $SD = 5.35$; $M_{T3} = 13.65$, $SD = 4.28$). Moreover, levels of work-family conflict did not change significantly over the course of the deployment, given that one-way repeated measures ANOVA did not reveal a significant effect for time. Finally, partners report to have high levels of social support available ($M_{T1} = 31.53$, $SD = 4.11$; $M_{T2} = 29.49$, $SD = 4.17$; $M_{T3} = 29.57$, $SD = 4.07$). One-way repeated measures ANOVA displayed a significant effect for time [Wilks' Lambda = .78, $F(2, 143) = 19.75$, $p < .01$, multivariate eta squared = .22]. Further analyses displayed significant lower levels of available support at Time 2 and Time 3 in comparison with Time 1.

The multiple reports on each variable are positively correlated across time (e.g., levels of psychological distress at Time 1 are positively related to levels of distress at Time 2 and Time 3). Furthermore, relations among the variables are displayed in expected directions. Higher levels of social support are related to lower levels of work-family conflict, lower levels of psychological distress, and higher levels of relationship satisfaction. Higher levels of perceived conflict between one's partner's job demands and family life (i.e., work-family conflict) are associated with higher levels of psychological distress and lower levels of relationship satisfaction. And higher levels of psychological distress are related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction.

Textbox

Before the deployment, 67 per cent of the partners were (very) satisfied with their relationship (i.e., scores were ≥ 4 on a scale from 1 to 5). Afterwards, this was 45 per cent. Among 18 per cent of the partners, relationships deteriorated (> -1 SD), whereas among 11 per cent, their relationship improved (> 1 SD) over the course of the deployment. 71 per cent of the relationships were fairly stable (within a margin of -1 SD and $+1$ SD).

While the majority of the partners experienced levels of psychological distress (before, during, and after the deployment) equal to –or even less than– people generally experience in everyday life, the scores of 26 per cent of the partners during the separation pointed to evidence of distress, of which 7 per cent indicated severe problems and psychological distress. Before the separation, these percentages were 18 and 5 percent. Afterwards, it was 15 and 4 per cent. Partners of enlisted (wo)men, experiencing an Afghanistan-deployment, who were not married, and were together less longer, reported higher levels of psychological distress.

On average, partners perceived that military job demands interfered with family life to a moderate degree. More specifically, 40 to 49 per cent experienced low levels of work-family conflict, 32 to 54 per cent experienced medium levels of work-family conflict, and one fifth (before and after) to a quarter (during) of the partners experienced high levels of work-family conflict over the course of the military-induced separation. Partners who had children, whose partner was currently sent to Afghanistan, and who had experienced a deployment at least once before reported higher levels of work-family conflict.

Family and friends were reported as most important sources of emotional and instrumental support. Additionally, fellow military families were valued in providing emotional support. As for information, the military organization (particularly before departure) and fellow military families (during and afterwards) are major sources of support.

The intercorrelations also display cross-time relations in unexpected directions. For instance, higher levels of relationship satisfaction at Time 1 are related to lower levels of work-family conflict at Time 2 and Time 3. And higher levels of psychological distress at Time 1 are associated with higher levels of work-family conflict at Time 2 and Time 3.

2.5.2 Test of the proposed model

We have tested the proposed longitudinal model (presented in Figure 2.2) using structural equation modeling with the method of maximum likelihood, which allows us to test all the hypothesized relations simultaneously. Multiple fit indices were used to test the adequacy of the model: i.e., the chi-square statistic, the root mean square error of approximation (*RMSEA*), the *PClose*, the comparative fit index (*CFI*), and the normed fit index (*NFI*). The multiple indices indicated that the model fitted the data well: $\chi^2 (15) = 23.97$, $p = 0.07$, $RMSEA = 0.03$, $PClose = 0.94$, $CFI = 0.99$, $NFI = 0.98$. However, the model had to be modified as several paths did not reach statistical significance and required deleting. Regarding within-time relations, social support was not associated with work-family conflict and psychological distress at Time 3. Regarding cross-lagged paths, only one path reached statistical significance, that is, from psychological distress at Time 2 to relationship satisfaction at Time 3. After the modifications (i.e., removing the insignificant paths), the fit indices showed a good model fit: $\chi^2 (31) = 36.63$, $p = 0.22$, $RMSEA = 0.02$, $PClose = 1.00$, $CFI = 0.99$, $NFI = .96$.

Subsequently, in addition to testing our hypothesized relations, we tested significant bi-variate cross-lagged relations that were displayed in the correlations table, but were not in hypothesized directions (e.g., the effect of psychological distress at Time 1 on work-family conflict at Time 2). The model demonstrated a good fit ($\chi^2 (18) = 18.90$, $p = 0.40$, $RMSEA = 0.01$, $PClose = 1.00$, $CFI = 1.00$, $NFI = .98$), however, no statistical significant effects were displayed, except for one. Levels of work-family conflict at Time 1 appeared to be significantly related to levels of social support at Time 2. Removing the insignificant paths resulted in the final model presented in Figure 2.3 (standardized solution). Multiple fit indices displayed an excellent fit of the model to the data ($\chi^2 (30) = 31.27$, $p = 0.40$, $RMSEA = 0.01$, $PClose = 1.00$, $CFI =$

1.00, $NFI = 0.97$). Given that adding the path from work-family conflict T1 to social support T2 significantly improved the fit of the model to the data ($\Delta\chi^2 = 5.36$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p = 0.02$) this relation is shown to be substantial.

First, the results demonstrate that levels of relationship satisfaction, psychological distress, work-family conflict, and social support considerably account for reports on the same construct in subsequent data waves, e.g., partners who report low levels of relationship satisfaction before the separation are likely to report low levels of relationship satisfaction afterwards ($\beta = .45$). Therefore, hypotheses 5 up to 8 are supported. Furthermore, at Time 1, work-family conflict is positively related to psychological distress ($\beta = .31$), which in turn adversely affects levels of relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.17$). Thus, higher levels of work-family conflict produce higher levels of distress and higher levels of psychological distress result in lower levels of relationship satisfaction, therefore supporting hypotheses 1, 2, and 3b. Moreover, work-family conflict also directly affects relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.16$), with higher levels of work-family conflict being associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction; supporting hypothesis 3a. Social support displays its beneficial effects in (a) reducing perceived work-family conflict ($\beta = -.16$), which in turn increases levels of relationship satisfaction, (b) reducing levels of psychological distress ($\beta = -.17$), which in turn promotes relationship satisfaction, and (c) directly enhancing relationship satisfaction ($\beta = .18$). Hence, at Time 1, our hypotheses have been supported. The variance explained in relationship satisfaction is 13 per cent.

At Time 2, similar relations are displayed. The strength of the relation between social support and psychological distress is identical to the one at Time 1 ($\beta = -.17$). Although, during the separation, social support also reduces levels of work-family conflict ($\beta = -.09$), which in turn diminishes levels of psychological distress ($\beta = .19$), the relations are less strong compared to Time 1. Furthermore, levels of psychological distress are related to levels of relationship satisfaction at Time 3. However, a suppressor effect is displayed (caused by psychological distress at Time 3), that is, while psychological distress at Time 2 has a weak negative correlation with relationship satisfaction at Time 3 (see Table 2.1), once psychological distress at Time 3 is taken into account, the nature of the relation changes from negative to positive.⁴

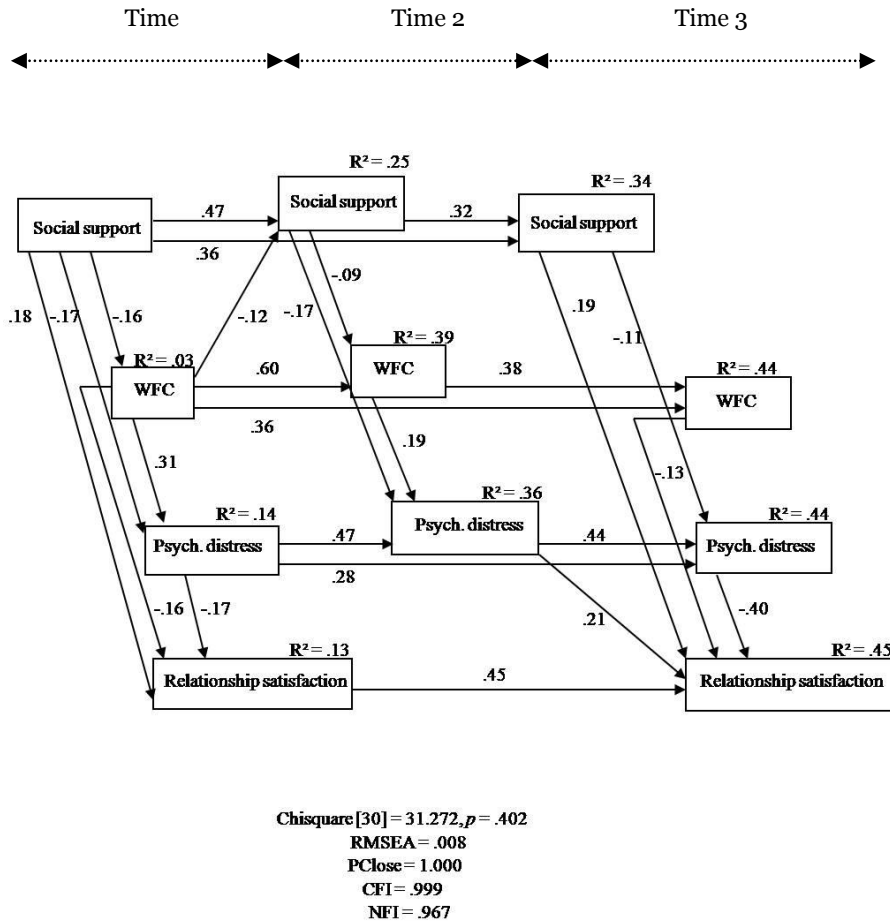


Figure 2.3 The effects of social support, work-family conflict, and psychological distress on relationship satisfaction in the course of job-induced separation (disturbances of endogenous variables are hidden for visual clarity)

At Time 3, the results display the direct effects of work-family conflict, psychological distress, and social support on relationship satisfaction. Thus, higher levels of work-family conflict are directly associated with lower levels of relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.13$), without resulting in increased levels of psychological distress. Higher levels of psychological distress are related to lower levels of relationship satisfaction ($\beta = -.40$). And higher levels of social support enhance levels of relationship satisfaction, both directly ($\beta = .19$) and indirectly via its effect on psychological distress ($\beta = -.11$). Therefore, at Time 3, hypotheses 2, 3a, 4b, and 4c have been supported, whereas the data show no support for hypotheses 1, 3b, and 4a. The variance explained in relationship satisfaction is 45 per cent.

Most of the cross-time relations among different constructs do not reach statistical significance in the model, presumably because they do not outweigh the within-time effects. The results, however, do reveal a statistically significant cross-time effect from work-family conflict at Time 1 to social support at Time 2, with higher levels of work-family conflict at Time 1 being related to lower levels of social support at Time 2 (which in turn is associated with higher levels of work-family conflict at Time 2).

2.6 Conclusion and discussion

This study examined the extent to which one's partner's job demands affect the intimate relationship in the course of job-induced separation and the effects of social support. Analyses of matched data of nondeployed spouses at three time periods revealed that, although on average relationships remain fairly strong, levels of relationship satisfaction declined significantly in the course of the separation. These findings provide knowledge on the impact of job-induced separation on intimate relationships, something that has frequently been debated, though has never been studied in this way before. Measurements of prestressor conditions at the very moment they occur are usually hard to obtain, given that stressful events rarely can be anticipated. The context of job-induced separation, and in particular military deployment, provided an excellent opportunity to study the effects on the intimate relationship. This knowledge is important, not only to military families, but to a

larger population of individuals and families who are confronted with job-induced separations, something that is more and more under discussion, especially in view of the globalizing world we are living in today. Although previous studies have discussed that intimate relationships change over the life course, changes that manifest in such a short period of time evidently must point to the impact of job-induced separation in some way.

Furthermore, the results demonstrated that perceptions of work-family conflict were moderate and did not change significantly over the course of the military-induced separation. Therefore, with the present data, we can not justify that a change in work-family conflict accounts for a change in relationship satisfaction. The data do demonstrate, however, that perceived conflict between one's partner's job demands and family life is an important antecedent to one's relationship satisfaction *within that time frame*. Before the separation, this relationship was partly mediated by psychological distress, whereas after reunion, only a direct effect was displayed. Although levels of relationship satisfaction before the separation strongly account for levels of relationship satisfaction afterwards –thus, irrespective of partners having relationship difficulties before the separation or being perfectly satisfied– work-family conflict adversely affects the intimate relationship.

Moreover, levels of psychological distress significantly dropped from Time 2 to Time 3. After reunion as well as before the separation, the participants do not experience higher levels of distress than people in comparable groups in civil society experience. However, levels of psychological distress adversely affect levels of relationship satisfaction *within and across time frames*, which is consistent with the Family Stress Model of Conger and his colleagues.

Perhaps most importantly, the results emphasize the unequivocal beneficial effects of perceived social support from relatives, friends, and others. Social support is found to a) reduce perceptions of work-family conflict, b) reduce levels of psychological distress, and c) enhance relationship satisfaction.⁵ Most studies on social support in the military focus on support for military personnel. Likewise, studies outside the military usually focus on employees and have emphasized the importance of family-

friendly work environments and supervisor support in helping employees meeting family needs (e.g., Ransford, Crouter, & McHale, 2008). This study contributes to these important findings by demonstrating the positive effects of social support from partners' (or families') informal social networks of relatives, friends, neighbors, and others. But, in the course of job-induced separation, levels of social support, although fairly high, were significantly lower during and after the separation in comparison with before. While not hypothesized, the results demonstrated that higher levels of work-family conflict before the separation account for lower levels of perceived support during the separation (which in turn is associated with levels of work-family conflict). Although a number of authors have discussed how such relationships –with a direction opposite to theorized cause and effect– might be explained (e.g., Sikora, Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2007), none of them has demonstrated that (and why) work-family conflict would precede levels of available social support. Our findings imply that one's perception of a stressor ('C' in the double ABCX model) may influence one's perception of available resources over time ('Bb'). Those who experience higher levels of work-family conflict before the separation may perceive a depletion of resources during the separation as they may feel that adequate support resources are not available. Such mental models of assessing one's situation and environment are familiar in social-psychology.

The findings of this study endorse family stress and family resilience theory as they demonstrate how perceptions and resources affect individual and family related outcomes in the condition of a stressful or challenging situation (or work condition). In this particular sample, resilient families can be characterized by having higher levels of available support and less negative perceptions of their partner's job demands. These families proved to be protected from adverse outcomes, as higher levels of social support and more positive perceptions of work-family conflict have beneficial effects on one's well-being and relationship satisfaction.

One thing that needs to be stressed is that our study almost exclusively included women. Future research regarding work-family conflict and relationship satisfaction in the course of job-induced separation should focus on how the experiences are intertwined with gender (Pitt-Catsouphe & Christensen, 2004). The study by Angrist and Johnson (2000) suggested that deployment of female soldiers was more stressful for relationships when compared to the deployment of male soldiers. However, our study demonstrates that work-related absence of men does affect levels of relationship satisfaction of their female partners. Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine whether replication of this study among families confronted with job-induced separation in other occupational groups produces similar results.

Finally, this study focused solely on the effects of one's partner's *job demands* on one's perceived relationship satisfaction, in the course of job-induced separations. Without doubt, there may be other factors that affect the intimate relationship in times of such separations. For instance, individuals may have changed through the experiences they have encountered during the separation. In this particular sample, service members may have experienced traumatic experiences, whereas nondeployed partners often report they have become more independent. These interpersonal changes will most likely affect the relationship between partners in some way. Future research should incorporate this.

In sum, with the present study we have demonstrated how perceptions of work-family conflict, levels of psychological distress, and levels of available support affect the intimate relationship in the course of job-induced separation. With the increasing numbers of families who are confronted with such separations nowadays, this should be a central focus to both researchers and organizations.

References

- Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 278-308.
- Angrist, J. D., & Johnson, J. H. (2000). Effects of work-related absence on families: Evidence from the Gulf War. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review, 54*(1), 41-58.
- Arbuckle, J. L. (2005). Amos 6.0 user's guide. SPSS Inc.
- Bedeian, A. G., Burke, B. G., & Moffett, R. G. (1988). Outcomes of work-family conflict among married male and female professionals. *Journal of Management, 14*(3), 475-491.
- Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., & Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military life style demands on well-being, Army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society, 33*(1), 43-58.
- Ciabattari, T. (2007). Single mothers, social capital, and work-family conflict. *Journal of Family Issues, 28*(1), 34-60.
- Conger, K. J., Rueter, M. A., & Conger, R. D. (2000). The role of economic pressure in the lives of parents and their adolescents: The family stress model. In L. J. Crockett & R. K. Silbereisen (Eds.), *Negotiating adolescence in times of social change* (pp. 201-223). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Coser, L. (1974). *Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment*. New York: Free Press.
- Cutrona, C. E., & Russell, D. W. (1987). The provisions of social relationships and adaptation to stress. *Advances in Personal Relationships, 1*, 37-67.
- Daalen, G. v. (2008). *Social support, does it make a difference? Examining the relationships between social support, work-family conflict and well-being*. Doctoral dissertation, Tilburg University, the Netherlands.
- Deeg, D. J. H. (2002). Attrition in longitudinal population studies: Does it affect the generalizability of the findings? An introduction to the series. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology, 55*, 213-215.

- DeSoir, E. L. J. L. (2000). Hoe beleeft het thuisfront een uitzending? De emotionele stadia bij langdurige inzet [How does the home front experience a deployment? The emotional stadia during prolonged deployments]. *Kernvraag*, 123(1), 19-26.
- Durand, D. B., Burrell, L., Stetz, M., & Castro, C. A. (2003). Work/family conflict issues for soldiers and families., from <http://www.dtic.mil/dacowits/briefings/WorkFamilyConflict.ppt>
- Edwards, J. R., & Rothbard, N. P. (2000). Mechanisms linking work and family: Clarifying the relationship between work and family constructs. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 178-199.
- Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(2), 176-185.
- Friedman, S. D., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2000). *Work and family - allies or enemies? What happens when business professionals confront life choices*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1997). Relation of work-family conflict to health outcomes: A four-year longitudinal study of employed parents. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 70(4), 325-335.
- Gimbel, C., & Booth, A. (1994). Why does military combat experience adversely affect marital relations? *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56(3), 691-703.
- Goldberg, D. (1992). *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2001). Consequences of work-family conflict on employee well-being over time. *Work & Stress*, 15(3), 214-226.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *The Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76-88.
- Hammer, L. B., Bauer, T. N., & Grandey, A. A. (2003). Work-family conflict and work-related withdrawal behaviors. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 17(3), 419-435.
- Hill, E. J. (2005). Work-family facilitation and conflict, working fathers and mothers, work-family stressors and support. *Journal of Family Issues*, 26(6), 793-819.
- Hill, R. (1949). *Families under stress*. New York: Harper & Row.

- Ilies, R., Schwind, K. M., Wagner, D. T., Johnson, M. D., DeRue, D. S., & Ilgen, D. R. (2007). When can employees have a family life? The effects of daily workload and affect on work-family conflict and social behaviors at home. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(5), 1368-1379.
- Jones, F., & Fletcher, B. C. (1993). An empirical study of occupational stress transmission in working couples. *Human Relations*, 46(7), 881-903.
- Kalliath, T. J., O'Driscoll, M. P., & Brough, P. (2004). A confirmatory factor analysis of the General Health Questionnaire-12. *Stress and Health*, 20, 11-20.
- Karney, B. R., & Crown, J. S. (2007). *Families under stress. An assessment of data, theory, and research on marriage and divorce in the military*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, National Defense Research Institute.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (second ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Koeter, M., & Ormel, J. (1991). *General Health Questionnaire. Nederlandse bewerking - Handleiding*. Lisse, the Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.
- Kohen, J. A. (1984). The military career is a family affair. *Journal of Family Issues*, 5(3), 401-418.
- Kossek, E. E., & Ozeki, C. (1999). Bridging the work-family policy and productivity gap: A literature review. *Community, Work & Family*, 2(1), 7-32.
- Logan, K. V. (1987). The emotional cycle of deployment. *Proceedings*, 43-47.
- Matthews, L. S., Conger, R. D., & Wickrama, K. A. S. (1996). Work-family conflict and marital quality: Mediating processes. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 59(1), 62-79.
- Mauno, S., & Kinnunen, U. (1999). The effects of job stressors on marital satisfaction in Finnish dual-earner couples. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20, 879-895.
- McCone, D., & O'Donnell, K. (2006). Marriage and divorce trends for graduates of the U.S. Air Force Academy. *Military Psychology*, 18(1), 61-75.

- McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983). The family stress process: the Double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. In H. I. McCubbin, M. B. Sussman & J. M. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and developments in family stress theory and research*. (pp. 7-37). New York: The Haworth Press.
- Neff, L. A., & Karney, B. R. (2004). How does context affect intimate relationships? Linking external stress and cognitive processes within marriage. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(2), 134-148.
- Netemeyer, R. G., Boles, J. S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 400-410.
- Noor, N. M. (2003). Work- and family-related variables, work-family conflict and women's well-being: some observations. *Community, Work & Family*, 6(3), 297-319.
- Parasuraman, S., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2002). Toward reducing some critical gaps in work-family research. *Human Resource Management Review*, 12, 299-312.
- Patterson, G. T. (2003). Examining the effects of coping and social support on work and life stress among police officers. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 31, 215-226.
- Patterson, J. M. (2002). Integrating family resilience and family stress theory. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 349-360.
- Peebles-Kleiger, M. J. K., & Kleiger, J. H. (1994). Re-integration stress for Desert Storm families: Wartime deployments and family trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 7(2), 173-193.
- Pitt-Catsoupes, M., & Christensen, K. (2004). Unmasking the taken for granted. *Community, Work & Family*, 7(2), 123-142.
- Premeaux, S. F., Adkins, C. L., & Mossholder, K. W. (2007). Balancing work and family: A field study of multi-dimensional, multi-role work-family conflict. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 28, 705-727.
- Ransford, C. R., Crouter, A. C., & McHale, S. M. (2008). Implications of work pressure and supervisor support for fathers', mothers' and adolescents' relationships and well-being in dual-earner families. *Community, Work & Family*, 11(1), 37-60.

- Rode, J. C., Rehg, M. T., Near, J. P., & Underhill, J. R. (2007). The effect of work/family conflict on intention to quit: The mediating roles of job and life satisfaction. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.
- Rook, K., Dooley, D., & Catalano, R. (1991). Stress transmission: The effects of husbands' job stressors on the emotional health of their wives. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 53(1), 165-177.
- Segal, M. W. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society*, 13(1), 9-38.
- Sikora, P., Moore, S., Grunberg, L., & Greenberg, E. (2007). Work-family conflict: An exploration of causal relationships in a 10-year, 4-wave panel study. University of Colorado.
- Solomon, Z., Waysman, M., Belkin, R., Levy, G., Mikulincer, M., & Enoch, D. (1992). Marital relations and combat stress reaction: The wives' perspective. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(2), 316-326.
- Story, L. B., & Bradbury, T. N. (2004). Understanding marriage and stress: Essential questions and challenges. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 23, 1139-1162.
- Unger, D. G., & Powell, D. R. (1980). Supporting families under stress: The role of social networks. *Family Relations*, 29(4), 566-574.
- Vinokur, A. D., Pierce, P. F., & Buck, C. L. (1999). Work-family conflicts of women in the Air Force: Their influence on mental health and functioning. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20(6), 865-878.
- Vormbrock, J. K. (1993). Attachment theory as applied to wartime and job-related marital separation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 114(1), 122-144.
- Voydanoff, P. (2002). Linkages between the work-family interface and work, family, and individual outcomes: An integrative model. *Journal of Family Issues*, 23(1), 138-164.
- Wadsworth, L. L., & Owens, B. P. (2007). The effects of social support on work-family enhancement and work-family conflict in the public sector. *Public Administration Review*, 67(1), 75-86.
- Westman, M., & Etzion, D. L. (2005). The crossover of work-family conflict from one spouse to the other. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35(9), 1936-1957.

Notes

- ¹ Examining one's perceptions of one's partner's job demands interfering with family life shows resemblances with crossover theory and research that demonstrate that work conditions of one member of a dyad affect (the well-being of) the other. However, this study does not focus on the interpersonal transmission processes from job incumbents to partners and therefore is distinguished from the commonly known crossover research as it focuses on partner's reports and perceptions of the other's work demands conflicting with family life.
- ² Cross-lagged relations are also examined but are hidden for visual clarity.
- ³ Generally, Cronbach alpha coefficients of $> .9$ are considered excellent, $> .8$ good, $> .7$ acceptable, $> .6$ questionable, $> .5$ poor, and $< .5$ unacceptable.
- ⁴ Regression analyses (with relationship satisfaction T3 as dependent and psychological distress T2 and T3 as independent variables) confirmed that once psychological distress T3 is included in the analyses, the nature of the relation between psychological distress T2 and relationship satisfaction T3 changes from negative to positive, thereby demonstrating the suppressor effect.
- ⁵ For comparison purposes, and to strengthen the evidence of the role of social support, we have also tested its buffering (i.e., moderating) effects. However, no significant effects were found.

***There and back again.
How parental experiences
affect children's adjustments
in the course of military deployments.****

* Andres, M.D., & Moelker, R. (2010). There and back again. How parental experiences affect children's adjustments in the course of military deployments. *Armed Forces & Society* (in press).

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Prof. dr. Joseph Soeters, Netherlands Defense Academy and Tilburg University, for his comments and constructive feedback; Rianne Uijtdewillegen for her assistance in conducting the interviews; and drs. Jurgen Gruson, Netherlands Defense Academy, for his editorial assistance.

Abstract

As a consequence of various causes, numerous children are confronted with parental separation. By following families in the course of military deployments, this study aimed at enhancing knowledge on temporary father-child separation. Data were part of a longitudinal study of military families and were collected among Dutch service members and their partners before, during, and after a deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina or Afghanistan. Results revealed that the great majority of the children adapted quite well to the separation and reunion. Furthermore, the general well-being of the children, the mothers, and the fathers in the mission area were positively related. Unlike separation characteristics, maternal well-being was predictive of children's adjustment in the course of paternal deployment. Hence, the findings underline the importance of helping spouses cope with the absences of service members as it increases the chances that children will also be doing well in the course of parental absence.

*“You can tell me that daddy is coming back,
but if they shoot him I have no daddy anymore”*

3.1 Introduction

The above-mentioned quotation reflects a seven-year-old child's concerns about whether his father will return home safely from his mission in Afghanistan. For several months, this child misses the presence of a parent and wonders when he will be coming back. And just like this child, numerous other children with a parent serving in the armed forces –the so-called *military brats*– are confronted with temporary parental separation. The term military brat, a term of endearment, is embedded in the military culture, used to describe children growing up in a family with a parent serving in the military. In research, the term is strongly associated with the work of sociologist Morten Ender (Ender, 2002, 2005, 2006).

Parental absence is not that exceptional nowadays. Different kinds of absence can be distinguished, which are assumed to have diverse effects on children. Generally, parental absence may “generate feelings of abandonment and stress (...) and is associated with a higher prevalence of behavioral and psychological problems” (Sigle-Rushton & McLanahan, 2002, p. 11; see also Vormbrock, 1993). Numerous studies have demonstrated the adverse effects of parent loss through divorce or death. Fewer studies, however, have focused on temporary parent-child separation, caused, for instance, by incarceration or fathers' occupations (e.g., in the fishing and oil or gas industry). A number of studies have examined the effects of military deployment on children. Few studies on military children, however, have been conducted outside of the United States. In the seventies, LaGrone (LaGrone, 1978) introduced the term ‘military family syndrome’, suggesting that “military families suffer from greater psychosocial difficulties than the general population” (Watanabe & Jensen, 2000). The concept has been highly debated ever since (e.g., Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005; Jensen, Xenakis, Wolf, & Bain, 1991; Ryan-Wenger, 2002). Cozza, Chun, and Polo (2005), for instance, argued not to be overly concerned about military families and children, as they are no more vulnerable than the population at large. According to

them, the misplaced concerns are a result of a lacuna in scientific knowledge. Military children are in no way a stereotypical group, but a heterogeneous and complex population, they argue. More than that, “in many ways military children and families appear to be a robust and healthy group” (Cozza, et al., 2005, p. 372). Certain other studies even demonstrated that military children may encounter fewer disorders and display a healthier self-image than their civilian peers (e.g., Chartrand, Frank, White, & Shope, 2008; Watanabe, 1985). Although the studies do not deny the fragility of children, they emphasize the importance of not focusing solely on problems.

Aiming at enhancing the understanding of the effects of deployment on children of service members, the purpose of this study is twofold: (a) to delineate the experiences of Dutch children and their parents in the course of service members’ deployments to Bosnia-Herzegovina or Afghanistan, and (b) to examine the factors that predict children’s adjustment difficulties during parental absence and upon reunion. This study extends previous research in several ways. First, data were collected along the whole cycle of deployment (i.e., pre, mid, post). This adds to existing knowledge, which mainly relies on research employing cross-sectional designs, sometimes applying retrospective measurements. Second, the present study focuses not solely on children’s experiences but also includes parents’ experiences in the course of a military deployment, among which the reports of the absent parents. Finally, this study aims at enhancing knowledge through testing hypotheses, using multivariate analyses.

After reviewing the literature and describing the design of the study, the article continues with a descriptive part, delineating the experiences during parent-child separation and upon parent-child reunion. In the subsequent sections, the factors that predict children’s adjustment difficulties during parental absence and upon reunion are examined.

3.2 Literature review on temporary parental absence

Irrespective of the underlying conditions, parental absence elicits a transition into a single parenting family, involving a changing composition of the family that requires family restructuring (e.g., new roles, norms, and routines) and member adaptation. Research and theory on single parenting suggest that multiple factors influence family (member's) outcomes, including family resources (economic and social resources in particular), individual attributes, family relationships (including parent-child relationships and parent-parent relationships), communication, stability of home routines, and time factors, such as the length of time spent in a single parent system (Ihinger-Tallman, 1986). Different types of absences creating a single parent family or single parent household can be distinguished. The former implies that children only have one parent left, whereas the latter defines those families in which only one parent resides in the home (Ihinger-Tallman, 1986). There is abundant literature on parental absence through parental loss or divorce. Hence, we will only provide a brief review of the literature on *temporary* parental absence as a result of imprisonment, work, and, in particular, military deployment.

3.2.1 Imprisonment

Literature on parental separation due to imprisonment is far less exhaustive than parental absence through death or divorce. The underlying conditions of incarceration thoroughly differ from military deployment and the imprisonment of a family member often involves financial difficulties and stigmatization associated with the criminal event. Nonetheless, the literature provides relevant knowledge on temporary parent-child separation because of some interesting resemblances related to the temporary absence of a family member and the return and reunion.

Fritsch and Burkhead (1981) examined children's behavioral reactions to parental absence and found that male inmates reported more acting-out behavior of their children (e.g., discipline problems), whereas female inmates observed more acting-in behavior (e.g., withdrawal). Lowenstein (1986) studied family members of detainees by interviewing mothers and asking them about their perception of their children's behavior as a result of the separation. The results of this study revealed that in 40 per

cent of the families with an incarcerated parent, the children encountered emotional and interactional problems. In 20 per cent of the families, the children experienced behavioral problems. Moreover, mothers' familial and personal resources (e.g., mothers' ages and levels of education, quality of the marriage, and network support) were related to children's ability to adjust to the separation. Arditti and her colleagues (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, & Joest, 2003) interviewed family members visiting an imprisoned individual "Saturday morning at the jail." The results demonstrated that declining maternal health significantly predicted declining child health. Participants reported emotional stress and parenting strain (characterized by social isolation and perceived lack of support), work-family conflict, and concerns about the children. Moreover, the participants reported on their children's grief and behavioral changes, such as difficulties in school, depression, irritability, and behavioral regression.

In accordance with research and theory on single parenting, the foregoing literature review demonstrates that mothers' resources (e.g., social), relationships (e.g., quality of the parent-parent relationship), health, and difficulties (e.g., emotional stress, parenting strain, work-family conflict) are related to children's adjustments. These factors can all be viewed as indicators of maternal well-being (Booth, et al., 2007). In this study, we include measures of parent-parent relationship satisfaction, parenting stress, work-family conflict,¹ loneliness, and psychological distress as indicators of maternal well-being² and hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1a-b: Maternal well-being before the separation (i.e., more parent-parent relationship satisfaction, less work-family conflict, less loneliness, and less psychological distress) is predictive of children's adjustment difficulties (a) during the separation and (b) upon reunion, that is, higher levels of well-being are associated with lower levels of difficulties.

Hypothesis 2a-b: Maternal well-being during the separation (i.e., less parenting stress, less work-family conflict, less loneliness, and less psychological distress) is negatively related to children's adjustment difficulties (a) during the separation and (b) upon reunion.

3.2.2 Work-related absence other than military deployment

Job-induced separation is becoming more and more common and is not limited to families in the fishing and oil or gas industries. Various jobs may require regular (e.g., weekly commuting) or prolonged periods away from home. Research on the effects of such separations on families is scarce. It has been argued that the impact of parental job-induced absence on children varies according to the pattern of absence (e.g., frequency, regularity, type of absence, and duration) (McKee, Mauthner, & Galilee, 2003). Therefore, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 3a-b: The duration of the parent-child separation is related to children's adjustment difficulties (a) during the separation and (b) upon reunion, with longer separations being associated with higher levels of difficulties.

Hypothesis 4a-b: The type of absence is related to adjustment difficulties among children (a) during the separation and (b) upon reunion, with more risky missions being associated with higher levels of difficulties.

Furthermore, research suggests that "the children's age, the mother's response to father absence, the father's own disposition to absence (voluntary or involuntary), the level of family and community support and integration all influence how children cope with work-related father absence," (McKee, et al., 2003, p. 33) which corresponds to our assumption that mothers' conditions are related to children's adjustments.

3.2.3 *Parental military deployment*

Parental absence as a result of military deployment is different from the foregoing as it involves the risk that the parent might get injured or killed in action. In addition to separations, risk of injury or death has been defined as one of the greedy demands of the military institution (Segal, 1986). A number of researchers have examined the effects of fathers' participation in combat operations or the effects of fathers' posttraumatic stress disorders on children's behavioral problems or the father-child relationship.³ However, as our study focuses on responses to the actual absence, we will not go into these research findings in more detail. In the seventies, McCubbin and colleagues conducted the first (longitudinal) studies into father-child separation as a result of the Vietnam War (e.g., Dahl, McCubbin, & Lester, 1976; McCubbin & Dahl, 1976). Subsequently, several researchers have examined children's responses to parental absence due to military deployment. Many of them have reported adverse effects, including sadness and being very emotional, sleeping problems, aggressiveness, irritability, depression, and decreased school performance (Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, Jaycox, & Scott, 2008; Hiew, 1992; Hillenbrand, 1976; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002; Rosen, Teitelbaum, & Westhuis, 1993). Even the effects of parental deployment on children's disability rates have been studied, but no statistically significant increase was found (Angrist & Johnson, 2000). The findings of a study conducted by Applewhite and Mays suggested that "children do not appear to be more adversely affected by maternal separation than by paternal separation" (Applewhite & Mays, 1996, p. 37). However, parental deployment is found to have diverse effects on male and female children (Hillenbrand, 1976; Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996). Furthermore, generally, "younger children tend to experience more adjustment problems than their older peers" (Booth, et al., 2007, p. 100).

A recent study conducted by Chartrand, Frank, White, and Shope (2008) demonstrated that, after controlling for parents' stress and depressive symptoms, 3- to 5-year-olds with a deployed parent displayed greater behavioral problems (i.e., internalizing, externalizing, and total behavioral problems) compared with same-aged children without a parent deployed. These findings are consistent with some studies that have found that children with deployed parents display higher levels of depression (Jensen, et al., 1996) or internalizing behavior (Kelley, et al., 2001)

compared with children whose parents had not been deployed. Interestingly, however, the study of Chartrand et al. (2008) also revealed that 1.5- to 3-year-olds with a deployed parent demonstrated significantly lower levels of externalizing and total behavioral problems compared with same-aged children without a deployed parent. Other studies also demonstrated that children might be quite adaptive and might even be a source of support to the parent at home (Huebner & Mancini, 2005; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002).

It is assumed that principally “adolescents are fairly resilient” (Booth, et al., 2007, p. 91). Empirical research has shown that separation does not only cause maladjustment, but can also elicit positive effects, such as children acting more maturely, being self-sufficient, cooperative, and more responsible at home (Chandra, et al., 2008; Hillenbrand, 1976; Huebner & Mancini, 2005). Chandra and her colleagues (2008) found these positive effects after surveying children and their caregivers while the children were attending a summer camp program (i.e., Operation Purple Camp), developed to help children cope with the deployment of a parent. In contrast to these positive effects, however, the results of their study revealed that younger children (i.e., 7- to 10-year-olds, compared with 11- to 14-year-olds) and girls reported higher levels of anxiety, while boys displayed more problems with attention. About half of the children reported great worries about their deployed parent. Younger children reported more difficulty with schoolwork and a significant number perceived a lack of understanding from other people (e.g., teachers and other children) and “shared that it was hard when people asked about their deployed parent because they did not know how to respond and it was uncomfortable” (Chandra, et al., 2008, p. 40). The children used more positive thinking or cognitive restructuring coping strategies compared with avoiding the problem and problem-solving strategies. Finally, some children worried a lot about their home caregiver and 65 per cent sensed a change in the usual behavior of the parent at home. It is worth noticing that some study findings varied between active component and reserve component families.

Palmer (2008) suggests that the effects of deployment *indirectly* affect child outcomes through parental stress and pathology. A number of studies have shown that separation affects the well-being, perceived work-family conflict, relationship satisfaction, and perceptions of social support of the nondeployed spouse (e.g., Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006; Dandeker, French, Birtles, & Wessely, 2006; Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995). The heightened stress of one parent coupled with the absence of the other parent is likely to negatively affect child outcomes (Palmer, 2008). Moreover, it is assumed that “children are responsive to parental stress” and “may mirror how parents respond in stressful situations” (Palmer, 2008, p. 209; Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). This corresponds to our assumption that maternal well-being is predictive of children’s adaptation (hypotheses 1 and 2). The findings of a study conducted by Kelley (1994) indicated that “differences in maternal adjustment and children's behavior [is] a function of the type of deployment” (i.e., experiencing a deployment with the possibility of combat versus a more routine one), which is consistent with our fourth hypothesis.

In addition to the parent-child separation, it has been suggested that reunion can be just as stressful (Vormbrock, 1993) and can elicit ambivalent emotions and feelings of estrangement (Johnson, et al., 2007; Vormbrock, 1993). Some research findings have shown that children experience reengagement difficulties upon return (Chandra, et al., 2008; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002). Others reported rather quick readjustment (Orthner & Rose, 2005). Reunion is assumed to be more difficult for children who experienced higher levels of distress during the separation or who emotionally detached themselves to a higher degree from the absent parent (Vormbrock, 1993). On the basis of the first, the final hypothesis was formulated:

Hypothesis 5: Children’s adjustment difficulties during the separation are positively related to children’s adjustment difficulties upon reunion.

The hypotheses result in the following tentative theoretical model (Figure 3.1). As research suggests that children's responses are affected by age and the number of children in the home, we tested the hypotheses after statistically controlling for the age of the youngest child and the number of children living at home.

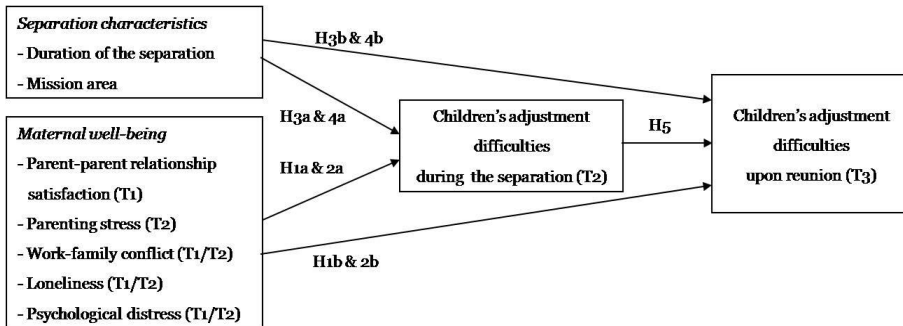


Figure 3.1 Proposed model (controlling for age of youngest child and number of children)

3.3 The longitudinal study among Dutch military families

3.3.1 Sample and procedure

At the onset of this study, the Dutch government had decided to deploy a large number of servicemen and women to a southern province of Afghanistan, Uruzgan. This area was known to be hazardous and the general public, military families in particular, feared for the safety of the soldiers. At the same time, Dutch soldiers were involved in another extensive mission, taking place in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As distinct from Uruzgan, this region had now become a post-conflict area and the mission was perceived as more routine and less hazardous. Nevertheless, for both missions, service members and their families were separated for an extended period of time. Today, at any given moment, over 2,000 Dutch service members are

deployed to mission areas all over the world. In 2006, military couples that anticipated a deployment to either Bosnia-Herzegovina or Afghanistan were asked to participate in a longitudinal study of military families in the course of deployment. Initially, 911 couples were recruited. Separate questionnaires for service members and their partners were sent to their home addresses before, during, and after the deployment.⁴ Of these, 44 envelopes were misdirected and returned unopened, resulting in a corrected sample frame of 867. Furthermore, for various reasons, some respondents dropped out in the course of data collection procedures, which reduced the sample frames at time 2 and time 3.⁵ Table 3.1 presents the number and percentages of participating service members and their partners. Additional interviews have been held with 120 partners,⁶ which enriched the quantitative survey data. The interviews took place at the partners' home addresses and were semi-structured as the questionnaire guided the conversation, but respondents were left free to add and elucidate things and bring up subjects they wanted to share. Interviews were not recorded as this was expected to hamper respondents from speaking freely, given that some topics were perceived as very sensitive. Instead, detailed notes were made, literally recording what was said. The average duration of the interviews was 60 to 75 minutes. Children's responses and experiences was one of the topics discussed.

Given that collecting data among children is not always possible or desirable (for instance, among the youngest children), is very difficult methodologically (varying techniques may be required among children in different age groups), and as parents are assumed to be able to depict (changes in) their children's conditions conscientiously, we decided to collect data on children's responses to the separation through parents' reports. Further data analyses exclusively included data collected among service members and partners with children.

Table 3.1
Participating partners and service members in the longitudinal study

	Sample frame		Response		Response percentage	
	Partners	Service members	Partners	Service members	Partners	Service members
<i>Time 1 – before</i>	867	867	453 (258)	303 (168)	52.2%	34.9%
<i>Time 2 – during</i>	832	788	386 (220)	353 (193)	46.4%	44.8%
<i>Time 3 – after</i>	635	635	235 (143)	183 (118)	37.0%	28.8%
Total	2334	2290	1074	839	45.2%	35.9%
	4624		1913		41%	

Note. Number of partners and service members with children in parentheses.

More than half of the participants in the overall study (Table 3.1) had children, with two children on average (ranging from 1 to 5). Of these couples with children, the deployed service members were all male and their partners were all female, hence, all children whose experiences are described in this article had their fathers deployed, while their mothers stayed at home. Data collected during the deployment included 425 children in total; the final data wave included 292 children. A number of 109 mothers (reporting on 221 children in sum) participated both during and after the deployment. The average age of these children during the separation was 9.59 ($SD = 7.45$), ranging from 0 to 28 years. The great majority of all participating mothers (88 per cent) had at least one child living at home during the separation. Furthermore, the greater part of the mothers (82 per cent) had paid work,⁷ either full-time (9 per cent) or part-time (73 per cent). The fathers were enlisted men (7 per cent), noncommissioned officers (60 per cent), or officers (33 per cent).⁸ The majority (74 per cent) was sent to Afghanistan and the average duration of the separation was five months.

3.3.2 Measures

In addition to demographic variables, such as children's ages and the number of children in the home, the questionnaires included items regarding the deployment (e.g., location, duration, and the number of deployments experienced),⁹ validated scales to assess, among other things, the well-being of service members' partners, and some self-constructed items regarding the children's experiences during the fathers' absence and upon reunion.

During the separation, the parents at home were asked if the separation went well for their children, on a scale ranging from 1 (*very hard*) to 4 (*very well*). Moreover, they were asked whether they had observed changes in their children and what the nature of these changes was (open-ended item). Children's adjustment difficulties during the separation were measured through seven items, formulated as follows: "*as a result of the deployment, my children...*". Among others, the items included: "*...have more trouble sleeping,*" "*are more disobedient,*" and "*are more irritable*" (Appendix D.1). After assessing the suitability of these data for factor analysis (KMO value = .85, Barlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance), the seven items were subjected to Principal Component Analysis, which revealed the presence of one component explaining 53 per cent of the variance. Subsequently, the items were summed to compute the 'total adjustment difficulties during separation' variable. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was .85.

After reunion, the parents at home were asked to describe how their children had experienced the deployment (open-ended item). Additionally, children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion were measured through five items, including "*the homecoming was a burden for the children,*" "*the children really had to grow accustomed to the returned parent,*" and "*the children did not accept their returned parent's authority*" (Appendix D.2). Factor analyses (KMO value = .81, Barlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance) revealed the presence of one component explaining 58 per cent of the variance. The items were summed to compute the 'total adjustment difficulties upon reunion' variable. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was .79.

Service members' partners also reported on parent-parent relationship satisfaction, levels of perceived conflict between military job demands and family life (i.e., work-family conflict), loneliness, parenting stress, and psychological distress.¹⁰ Relationship satisfaction was measured through the ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale (Fowers & Olson, 1993). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scale were .85 (time 1) and .86 (time 3). Work-family conflict was assessed through the Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). The items required slight wording modifications (e.g., 'my work' was changed into 'my partner's work'), as this study focuses on service members' job demands. Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scale ranged from .85 to .89 (measured at time 1, 2, and 3). Loneliness was measured by a shortened version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996), consisting of four items, including "*How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to?*" and "*How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you?*" Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scale ranged from .61 to .69 (time 1, 2, and 3). Parenting stress was measured by three items, including "*I find it difficult taking care of the children without my partner.*" Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale was .65 (time 2). Psychological distress was assessed using a shortened version of the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12), a measure developed to assess "psychological strain in the general population" (Goldberg, 1992; Kalliath, O'Driscoll, & Brough, 2004; Koeter & Ormel, 1991). Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scale ranged from .82 to .85 (time 1, 2, and 3).

Finally, the questionnaires for the deployed parents included, among other things, the Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, et al., 1996), items regarding their general well-being during the deployment and their experiences upon reunion.

3.4 Parent-child separation

3.4.1 Parents' concerns before departure

Preparing for a deployment includes informing the children about the forthcoming absence of the parent. During the interviews, conducted before departure, various mothers did not know how to inform and prepare the children for the upcoming deployment. Mothers with younger children struggled with explaining the duration of the absence to the children. One of these mothers shared: *"What do we tell the children? Four months is hard to explain. They have no sense of time."* A mother of a five-year-old expressed: *"Most difficult is telling your child that daddy is going to be deployed."* In general, both parents expressed concerns about the children's responses to the father's departure. The survey data demonstrated that nearly half of the service members (47 per cent) and 58 per cent of the partners worried (a lot) about their children's reactions. Parents with younger children and anticipating a deployment to a more risky mission area worried significantly more. *"You can never prepare your children enough for a deployment. We try to make them understand as good as possible, we make calendars, read those little books, tell them about the deployment. The children are my greatest concern."*

Another mother described her concerns as follows: *"I don't like the duration of the deployment: five months without leave. (...) I worry about my children: the atmosphere, the association with each other and with me, and school. Practically, I think it will be easier compared with last time as I don't have to arrange a babysitter, for example. Emotionally, however, I expect it to be more difficult. The youngest doesn't want his daddy to leave. Sometimes, he cries in bed. The oldest expresses himself not that much, he bears up bravely, says: 'Then I will be the man of the house.' Sometimes, they quarrel with each other; lately, they are irritable. I worry about keeping a good atmosphere while my husband is away."* On the other hand, 30 per cent of the fathers and 18 per cent of the mothers did not worry about their children's reactions to the absence.¹¹ Furthermore, no less than 30 per cent of the departing fathers were concerned about their parent-child relationship, while half of the fathers (50 per cent) were not.

3.4.2 Children's responses to father's absence

More than half of the mothers (54 per cent) indicated that the children really missed their father right after he had left to fulfill his duty abroad. One mother described: *"It's getting better now, but the first few weeks were difficult. (...) My eldest daughter started bedwetting again, was frequently awake at night, and was ill more often. The youngest is too young to grasp it all. The children don't have a sense of time yet and it's very difficult to make clear to them how long their father will be gone and when he will be coming home. My oldest daughter keeps asking if daddy is coming home now and each time I have to tell her: 'no, not today.' The last month, I will make a calendar, but there are just too many days to go now."* A substantial number of the mothers (38 per cent) agreed to the statement that the children's feelings of loss declined after some weeks. As many as 69 per cent of the mothers believed that the children adapted rapidly. During the interviews, some mothers even put forward that the children were sometimes too busy playing to come to the phone when their father was calling from the mission area. These findings endorse the well-known emotional cycle of deployment (DeSoir, 2000; Logan, 1987; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994; Vormbrock, 1993), which describes feelings of sadness and loss during the first weeks of the separation followed by family members stabilizing and settling into a certain routine.

Little over half (53 per cent) of the mothers observed changes in their children during the father's absence which were not solely adverse (e.g., crying more often, having toilet-trained problems, or being stubborn or quickly tempered) but were also related to feeling more responsible, and being more helpful and caring. The great majority of the mothers (75 per cent) reported that their children were doing (quite) well. A quarter (25 per cent), however, reported that their children experienced difficulties; no significant differences were displayed between the Bosnia and Afghanistan deployments. Responding to the items regarding children's adjustment difficulties during the separation, over one third (37 per cent) of the mothers reported that the children asked for more attention. Nearly a quarter (23 per cent) reported that the children were more disobedient or were rather more edgy (22 per cent) and 17 per cent of the mothers observed their children having difficulties sleeping. Furthermore, 10 per cent observed difficulties in school, 7 per cent of the children had more often

trouble with bedwetting, and 5 per cent were ill more often. Further analyses revealed that, generally, mothers with children in the younger age groups (i.e., 0- to 5-year-olds and 6- to 11-year-olds) observed more difficulties than mothers with children in the older age groups (i.e., the 11 – 15, 16 – 20, and ≥ 21 age groups) (Habraken, 2008), which is consistent with previous research that shows that younger children tend to experience more adjustment problems (Booth, et al., 2007). There was a significant effect for age group on irritability, difficulty sleeping, and bedwetting; mothers with children in the 6 – 10 age group experienced the highest levels of irritability, whereas mothers with children in the 0 – 5 age group reported the most sleeping difficulties and problems with bedwetting.

3.4.3 *Different ages, different experiences*

In addition to the foregoing, the parents at home were asked to describe their children's deployment experiences on the whole. While analyzing this open-ended item, we were able to make allowance for the children's ages as the respondents distinguished between their children in their reports (e.g., 'the eldest did fine, while our youngest...'). The data revealed that infants are usually too young to notice the absence of the father, which to a large degree also seemed to apply to children between one and two years of age. The difficulties that mothers of one- and two-year-olds described related to being upset, seeking and asking for the father, having difficulties sleeping, showing clinging behavior towards the mother, and acting restlessly and being quickly tempered. Mothers of three-year-olds generally indicated that their children were doing quite well and accepted the absence of their fathers rapidly. The ones who observed difficulties reported recalcitrant behavior, sadness, and anger. Four-year-olds also seem to accept the father's absence rapidly. Difficulties among these children were related to sleeping problems, bedwetting, acting very lively, crying a lot, feeling tense, and anxiety. Mothers of five-year-olds also reported rapid adaptation, despite the children missing their father. From about six years old, the duration of the separation was often reported as being too long. One mother explained: "*According to a child's perception, a summer holiday is a month of Sundays and that lasts for only six weeks.*"

Some mothers of school-age children observed fear, uncertainty, and concerns about the safety of the father. A mother shared: *“My daughter really feared that her father would die.”* As school-age children watch the news more often, and thus are more likely to be confronted with questions from classmates and friends such as *“Is your father going to die?”*, they become more aware of the risks involved. Anxiety and concerns about the safety of their parent is also clearly visible among teenage children, mainly among the younger teenagers (i.e., 13, 14, 15 years old). *“She reads the newspapers and watches the television news. Hence, she sees, just as I see, that this deployment involves more risks than previous ones”*, a mother expressed. Many mothers mentioned the importance of communication with the deployed parent and emphasized the beneficial effects of frequent contact by phone, e-mail, Skype, or MSN Messenger.¹²

Although marginally more mothers of the younger teenagers observed their children having difficulties with the absence of their fathers, others stated that their children were doing well, that they were somewhat used to it, that they had become more independent, and that they were going their own way. One mother observed that her child felt responsible for her (i.e., the mother's) well-being. One other mother argued that visiting home front activities helped her children cope, as these occasions gave them the opportunity to talk with other children with a deployed parent. The majority of the mothers having older teenagers (i.e., 16 to 19 year-olds) reported positive deployment experiences. They observed that their children were doing rather well; they managed and were busy with their own lives, although they missed their father. Moreover, the mothers reported children's acceptance and understanding that this is part of their father's job. *“The children are quite relaxed,”* one mother shared. *“I believe that when you talk about it light-heartedly, you will pass that on to your children. We talk about it, the children give their opinions, it's not at all an emotionally charged issue. When the children were younger, it was more difficult for them. They missed their father more. They heard things at school and were not able to place it. I had to dry more tears. Now, the children are out often, they are 18 and 16 years old. They only have to consult me, which makes it harder later, when my husband returns: then, they have to consult both of us again.”* Some mothers shared that they were pleased that they were able to talk about things, which made it

easier. Frequent contact is still often reported to be beneficial. Children in their twenties, finally, seem to cope well, despite missing their father. Mostly, they are involved, interested, and concerned.

3.4.4 *Parents' experiences during the separation*

Even though a deployment temporarily creates a single parent household, the parents at home generally seemed to do well. The great majority (76 per cent) indicated that the deployment went quite well for them, whereas nearly a quarter (24 per cent) finds it (rather) tough. A large number of mothers (64 per cent) perceived support from their children in the course of the deployment, whereby mothers with older children perceived more support ($r = .25, p < .01$). During the absence of their partners, mothers reported moderate levels of parenting stress ($M = 8.19, SD = 2.96$). Levels of work-family conflict ($M = 14.34, SD = 5.62$), defined as the degree to which they felt that the military job demands interfered with family life, were also moderate and had not increased significantly compared with reports from before the separation.¹³ Although the mothers reported low levels of loneliness ($M = 8.26, SD = 1.91$), the data displayed a significant increase compared with reports preceding the deployment [$t(171) = 7.28, p < .01$]. Finally, mean levels of psychological distress indicated that the mothers hardly experienced higher levels of distress than any other individual generally experiences ($M = 12.39, SD = 4.58$), as scores between 11 and 12 are defined as typical and the mothers only slightly exceeded these bounds. Nevertheless, levels of psychological distress among mothers increased significantly from time 1 to time 2 [$t(171) = 2.13, p < .05$].

At the same time, yet miles away from home, the great majority of the fathers (91 per cent, $n = 192$) reported that they were doing (quite) well, whereas the deployment was hard on 9 per cent of them. Older service members with higher ranks reported more positive deployment experiences. Furthermore, more frequent telephone contact with their partners at home significantly correlated with more positive reports. Asking the service members about their partners and children at home, the majority (68 per cent) believed their partner was doing (quite) well, while 32 per cent believed they were experiencing difficulties. Similar reports were given about the children: 67 per cent of the fathers thought the children were doing (rather) well,

whereas 34 per cent believed the deployment was rather more difficult for them.¹⁴ These perceptions of how their children and partner are doing significantly relate to service members' reports about how the deployment is going for them ($r = .43$ and $r = .37$ respectively, $p < .01$). Thus, the better service members believe their home front is coping with their absence, the more they report the deployment is going well for them. It is worth noting that the perceptions of the service members are somewhat more negative compared to the perceptions of the mothers at home, 76 per cent of whom reported to do (quite) well ($n = 213$) and 75 per cent reported that the children were doing (rather) well. The reports of the partners at home were also related to the reports of the servicemen,¹⁵ which corresponds to theory and literature claiming that stress experienced by a person can affect another (closely related) individual; a phenomenon called crossover (e.g., Westman, 2001).

3.5 Parent-child reunion

3.5.1 Children's responses upon reunion

According to 15 per cent of the mothers, the homecoming of the father was a burden for the children (according to 75 per cent it was not) and nearly a quarter of the mothers (24 per cent) reported that their children really had to grow accustomed to their father after he had returned (65 per cent disagreed). *"After reunion they [the children] had to settle down once more (...) It doesn't end when they [the service members] have just returned home, it takes weeks again,"* according to one mother. Moreover, 10 per cent of the mothers reported authority difficulties, i.e., the children refused to accept the authority of the returned father, while 79 per cent did not recognize such problems. The majority of the children (78 per cent) rapidly took up the daily routine, while 11 per cent of the mothers reported that their children did not. More worrisome are the numbers that point to separation anxiety: according to 40 per cent of the mothers, the children are afraid that their fathers will leave again. A mother of two children, two and four years old, said: *"After my husband has returned home, my children are asking whether he will come home at night, every day."* Another mother shared: *"After the homecoming, my son has called for his daddy at night for three months. He felt strange when my husband went out to*

work and was afraid that he would stay away for so long again. Now, it is getting better.” Qualitative data showed that separation anxiety is reported by mothers with children up to ten years of age, though principally by mothers with children up to five years old. In some cases, it is still persisting three months after the return. The survey data revealed that 45 per cent of the mothers, on the other hand, did not observe separation anxiety in their children.

3.5.2 *Fathers’ reunion experiences*

Over a quarter (27 per cent) of the homecoming fathers ($n = 118$) were concerned about the children’s responses to their return, while the majority (60 per cent) did not worry at all. Some fathers (5 per cent) found the reunion with their children difficult (85 per cent did not) and 6 per cent reported that their children did not recognize them at first (90 per cent did not report such problems). The majority (76 per cent) experienced quickly regaining their role within the family, whereas 9 per cent did not. Before departure, 30 per cent of the fathers had expressed concerns about the relationship with their children. After reunion, 15 per cent stated that the parent-child relationship had changed as a result of the deployment. According to 61 per cent of the fathers, though, the relationship with their children was not affected by the deployment (25 per cent had a more neutral opinion). Moreover, 35 per cent believed the bond had become stronger; 23 per cent did not. Finally, 14 per cent of the fathers reported spending more time with their children than they did before the deployment.

3.6 **Factors predicting children’s adjustment difficulties**

Table 3.2 presents means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among children’s adjustment difficulties, the control variables, separation characteristics, and maternal well-being. Consistent with our expectations, children’s adjustment difficulties during the separation are positively related to children’s adjustment difficulties upon reunion. Furthermore, the age of the youngest child is negatively correlated with children’s adjustment difficulties; that is, older children experience fewer problems. More children in the household is associated with more reported

difficulties during the separation and does not display a significant relation with reported difficulties upon reunion. Interestingly, the duration of the separation and the mission area in which the deployed parent resides do not display significant relations with children's adjustment difficulties. In contrast, the variables regarding maternal well-being, with the exception of levels of loneliness before the deployment, display significant relations with children's responses, both during the separation and upon reunion.

We tested the hypotheses by means of multiple hierarchical regression analyses (which included data from different data waves), statistically controlling for the age of the youngest child and the number of children in the home. The control variables were entered in the first step and the predictor variables (i.e., separation characteristics and the variables addressing maternal well-being) were entered in the second step. Table 3.3 presents the findings from examining the factors that predict children's adjustment difficulties during the separation, while Table 3.4 displays the regression of children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion on the predictor variables. Additionally, in Table 3.4, we tested whether the effects of the independent variables on children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion were mediated by children's adjustment difficulties during the separation. Testing for mediation includes several steps. After testing the direct effects of the independent variables on the outcome variable, we performed the same analysis, yet included the mediator into the model to test for its intervening effects. Mediation is supported when adding the intervening variable to the model either results in the disappearance (full mediation) or in a decrease (partial mediation) of the effect of the independent variable(s) on the outcome variable. The results are described in the following paragraphs.

Table 3.2*Intercorrelations among children's difficulties, control variables, separation characteristics, and maternal well-being*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Children's adjustment difficulties (during the separation)	13.98	6.16	-												
2. Children's adjustment difficulties (upon reunion)	11.18	4.16	.39**	-											
3. Age youngest child (T1) ^a	8.03	7.16	-.41**	-.19*	-										
4. Number of children at home (T1)	2.42	0.95	.22**	-.12	-.14*	-									
5. Duration of the separation (T1) ^b	4.94	0.95	-.14	.09	.22**	.07	-								
6. Mission area (T1) ^c	0.72	0.45	.09	.03	-.25**	.01	-.47**	-							
7. Quality parent-parent relation. (T1)	50.07	7.16	-.17 [†]	-.23*	.11	-.07	.00	-.05	-						
8. Mothers' parenting stress (T2)	8.19	2.96	.43**	.35**	-.29**	.10	-.05	.08	-.07	-					
9. Mothers' WFC (T1)	13.02	4.83	.22**	.23*	-.28**	.02	-.10*	.18**	-.23**	.33**	-				
10. Mothers' WFC (T2)	14.34	5.62	.41**	.28**	-.29**	.02	-.02	.12	-.16*	.49**	.63**	-			
11. Mothers' loneliness (T1)	7.20	1.96	.08	.05	-.07	.12*	-.02	.03	-.33**	.15*	.31**	.28**	-		
12. Mothers' loneliness (T2)	8.26	1.91	.33**	.27**	-.13	.06	.01	.05	-.11	.39**	.31**	.38**	.53**	-	
13. Mothers' psych. distress (T1)	11.81	4.79	.22*	.21*	-.11 [†]	.00	-.06	.10*	-.26**	.32**	.29**	.40**	.48**	.24**	-
14. Mothers' psych. distress (T2)	12.39	4.58	.45**	.36**	-.13	-.04	.03	-.04	-.08	.37**	.44**	.48**	.20**	.44**	.42**

^a Age youngest child in years, ^b Duration of the separation in months, ^c Mission area is dummy coded (1 = Afghanistan, 0 = Bosnia).** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .10$

3.6.1 Factors predicting children's adjustment difficulties during separation

The analyses show significant effects of the age of the youngest child and the number of children in the household on children's adjustment difficulties during the separation (Table 3.3), whereby having older children ($\beta = -.38, p < .01$) and fewer children living at home ($\beta = .17, p < .05$) are associated with fewer reported difficulties, explaining 19 per cent of the variance. Furthermore, the analyses do not reveal a significant effect of the duration of the separation and the mission area on children's adjustment difficulties during the separation; hence, hypotheses 3a and 4a have been rejected.

Regarding maternal well-being before the deployment (Table 3.3, model 1), mothers' levels of psychological distress are shown to be predictive of children's adjustment difficulties during the separation ($\beta = .18, p < .05$),¹⁶ which supports hypothesis 1a. The full model explains 25 per cent of the variance in children's adjustment difficulties during the separation. For maternal well-being during the deployment (Table 3.3, model 2), a trend is discernable towards higher levels of parenting stress associated with higher levels of children's adjustment difficulties ($\beta = .15, p < .10$).¹⁷ Moreover, mother's psychological distress significantly predicts children's adjustment difficulties ($\beta = .30, p < .01$); therefore, hypothesis 2a is supported. The model explains 42 per cent of the variance in children's adjustment difficulties during the deployment.

3.6.2 Factors predicting children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion

Predicting children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion (Table 3.4), the age of the youngest child (unlike the number of children in the household) displays a significant effect ($\beta = -.26, p < .01$), whereby having older children is associated with fewer reported adjustment difficulties upon reunion, explaining 8 per cent of the variance. Again, no significant effects of the duration of the separation and the mission area are displayed; hence, hypotheses 3b and 4b have been rejected. Regarding maternal well-being before the deployment (Table 3.4, model 1a), no significant effects are displayed, although a trend is visible towards higher levels of parent-parent

Table 3.3*Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting children's adjustment difficulties during the separation*

	Model 1 (T1)				Model 2 (T2)			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Constant	13.99	1.51			13.99	1.49		
<i>Control variables</i>								
Age youngest child ^a	-.33	.07	-.38**		-.33	.07	-.38**	
Number of children in the home	1.09	.65	.17*	.19**	1.09	.51	.17*	.19**
<i>Predictor variables</i>								
Duration of the separation ^b	-.62	.58	-.10		-.75	.51	-.12	
Mission area ^c	-1.04	1.23	-.08		-.64	1.08	-.05	
Quality parent-parent relation (T1)	-.08	.07	-.09					
Mothers' parenting stress (T2)					.32	.17	.15 [†]	
Mothers' work-family conflict (T1/T2)	.10	.11	.08		.13	.09	.12	
Mothers' loneliness (T1/T2)	-.32	.29	-.10		.18	.26	.06	
Mothers' psychological distress (T1/T2)	.24	.12	.18*	.05	.40	.11	.30**	.22**
<i>df</i>				131				133
<i>Adjusted R²</i>				.25				.42

Note. Dependent = children's adjustment difficulties during the separation ($n = 171$).^a Age youngest child in years, ^b Duration of the separation in months, ^c Mission area is dummy coded (1 = Afghanistan, 0 = Bosnia).** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .10$.

Table 3.4

Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion

	Model 1 (T1)								Model 2 (T2)							
	A				B				A				B			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Constant	14.61	1.60			14.61	1.77			14.61	1.63			14.61	1.77		
<i>Control variables</i>																
Age youngest child ^a	-.15	.05	-.26**		-.15	.06	-.26*		-.15	.06	-.26**		-.15	.06	-.26*	
Number of children in the home	-.81	.52	-.15	.08*	-.81	.58	-.15	.08*	-.81	.53	-.15	.08*	-.81	.58	-.15	.08*
<i>Predictor variables</i>																
Duration of the separation ^b	.55	.47	.13		.77	.50	.18		.57	.47	.13		.78	.50	.18	
Mission area ^c	-.55	1.00	-.06		-.34	1.06	-.04		-.45	.99	-.05		-.34	1.04	-.04	
Quality parent-parent relation (T1)	-.10	.06	-.18 [†]		-.08	.06	-.14									
Mothers' parenting stress (T2)									.35	.16	.25*		.27	.17	.19	
Mothers' work-family conflict (T1/T2)	.14	.09	.17		.10	.10	.11		.07	.08	.10		.04	.09	.05	
Mothers' loneliness (T1/T2)	-.19	.24	-.09		-.10	.26	-.05		.28	.24	.13		.23	.25	.11	
Mothers' psychological distress (T1/T2)	.05	.10	.06	.09	.01	.10	.01		-.01	.10	-.01	.15*	-.10	.11	-.11	
Children's adjustment difficulties during					.25	.08	.37**	.20*					.23	.08	.34**	.22**
<i>df</i>				101				82				97				82
<i>Adjusted R²</i>				.16				.27				.23				.30

Note: Dependent = children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion ($n = 128$).

^a Age youngest child in years, ^b Duration of the separation in months, ^c Mission area is dummy coded (1 = Afghanistan, 0 = Bosnia).

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .10$.

relationship quality associated with lower levels of children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion ($\beta = -.18, p < .10$).¹⁸ Hence, the data do not support hypothesis 1b.

When we subsequently added the 'children's adjustment difficulties during the separation' variable into the model (Table 3.4, model 1b), a significant effect was displayed on levels of children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion ($\beta = .37, p < .01$), thereby supporting hypothesis 5. Yet, the variable did not intervene between maternal well-being at time 1 and children's adjustment difficulties at time 3, as no significant effects of the independent variables on the outcome variable were displayed.

Regarding maternal well-being during the deployment (Table 3.4, model 2a), results reveal that higher levels of mothers' parenting stress during the separation were significantly related to children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion ($\beta = .25, p < .05$), supporting hypothesis 2b. Together, the predictor variables explained another 15 percent of the variance in this model. The full model explained 23 per cent of the variance in children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion.

Subsequently, we tested whether the effects were direct or mediated by children's adjustment difficulties during the separation. By adding this variable to the model, the significant effect of mothers' parenting stress disappeared, thereby demonstrating full mediation (Table 3.4, model 2b). The final model explained 30 per cent of the variance in children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion.

3.7 Discussion

By following military families along the stages of deployment (pre, during, post), this study aimed at enhancing knowledge on the process of temporary father-child separation as a result of military deployment. Results revealed that most of the children were doing quite well and adapted to the separation and reunion fairly rapidly, which does not alter the fact that a certain number of children did experience difficulties. One quarter of all participating mothers reported that the deployment

was rather difficult for their children. In part, our findings are consistent with previous research suggesting that younger children tend to experience more adjustment problems (Booth, et al., 2007). However, the results also suggest that infants usually seem too young to notice the absence of the parent.

Furthermore, nearly all mothers mentioned that the children missed their fathers. Whereas the younger ones predominantly missed the presence of a parent, school-age children often also experienced anxiety and concerns about the safety of their absent parent as they were more aware of the risks involved. Adolescents, although they may really show some *adolescent* behavior, generally seemed to manage as they lead more their own lives, which is consistent with previous research suggesting that adolescents are fairly resilient (Booth, et al., 2007). More worrisome are the numbers that point to separation anxiety, which in some cases was still persisting three months after reunion. As much as 40 per cent of the mothers reported that the children were afraid that their father will leave again. Qualitative data showed that separation anxiety is reported by mothers with children up to ten years of age, though principally by mothers with children up to five years old. A study by Pierce, Vinokur, and Buck (1998) into long-lasting effects on children of deployed mothers suggested that adjustment problems experienced by children during a deployment are transient, as children's adjustment difficulties during the deployment were not associated with adjustment problems two years later. Still, more knowledge on long-term effects is needed to more accurately determine the impact of temporary parent-child separation (and deployment in particular) on children's well-being and attachment.

Theory and research on single parenting and temporary parental absence (including imprisonment and work-related separation other than military deployment) suggests that mothers' resources (e.g., social), relationships (e.g., quality of the parent-parent relationship), health, and difficulties (e.g., emotional stress, parenting strain, work-family conflict) influence how children cope with and adjust to father's absence (Arditti, et al., 2003; Ihinger-Tallman, 1986; Lowenstein, 1986; McKee, et al., 2003; Palmer, 2008). Although military deployment differs from other types of temporary separations in several ways, it also shares some common factors, e.g., the temporary nature of the absence and the return of the family member in the family again. The

results revealed that, generally, the mothers coped quite well with the separation, which was demonstrated by the moderate levels of parenting stress, work-family conflict, psychological distress, and the low levels of loneliness. Levels of psychological distress and loneliness, however, had increased significantly from time 1 (before) to time 2 (during the deployment). Moreover, maternal well-being is shown to be predictive of children's adjustment difficulties in the course of paternal deployment. More specifically, after statistically controlling for the age of the youngest child and the number of children in the household, mothers' levels of psychological distress before the deployment and during the separation were significantly related to children's adjustment difficulties during the deployment. Furthermore, a trend is visible towards higher levels of mothers' parenting stress associated with higher levels of children's adjustment difficulties during the deployment. Mothers' levels of parenting stress during the separation significantly predicted children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion. These findings underline the importance of supporting military families. Helping spouses cope with the absence of the service member increases the chances that children will also be doing well in the course of parental absence. But more than that, focusing on families rather than individuals –as family members and their experiences are strongly related– should be central in family support interventions.

Moreover, the above mentioned theory and literature suggests that time factors and types of absences influence responses to the separation. However, in our study, regression analyses did not uncover relations between the duration of the separation and the type of absence (i.e., more risky missions versus more routine ones) on children's responses. This suggests that, predominantly, it is the *absence* of the parent that counts rather than the duration of the absence or the area in which the parent resides. It is conceivable that it is difficult for children, especially the younger ones, to grasp the risks involved. Younger children also have difficulties to keep track of the duration of the absence, as they have no sense of time and even a few weeks seem to last forever. It needs to be stressed that the duration of the separation in our sample varied between four and six months. When parents are absent for much longer periods (e.g., twelve months), it is likely that the duration does make a difference.

Additionally, this study included reports of the deployed fathers regarding their experiences with the parent-child separation. In addition to older and higher ranking servicemen reporting more positive general deployment experiences, more frequent telephone contacts with the family at home were significantly associated with more positive reports. Previous research on the use of telephones in military operations (Applewhite & Segal, 1990; Ender, 1995; Schumm, Bell, Ender, & Rice, 2004) demonstrated that the telephone is by far the most popular form of communication among deployed soldiers, yet, the possibility of service members to speak with family members back home in real time has been defined a *mixed blessing* (Applewhite & Segal, 1990; Ender, 1995). Besides the positive effects on morale, certain negative effects of telephone communications are also identifiable, such as high telephone bills, security risks, and maintaining family roles over the telephone (Ender, 1995). Through various communication media, service members remain informed about the well-being of their home front. The results of this study demonstrated that the better service members believe their home front is coping with their absence, the more they report the deployment is going well for them. Moreover, the (independent) reports of the partners at home regarding their well-being were related to the reports of the servicemen about how the deployment was going for them, that is, more stress experienced at home was related to service members reporting more negative deployment experiences. These findings, in turn, suggest that the better the home front is coping with the separation, the better the service members will function during the deployment. This evidence of crossover is highly important to military (family) research and practices. Although it is often presumed that when families are doing well service members will be better able to perform the mission, as far as we know this has not yet been demonstrated in this way.

Two mechanisms for the crossover process may underlie our findings. Firstly, as partners (or family members) care for each other, the “strain in one partner [or family member] produces an empathic reaction in the other that increases his or her level of strain” (Westman, 2001, p. 730). Our findings suggest that this mechanism even operates when family members are physically separated from each other, yet have frequent contact through various means of communication. Secondly, the relationship between family members’ strain may be spurious and a result of the

common stressor (i.e., the deployment/separation) that affects all of them (Westman, 2001).

Finally, certain limitations of this study are worth mentioning. First, data on children's responses have been collected by surveying and interviewing mothers, whose subjective reports may be biased by their own deployment experiences. However, including the reports of the absent fathers adds another perspective to the data, which revealed that the perceptions of both parents were quite similar; mothers' reports were even somewhat more positive. Second, we have not been able to examine whether boys' responses differ from that of girls', as our questionnaires did not include an item regarding the gender of the children. Previous research suggests that deployment has diverse effects on male and female children (Hillenbrand, 1976; Jensen, et al., 1996). An item regarding the gender of the parents was included. However, our sample exclusively included deployed fathers and stay-at-home mothers. Therefore, we have not been able to examine the effects of maternal absence compared with paternal absence, although the study of Applewhite and Mays (1996) suggested that children may not be more adversely affected by maternal separation than by paternal separation. Additionally, parents' gender is relevant as mothers' reports on children's responses may differ from fathers, which was demonstrated by the study of Fritsch and Burkhead (1981).¹⁹

References

- Andres, M. D., & Moelker, R. (2009). Parents' voice. The intergenerational relationship, worry, appraisal of the deployment, and support among parents of deployed personnel. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Military sociology. Essays in honor of Charles C. Moskos, Volume 2*: Emerald (in press).
- Angrist, J. D., & Johnson, J. H. (2000). Effects of work-related absence on families: Evidence from the Gulf War. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54(1), 41-58.
- Applewhite, L. W., & Mays, R. A. (1996). Parent-child separation: A comparison of maternally and paternally separated children in military families. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 13(1), 23-39.
- Applewhite, L. W., & Segal, D. R. (1990). Telephone use by peacekeeping troops in the Sinai. *Armed Forces & Society*, 17, 117-126.
- Arditti, J. A., Lambert-Shute, J., & Joest, K. (2003). Saturday morning at the jail: Implications of incarceration for families and children. *Family Relations*, 52(3), 195-204.
- Booth, B., Segal, M. W., Bell, D. B., Martin, J. A., Ender, M. G., Rohall, D. E., et al. (2007). *What we know about Army families: 2007 update*: Report prepared for the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command by Caliber.
- Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., & Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military life style demands on well-being, Army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society*, 33(1), 43-58.
- Chandra, A., Burns, R. M., Tanielian, T., Jaycox, L. H., & Scott, M. M. (2008). *Understanding the impact of deployment on children and families. Findings from a pilot study of Operation Purple Camp participants*. . RAND Center for Military Health Policy Research.
- Chartrand, M. M., Frank, D. A., White, L. F., & Shope, T. R. (2008). Effect of parents' wartime deployment on the behavior of young children in military families. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, 162(11), 1009-1014.
- Cozza, S. J., Chun, R. S., & Polo, J. A. (2005). Military families and children during Operation Iraqi Freedom. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 76(4), 371-378.

- Dahl, B. B., McCubbin, H. I., & Lester, G. R. (1976). War induced father absence: Comparing the adjustment of children in reunited, non-reunited and reconstituted families. *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 6, 99-108.
- Dandeker, C., French, C., Birtles, C., & Wessely, S. (2006). *Deployment experiences of British Army wives before, during and after deployment: Satisfaction with military life and use of support networks*. Paper presented at the NATO RTO-MP-HFM-134 symposium on "Human dimensions in military operations". Brussels, Belgium. from <http://ftp.rta.nato.int/public//PubFullText/RTO/MP/RTO-MP-HFM-134//MP-HFM-134-38.pdf>
- Drummet, A. R., Coleman, M., & Cable, S. (2003). Military families under stress: Implications for family life education. *Family Relations*, 52(3), 279-287.
- Ender, M. G. (1995). G.I. phone home: The use of telecommunications by the soldiers of Operation Just Cause. *Armed forces & society*, 21, 435-454.
- Ender, M. G. (2002). *Military brats and other global nomads: Growing up in organization families*. Westport: Praeger.
- Ender, M. G. (2005). Military brats. Film representations of children from military families. *Armed Forces & Society*, 32(1), 24-43.
- Ender, M. G. (2006). Voices from the backseat: Growing up in military families. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life: The psychology of serving in peace and combat, Volume 3, The military family*. (pp. 138-166). Westport: Praeger.
- Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(2), 176-185.
- Fritsch, T. A., & Burkhead, J. D. (1981). Behavioral reactions of children to parental absence due to imprisonment. *Family Relations*, 30(1), 83-88.
- Galovski, T., & Lyons, J. A. (2004). Psychological sequelae of combat violence: A review of the impact of PTSD on the veteran's family and possible interventions. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 9, 477-501.
- Goldberg, D. P. (1992). *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

- Habraken, I. (2008). *Kinderen van militairen op uitzending...probleemjongeren?* [Children of deployed military service members...problem youngsters?]. Bachelor thesis, Netherlands Defense Academy.
- Hiew, C. C. (1992). Separated by their work: Families with fathers living apart. *Environment and Behavior*, 24(2), 206-225.
- Hillenbrand, E. D. (1976). Father absence in military families. *The Family Coordinator*, 25(4), 451-458.
- Huebner, A. J., & Mancini, J. A. (2005). *Adjustments among adolescents in military families when a parent is deployed*. West Lafayette: Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University.
- Ihinger-Tallman, M. (1986). Adjustment in single parent families: Theory building. *Family Relations*, 35(1), 215-221.
- Jensen, P. S., Martin, D., & Watanabe, H. K. (1996). Children's responses to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35, 433-441.
- Jensen, P. S., Xenakis, S. N., Wolf, P., & Bain, M. W. (1991). The 'military family syndrome' revisited: 'by the numbers'. *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, 179(2), 102-107.
- Johnson, S. J., Sherman, M. D., Hoffman, J. S., James, L. C., Johnson, P. L., Lochman, J. E., et al. (2007). *The psychological needs of U.S. military service members and their families: A preliminary report*. American Psychological Association: Presidential Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families and Service Members.
- Kalliath, T. J., O'Driscoll, M. P., & Brough, P. (2004). A confirmatory factor analysis of the General Health Questionnaire-12. *Stress and Health*, 20, 11-20.
- Kelley, M. L. (1994). Military-induced separation in relation to maternal adjustment and children's behaviors. *Military Psychology*, 6(3), 163-176.
- Kelley, M. L., Hock, E., Smith, K. M., Jarvis, M. S., Bonney, J. F., & Gaffney, M. A. (2001). Internalizing and externalizing behavior of children with enlisted Navy mothers experiencing military-induced separation. *Journal of American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 40, 464-471.
- Koeter, M. W., & Ormel, J. (1991). *General Health Questionnaire. Nederlandse bewerking - Handleiding*. Lisse, the Netherlands: Swets & Zeitlinger.

- LaGrone, D. M. (1978). The military family syndrome. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 135, 1040-1043.
- Lowenstein, A. (1986). Temporary single parenthood - The case of prisoners' families. *Family Relations*, 35(1), 79-85.
- McCubbin, H. I., & Dahl, B. B. (1976). Prolonged family separation in the military: A longitudinal study. In H. I. McCubbin, B. B. Dahl & E. J. Hunter (Eds.), *Families in the military system* (pp. 112-144). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- McKee, L., Mauthner, N., & Galilee, J. (2003). Children's perspectives on middle-class work-family arrangements. In A. M. Jensen & L. McKee (Eds.), *Children and the changing family. Between transformation and negotiation* (pp. 27-45). London: Routledge.
- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2002). *Partneronderzoek. Wat partners vinden van de uitzending van hun militair. [Partner research. How partners feel about the deployment of their soldier]*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Gedragswetenschappen
- Netemeyer, R. G., Boles, J. S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 400-410.
- Orthner, D. K., & Rose, R. (2005). *SAF V Survey report: Adjustment of Army children to deployment separations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, prepared for the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center.
- Palmer, C. (2008). A theory of risk and resilience factors in military families. *Military Psychology*, 20, 205-217.
- Pierce, P. F., Vinokur, A. D., & Buck, C. L. (1998). Effects of war-induced maternal separation on children's adjustment during the Gulf War and two years later. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 28(14), 1286-1311.
- Rosen, L. N., Teitelbaum, J. M., & Westhuis, D. J. (1993). Children's reactions to the Desert Storm deployment: Initial findings from a survey of Army families. *Military Medicine*, 158, 465-469.
- Russell, D. W. (1996). UCLA Loneliness Scale (version 3): Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Assessment*, 66(1), 20-40.

- Ryan-Wenger, N. A. (2002). Impact of the threat of war on children in military families. *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 16, 245-252.
- Segal, M. W. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society*, 13(1), 9-38.
- Sigle-Rushton, W., & McLanahan, S. (2002). *Father absence and child well-being: A critical review*. Princeton: Center for research on child well-being.
- Vormbrock, J. K. (1993). Attachment theory as applied to wartime and job-related marital separation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 114(1), 122-144.
- Watanabe, H. K. (1985). A survey of adolescent military family members' self image. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 14(2), 99-107.
- Watanabe, H. K., & Jensen, P. S. (2000). Young children's adaptation to a military lifestyle. In J. A. Martin, L. N. Rosen & L. R. Sparacino (Eds.), *The military family. A practice guide for human service providers* (pp. 209-224). Westport: Praeger.
- Westman, M. (2001). Stress and strain crossover. *Human Relations*, 54(6), 717-751.
- Wood, S., Scarville, J., & Gravino, K. S. (1995). Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among Army wives. *Armed forces & society*, 21(2), 217-236.

Notes

- ¹ In this study, work-family conflict refers to the degree to which spouses feel that military job demands interfere with family life.
- ² Maternal well-being refers to the well-being of the parent at home, who were all female in this study.
- ³ A literature review is provided by Galovski & Lyons (2004).
- ⁴ The questionnaires for service members at the second data wave (i.e., during the deployment) were sent to the mission area. As we were not able to locate all the service members in the mission area, the number of service members included in the sample frame at time 2 was slightly less than the number of partners (see also Table 3.1).
- ⁵ Reasons concerned: one refused to participate in the study and had announced that to us, the deployment was cancelled or delayed, both partners were deployed, or the relationship was ended just before the deployment.
- ⁶ Of which 65 interviews were conducted before departure, 31 during the separation, and 24 interviews were held afterwards.
- ⁷ Preliminary analyses revealed that employment status of the mother did not have an effect on children's adjustment difficulties during the separation or upon reunion.
- ⁸ There were no significant differences in adjustment difficulties (during the separation or upon reunion) between children of enlisted men, noncommissioned officers, or officers.
- ⁹ As the number of deployments experienced by the service member or the spouse may not be identical to the number of separations experienced by the children, this variable was excluded from this article.
- ¹⁰ The questionnaires also included a measure of perceived social support, yet, as exploratory analyses did not display any relation between mothers' perceived social support and children's responses, this variable was excluded from this article.
- ¹¹ The remaining percentages relate to those respondents who were rather neutral.

- ¹² Skype is a means to communicate for free through voice and video calls and instant messages, which usually takes place on computers. MSN Messenger is Microsoft's free chat program (now called Windows Live Messenger).
- ¹³ Matched data have been used to examine changes over time.
- ¹⁴ The percentages do not add up to 100 per cent as a result of rounding off.
- ¹⁵ Matched data have been used.
- ¹⁶ Without statistically controlling for the age of the youngest child and the number of children at home, maternal well-being at time 1 significantly explained another 8 per cent of the variance in children's adjustment difficulties at time 2.
- ¹⁷ Excluding the control variables from the model, a significant relation is displayed ($\beta = .22, p < .01$) and a trend is discernable towards higher levels of work-family conflict associated with higher levels of adjustment difficulties.
- ¹⁸ Excluding the control variables from the model, this trend was also visible, just as a trend towards higher levels of work-family conflict associated with higher levels of adjustment difficulties.
- ¹⁹ The relevance of parent's gender and the differences between mother's and father's reports have also been demonstrated by Andres & Moelker (2009).

Parents' voice.

***The intergenerational relationship, worry,
appraisal of the deployment, and support
among parents of deployed personnel.****

* Andres, M.D., & Moelker, R. (2009). Parents' voice. The intergenerational relationship, worry, appraisal of the deployment, and support among parents of deployed personnel. In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Military Sociology. Essays in honor of Charles C. Moskos, Volume 2*. Emerald.

Abstract

Because of the high-risk deployments into Afghanistan, service members' parents have become more important in public opinion as well as in activities of family support groups. Although their voice is heard louder than ever before, research into parents' experiences in the course of deployment is scarce. This study among 1098 parents of Dutch service members, reveals, among other things, that the relationship between service members and their parents can be described as strongly cohesive and may even be strengthened by a deployment. Moreover, parent-child cohesion and parents' appraisal of their son's or daughter's deployment predict parents' support for the armed forces and its missions.

4.1 Introduction

“ ‘Parents,’ said one recruiter in Ohio who insisted on anonymity because the Army ordered all recruiters not to talk to reporters, ‘are the biggest hurdle we face’ ”

(Cave, 2005)

The above mentioned quotation from the *New York Times* indicates a shift in legitimization that not only pertains to recruitment but also to the support for missions abroad, be it peace keeping or peace enforcing missions. Because of the change in tasks of the armed forces and the corresponding restructuring, in particular the rise of expeditionary all volunteer forces working under risky conditions, the voice of parents is heard louder than ever before. Especially in comparison to Cold War conscript armies whose tasks were dominantly confined to territorial defense and therefore remained inside their barracks, contemporary military operations include tasks that would worry each mum and dad at the home front. Concerned parents could act as a pressure group, lobbying, protesting and acting against the defense organization's goals. Parents can play the media and by doing so affect public opinion and eventually the politicians who are dependent on their constituents.

In June 2004, a mother of a Dutch soldier gained public speaking time at a public protest in front of the Dutch House of Commons' residence, where she gave her opinion upon the prolongation of deploying Dutch soldiers to Iraq: *“It must and may not happen that our boys risk their lives for a case that is just not right”* (Vredessite, 2004). Two years later, in 2006, just before the Dutch parliament agreed to the government's decision to deploy soldiers to the hazardous Afghan province Uruzgan, soldiers' mothers were more and more expressing their concerns about this new mission that was debated in the parliament and in the media for months. On January 7, the leading Dutch newspaper *NRC-Handelsblad* ran a headline *“Off to playground Uruzgan, seeing the world through pink spectacles”* (Müller, 2006b). The article quoted Jolanda Klooster, a mother who protested each week at the monumental 'De Dam' in the Amsterdam centre, forming a one women picket line showing a banner *‘parents against Uruzgan deployment’*. A few months later, June 16, the headline *“Home front Uruzgan is preparing for the worst”* was prompted (Müller, 2006a).

The newspaper that already starred one protesting parent, now focused on the last 'family support meeting' that prepared spouses, relations, and parents of soon to be deployed soldiers for the moment the troops would say farewell. During the meeting, termed officially 'family support information meeting', not only the 'manual deceased' was discussed, but also skepticism and cynicism was expressed: *"We are in a province as large as The Netherlands with only 1400 men"*. The newspaper noted that for many it would be the first time that their children would be deployed, therewith explaining the disquietude. Ever since, newspapers, journals, and television programs reported on and interviewed parents of Dutch service men and women with regularity, e.g., a mother whose two sons were deployed in Afghanistan at the same time was heard, as well as a father whose one son was deployed in Afghanistan, while his other son participated in the EUFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even the stories of parents whose son was killed in action were uncovered in the media. *"Between proud and fear"*, *"Close upon the fire"*, *"Return safely!"*, *"My daughter is a soldier in Afghanistan"*, *"When they have a mission, we have a mission"*, *"Waiting for a postcard from Uruzgan"*, and *"Forever our hero"* are just a few examples of headlines that herald articles in which parents of deployed military personnel were interviewed. In 2006, the armed forces were elected media person of the year by the Dutch leading journal Elsevier. The home front helped earn this nomination by their appearances on national television and by being interviewed in journals and newspapers.

We, being researchers, became even more aware of the increased importance of parents when we visited the family support committee and interviewed chair persons of the family support groups that are part of this committee. Before, we were only focused on partners of deployed soldiers. In the early nineties, it was the soldiers' spouses taking the initiative in volunteer organizations, and sometimes the initiative was taken militantly (Moelker & Cloin, 1996). The activism of the nineties in which partners themselves established volunteer organizations and criticized army leadership resulted in the defense organization formulating policies and establishing a formal family support committee, which channeled the activities of the volunteers in the family support groups. Nowadays, parents mainly staff family support groups. It is a rule rather than an exception that parents produce newsletters, post parcels,

and arrange farewell and welcome meetings at the airport. Partners of course participate at farewell meetings at airports and visit 'midterm meetings' and 'information meetings' in order to acquire additional information, but it is the parents who are the core volunteers in the family support groups.

In 2006, we interviewed the chairman of one of the many family support groups. It was remarkable that this father, a small independent entrepreneur in the construction business, allowed himself time off to engage in volunteer action. Being independent he could manage his own time, but the volunteer work was not without compensation. His reward on the one hand was the information he in this manner obtained first hand, whereas on the other hand he could express commitment with his son and the deployed soldiers. He was used to participating in volunteer organizations, such as the local soccer club, and he experienced the same feeling of 'belonging' and 'cooperative spirit' in both associations. According to this chairman, it is important that people invest in a 'good cause'. He even mentioned a kind of 'orange feeling', the feeling of shared identity the Dutch experience when the national soccer team engages in international competition. His son, as a member of the Marine Corps, was one of the 'players' who deserves commitment and support.

Parents are committed and worried at the same time, as parents always are. The new feature, however, is that parents have become media persons capable of voicing their discontent, their support, or their criticism in the newspapers or on television. As for that, times have changed and parents deserve attention. Soldiers' parents can impact the operational effectiveness by influencing public opinion and may even demand that the service members be repatriated.

The questions guiding the study presented here focus on the parent-child relationship, parents' concerns, their appraisal of their son's or daughter's deployment, and their support for the armed forces and its operations. More specifically, how can the relationship between service members and their parents be described and to what extent does a deployment affect this relationship? To what degree do parents feel anxious about their son's or daughter's deployment and do mothers worry more than fathers? How do parents appraise the deployment of their

child, what are their needs for support, and what sources do they rely on? And finally, how do parents feel about the military career of their child, what are their levels of support for the armed forces and its missions, and what factors predict these levels of support? Yet first, international studies into parents of deployed soldiers will be summarized briefly. In the sections thereafter, the research design and the findings will be reported. A conclusion ends the chapter.

4.2 International studies into parents of deployed soldiers

Considering the fact that parents were only incidentally on the worldwide research agenda, it will not be surprising that the existing literature on parents is sparse. A survey titled 'What We Know About Army Families' by the Booth headed team that includes the renowned military sociologist Mady Segal (Booth, et al., 2007) indeed provides an overview of all existing knowledge, but also painfully illustrates that the scientific community studied 'children of soldiers' better than it did the soldiers' parents. Only a few American scholars, like Jocelyn Bartone and Paul Bartone, did observe the parents of deployed soldiers developing into a new phenomenon with political potential *"... military parents may not feel the same constraints that military spouses often feel about negatively impacting the career of their soldier spouses by speaking out against a particular mission or policy. In fact, 'military parents' have become a very visible force both in support of their 'children' going to war, as well as in support of bringing their 'children' home and ending the war. (...) It was the loss of her child that led to what has become perhaps the most visible example of a parent group protesting the country's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. When Cindy Sheehan waited outside the vacation ranch of George W. Bush and repeatedly asked to speak with him about bringing the troops home, some parents actively supported her efforts, while others saw her as being unpatriotic for not supporting 'the president and our troops' "* (Bartone & Bartone, 2004).

Highly interesting is the work of the Israeli political scientist Udi Lebel (2005, 2007) into the psychology of bereavement. This work describes the experiences of Israeli parents who in losing a son or daughter have become political and protest against the government. The parents in their grief can no longer accept the rhetoric of martyrdom and sacrifice that is bestowed upon them in order to legitimize their loss. The working hypothesis that the study into the experiences and opinions of parents is at the same time a study into the perceived legitimacy of military operations was derived from this study.

In the Netherlands, Dirkzwager and her colleagues (Dirkzwager, Bramsen, Adèr, & Van der Ploeg, 2005) examined secondary traumatization among partners and parents of Dutch peacekeepers. They argued that as “peacekeeping soldiers are often young and living at home, their parents may be susceptible to secondary traumatization” (Dirkzwager et al., 2005, p. 218). In contrast to partners, however, they found no significant differences among parents of peacekeepers with various levels of posttraumatic stress. Whether or not the service member lived at home with the parent did not have a significant effect. The gender of the parent, on the other hand, did, with mothers reporting more PTSD symptoms, more sleeping problems, and more somatic problems than fathers did.

The Belgian scholars Sophie Delvaux and Patrick Moreau (2008) conducted one of the few European studies into parents in the course of military deployment. Their study was part of a larger project, supervised by Professor Philippe Manigart of the Royal Military School that was directed at psychosocial support in the Belgian armed forces. The results are ground-breaking as in the Belgian case both the psychosocial needs of partners and those of the parents were compared. As expected, the parents did worry about their deployed child, but partners worried more intensely. Twelve per cent (25 persons) of the Flemish respondents reported to have experienced the deployment of their partner, son, or daughter badly. Nineteen out of the 25 respondents were partners, 6 out of the 25 were parents. Sixty per cent of the respondents coped well during the absence of their child or partner. Among the Francophone (Walloon) respondents, 23 per cent (35 persons) missed their loved ones very badly, of which the majority (24 of the 35), again, were partners and 11 out

of the 35 were parents. In contrast to the aforementioned 60 per cent Flemish relatives who coped well with the separation, only 48 per cent of the Walloon relatives coped well. Conceivably, the difference might be caused by the composition of the groups: parents cover a larger proportion amongst the Flemish. An interesting lesson learned from the Belgian study for the Dutch is that perceptions of parents differ from partners. The Belgian researchers also found a gender effect, that is, fathers seemed to respond differently from mothers.

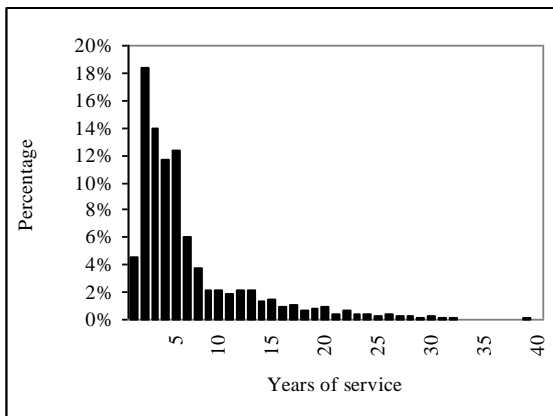
4.3 The Dutch study

In 2005, the authors started a large-scale study into families of deployed military personnel. In addition to surveying deployed service members and their partners, it was decided to study the experiences of the service members' parents. A total of 2000 questionnaires was sent, of which 1098 were returned. The resulting response rate of 55 per cent was even higher than among partners (on average, 45 per cent). For the first time ever, parents of Dutch deployed soldiers were asked to give their opinion, experiences, and attitudes regarding their son's or daughter's deployment. The questionnaires were sent about a month after the soldiers had returned from the missions EUFOR 4 and 5 (European Force; the peace support mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina) and ISAF/TFU 1 and 2 (Task Force Uruzgan; the deployments into the province of Uruzgan in southern Afghanistan). The authors had decided not to include service personnel participating in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) because of the special characteristics of this mission and the fact that the Special Forces, who lead this mission, do not form a group representative of normal peacekeeping missions.

The missions ISAF/TFU and EUFOR differ much from each other. EUFOR is a continuation of IFOR and SFOR in the post-conflict area of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Although the number of troops has been reduced considerably over time, military presence still remains necessary as symbolic token of commitment of the international community. Even though all seems quiet on the surface, violence could easily be rekindled if the international community would withdraw completely. The

present tensions between Serbia and Kosovo and the troubled reconstruction of multi-ethnic Bosnia-Herzegovina are the living proof of the feeble equilibrium. Southern Afghanistan is certainly not a post-conflict area. Eruptions of violence occur each and every day and the province of Uruzgan is the locus of insurgency, troubling local government and the Dutch armed forces in particular. The Dutch support the Karzai administration, which is in armed conflict with the insurgents. The troubles have only increased hindering the attempts at reconstructing Afghan society. The greater part (77 per cent) of the respondents' children had been deployed in Afghanistan, while 19 per cent of the military personnel participated in the EUFOR mission in Bosnia. A small number (4 per cent) took part in other deployments. The sons and daughters were enlisted personnel (68 per cent), noncommissioned officers (21 per cent) or officers (11 per cent). For roughly half (56 per cent) of the servicemen it was the first time to be deployed, 24 per cent had been deployed once before, and 20 per cent had been deployed trice or more. The mean length of the current deployment was five months.

The majority of the parents were mothers (61 per cent), although fathers were also well represented (39 per cent). The mean age of the parents was 53.5 years ($SD = 7.55$); the youngest parent was 37 years of age and the oldest 84. The greater part of the parents (81 per cent) was married, 5 per cent cohabitated, 3 per cent had a



partner but did not live together, and about 12 per cent was single.¹ Nearly all deployed children (95 per cent) were sons, only 5 per cent of the parents had a daughter deployed.

Figure 4.1 How long has your son or daughter served in the armed forces?

On average, the daughters were one year younger than the sons, with mean ages of 24.4 and 25.5 years respectively. The ages of the children ($M = 25.5$, $SD = 6.35$) ranged from 18 to 52 years. In half of the families (50 per cent), the child still lived at his parents' home. From the parents' perspective, the soldiers are very young and statistically the distribution of the number of years serving in the armed forces is positively skewed, that is, scores are highly clustered to the left (Figure 4.1). The average number of years served is 6.4, but it is a very small group of highly experienced life-time professional service members that raises the average. Only 40 per cent of the soldiers had over five years of experience and 17 per cent had served over 10 years.

4.4 The parent-child relationship

Usually, studies into military families focus on the partners of service personnel, e.g., their hardships and strengths, and the effects of military life (including deployments) on their relationship quality. Naturally, the bond between partners and service members is different from the one between service members and their parents, if only the latter is one of flesh and blood. It is important to consider gender differences when studying intergenerational relationships as mother-child relationships are found to differ from father-child relations. Women are often viewed to be the '*kinkeepers*' in the family, that is, they tend to be more involved and to invest more in maintaining intergenerational relationships than men (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Lye, 1996). Furthermore, "same-sex dyads tend to differ from cross-sex dyads" (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 1998, p. 927). Thus, each type of the parent-child dyad is assumed to be different. Moreover, the mother-daughter relationship is found to be emotionally closer than the other dyads (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 1998).

Data of our study reveal that the bond between parents and service members can be described as strongly cohesive² ($M = 21.24$, $SD = 2.79$). Moreover, the mother-daughter and mother-son relations displayed significant higher levels of cohesion than the father-son dyads [$F(3,1047) = 7.63$, $p < .01$]. Whether or not the service member lived at home with the parents did not make a difference in parents'

perceptions of the relationship. Seventy per cent of the parents who did not coreside with their deployed child lived within 1 hour overall travel time, and 57 per cent lived within only 30 minutes travel distance, indicating close geographical proximity. Nearly all parents (97 per cent) reported that contact with their child is (very) important to them and 90 per cent is (perfectly) satisfied with their amount of contact.

Thanks to the modern means of communication, parents are able to keep in touch with their son or daughter in the course of a military deployment. One can conclude that parents use all contact possibilities (Table 4.1). The traditional hand-written letter is out of fashion, but considering the possibilities of (mobile) telephony and computer communications this is not surprising. With the exception of SMS contact among parents and service members of the ISAF/TFU mission,³ the frequency of contacts is remarkable.

Table 4.1

In which way and how often did you have contact with your son or daughter during the deployment?⁴

		Once or more a day	Once or more a week	Once a fortnight	Once a month	Seldom/ never
EUFOR	Telephone	1%	38%	28%	18%	16%
	SMS	6%	34%	18%	13%	30%
	E-mail	3%	38%	22%	17%	19%
	MSN	7%	49%	9%	5%	31%
	Letters	1%	12%	14%	30%	44%
	Postal parcels	1%	9%	15%	46%	29%
ISAF/TFU	Telephone	1%	38%	35%	18%	8%
	SMS	1%	5%	4%	3%	88%
	E-mail	2%	28%	28%	20%	23%
	MSN	4%	44%	16%	8%	28%
	Letters	1%	18%	16%	27%	38%
	Postal parcels	0%	19%	24%	33%	23%

Parents and service members mutually discuss their experiences and feelings in relation to the deployment, whereby the service members' experiences and feelings are more prominent. After they have returned, many parents (40 per cent) observed changes in their son or daughter, of whom 45 per cent found these changes positive. Parents often noted that their child had become more mature and independent, or more social and attentive. One mother described it as follows: *"He left as a boy and returned as a man."* Another 45 per cent neither found the observed differences positive nor negative, whereas 10 percent of the parents thought that their child had altered negatively, including being harder, indifferent, irritable, or restless. According to 42 per cent of all parents, the deployment has strengthened the bond with their son or daughter. One of the fathers noted that *"Being deployed two times as a former soldier, me and my son now enjoy stronger bonds and better mutual understanding."* Another parent stated: *"An exciting time such as a deployment deepens the relationship with both our son and his girlfriend and that is something of value."* Twenty-six per cent of the parents reported that the deployment had improved the parent-child relationship. Seventy-two per cent of the parents indicated that the relationship had not changed, while 3 per cent announced deterioration.

4.5 Parents' worries

The authors' second research theme was related to the degree to which parents feel anxious about their son's or daughter's deployment and whether or not mothers worry more than fathers. Worry is a common emotional experience in parent-child relationships (Hay, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2007, 2008). Although parent-child relationships change when children grow older, "parents continue to provide affection, support, and nurturance to their adult children" (Hay, et al., 2008, p. 104). Worry is bi-directional; just as parents worry about their children, children also worry about their parents (e.g., Parker, Call, Dunkle, & Vaitkus, 2002). Yet, adult children mainly worry about their parents' health, whereas the types of worries among parents are more diverse, including their adult children's health, safety, relationships, work/family issues, and finances (Hay, et al., 2008). However, research into this subject is sparse. A number of studies have shown that levels of

worry are related to perceptions of the parent-child relationship. For instance, Hay, Fingerman, and Lefkowitz (2007) found that the more parents worried about their child, the more positively the child evaluated their relationship. The results of a second study of these authors (Hay, et al., 2008) revealed that parents' worry about their adult children's safety was associated with parents' more negative perceptions of the relationship quality. Strange as it may seem, few gender differences were found in the levels of worry.

We have explored parents' levels of concerns through four newly-constructed items ($\alpha = .72$), including "*I worried about the safety of my son/daughter in the mission area*" and "*I worried whether my son/daughter would be changed*".⁵ Mean levels of worry were moderate ($M = 13.68$, $SD = 0.84$), ranging from very low (4) to very high (20). Further analyses revealed a significant effect of the type of dyad on parents' disquietude, that is, mothers worried more over their deployed son than fathers did [$F(3,1036) = 6.74$, $p < .01$]. No significant differences were found between the other dyads. Additionally, parents worried significantly more when their child was sent to a more risky mission area, i.e., Afghanistan in this instance [$t(991) = -22.27$, $p < .01$]. Unlike other studies did (e.g., Hay, et al., 2008), no associations were found between the level of worry and perceptions of the parent-child relationship.

4.6 Parents' appraisals of their child's deployment

Before the service members' departure, the parents were informed of the goals of the mission, the mandate, the risks involved, and geographic specifics during 'home front information days'. Seventy-six per cent of the parents visited this information day and 94 per cent of these found it (highly) appropriate (see also Delver, 2008). The mission in Afghanistan was sold politically as a mission of reconstruction, though the risky nature was not denied. During these gatherings, parents posed critical questions and showed a skeptical attitude regarding the whole endeavor. Parents understood very well that the mission in Uruzgan was different in nature than the deployments into Bosnia and estimated the chances of the soldiers really doing reconstruction work. One of the parents told us: "*Even though they informed us very specifically of*

the dangers involved, the amount of violence our troops encountered amazed me". Although the Uruzgan mission was perceived to be much more dangerous than the Bosnia mission, parents of service members participating in the first were significantly more convinced that their sons and daughters were well prepared than the parents whose children were deployed to the less risky mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. One may assume that the military will prepare soldiers of any mission to the best of their ability; therefore, the difference in evaluation of preparation can only be explained by a psychological mechanism of compensation known as the Terror Management Theory (Pyszczynski, Solomon, & Greenberg, 2003), suggesting that the more risky the mission, the more the home front wants to believe that their soldier is well prepared.

The higher the parents estimated the risk of the deployment, the more they missed their children [$t(1024) = -6.55, p < .01$]. Moreover, mothers missed their child more than fathers did [$t(1074) = -5.24, p < .01$]. While 47 per cent of the EUFOR-fathers missed their child, it was 57 per cent of the mothers who missed their child. In the Uruzgan deployment, the percentage among fathers rises to 57 per cent and among mothers to 76 per cent.

As researchers generally agree on the beneficial effects of social support in decreasing the impact of stressful events, examining parents' need for support in the course of their child's deployment is highly relevant. Results of this study revealed that parents' greatest need of support is emotional support, that is, a good conversation or a listening ear. And it surely matters who listens (Table 4.2). Parents prefer airing their hearts to a relative or good friend. But also the spouse of the deployed soldier is a popular conversation partner, which is quite obvious given that this partner is a trusted companion and a fellow sufferer. As emotional support is based on reciprocity, partners and parents can exchange their feelings by talking about the military deployment. Neighbors and parents of other soldiers rank in the middle in terms of popular conversation partners, while professionals clearly prove the least popular. One airs his heart rather to the next of kin and to friends than confessing the whole story to professionals. A relevant finding of this study is that the need for emotional support rises as the perceived risk of the deployment increases. This

finding will not surprise anyone, yet it is important to have demonstrated and quantified the need for support for policy purposes.

Table 4.2
Parents' sources of emotional support (in %)

	EUFOR	ISAF/TFU
My son's/daughter's partner	40	52
Another relative	48	62
A friend	44	57
A neighbor	21	30
A parent of another soldier	23	27
A professional worker inside the AF	9	11
Professional assistance outside the AF	5	5

Note. The percentages do not sum up to 100 per cent as multiple answers were given.

Besides the need for emotional support, parents were asked about their need for instrumental assistance. The need for this kind of support was significantly lower and again it was primarily supplied by the circle of relatives and friends. Instrumental assistance is provided the most by direct relatives (26 per cent) or by the child's partner (24 percent), followed by friends (19 per cent). Requests for practical support are to a lesser extent directed to parents of other soldiers (12 per cent), a professional within the armed forces (10 per cent), neighbors (6 per cent), or a professional outside the defense organization (3 per cent).

The need for information, on the other hand, is large and is one of the most essential needs the armed forces must provide to the parents in order to create enough legitimacy to sustain the mission. During high-risk deployments, the need for information is larger whilst more difficult to provide. Whereas the information given by the armed forces fully meets the needs of 30 per cent of the EUFOR parents, this

percentage drops to 17 per cent amongst the ISAF/TFU parents. The majority of the respondents (50 per cent of the EUFOR parents and 58 per cent of the ISAF/TFU parents) indicated that the information given by the armed forces was satisfactory, while 23 per cent of the EUFOR and 25 per cent of the ISAF/TFU parents were not satisfied with the information given by the defense organization. Parents are not always easily satisfied because of their heightened media sensitivity. Especially the higher risk deployments are monitored to the smallest detail and it does not differ much if the source stems from the newspapers, radio, or television. Figure 4.2 displays that parents of soldiers deployed to the more hazardous mission ISAF/TFU conscientiously watch the media during their son's or daughter's absence. At this time, it is even their most important source of information! Among parents of soldiers deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina, this percentage is considerably less (Figure 4.3).

Before and after the deployment, most parents obtained information directly from their son or daughter. Even during their absence, the great majority of the parents (EUFOR: 84 per cent, ISAF/TFU: 76 per cent) were informed by their child about the conditions in the mission area. However, as service members of the EUFOR mission remained their parents' most important source of information during the deployment, service members of the ISAF/TFU mission were no longer their parents' primary source of information (the media were!). Because of safety reasons, the means of communication were less in Afghanistan (i.e., mobile telephony was not permitted), which might underlie the difference. Moreover, during the deployment, the family support committee and the crisis centre rose in esteem, but the percentage of parents who consulted these sources of information did not exceed 30 per cent.

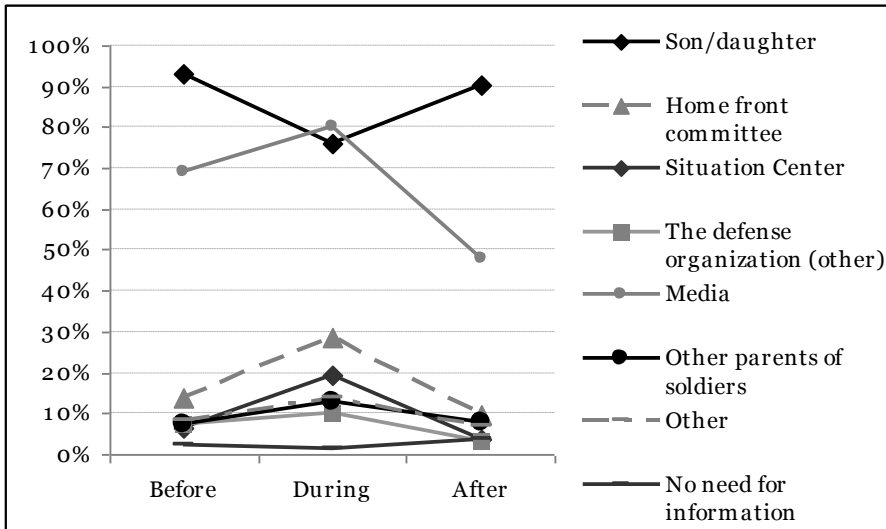


Figure 4.2 Parents' information sources in the course of their child's ISAF/TFU deployment

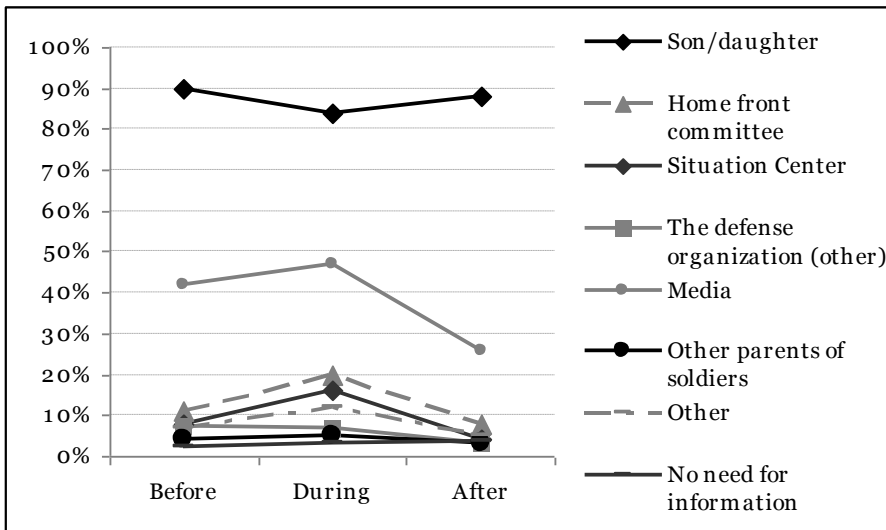


Figure 4.3 Parents' information sources in the course of their child's EUFOR deployment

Although parents tend to seek support in their direct social network of relatives and friends, these persons may not always be able to meet particular needs, for instance in relation to a military deployment. The defense organization, then, may fulfill an important role in providing support. Although the greater part (78 per cent of the EUFOR parents and 62.5 per cent of the ISAF/TFU parents) reported not to have had the need for support from the armed forces, more than three quarters of the respondents (EUFOR: 79 per cent, ISAF/TFU: 76 per cent) evaluated the support provided by the defense organization as largely or entirely satisfying their needs. The remaining 21 and 24 per cent of the parents, on the other hand, found the support not (entirely) sufficient. In general, the more the mission was perceived as a risky operation, the more the need for support from the defense organization increased. Because of the general perception of ISAF/TFU as a hazardous mission, the attendance of parents at family support information meetings was significantly higher than the attendance at EUFOR information meetings (79 versus 64 per cent). Also significantly higher was the attendance of ISAF/TFU parents at midterm and contact meetings (Figure 4.4). 67 per cent of the ISAF/TFU parents visited these meetings occasionally or regularly, against 30 per cent of the EUFOR parents.

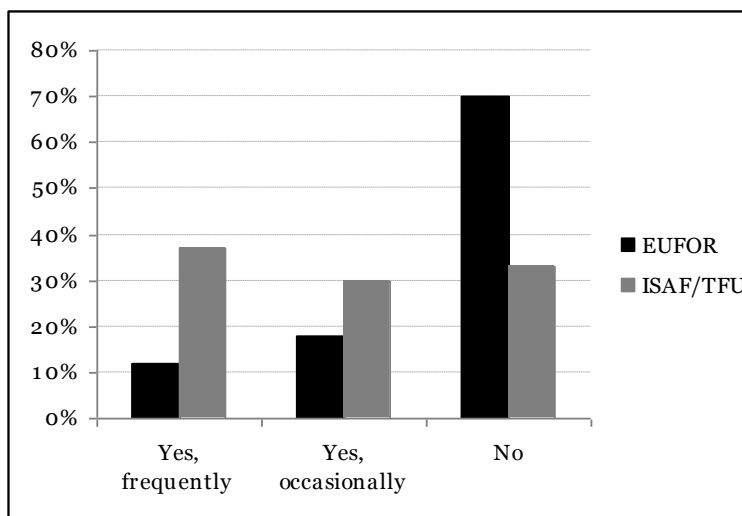


Figure 4.4 Did you participate in activities and gatherings that were organized for relatives of deployed soldiers?

Visiting family support activities can also be explained by the high level of commitment among parents and the feeling of solidarity that is experienced (*"We are all in the same boat"*). A more intense way of expressing commitment is doing volunteer service in the family support group. About one out of 20 parents (5 per cent) volunteered for work in a family support group. The degree of volunteer participation did not differ significantly among parents of both missions. Sixty-four per cent of the parents volunteered because they wanted to support their son or daughter morally, yet providing moral support was not the only motive. Forty-five per cent of the volunteers hoped to gain first hand information about the deployment. The parents who take upon them volunteer tasks very much resemble the chairperson of the family support group that was referred to in the introduction of this chapter.

Regarding parents' appraisals of the deployment, 41 per cent of the parents whose son or daughter was deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina described it as a positive experience and only 5 per cent of the parents experienced the deployment negatively. The experiences with the Afghan deployment were much more negatively perceived. Twenty-two per cent of the parents described the deployment as a (very) negative experience. A mother lamented *"...I have lived in anxiety, tension, and sorrow for five months. It was there when I woke up and when I got to sleep."* A quarter (25 per cent) of the parents, on the other hand, perceived the deployment of their son or daughter in Afghanistan (very) positively. Moreover, among both groups of parents, 60 per cent reported to have seen some positive aspects of the deployment, including having elicited a strengthened parent-child bond and more appreciation for each other, a rich experience, and personal growth of the service member. Sometimes, parents describe the deployment positively just because *"He has experienced the deployment positively."*

Further analyses revealed that fathers experienced the deployment of their child differently from mothers; that is, the mother perceived the deployment of their son more negatively than fathers experienced the deployment of their son or daughter [$F(3, 983) = 7.11, p < .01$]. No differences were found among the other types of dyads. Additionally, the nature of the mission was associated with parents' appraisal of the deployment, with more risky mission eliciting more negative perceptions [$t(942) =$

6.15, $p < .01$]. Further, parents' worry significantly correlated with parents' appraisal of the deployment, that is, parents who worried more perceived the deployment more negatively ($r = -.39, p < .01$).

4.7 Parents' support: the issue of legitimacy

The attitude and support of parents regarding the military and its operations is highly relevant. The prevailing support for the armed forces is strong but there are threats to the legitimacy of missions. Regarding parents' attitudes towards the armed forces in general, fathers of soldiers deployed to Afghanistan were as positive as fathers whose child was deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina. This also applied to mothers. Fathers, however, showed significantly more support than mothers did [$t(1084) = 6.07, p < .01$]. As much as 80.5 per cent of the fathers share a positive or very positive view regarding the armed forces, whereas only 66.4 per cent of the mothers stand behind the armed forces. Regarding the aim of the armed forces to bring peace and security in post-conflict regions, parents also showed positive attitudes. The differences between fathers and mothers were not significant, neither were there significant differences between parents whose son or daughter was sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina or Afghanistan. Concerning the objective or goal of the current mission, parents' support was only moderate. Fathers showed significantly more support when their child was deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina, compared with fathers whose son or daughter was sent to Afghanistan [$t(398) = 5.03, p < .01$], which also applied to mothers [$t(622) = 7.46, p < .01$]. Moreover, fathers' support for the current mission was significantly higher than mothers' support [$t(1080) = 2.03, p < .05$]. Both fathers and mothers, however, unquestionably stand behind the choice of their son or daughter to work in the military, no matter to what mission area their child was deployed. A parent explained: *"My son wants in the army and I respect his opinion. Therefore, I consciously blocked my own positive or negative feelings"*. Eighty-seven per cent of the parents wants their child to remain a military service(wo)man. Their attitude towards future deployments, however, is only moderate, with fathers showing significantly more support than mothers [$t(1070) = 2.43, p < .05$].

Table 4.3

Family and deployment characteristics and parent-child cohesion, parents' worry, and appraisal of the deployment predicting parents' support for the military and its operations

	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Intercept	19.01	1.30		
<i>Family characteristics</i>				
Parents' age	-.02	.02	-.05	
Dyad: father-daughter	-.27	.88	-.01	
Dyad: mother-son	-.88	.23	-.14**	
Dyad: mother-daughter	.02	.61	.00	
Dyad: father-son	---	---	---	
Coresident ^a	1.03	.25	.16**	
Number of siblings	.01	.11	.00	
<i>Deployment characteristics</i>				
Mission ^b	-.75	.31	-.09*	
Length of the deployment ^c	.12	.14	.03	
Number of deployments	.26	.12	.08*	.05**
Parent-child cohesion	.19	.03	.16**	
Parents' worry	-.07	.04	-.07	
Parents' appraisal of the deployment	1.96	.13	.46**	.25**
<i>df</i>				915
<i>Adjusted R²</i>				.29

Dependent variable = parents' support for the military and its missions.

Note. Type of dyad was entered as a series of dummies (k-1), ^a Coresident is dummy coded (0 = no, 1 = yes), ^b Mission is dummy coded (0 = EUFOR, 1 = ISAF/TFU), ^c Length of the deployment in months.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

In order to examine the factors that account for parents' levels of support for the armed forces and its missions,⁶ we subjected the following variables into multiple regression analysis: parent-child cohesion (as an indicator of the parent-child relationship), parents' worry, and parents' appraisal of the deployment (Table 4.3). Moreover, we controlled for family characteristics (i.e., parents' age, type of the dyad,

whether or not the service member lived at home, and number of siblings of the service member) and deployment characteristics (i.e., the mission, the length of the deployment, and the number of deployments). Results revealed that support for the military and its operations was significantly lower among mothers who had a son deployed compared with fathers whose son was sent abroad ($\beta = -.14, p < .01$). No significant effects were found for the other types of dyads. Moreover, parents whose child lived at home showed significant higher levels of support ($\beta = .16, p < .01$), just as parents whose child had been deployed more often ($\beta = .08, p < .05$). Parents' attitudes towards the armed forces and its operations were more negative when the soldier had been deployed to a more risky mission compared with parents who experienced a less hazardous deployment of their son or daughter ($\beta = -.09, p < .05$). Moreover, parent-child cohesion, parents' worry, and their appraisal of their child's deployment accounted for another 25 per cent of the variance in support. Whereas levels of worry nearly reached statistical significance ($p = .053$), parents who have a more cohesive bond with their deployed child and parents who appraised the deployment more positively showed higher levels of support for the armed forces and its operations ($\beta = .16$ and $\beta = .46$ respectively, $p < .01$).

4.8 Conclusion and discussion

This chapter explored issues that were hardly ever discussed in literature on military science. It is just a start, however, and much more has to be disentwined. Gender differences among parents were clearly present, for instance in the evaluation of risk and danger and in the resulting concerns about the safety of the deployed son or daughter. In addition to parents worrying more when their son or daughter was sent to a more hazardous mission area, mothers worried more over their son than fathers did. No significant differences were found, however, between other dyads (e.g., mother-son versus mother-daughter dyads). This might be caused by the small amount of mother-daughter dyads (3 per cent) and father-daughter dyads (2 per cent) in our sample.

Gender differences were also present in the ways in which parents perceived and evaluated their son's or daughter's deployment. Mothers experienced the deployment of their son more negatively than fathers did. Moreover, parents whose child participated in a more hazardous mission and parents who worried more, perceived the deployment more negatively. Considering the fact that most soldiers are well trained for deployment, but relatively inexperienced as a professional soldier –often they are on deployment for the very first time– and are put to work at a difficult reconstruction mission in a non-stabilized region, the concerns of parents become very understandable. Parents are not only concerned, though, but also very committed to their deployed child. Their attendance in volunteer action partly derives from this commitment but also from the need for information; a need that grows stronger as the mission is perceived more risky. The participation at family support information meetings and other activities was as expected higher in the riskier missions. Moreover, the ISAF/TFU parents followed the news more and had more need for support than the parents whose children were deployed in the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The majority of the parents were satisfied with the information given by the defense organization, although most of them directly obtained information from their son or daughter and conscientiously watched the media. Emotional and instrumental support were primarily supplied by the direct circle of relatives and friends and partners of the daughters or sons. If necessary, the demand for support may be expanded to a wider social circle of neighbors or parents of other soldiers. Only in the last resort parents will ask professionals for assistance, most probably in cases when only professional help can offer relief.

Approximately five per cent of the parents volunteers in family support groups in order to provide their child with moral support, to obtain first-hand information, to demonstrate involvement, but often also because they always have been active in voluntary associations outside the armed forces. They simply feel that it is something that is part of their regular lives and that one should commit oneself to a good cause that in a way can be described as a kind of 'orange feeling'. Patriotism is perhaps too strong a word within the Dutch context, but there are still many people who act in the interest of a common good.

The bond between the parents and soldiers can be described as strongly cohesive. Mutually, the experiences and feelings in relation to the deployment are discussed. Forty per cent of the parents observed differences in their son or daughter after they had returned, but most of them described these differences positively. A substantial percentage of the parents felt that the deployment had strengthened the bond with their child and had improved the parent-child relationship.

Regarding the support for and legitimacy of the mission, the gender effect once more holds true. Whereas mean levels of support were moderate to high, mothers showed lower levels of support than fathers did. Fathers react, feel, and act differently than mothers do. Fathers seem to support their children in a way that resembles their support in sports, they are standing behind their child demonstrating emotional support, and in doing so they assess and perceive the matter of risk in a totally different manner than mothers do. Mothers worry more over the safety and well being of their children, are less supportive of the objectives of the mission and believe to a lesser degree in the credibility of missions abroad. The potential for discontent and protest is probably larger in mothers than in fathers. From occurrences in the Netherlands and from experiences in other countries it is known that mothers will climb the barricades when too many body bags return. Only the mere thought of possible casualties will bring forth mothers protesting the state's military expeditionary ethos. It is to be expected that mothers will raise their voice against the mission when the number of casualties pass a certain threshold, the only difficulty is that no one can predict in advance where the threshold will lie.

References

- Bartone, J. V., & Bartone, P. T. (2004). *Missions alike and unlike: Military families in war and peace*. Paper presented at the European Research Group on Military and Society.
- Bloom, B. L. (1985). A factor analysis of self-report measures of family functioning. *Family Process, 24*, 225-239.
- Booth, B., Segal, M. W., Bell, D. B., Martin, J. A., Ender, M. G., Rohall, D. E., et al. (2007). *What we know about Army families: 2007 update*: Report prepared for the Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation Command by Caliber.
- Cave, D. (2005, June 3). Growing problem for military recruiters: Parents. *The New York Times*, from http://www.nytimes.com/2005/06/03/nyregion/03recruit.html?_r=1&pagewanted=all&oref=slogin#
- Delveaux, S., & Moreau, P. (2008). *Soutien psychosocial des proches du personnel participant à des opérations (gestion des crises, aides humanitaires) 2007-2008*. Gent University, Belgium.
- Delver, L. (2008). *Ouders en uitzending. Een onderzoek naar de ervaringen van de ouders van uitgezonden militairen [Parents and deployments. A study into deployed service members' parents' experiences]*. Bachelor thesis, Netherlands Defense Academy.
- Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Bramsen, I., Adèr, H., & Van der Ploeg, H. M. (2005). Secondary traumatization in partners and parents of Dutch peacekeeping soldiers. *Journal of Family Psychology, 19*(2), 217-226.
- Hay, E. L., Fingerman, K. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2007). The experience of worry in parent-adult child relationships. *Personal Relationships, 14*(4), 605-622.
- Hay, E. L., Fingerman, K. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2008). The worries adult children and their parents experience for one another. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 67*(2), 101-127.
- Kaufman, G., & Uhlenberg, P. (1998). Effects of life course transitions on the quality of relationships between adult children and their parents. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60*(4), 924-938.

- Lebel, U. (2005). Beyond the pantheon: Bereavement, memory, and the strategy of de-legitimization against Herut. *Israel Studies*, 10(3), 104-126.
- Lebel, U. (2007). Civil society versus military sovereignty. *Armed Forces & Society*, 34(1), 67-89.
- Lye, D. N. (1996). Adult child-parent relationships. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, 79-102.
- Moelker, R., & Cloïn, G. (1996). Gezinnen bij uitzending [families during deployment]. In R. Moelker (Ed.), *In-, door- en uitstroom van personeel* (Vol. 6, pp. 43-60).
- Müller, J. (2006a, June 16). Thuisfront Uruzgan zet zich schrap [Home front Uruzgan is preparing for the worst]. *NRC Handelsblad*, p. 1, from http://www.nrc.nl/binnenland/article1693355.ece/Thuisfront_Uruzgan_zet_zich_schrap
- Müller, J. (2006b, January 7). 'Ze gaan met roze bril op naar speeltuin Uruzgan'. Moeders zijn bezorgd over de gevaarlijke aanstaande missie van hun zonen naar Afghaanse provincie ['Off to playground Uruzgan, seeing the world through pink spectacles'. Mothers worry about the hazardous coming deployment of their sons in Afghan province] *NRC Handelsblad*, p. 3, from <http://archieff.nrc.nl/index.php/2006/Januari/7/Binnenland/03/Ze+gaan+met+roze+bril+op+naar+speeltuin+Uruzgan%27>
- Parker, M. W., Call, V. R. A., Dunkle, R., & Vaitkus, M. (2002). "Out of sight" but not "out of mind": Parent contact and worry among senior ranking male officers in the military who live long distances from parents. *Military Psychology*, 14(4), 257-277.
- Pyszczyński, T. A., Solomon, S., & Greenberg, J. (2003). *In the wake of 9/11: The psychology of terror*. Washington DC: APA Press.
- Vredessite (2004). Moeder uit te zenden militair spreekt morgen op manifestatie bij Tweede Kamer [Mother of to be deployed soldier speaks at protest at House of Commons], from <http://www.vredessite.nl/nieuweoorlog/2004/platform2106.html>

Notes

- ¹ The percentages do not sum up to 100 per cent because of rounding off.
- ² Measured through the 5-item subscale *Cohesion* of Bloom's (1985) Family Functioning Scale, $\alpha = .74$, items are presented in appendix E.1.
- ³ Range and security measures are the cause of this limited SMS contact.
- ⁴ SMS stands for Short Message Service, a communication service through which short text messages are interchanged between mobile telephones; MSN Messenger is Microsoft's free chat program (now called Windows Live Messenger).
- ⁵ Items are presented in appendix E.2.
- ⁶ Assessed through 5 self-constructed items, $\alpha = .78$, presented in appendix E.3.

Sweethearts or strangers?
Couples' reconciliation
following military deployment.

* Andres, M.D., & Moelker, R. Sweethearts or strangers? Couples' reconciliation following military deployment. Manuscript submitted for publication to the *Military Families* book project, edited by P. Manigart, R. Moelker, & M.W. Segal.

The authors thank Rianne Uijtdewillegen for her assistance in conducting the interviews.

Abstract

Notwithstanding the joy induced by service members' returns after deployment, reunions also commence processes of reintegration and adaptation. This chapter examines patterns of reconciliation among returned service members and their partners following military deployments as well as the process of sustaining the intimate relationship during the separation through active verbal interactions. Quantitative data were collected among service members and partners during ($N = 353s / 386p$) and after ($N = 183s / 235p$) deployments. Supplementary qualitative data were derived from interviews conducted with a randomly selected subsample of the partners ($N = 55$). The data demonstrate that reconciliation clearly involves a process of adaptation, which was more difficult for partners than for returned service members. Still, many couples believed things went back to normal rather quickly. Some attributed the regained stabilization to their frequent and intense contact during the separation. The data show that it is not the *frequency* of communications but the *way* couples communicate during the separation (i.e., the degree to which couples engage in active interactions) that is positively associated with reconciliation and evaluations of the relationship afterwards. Being aware of the benefits of active verbal interactions may help couples maintaining a well functioning relationship in the course of temporary separations.

5.1 Introduction

One of the many rides across the country –heading for army spouses whose husbands were sent abroad– brought me to this nice village near the waterfront. It was the third time that I entered the street. “*My door is always open,*” she said, the last time I left. And here I was again, for the final interview. She waved through the kitchen window and welcomed me. It had been three months since her husband returned from Uruzgan, a southern province of Afghanistan, where he was part of a Provincial Reconstruction Team. We took a seat at the kitchen table, drank coffee, and with her two cats lying on the chairs next to us, she openly talked about her and her family’s experiences following her husband’s deployment:¹ “*We’ve done a great deal of talking,*” she said. “*The first week, we’ve plumped down on the couch with a cup of coffee and we’ve only talked. He has shown some pictures. At that moment, telling his story was important. He had heard all our reports by e-mail, like the first school day of our daughter. He can share his experiences with me. I listen, ask questions now and then, am all ears; just let him talk. We have always been very open and honest. Fortunately, he had not witnessed anything [traumatic], which makes it less hard. He’s had really got the chance to provide humanitarian aid. I have really been worried about him witnessing things, being left with a trauma. Then, you’ll get back a totally different husband. Once, he had his finger on the trigger because someone disregarded an order. And once, he saw a plane dropping a bomb, at a distance. That kind of things must be impressive. I know what happens, but don’t see it with my own eyes.*” Being relieved that her husband had returned without any trauma-related symptoms, she made clear that talking and listening was significant for them. Although she had not been there and had not seen what he had seen, she was able to listen. This was their way to communicate about the past several months which they had spent separated.

This army wife is one of the many who had to miss the presence of her husband as a result of military deployment. Today, at any given time, over 2,000 Dutch service members are deployed to mission areas all over the world, such as Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Chad, and Congo. As missions differ (e.g., in duration, contact opportunity, exposure to physical danger), families’ experiences will also differ. Yet,

any deployment causes a separation between service members and their families for an extensive period of time. Homecomings *physically* reunite families, but are they instantly reunited *emotionally* and *socially* too? Being relieved that soldiers return home safely from their mission abroad, military families generally celebrate the homecomings. But the glow of happiness is frequently followed by a reality shock and the process of reintegration and adaptation has only just begun. Moreover, spouses might find themselves detached and estranged from each other –considering each other as strangers rather than sweethearts– as a result of the different personal and emotional experiences. Sustaining the intimate relationship during the separation through active verbal interactions might influence reconciliation processes after reunion. The following research questions guide this chapter:

Research questions:

- *How can processes of reconciliation following reunion be described?*
- *To what degree do service members and partners engage in active verbal interactions during and after the separation?*
- *To what degree do such interactions affect reconciliation processes and evaluations of the relationship afterwards?*

5.2 Military deployment

Theory and research assert that work can affect individuals and their spouses in diverse ways, including one's physical, psychological, and relationship well-being (Barling, 1984; Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001; Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992; Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; Segal, 1989; Voydanoff, 2002). Moreover, job-related separations, including military deployments, affect individuals and their partners as these are considered stressful events that instigate change in life routines and, therefore, require adaptation in

order to restore balance in people's lives. "Theoretically, stressful events may include any event that requires adaptation by the individual, regardless of whether the event is positive or negative" (Neff & Karney, 2004, p. 137), including, for instance, pregnancy, the birth of a child, or change in working conditions or residence. Multiple separations and reunions, in addition to the risks of service members' injuries or deaths, are unique stressors associated with military life (Segal, 1986).

Military deployments require service members' and families' adaptations to different routines, both during the deployment and following reunion. Service members are sent to a different and often hazardous environment in which they are surrounded by a different set of individuals and engage in different routines. Partners who remain at home typically assume primary responsibility for all household and parenting tasks, whilst continuing regular responsibilities at work, or school. Although combining family roles with the role of worker is suggested to benefit one's well-being in many cases (Roehling & Bultman, 2002), the multiple roles partners need to fulfill during the absence of service members may result in overload and conflict. On the other hand, the necessity of mastering all tasks and responsibilities may elicit feelings of freedom, power, and self-sufficiency. Both the absence and the addition of a family member in the household considerably changes the family structure as a result of which "roles must be renegotiated and norms and procedural rules may be modified or changed completely for the family members" (Ihinger-Tallman, 1986, p. 218) in order to restore the family's equilibrium.

5.3 Reunion and reconciliation

Hill (1945), who's pioneering work on wartime separation and reunion has laid the foundation of much of the research in the field, argued that the homecoming has often been anticipated as "a golden dream" (p. 32) with idealized images and high expectations. Later studies also demonstrated that one tends to romanticize reunion (e.g., Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995). After the first few days, usually characterized by "emotional intoxication" (Hill, 1945, p. 33), "physical closeness" (Wood, et al., 1995, p. 225), or honeymoon period (e.g., Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003),

couples find themselves faced with a process of reintegration, reorganization, and adaptation. Service members may feel redundant and unaccepted as a result of the partners' self-sufficiency and need for independence, developed during the service members' absences. They might find themselves bothered by the changes that have taken place in the family or may feel the need to bring in some discipline in the household. Returned service members may also feel a lack of excitement or feel unable to talk freely about their war experiences (Hill, 1945). Partners, in turn, may feel compelled to relinquish some of their freedom and authority as returned service members want to resume their role in the family. However, in spite of these somewhat struggling reconciliation processes, positive reunion experiences have also been identified, including mutual feelings of pride and appreciation (e.g., Wood, et al., 1995) and greater feelings of closeness (e.g., Rosen & Durand, 2000).

It has been argued by Hill (1949, cited by Vormbrock, 1993) that the degree to which service members remain included in the family system during their absences influences separation and reunion adjustments. Yet, neither completely excluding nor completely including the absent service member in the separation adjustment process seems beneficial. Families that exclude the service member (defined as *closed-ranks adjustment*), for instance by redistributing the service member's family roles and excluding the soldier from day-to-day decision making, are likely to develop a well-functioning family system during the service member's absence. However, they will be faced with serious adjustment and reintegration difficulties when the service member returns home as he may feel excluded from the family. Families that include to service member in the separation adjustment process (defined as *open-ranks adjustment*) continue to depend on the service member. For instance, they try to function without role redistribution and depend on the service member in decision making processes. These families are likely to experience disorganization, distress, and adjustment difficulties during the separation. But, because of the unmodified division of roles, they are likely to encounter less adjustment difficulties following reunion, resulting in a rather smooth process of reconciliation. The families that adjusted best to the separation and reunion maintained an affectional relationship during the separation (through communications) and did not depend on the absent

service member's advice concerning immediate family problems, thus *partially closed ranks* (Hill, 1949; Vormbrock, 1993).

Vormbrock (1993) provided an extensive –and frequently cited– review of the literature on marital separation and reunion reactions. She applied Bowlby's and Ainsworth's attachment theories and perspectives, on the basis of which she formulated several predictions about wartime and job-related marital separations. Among other things, Vormbrock (1993) predicted that: temporary physical separation from a loved one involves a sequence of emotional reactions, including conflicting emotions at reunion; longer separations are associated with more difficult reunions; and separations arouse distress “even when they [couples] have experienced numerous prior separations” (p. 125). Rosen, Durand, Westhuis, and Teitelbaum (1995) reexamined some of Vormbrock's hypotheses. Their study, conducted among 773 army spouses one year after their husbands' return from Operation Desert Storm, revealed that patterns of readjustment to wartime separation can be characterized by increased distance or closeness between spouses, role sharing (e.g., soldiers adopting a more egalitarian role, spouses adopting new roles, and new agreements), and increased independence (e.g., spouses feeling more independent and making more decisions) or dependence. Among other things, marital satisfaction and consideration of divorce prior to the separation, stressful events experienced during the separation, and soldiers keeping the spouses informed predicted reunion experiences. Remarkably, emotional well-being during the deployment was not related to any of the reunion factors.

5.4 Relationship quality following deployment

Obviously, temporary separations involve different personal and emotional experiences (e.g., in the mission area versus at home) which can bring on changes, making it more difficult to reintegrate after reunion and returning to the way things were before the separation. Hence, sweethearts may have become strangers, finding themselves detached and estranged from each other because of the long-term separation; efforts may be needed to find common ground again. “Reunion appears

to be a difficult process rather than a happy ending” (Vormbrock, 1993, p. 137), but relationships are assumed to have stabilized about three months after reunion (Logan, 1987; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994). Nonetheless, more and more concerns have been raised about rising divorce rates as a result of military deployments. In general, it is assumed that “stressful environments affect marriages” (Story & Bradbury, 2004, p. 1140; see also Neff & Karney, 2004). More specifically, deployments are often viewed as harmful to relationships. Hence, it is important to study factors that may enhance relationship satisfaction in the course of temporary separations. Studies addressing the effects of military deployments on intimate relationships show divergent results. Whereas some researchers demonstrated adverse effects (e.g., Angrist & Johnson, 2000; Gimbel & Booth, 1994; Solomon, et al., 1992), others found insignificant or even beneficial effects (e.g., Karney & Crown, 2007). More than fifty years ago, Hill (1945, p. 33) argued that “with all its shortcomings, correspondence remains the main means of salvaging marriages” in times of physical separations.

5.5 The role of active communications

Various stress theories (e.g., Hill, 1949; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; McCubbin & Patterson, 1983) assert that the ways in which individuals cope with stressful events affect the outcomes. Coyne and Smith (1991) identified *active engagement* as a form of relationship-focused coping. According to them, “active engagement is a matter of involving the partner in discussions, inquiring how the partner feels, and other constructive problem solving” (Coyne & Smith, 1991, p. 405). It is an example of the dyadic coping concept in which coping is viewed as a “genuine dyadic phenomenon” (Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser, 2006, p. 485), which can be distinguished from the individual coping strategies, such as emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping. Dyadic coping involves spousal support, which is clearly different from social support provided by family, friends, neighbors, and others. When people encounter a stressful event, the partner is often the primary and most important source of support (Bodenmann, et al., 2006). Moreover, many stressful events, such as deployments, affect both partners, which makes dyadic coping crucial in maintaining a well

functioning relationship. Furthermore, Pearson and Sessler (1991) emphasized the importance of communication in the maintenance of intimate relationships. Additionally, the study of Moelker, Ambaum, Overbeek, and Schipper (1999), conducted among 210 partners of service members who had been deployed approximately a year earlier, revealed that good communication promotes relationship quality (including intimacy). Similar findings were reported by Moelker and Van der Kloet (2002, 2003), who conducted a study among 425 partners of service members who had returned from a deployment to Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, or Cyprus a year earlier.

Two mechanisms have been identified through which dyadic coping affects the intimate relationship. First, it reduces the negative effects of stress on marriage, and second, it strengthens “the feeling of ‘we-ness’, mutual trust, and intimacy” (Bodenmann, et al., 2006, p. 486). Broman, Riba, and Trahan (1996, p. 910) have argued that “positive, open communication between spouses provides a means to air concerns, fears, guilty feelings, and anger” and that this is so important that it may even be the only way for a couple’s relationship to survive a stressful event. The vital role of correspondence is also emphasized on military websites: “Communications play a critical role when a service member is physically absent. Maintaining an emotional connection is essential in sustaining a relationship. Active communication also boosts morale for both the service member and those left at home”.²

Despite the general agreement on “the benefits of engaged, constructive marital interactions during periods of stress” (Story & Bradbury, 2004, p. 1143), Vormbrock (1993, p. 136) referred to Gerstel and Gross’s (1984) study conducted among commuters engaging in long-distance contact with their spouses, which reported that often “phone conversations were about practical rather than emotional matters, made it difficult to resolve disagreements, did not allow for in-depth sharing of experiences, and sometimes intensified their sense of separateness”. This example illustrates the drawbacks of ‘shallow’ communications –which can lead to loneliness, even among commuters– and the significance of in-depth sharing of experiences. Moreover, research into the use of telephones in military operations has defined telephone use as a *mixed blessing* (Applewhite & Segal, 1990; Ender, 1995). While on the one hand

positive effects have been shown (e.g., on morale), on the other hand certain negative effects were identifiable, including maintaining family roles over the telephone.

5.6 Study design

Data used in this study are part of a more extensive longitudinal study of military families, focusing on a wider range of topics. This chapter relies on quantitative data, collected among service members and their partners during (T1) and after military deployment (T2),³ as well as qualitative data derived from interviews conducted with a randomly selected subsample of these partners. The couples experienced a deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina (EUFOR 4 or 5) or Afghanistan (TFU 1 or 2) and were separated, on average, for five months. During the separation, 788 questionnaires were sent to service members in the mission area and 832 to their partners' home addresses.⁴ Of the questionnaires sent, a number of 353 and 386 were returned by service members and partners respectively ($N_{\text{couples}} = 198$), resulting in a response rate of 45 and 46 per cent. Three months after reunion, 183 service members and 235 partners filled out the questionnaires ($N_{\text{couples}} = 162$), resulting in response rates of 29 and 37 per cent respectively.⁵ All observations are used in the analyses, applying the method of pairwise deletion, which means that analyses regarding couples solely include those service members and partners who both filled out the questionnaires and questions concerned.⁶ Additionally, we have interviewed 55 randomly selected partners, of which 31 interviews were conducted during the separation and 24 interviews were conducted afterwards. These qualitative data enriched the quantitative survey data. The interviews were semi-structured as the questionnaire guided the conversation, but respondents were left free to add and elucidate things and bring up subjects they wanted to share. Interviews were not recorded as this was expected to hamper respondents from speaking freely, given that some topics were perceived very sensitive. Instead, detailed notes were made, literally transcribing what was said.

In accordance with the research questions that guide this chapter, we focus predominantly on data on communication, reconciliation, and relationship quality that were collected during and/or after the separation. The questionnaires sent during the deployment contained items regarding the frequency of contact with either the partner in the mission area or at home, as well as items regarding couples' interactions. Coyne and Smith's (1991) definition of active engagement inspired us to operationalize the construct that we define 'active verbal interactions'. Items of the scales used during and after the separation are reported in Appendix F1 and F2. The scales showed satisfactory levels of internal consistency: during the separation $\alpha = .79$ for service members and $.72$ for partners; after reunion $\alpha = .75$ for service members and $.70$ for partners. Additionally, the questionnaires sent three months after reunion contained items regarding reunion and reconciliation experiences. We define reconciliation as reestablishing a close relationship; adjusting; harmonizing (items are reported in Appendix F3). Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scales were $\alpha = .81$ among service members and $\alpha = .80$ among partners. Relationship quality was measured by using Fowers and Olson's (1993) ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale and items adapted from the subscale Love of Braiker and Kelley's (1979) Relationship Questionnaire, assessing feelings of belonging, closeness, and attachment. Cronbach alpha coefficients for the scales were $\alpha = .91$ for service members and $\alpha = .89$ for partners (16 items).⁷

The following paragraphs tell the stories of couples who are engaged in long-term relationships ($M = 11.2$ years, $SD = 8.80$); more than half of them (58 per cent) have children. The great majority (95 per cent) of the service members are male and almost all (97 per cent) partners are female. Some are in their teens or twenties, others in their fifties, but most of them are somewhere in between ($M_{\text{service members}} = 35.0$, $SD = 9.37$; $M_{\text{partners}} = 33.2$, $SD = 9.17$). On average, the service members have been in the armed forces for 14.5 years ($SD = 9.23$); they are enlisted personnel (24 per cent), noncommissioned officers (47 per cent), or officers (29 per cent).

5.7 Sweethearts or strangers?

5.7.1 *The homecoming*

The homecoming has often been anticipated a while before the actual occurrence. One young woman, twenty-one years old, told me the following about her husband's return: *"I was really nervous. I've never felt that nervous in my whole life. I was shaking and have shed some tears. He came home on Friday. The night before, until late into the night, I had been very busy cleaning everything; just because my nerves were worn to shreds. I did not have an imagination about the reunion, I thought: just let it come. I was so happy to see him again. (...) We kept the weekend quiet. On Monday, I went back to work, so he could find his niche again. We settled down instantly, although at the beginning I thought: 'okay, he is back again.' I saw his stuff everywhere. He is totally back again. But I'm not going to be a bore; I just leave him for a while."*

For nearly all couples (95 per cent), the homecoming was a joyous event; only few believed it was not. Unlike the above quoted army wife, who had no expectations in advance, the homecoming had not met the expectations of some partners (10 per cent, $n = 234$) and service members (7 per cent, $n = 179$), which can either mean that the reunion exceeded expectations or point to disappointments. Remarkably, the homecoming involves more tenseness among partners than among service members. Nearly a quarter of the partners (24 per cent) thought the return produced much tension; among service members, this was 14 per cent. One spouse expressed: *"The homecoming was very tense, on all fronts. The precise date, two nervous children.... Everything revolves around him. I have also an intense time behind me. It was a very busy day. Everyone kept asking about it. I was busy tidying up our home. (...) They [the soldiers] were stuck for a couple of days, which caused much uncertainty. Then, I received a text message containing his location. There are so many factors that play a part: the plane does or does not arrive, the plane cannot land...."*

5.7.2 Reconciliation

Although they have been physically reunited, loved ones usually have to get used to being back together again, just as they had to get used to being separated. A partner shared: *“At the start, it was taking some getting used to again. (...) I had to rely on myself [during her partner’s absence], didn’t need to have dinner ready at six. I didn’t have to be considerate of someone; I could go my own way. Now, you should have some considerations for each other. You have to make some concessions. You’re doing well together rather quickly, but you need to tune into each other’s rhythm again.”* Many partners whom we have interviewed three months after reunion described this process of reintegration following reunion, often characterized by having to get used to each other again, taking into account the presence of the other, tuning in to each other’s daily rhythm, having to make concessions and adjustments, and no longer being the only boss in the home. One of them said: *“I think the time after reunion was more difficult than during the separation. My freedom was gone. I got used to a life without him. I had a certain rhythm of doing sports, walking with the dog, and working. (...) I really had to get used to a new rhythm, and not hanging around with friends so often anymore. It is pleasant together, but that means that I have to give up other things.”* Partners experienced more difficulties growing accustomed to the returned service members again (29 per cent) than vice versa (12 per cent); among them this partner who said: *“At first, I really had to get used again. Fencing off my terrain. This is my territory. Suddenly, he is also home again. (...) Adjusting was easier for him than for me.”* More partners (21 per cent) than service members (13 per cent) reported difficulties regarding the service member adjusting to the routines at home (59 and 73 per cent respectively did not) and roughly 10 per cent of the couples had to renegotiate roles (74 per cent had not).

Only 6 per cent of the partners and 5 per cent of the service members reported a tensed atmosphere in the home and just as many worried about their relationship. A small number (3 per cent) of the couples reported to have become estranged from each other. However, others (roughly one third of the partners and service members) reported to enjoy the presence of their loved one even more than before the deployment, implying that separations can also cause couples to realize the value of

being together. One partner said: *"You just notice what you miss when it's gone. I appreciate it more now. The things we do together."* Another said: *"You feel what you miss; you are going to value little things more."* The interviews revealed that, for several couples, going on holiday eases the reunion. According to one: *"We went away on holiday immediately after he had returned and took up the thread more easily."* And another: *"Our vacation right after the deployment has normalized it all again."* A third shared: *"We went on holiday together. The family did not like it but for us it was great. He has shared a lot with me during that vacation; genuinely about his feelings there. It was so valuable. It's like he has never been away. Everything was back to normal very quickly. We have paid a lot of attention to each other."*

For the majority, the reconciliation phase did not last very long. Seventeen out of the twenty-five interviewees believed that everything went back to normal rather quickly. The survey data provided more precise information about the duration of the reconciliation phase. For nearly half of the partners (45 per cent, $n = 230$) and service members (49 per cent, $n = 179$) it took less than two weeks before things were stabilized. A partner said: *"We went on where we've left off, that was because we'd had so much contact."* Roughly one out of five couples needed two to four weeks to take up the thread of life. For 9 per cent of the partners and 6 per cent of the service members the adaptation phase lasted four to six weeks. And 11 per cent of the couples had not reached the state in which things were before the separation three months after return. On the whole, –although still fairly high– levels of relationship quality had dropped significantly in the course of the separation [$t(89) = 5.59, p < .01$ for service members and $t(164) = 8.47, p < .01$ for partners].⁸

5.8 Couples' interactions

5.8.1 During the separation

In the foregoing, one partner believed that she and her partner went on where they had left off because they had had so much contact during the separation. Today, various means of communication enable deployed service members and their home

front to remain interconnected while being physically separated. The survey data demonstrate that couples stay in touch on a regular basis, whereby telephone communication is most popular, followed by e-mail, MSN, SMS, letters, and packages. *“Personal contact remains most important,”* according to one partner. No less than 83 per cent of the partners ($n = 375$) and service members ($n = 341$) communicated with each other by telephone at least once a week, of whom 10 per cent at least once a day. Despite some differences between the Bosnia and Afghanistan missions in the use of mobile telephony, the frequency of telephone communications was similar among both groups. Fast means of interactions are also offered by modern internet facilities, such as e-mail and MSN Messenger. A great majority of the service members (75 per cent) and partners (69 per cent) used e-mail to keep each other posted at least once a week. Slightly more than half of the couples used MSN Messenger at least weekly as a means to make contact with either the mission area or the homeland. Albeit less frequently, couples generously make use of the possibility to send letters and packages to their beloved.

One army wife, whose husband was deployed to Afghanistan, said the following about her communication with her husband abroad: *“I find it most important just to hear his voice. Then I know it’s all right. (...) My husband has a duty-roster: so many days off and so many days on the base. When he’s away, we simply have no contact. When he’s on the base, the first thing he does is calling me; if he has time, of course. I e-mail him and write him letters, so I can tell my story. Five years ago, Internet did not exist like it does today. If you just quickly want to share something, you can send an e-mail. I also used to send packages, but he received so many from everyone that he told me I did not have to send him anything anymore except for the bare necessities.”* A wife whose husband was sent to Bosnia-Herzegovina expressed: *“We contacted each other almost every day, via e-mail, MSN, or by telephone. Usually, he called. I was able to call him, but I was never sure whether it suited him for he was always working. It was like an unwritten rule that he was the one who called. Through telephone communication, some things seem so meaningless. You don’t want to make it harder than it is. At some moment, you no longer tell certain things. You often feel pitiful. (...) I think it is a luxury to be able to communicate*

every day. But just the physical contact makes your bond and that is not possible for a while."

So, how do couples maintain their bond and preserve their intimate relationship while being physically separated? The literature review suggested that engaging in constructive interactions during periods of stress is of vital importance in maintaining a well functioning relationship. The survey data reveal that couples' levels of active verbal interactions are fairly high ($M_{\text{service members}} = 29.90$, $SD = 5.16$; $M_{\text{partners}} = 32.06$, $SD = 4.83$). *"It's important to remain a little informed about what's going on inside the other, or he will return and you will be completely drifted apart,"* according to one partner. The great majority of the couples attempt to maintain their intimate bond by showing affection (service members: 88 per cent; partners: 95 per cent) and asking how the other feels (93 and 95 per cent respectively). A large proportion of service members (88 per cent) reported to provide advice regarding matters at home, while 64 per cent of the partners reported to ask for such advice, indicating that not all depend on the absent service member's advice concerning immediate family problems.

Generally, partners at home communicate more openly, given that the majority (78 per cent) share all their experiences (service members: 39 per cent) and try to discuss things they feel sore about (partners: 70 per cent; service members: 56 per cent). Only 10 per cent of the partners keep bad news from the service members and 22 per cent avoid things that might upset them. Among service members, these percentages are clearly higher (i.e., 35 and 42 per cent respectively), possibly pointing to a more protective attitude towards the home front. In an interview, a partner explained: *"I told him a lot over the telephone. He wanted to hear much from me; he wasn't able and allowed to tell much himself."* While service members are not able to share all their experiences, partners have other motives to keep things from their beloved. *"Certain things I keep from him. Things he can't really solve right now. He'll only seriously worry."* Another said: *"I filter out the news I tell him."* Or: *"I don't bother him with things he cannot deal with right now."* A fourth partner shared: *"I am inclined to keep bad news from him. Certain things I put into words nicer than they*

are. I avoid him to worry. My partner doesn't share his work experiences with me, but he does share the feelings he has with it."

5.8.2 *Following reunion*

During the interviews, it became clear that –being physically separated from each other– couples often maintain intense contact by the use of letters, telephone, or e-mail and that the reunion usually brings an end to this kind of contact. After her husband returned, one army wife said: *"Sometimes, I told him: you can better be deployed, at least then you talk."* One other shared: *"We've had a very intense contact while he was there, which was instantly over when he returned home. He just continued where we had stopped back then. I was like: 'what next?' You have been separated from each other for a while and unnoticedly you each have built your own life."* Nonetheless, generally, couples' levels of active verbal interactions are still fairly high, although service members talk less about their deployment experiences than partners do. Little more than half of the service members (57 per cent) share all their experiences after their return, while among partners this percentage is much higher (i.e., 83 per cent).

But it is not always that easy. One army spouse told me: *"My husband did tell me his experiences, but not his feelings with it. I tried to share my story but he doesn't understand. Then I just stop. Right now, it doesn't work."* Another said: *"Your biggest fear is: how do they return? (...) That fear is still there: will he be able to piece it together? Will it all come out? I can't imagine what he has seen and experienced. I sense he's running out of energy. There is much in his head what may or may not come out. We let each other free in it. We've made good agreements about it: when he wants to share anything with me, he does; when he wants to go into the woods, he just goes."* Only a few (6 per cent of the partners and 13 per cent of the service members) avoid everything that could upset the other and when they feel sore about anything, the great majority talk about it (partners: 90 per cent; service members: 74 per cent). Generally, both service members (76 per cent) and partners (89 per cent) ask how the other feels and turn out to be good listeners as well (68 and 76 per cent respectively).

5.9 The effects of active interactions

In the foregoing, couples interactions during and after the separation have been described. Yet, to what degree do such interactions affect reconciliation processes and evaluations of the relationship afterwards? Attempting to answer this final research question, multiple hierarchical regression analyses have been performed. First, Table 5.1 enumerates the means and standard deviations of the variables under study.

Table 5.1
Means and standard deviations of the variables

	Service members		Partners	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Relationship quality afterwards (T2)	4.02 (159)	0.53	3.97 (215)	0.54
Reconciliation difficulties afterwards (T2)	1.85 (146)	0.65	1.99 (188)	0.73
Active interactions afterwards (T2)**	3.76 (177)	0.58	3.91 (230)	0.53
Active interactions during (T1)**	3.74 (346)	0.65	4.01 (380)	0.60

Note. *N* in parentheses; the means and standard deviations are divided by the number of items; ** significant difference between means service members and partners at the .01 level.

Summarizing, both service members and partners reported fairly high levels of relationship quality just as rather smooth processes of reconciliation after the separations. Furthermore, although relatively high among both, partners' levels of active verbal interactions were significantly higher than service members', both during and after the separation.

Table 5.2 presents the intercorrelations among the study variables. Service members' and partners' reconciliation experiences are associated with their own and the other's evaluations of the relationship, with more reconciliation difficulties (i.e., more efforts needed to reestablish a close relationship, to adjust, and to harmonize) being related to lower levels of relationship quality. Furthermore, active verbal interactions after

reunion are associated with more smooth reconciliation and higher levels of relationship quality. Active interactions during the separation have similar, but less strong, effects (and not all of these interrelations reach statistical significance).

Table 5.2
Intercorrelations among the study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Relationship quality service members (T2)							
2. Relationship quality partners (T2)	.60**						
3. Reconciliation difficulties service members (T2)	-.61**	-.50**					
4. Reconciliation difficulties partners (T2)	-.39**	-.61**	.52**				
5. Active interactions service members (T2)	.70**	.49**	-.55**	-.32**			
6. Active interactions partners (T2)	.41**	.67**	-.42**	-.56**	.33**		
7. Active interactions service members (T1)	.23**	.18*	-.26*	-.11	.33**	.11	
8. Active interactions partners (T1)	.20*	.30**	-.14	-.10	.14	.31**	.31**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Tables 5.3 and 5.4 present the results of the hierarchical regression analyses, performed to test the effects of active verbal interactions on service members' and partners' reconciliation (Table 5.3) and evaluations of their relationship (Table 5.4) following reunion.

Table 5.3*Active interactions as predictors of service members' and partners' reconciliation^a*

	Service members				Partners			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Constant	11.78	.89			12.04	1.07		
<i>Control variables</i>								
Length of relationship ^b	-.09	.05	-.20 [†]		-.04	.06	-.07	
Number of prior deployments	.31	.33	.10	.05	.19	.45	.05	.01
<i>Predictor variables</i>								
Active interactions self (during: T1)	-.23	.08	-.30**	.09**	-.08	.09	-.09	.01
Active interactions other (during: T1)	-.01	.09	-.02	.00	-.07	.09	-.08	.01
Active interactions self (after: T2)	-.59	.10	-.52**	.24**	-.81	.13	-.59**	.31**
Active interactions other (after: T2)	-.19	.12	-.15	.02	-.34	.11	-.27**	.06**
<i>df</i>				82				93
<i>Adjusted R²</i>				.39				.38 ^c

Note. ^a Higher levels of reconciliation refer to more difficulties, lower levels refer to smoother reconciliation processes; ^b Length of relationship in years; ^c ΔR^2 do not add up to .38 because of rounding off.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .10$.

Table 5.4

Active interactions as predictors of service members' and partners' relationship satisfaction

	Service members				Partners			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	ΔR^2
Constant	63.85	1.99			66.97	2.21		
<i>Control variables</i>								
Length of relationship ^b	.01	.11	.01		-.10	.12	-.09	
Number of prior deployments	.23	.73	.04	.00	-1.11	.93	-.13	.03
<i>Predictor variables</i>								
Active interactions self (during: T1)	.50	.17	.30**	.09**	.41	.19	.23*	.05*
Active interactions other (during: T1)	.17	.20	.09	.01	.23	.18	.14	.02
Active interactions self (after: T2)	1.58	.21	.64**	.37**	1.89	.22	.69**	.41**
Active interactions other (after: T2)	.81	.23	.30**	.07**	.45	.21	.18*	.03*
Reconciliation self (T2)	-.69	.20	-.32**	.06**	-.60	.18	-.30**	.06**
Reconciliation other (T2)	-.12	.19	-.06	.00	-.10	.21	-.05	.00
<i>df</i>				80				81
<i>Adjusted R²</i>				.60				.60

Note. ^a Length of relationship in years; ^b Higher levels of reconciliation refer to more difficulties, lower levels refer to smoother reconciliation processes.

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, [†] $p < .10$.

Table 5.3 demonstrates that service members who are engaged in longer relationships experience less difficulties harmonizing when they get back, even though this variable only reaches the statistical significance level of .06 in the first step of the hierarchical regression analysis where it is entered as a control variable ($\beta = -.20, p = .06$). Among partners, the length of the intimate relationship has no effect on reconciliation following reunion. Among service members, higher levels of active interactions with their partners during the separation predict less reconciliation difficulties afterwards (i.e., less efforts needed to harmonize and adjust) ($\beta = -.30, p < .01$). Partners' levels of active interactions during the separation do not display significant effects on service members' reconciliation processes afterwards.

Furthermore, service members' reports of more active communications afterwards are associated with less reconciliation difficulties experienced by them ($\beta = -.52, p < .01$). Among partners, the analyses reveal that active verbal interactions afterwards, rather than during the separation, affect reconciliation processes. Both their own ($\beta = -.59, p < .01$) and their partners' (i.e., the service members') ($\beta = -.27, p < .01$) higher levels of interactions are associated with less efforts to adjust and harmonize. The final models explain 39 and 38 per cent of the variance in service members' and partners' reconciliation experiences respectively.

Table 5.4 displays that active interactions reported by one self during the separation beneficially affect one's evaluation of the relationship afterwards ($\beta = .30, p < .01$ among service members; $\beta = .23, p < .05$ among partners). After reunion, both the active interactions reported by one self ($\beta = .64, p < .01$ for service members; $\beta = .69, p < .01$ for partners) and one's partner ($\beta = .30, p < .01$ and $\beta = .18, p < .05$ respectively) are positively associated with one's reported relationship quality. Finally, one's own reconciliation experiences are related to one's evaluation of the relationship, with more smooth reconciliations being associated with higher levels of relationship quality ($\beta = -.32$ and $-.30, p < .01$ among service members and partners respectively). For service members and partners, the final models explain 60 per cent of the variance in relationship quality following the separation.

5.10 Summary and discussion

Using quantitative and qualitative data collected among physically separated (T1) and reunited (T2) couples, this study aimed at enhancing knowledge regarding couples' reconciliation patterns following reunion and the role of active verbal interactions during and after the separation. Literature suggests that stressful events affect marriages. More specifically, military deployments are often viewed as harmful to relationships. Hence, it is important to study factors that enhance relationship quality following such events. Literature suggests that couples' constructive interactions in the course of stressful events (in this case: military-induced separations) are crucial in maintaining a well-functional relationship.

First, this study revealed that reconciliation clearly involves a process of adaptation, which was perceived as more difficult by partners than returned service members. Nevertheless, generally, reconciliation passed off rather smoothly and many couples believed things went back to normal rather quickly. For the majority, things were stabilized three months after reunion, which is in accordance with previous research and theory. The fairly high levels of relationship quality three months after reunion underline these findings, though they have dropped significantly –but not substantially– compared with pre-deployment levels. On the whole, the separations have not turned sweethearts into strangers.

Second, during the separation, service members and partners adopt fairly high levels of active interactions, implying couples' efforts to preserve their intimate relationships despite the absence of physical contact. As preliminary analyses revealed that the frequency of communications during the separation was not related to reconciliation processes or evaluations of the relationship afterwards, it is the *quality* rather than the *quantity* of interactions that matters. After reunion, couples generally also engage in active interactions, though at both times (during and after the separation) service members communicated less openly than partners did. This may be explained from a gender (being male or female) or professional perspective (being service member or not; the former is not always able or allowed to share everything).

Third, the study demonstrates that active verbal interactions attenuate difficulties harmonizing and adjusting and positively affect couples' evaluations of their relationships afterwards. Interestingly, again, differences are shown between partners and service members. This implies that these processes, which can be viewed as a form of dyadic coping, work differently for partners than for service members. For instance, active interactions of both themselves *and* the service members after reunion are significantly associated with partners' reconciliation experiences. For service members, however, it is principally important that *they* can express themselves, both during and after the separation, given that partners' active interactions were not related to their process of reconciliation. Yet, partners and service members engaging in active verbal interactions is associated with both their evaluations of the relationship. Fully understanding such dyadic processes requires more longitudinal empirical data. Researchers studying marital interactions during periods of stress have usually focused on nonphysically separated couples or relied on retrospective measures –given that it is often difficult to predict when a stressful event will occur.

The results imply that by keeping each other informed and involved, inquiring how the other feels, expressing affection, and so on –in other words, by engaging in active verbal interactions in the course of job-induced separations– couples are less likely to become estranged from each other. It needs to be stressed that these findings do not suggest that every service member or partner should relieve their feelings and share difficulties with their beloved unlimitedly. Certain issues are hard to solve at such a distance, other things may be hard to understand, and burdening partners with these matters may adversely affect their well-being.

For defense organizations, the findings of this study support the assumption that providing and facilitating means to communicate when sending personnel abroad is of uppermost importance. It is worth noticing that other analyses of the data revealed that the great majority of Dutch service members and partners reported to be satisfied with the existing means to communicate during the separation (see also Andres & Moelker, 2008). However, differences between mission areas in means of

communication should be a point of interest in order to enable all service members and families to engage in active interactions.

Furthermore, providing couples with information about the benefits of active verbal interactions may become part of family support programs. Although every individual or couple will communicate and cope with the separation differently, for them to be aware of certain benefits may help maintaining a well functioning relationship in the course of temporary separations.

References

- Andres, M. D., & Moelker, R. (2008). Militaire gezinnen en uitzending (III). Evaluatie van de thuisfrontzorg [Military families and deployment (III). Evaluation of family support]. *Militaire Spectator*, 177(11), 603-614.
- Angrist, J. D., & Johnson, J. H. (2000). Effects of work-related absence on families: Evidence from the Gulf War. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 54(1), 41-58.
- Applewhite, L. W., & Segal, D. R. (1990). Telephone use by peacekeeping troops in the Sinai. *Armed Forces & Society*, 17, 117-126.
- Barling, J. (1984). Effects of husbands' work experiences on wives' marital satisfaction. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 124, 219-225.
- Bodenmann, G., Pihet, S., & Kayser, K. (2006). The relationship between dyadic coping and marital quality: A 2-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(3), 485-493.
- Broman, C. L., Riba, M.L. & Trahan, M.R. (1996). Traumatic events and marital well-being. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 58(4), 908-916.
- Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., & Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military life style demands on well-being, Army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society*, 33(1), 43-58.
- Coyne, J. C., & Smith, D. A. (1991). Couples coping with a myocardial infarction: A contextual perspective on wives' distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 61, 404-412.
- Drummet, A. R., Coleman, M., & Cable, S. (2003). Military families under stress: Implications for family life education. *Family Relations*, 52(3), 279-287.
- Ender, M. G. (1995). G.I. phone home: The use of telecommunications by the soldiers of Operation Just Cause. *Armed forces & society*, 21, 435-454.
- Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(2), 176-185.
- Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1997). Relation of work-family conflict to health outcomes: A four-year longitudinal study of employed parents. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 70(4), 325-335.

- Gerstel, N. R., & Gross, H. (1984). *Commuter marriage: A study of work and family*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Gimbel, C., & Booth, A. (1994). Why does military combat experience adversely affect marital relations? *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 56(3), 691-703.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2001). Consequences of work-family conflict on employee well-being over time. *Work & Stress*, 15(3), 214-226.
- Hill, R. (1945). The returning father and his family. *Marriage and Family Living*, 7(2), 31-34.
- Hill, R. (1949). *Families under stress*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Hughes, D., Galinsky, E., & Morris, A. (1992). The effects of job characteristics on marital quality: Specifying linking mechanisms. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(1), 31-42.
- Ihinger-Tallman, M. (1986). Adjustment in single parent families: Theory building. *Family Relations*, 35(1), 215-221.
- Karney, B. R., & Crown, J. S. (2007). *Families under stress. An assessment of data, theory, and research on marriage and divorce in the military*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, National Defense Research Institute.
- Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. New York: Springer.
- Logan, K. V. (1987). The emotional cycle of deployment. *Proceedings*, 43-47.
- Matthews, L. S., Conger, R. D., & Wickrama, K. A. S. (1996). Work-family conflict and marital quality: Mediating processes. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 59(1), 62-79.
- Mauno, S., & Kinnunen, U. (1999). The effects of job stressors on marital satisfaction in Finnish dual-earner couples. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20, 879-895.
- McCubbin, H. I., & Patterson, J. M. (1983). The family stress process: the Double ABCX model of adjustment and adaptation. In H. I. McCubbin, M. B. Sussman & J. M. Patterson (Eds.), *Social stress and the family: Advances and developments in family stress theory and research*. (pp. 7-37). New York: The Haworth Press.
- Moelker, R., Ambaum, J., Overbeek, E., & Schipper, M. (1999). Beter luisteren, meer sex? [Better listening, better sex?]. *Militaire Spectator*, 168(2), 98-104.

- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2002). *Partneronderzoek. Wat partners vinden van de uitzending van hun militair. [Partner research. How partners feel about the deployment of their soldier]*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Gedragswetenschappen
- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2003). Military families and the armed forces. A two sided affair? In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 201-223). New York: Kluwer.
- Neff, L. A., & Karney, B. R. (2004). How does context affect intimate relationships? Linking external stress and cognitive processes within marriage. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(2), 134-148.
- Pearson, J. C., & Sessler, C. J. (1991). *Family communication and health: Maintaining marital satisfaction and quality of life*. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Chicago.
- Peebles-Kleiger, M. J. K., & Kleiger, J. H. (1994). Re-integration stress for Desert Storm families: Wartime deployments and family trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 7(2), 173-193.
- Roehling, P. V., & Bultman, M. (2002). Does absence make the heart grow fonder? Work-related travel and marital satisfaction. *Sex Roles*, 46(9/10), 279-293.
- Rosen, L. N., & Durand, D. B. (2000). Marital adjustment following deployment. In J. A. Martin, L. N. Rosen & L. R. Sparacino (Eds.), *The military family. A practice guide for human service providers* (pp. 153-165). Westport: Praeger.
- Rosen, L. N., Durand, D. B., Westhuis, D. J., & Teitelbaum, J. M. (1995). Marital adjustment of Army spouses one year after Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25(8), 677-692.
- Segal, M. W. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society*, 13(1), 9-38.
- Segal, M. W. (1989). The nature of work and family linkages: A theoretical perspective. In G. L. O. Bowen, D.K. (Ed.), *The organization family: Work and family linkages in the US military* (pp. 3-36). New York: Praeger.
- Solomon, Z., Waysman, M., Belkin, R., Levy, G., Mikulincer, M., & Enoch, D. (1992). Marital relations and combat stress reaction: The wives' perspective. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(2), 316-326.

- Story, L. B., & Bradbury, T. N. (2004). Understanding marriage and stress: Essential questions and challenges. *Clinical Psychology Review, 23*, 1139-1162.
- Vormbrock, J. K. (1993). Attachment theory as applied to wartime and job-related marital separation. *Psychological Bulletin, 114*(1), 122-144.
- Voydanoff, P. (2002). Linkages between the work-family interface and work, family, and individual outcomes: An integrative model. *Journal of Family Issues, 23*(1), 138-164.
- Wood, S., Scarville, J., & Gravino, K. S. (1995). Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among Army wives. *Armed forces & society, 21*(2), 217-236.

Notes

- ¹ This introduction describes the first author's retrospective view of one of the interviews that has been conducted in the course of this research project.
- ² <http://www.military.com/benefits/resources/deployment/communication-during-deployment>.
- ³ In the overall study, these are the second and third (i.e., final) data wave respectively, however, data collected before the separation are beyond the scope of this chapter.
- ⁴ As we were not able to locate all the service members in the mission area, the number of service members included in the sample frame at this time was slightly less than the number of partners.
- ⁵ The sample frame at this data wave included 635 couples as couples dropped out along data collection procedures for various reasons.
- ⁶ Data of couples have been matched.
- ⁷ The measures do not confound given that the items used to measure active verbal interaction, reconciliation, and relationship quality have no overlapping contents. For instance, no items on communication were included in the measures of reconciliation and relationship quality.
- ⁸ The eta squared statistics indicated large effect sizes of .26 and .30 respectively.

***Conflicting work-family demands,
well-being, relationship satisfaction,
and turnover intentions
in the course of job-induced separations.***

* Andres, M.D., Soeters, J., & Moelker, R. Conflicting work-family demands, well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separations.

Abstract

Literature demonstrates that work demands conflicting with family life can lead to work and non-work-related outcomes. The aim of this study was to test a model, simultaneously assessing the relations between work-family conflict, well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separations. Survey data were collected among military personnel in three waves, that is, before ($N = 303$), during ($N = 353$), and after ($N = 183$) the military-induced separation, with a four to five months time lag between each wave. The results suggest that a significant event such as job-induced separation influences the stability of work-family conflict experiences, general well-being, and relationship satisfaction, whereas turnover intentions remained fairly stable. Even though turnover intentions before the separation predict turnover intentions afterwards (indicating its stability), the means demonstrated that, on the whole, levels of turnover intention had increased significantly over the course of the military-induced separation. Furthermore, levels of general well-being were significantly lower during and after the separation compared with before and relationship satisfaction decreased significantly, though not substantially. No significant differences were found in work-family conflict over time. Work-family conflict was found to have significant immediate, rather than longer-term (i.e., cross-lagged) relations with relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions. Cross-lagged relations were found from general well-being to work-family conflict, suggesting that declined well-being at one point in time predict increased work-family conflict experiences at a subsequent point in time. Moreover, service members experiencing higher well-being before departure are likely to be more satisfied with their relationship afterwards.

6.1 Introduction

The interdependency of the work and family domain has been demonstrated by considerable research (see for instance Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), but the nature of the relation is complex. Are they *allies*, or *enemies* (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000)? Just as the family, work often is central to individuals' lives and can be rewarding in various ways (e.g., financially, socially, and emotionally) (Bedeian, Burke, & Moffett, 1988). However, just as the family, work can also be demanding, or '*greedy*' (Coser, 1974; Segal, 1986), requiring the workers' time, energy, and psychological involvement. Conflict arises when work and family demands are incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Job-induced family separations increase the likelihood of work-family conflict (Adams, Jex, & Cunningham, 2006) as such absences take up all the worker's resources (e.g., time, energy, involvement) making it difficult to meet family demands for a considerable period of time. Various occupations in different industries involve job-induced separations (e.g., in the oil and gas industry, transport, and fishing industry) and more and more organizations are expanding activities globally, requiring employees to travel abroad for prolonged periods of times (e.g., expatriates) (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Likewise, –though recognizing the unique characteristics, such as the risks involved– military personnel and their families have to deal with temporary separations frequently, as job-induced separations are inherently associated with the military profession.

Since the early 1990s, deployment rates have increased (Adler & Golembe, 1998; Reed & Segal, 2000) and with that have the frequencies of family separations. Hence, the question how to combine and integrate a professional military career and family life in such a way that tensions are manageable is highly interesting and important, given that tensions between work and family life are beneficial for neither organizations nor families. For instance, a recent study of Burrell and colleagues (Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006) demonstrated that the impact of separations is negatively related to one's well-being, marital satisfaction, and satisfaction with the Army. Separations are also found to be correlated with work-family conflict, which in turn is associated with work- or family-related outcomes (e.g., Adams, et al., 2005). Weiss and colleagues (2003) argue that as a result of

frequent absences, private relationships can become strained and nonwork factors in turn may influence job turnover, which may be more prominent in military families than in nonmilitary families. When work requires exorbitant investments (e.g., time, involvement) service members may either leave the organization or end the relationship.

The aim of the present study is to examine stability and cross-lagged relations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separations (i.e., military deployments). Stability relations demonstrate how well a previous level of a variable (e.g., work-family conflict at time 1) predicts the subsequent level of that variable (e.g., work-family conflict at time 2), whereas cross-lagged relations refer to relations between different variables over time (e.g., work-family conflict at time 1 predicting psychological distress at time 2). This study endeavors to contribute to previous research in several ways.

First, knowledge in the work-family field predominantly relies on research employing cross-sectional designs, sometimes applying retrospective measurements (Casper, Eby, Bordeaux, Lockwood, & Lambert, 2007; Dikkers, 2008; Weiss, et al., 2003). For instance, Casper and colleagues (2007) conducted a review of the methods used in work-family research published in industrial-organizational psychology and organizational behavior journals between 1980 and 2003 and found that, of the 225 studies reviewed, only 24 studies (11 per cent) employed longitudinal research designs, whereas 201 studies (89 per cent) were cross-sectional. Of the 77 studies specifically addressing work-family conflict, only 5 (6 per cent) were longitudinal and 72 (94 per cent) were cross-sectional. Although cross-sectional studies have generated much valuable information, they have certain limitations, for instance regarding their inability to provide information about relations over time. Employing a longitudinal design enables us to examine relations among the variables within and across time frames, as well as within-person changes over time. Although it has been recognized that work-family conflict can have health- or stress-related (e.g., general well-being), non-work-related (e.g., relationship satisfaction), and work-related consequences (e.g., turnover intentions) (e.g., Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000;

Voydanoff, 2002), only few studies have examined the relations simultaneously, in one model, addressing their stability and cross-lagged relations.

Second, in addition to the need for research employing repeated assessments, there is a need for collecting data prior to the onset of key events (Story & Bradbury, 2004). Prestressor conditions usually are difficult to measure, as it is hard to predict when a stressful event will occur. Assessing conditions at the very moment they occur prevents bias as a consequence of asking respondents about past perceptions. The context of job-induced separations, and in particular military deployments, sets conditions to study the effects of work-family issues in the course of temporary separations. It is very likely that such separations are key (or critical) events that may affect work-family conflict experiences and the variables to which these experiences are related (in this particular study, we focus on general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions). Only few studies are conducted within the context of job-induced separations (e.g., Roehling & Bultman, 2002; Westman, Etzion, & Gattenio, 2008).

6.2 Theoretical framework

Researchers studying the work and family interface have predominantly focused on the construct of work-family conflict, which is a bidirectional concept distinguishing work interfering with family (*work-family conflict*, or WFC) from family interfering with work (*family-work conflict*, or FWC) (e.g., Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996). For the purpose of our study, we focus exclusively on work-family conflict, that is, the extent to which military job demands interfere with family life. Although initially researchers suggested that work-family conflict mediated the relation between *work-related antecedents* and *family-related outcomes* (e.g., Frone, Yardley, et al., 1997), a review of the literature on work-family conflict shows that both work and family factors can be precursors or outcomes of work-family interference (see, for instance, Adams, et al., 2006).

Divergent theoretical perspectives have been applied to studying and explaining processes and experiences of work-family conflict. Predominant are the perspectives presuming that resources can be limited and the inability to adequately apply resources in one or both domains (i.e., work and family) causes conflict or strain. In this study, we apply Hobfoll's (1989, 2001) Conservation of Resources (CoR) theory, which provides a useful framework for studying work and family relationships (see for instance Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999) and testable hypotheses predicting outcomes in varying contexts.

The Conservation of Resources model is a comprehensive stress model postulating that "resource loss is the principal ingredient in the stress process" (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 337) and, consequently, resource gain is indispensable. The theory assumes that "people strive to retain, protect, and build resources" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516) and the potential or actual loss of these valued resources as well as the lack of resource gain produces stress. It is suggested that stressful events or circumstances are likely to threaten one's resources and therefore produce stress and strain outcomes. Likewise, the theory proposes that "interrole conflict leads to stress because resources are lost in the process of juggling both work and family roles" (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999, p. 352). In the course of job-induced separations, such as military deployments, one is likely to perceive conflict between work and family demands as one needs to devote resources (e.g., time) in the work domain to such an extent that it causes a loss of resources available for the family domain. That is, it prevents individuals from adequately fulfilling family responsibilities or spending time together with the family (thus, interfering with family life). According to the Conservation of Resource theory, this will produce negative emotions and feelings of distress in both the work and family domain. The relations between conflicting work and family demands, well-being (i.e., individual), relationship satisfaction (i.e., nonwork domain), and turnover intentions (i.e., work domain) are elaborated in the following sections.

6.2.1 Work-family conflict and well-being

Longitudinal research, employing two- or three-wave study designs with varying time lags between the data waves, revealed that work-family conflict is a relatively stable experience over time. This is indicated by its test-retest correlations above .50,

demonstrated by various researchers (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker, & Bulters, 2004; Kinnunen, Geurts, & Mauno, 2004; Leiter & Durup, 1996; Rantanen, Kinnunen, Feldt, & Pulkkinen, 2008; Westman, et al., 2008). The stability in work-family conflict experiences corresponds to Leiter and Durup's argument that "the current state is often the best predictor of future state." However, they added to that: "...unless an intervening event influences that emotional state" (Leiter & Durup, 1996, p. 42). Analogously, Rantanen et al., (2008, p. 38) argue that "critical incidents" in the work or family domain "might generate instability in work-family conflict experiences." Prolonged job-induced separation (at least longer than weekly commuting) is very likely to be such an event. Applying previous research as a standard, we therefore hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 1: Job-induced separations will affect the stability of work-family conflict experiences, that is, stability coefficients of work-family conflict in the course of such separations will be lower than .50.

Considerable empirical research has demonstrated the relations between work-family conflict and health and well-being outcomes (e.g., Durand, Burrell, Stetz, & Castro, 2003; Grant-Vallone & Ensher, 2001; Noor, 2003; Parasuraman, Greenhaus, & Granrose, 1992). Only few studies have examined this relation longitudinally, with varying time lags between the data waves. Just like work-family conflict, these studies demonstrated that indicators of well-being were fairly stable over time (i.e., test-retest correlations were $> .50$) (e.g., Demerouti, et al., 2004; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997; Leiter & Durup, 1996; Rantanen, et al., 2008). However, taking into consideration that an intervening critical event, such as prolonged job-induced separation, might influence employees' emotional states, and applying previous research as a standard, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 2: Job-induced separations will affect the stability of well-being, that is, stability coefficients of well-being in the course of such separations will be lower than .50.

Regarding its relations with work-family conflict, the longitudinal study of Frone, Russell, and Cooper (1997) displayed an effect of work-family conflict on levels of heavy alcohol consumption *four years* later, but not on depression, poor physical health, or increased incidence of hypertension. They suggested that the causal effect of work-family conflict on indicators of well-being might occur during a shorter span of time (Frone, Russell, et al., 1997). Grant-Vallone and Donaldson (2001) examined the effects of work-family conflict on employees' well-being *six months* later. The results of their study demonstrate that, both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, work-family conflict is related to well-being, over and above social desirability bias and other control variables (i.e., gender, marital status, number of children, and hours worked). These findings were consistent across self-reported well-being and coworker-reported well-being. Thus, over a six-month time lag, work-family conflict was shown to have immediate *and* long-term effects on employees' overall well-being. Moreover, the relation between work-family conflict and well-being was found to be consistent for employees in different family situations.

In addition to work-family conflict acting as a precursor to well-being, researchers also found support for work-family conflict being an outcome of well-being, or being *both* an antecedent and an outcome of well-being (that is, work-family conflict and well-being mutually influence one another). For instance, the two-wave study of Kinnunen, Geurts, and Mauno (2004), with a *one-year* time lag, revealed that work-family conflict at time 1 predicted psychological symptoms (as an indicator of well-being) at time 2 for women but not for men. Among men, however, a lack of well-being (i.e., psychological and physical symptoms) at time 1 functioned as a precursor of work-family conflict perceived at time 2. Demerouti, Bakker, and Bulters (2004) found similar results. They employed a three-wave study design with a *six-week* time lag between each data wave, assessing work pressure, work-home interference, and feelings of exhaustion. Their findings demonstrated that work-home interference had a short- (six weeks) and long-term (three months) lagged effect on exhaustion, since work-home interference at time 1 predicted exhaustion at time 2 and 3. Moreover, they found that exhaustion at time 1 predicted work-home interference at time 2 and 3. Hence, work-home interference was both a predictor and an outcome of exhaustion. An earlier study of Leiter and Durup (1996), who used a two-wave panel

design, already found such longitudinal relations between work-family conflict and emotional exhaustion. The findings of this study revealed that work-family conflict predicted emotional exhaustion three months later. Moreover, employees experiencing more emotional exhaustion at time 1 were more likely to experience higher levels of work-family conflict at time 2 (i.e., three months follow-up).

According to the Conservation of Resources theory and the aforementioned review of the literature, we hypothesize that, in the course of job-induced separations, work demands absorb employees' resources (such as time, energy, involvement) to such an extent that this prevents them from adequately fulfilling family responsibilities or spending time together with the family, which adversely affects their wellbeing. Thus:

Hypothesis 3: In the course of job-induced separations, work-family conflict is negatively related to employees' general well-being (a) within and (b) across time frames.

The Conservation of Resources theory and the aforementioned literature review also suggest that employees suffering from poorer well-being might have fewer mental resources to manage the responsibilities associated with work and family life as a result of which experiences of work-family conflict increase (Rantanen, et al., 2008). Therefore, in addition to hypothesis 3, we hypothesize that work-family conflict may also function as an outcome of well-being. Thus:

Hypothesis 4: In the course of job-induced separations, lower levels of well-being predict higher levels of work-family conflict (a) within and (b) across time frames.

6.2.2 Work-family conflict and relationship outcomes

Researchers examining relationship satisfaction in multiple data waves have found that relationship satisfaction is a quite stable experience over a six-month and one-year time period (i.e., test-retest correlations were $> .70$) (e.g., Kinnunen, et al., 2004; Leiter & Durup, 1996). Applying these findings as a standard and taking into account that stressful events are assumed to affect (the stability of) intimate

relationships (see, for instance, Neff & Karney, 2004; Story & Bradbury, 2004), we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 5: Job-induced separations will affect the stability of relationship satisfaction, that is, the stability coefficient of relationship satisfaction in the course of such separations will be lower than .70.

As compared to the associations between work-family conflict and well-being, the (longitudinal) relations between work-family conflict and relationship outcomes have been studied less. Research has demonstrated the spillover effects of job stressors on relationship outcomes (e.g., Adams, et al., 2005; Barling & MacEwen, 1992; Hughes, Galinsky, & Morris, 1992; Roberts & Levenson, 2001), which are often found to be mediated by work-family conflict. Some studies have shown that increased levels of work-family conflict are associated with decreased levels of marital satisfaction (e.g., Bedeian, et al., 1988; Durand, et al., 2003; Leiter & Durup, 1996; Voydanoff, 2005). Bedeian and colleagues (1988), for instance, postulated that “work exerts a powerful influence on the quality of individuals’ marriages” and spending large proportions of time in work restrains high involvement in one’s relationship (Bedeian, et al., 1988, p. 487).

Studies addressing the longitudinal relations between work-family conflict and relationship outcomes, however, show mixed results. Leiter and Durup (1996) demonstrated that work-family conflict had an influence on marital satisfaction *three months* later, whereas Kinnunen et al. (2004) found that, among men and women, work-family conflict did not predict marital satisfaction *one year later*. These differences in findings may be due to varying time lags between the data waves, which suggests that it is more likely that work-family conflict affects relationship outcomes in shorter spans of time (say, several months –empirical evidence does not allow for more precise estimates of time) than in the long run (e.g., time lags of one year or longer). In their study on work-family interference in the course of an intervening critical event (in this instance, the transition to parenthood), using a three-wave study design with a six-month time lag between each wave, Belsky, Perry-Jenkins,

and Crouter (1985) found that high levels of work-family interference, reported by husbands and wives, resulted in increased marital conflict.

The Conservation of Resources theory posits that applying resources (time, psychological involvement) in one domain (e.g., work) can produce a loss of resources available for an other domain (e.g., family) which produces strain in the other (family) domain (e.g., relationship dissatisfaction). Hence, we presume that relationship satisfaction decreases as a result of work-family conflict, e.g., one is dissatisfied with the time spent together or one has disagreements over household and childcare responsibilities as work absorbs one's resources. On the basis of this, *and* considering the aforementioned literature review, in which the association between work-family conflict and relationship outcomes is well-established in cross-sectional research, whereas (less extensive) longitudinal evidence displays mixed results –which might be explained by the varying time lags between the data waves or the presence or absence of critical events–, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 6: In the course of job-induced separations, work-family conflict is negatively related to relationship satisfaction (a) within and (b) across time frames.

6.2.3 Well-being and relationship outcomes

Empirical studies have shown that various indicators of well-being are associated with relationship outcomes (e.g., Barling & MacEwen, 1992; Conger, Rueter, & Elder, 1999; Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; Kwon, Rueter, Lee, Koh, & Wha Ok, 2003; Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; Roberts & Levenson, 2001; see also Story & Bradbury, 2004). The findings of the studies suggest that, for instance, psychologically distressed individuals tend to evaluate their intimate relationship more negatively than individuals who do not feel distressed. Analogously, considering the Conservation of Resources theory, it is plausible that an individual's emotional state can deplete (in case of poor well-being) or increase one's resources available for the family domain, for instance, to engage in interpersonal relationships. Considering CoR theory and the empirical evidence regarding the associations between well-being and relationship outcomes, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 7: In the course of job-induced separations, general well-being is positively related to relationship satisfaction (a) within and (b) across time frames.

6.2.4 Work-family conflict, well-being, and turnover intentions

Only limited longitudinal studies examining turnover intentions on multiple data waves were found. These studies reveal that turnover intentions are moderately stable over a five-month and one-year time period (i.e., test-retest correlations were $> .50$) (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson, 1999; Houkes, Jansen, De Jonge, & Bakker, 2003; Vandenberg & Nelson, 1999). Again, applying previous research as a standard and taking into consideration that an intervening critical event, such as prolonged job-induced separation, might influence employees' experiences, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 8: Job-induced separations will affect the stability of turnover intentions; that is, the stability coefficient of turnover intentions in the course of such separations will be lower than .50.

Furthermore, research has demonstrated that work-family conflict can instigate employees to quit their jobs; that is, work-family conflict is found to be associated with withdrawal cognitions and turnover intentions (e.g., Cohen, 1997; Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Netemeyer, et al., 1996), which in turn are associated with actual turnover (Griffeth, Hom, & Gaertner, 2000; Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Again, longitudinal studies are sparse. The Conservation of Resources theory posits that when resources become scarce, individuals try to change (or even exit) resource threatening situations (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). When resources available for the family domain are lost as a result of work demands, some kind of action is needed to protect the threatened resources, to conserve one's resources, or to eliminate the resources drain. Hence, one will be likely to pursue alternatives that enable a better distribution of resources and thereby decrease the potential of conflict. Such an alternative is, for instance, decreasing one's effort within the work role or even quitting the job (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Thus, when work-family conflict grows too large, one solution is to leave the workplace (Rode, Rehg, Near, & Underhill, 2007), trying to diminish work demands interfering with family life.

Therefore, and considering the empirical evidence regarding the associations between work-family conflict and turnover intentions, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 9: In the course of job-induced separations, work-family conflict is positively related to turnover intentions (a) within and (b) across time frames.

Given that the vast majority of research focusing on turnover intentions addresses the influence of work factors, such as job satisfaction, little empirical evidence was found related to the association between employees' well-being and turnover intentions. A longitudinal study of Hellgren and colleagues (1999) demonstrated correlations between psychological and mental health and turnover intentions within and across time frames (i.e., with a one-year time lag). On the basis of these findings and the assumptions of CoR theory, we hypothesize that:

Hypothesis 10: In the course of job-induced separations, general well-being is negatively related to turnover intentions (a) within and (b) across time frames.

6.2.5 The hypothesized model

Hypotheses 1, 2, 5, and 8 relate to the stability of each variable under study in the course of job-induced separations, which will be tested first (serving as a *baseline model*). Subsequently, we will examine the variables' interrelations, thereby testing hypotheses 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10. These hypothesized relations are depicted in Figure 6.1. The model will be tested longitudinally in order to assess the relations among the variables *within* and *across* time frames (i.e., the cross-sectional and cross-lagged relations). All variables have been assessed at time 1 (before departure) and time 3 (after reunion). Time 2 (during the separation), however, does not include the measures of relationship satisfaction –as partners were physically separated at that time– and turnover intentions.

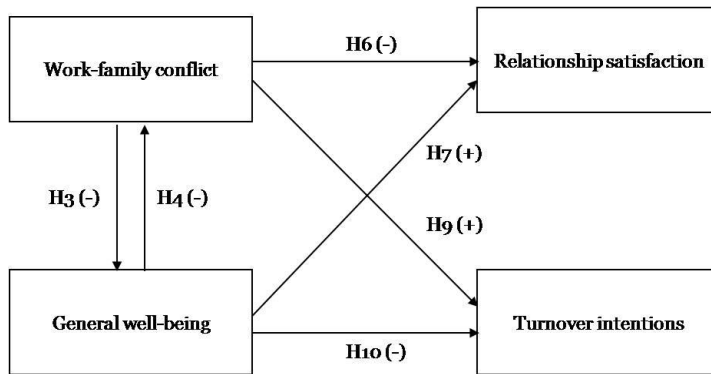


Figure 6.1. *Hypothesized interrelations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions.*

6.2.6 *Alternative models*

In addition to the hypothesized model, we have tested alternative models, given that testing one model and demonstrating that it fit the data well does not assure that there exist no other possible models that might fit the data equally well. For the purpose of comparability, and to strengthen the empirical evidence, we tested the alternative that relationship satisfaction would be negatively related to work-family conflict and positively related to well-being. In these models, relationship satisfaction is considered a resource that lessens the incidence of work-family conflict experiences and increases individual's well-being. In fact, some support for these directions of each of these two relations exists (Beach, Katz, Kim, & Brody, 2003; Kinnunen, et al., 2004). Moreover, we have examined whether relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions are related as it might be plausible to consider that turnover intentions are influenced by relationship satisfaction. Just recently, researchers have extended turnover models by including nonwork variables, such as life satisfaction (e.g., Rode, Rehg, Near, & Underhill, 2007; Weiss, et al., 2003) as it has been recognized that turnover intentions (or withdrawal cognitions) might be influenced by extra-organizational commitments, such as nonwork or family factors (Adams, et al., 2006; see also Shaffer & Harrison, 1998). This is, for instance, demonstrated by the results of a large scale survey among United States active duty members, which revealed that

family was among the top reasons cited by military personnel for considering leaving the military (Rabkin, 2000). When relationship satisfaction decreases (e.g., when one is dissatisfied with the time spent together or one has disagreements over household and childcare responsibilities as work absorbs one's resources), one might be likely to exit the situation that is the source of the conflict in order to protect one's resources; thus, turnover intentions are likely to increase under such conditions. However, up to the present, very little attention has been given to the possible interrelations between relationship satisfaction –as a nonwork variable– and turnover intentions.

6.3 Method

6.3.1 Sample and procedure

The data are part of a more extensive study to military families in the course of deployments, including three measurements: one month preceding the separation, just past midway the deployment, and three months after reunion (with a four- to five-months time lag between each data wave). As a rule, deployments of Dutch military personnel vary between four and six months. Because of the varying deployment durations, the time lags between the data waves varied between four (for the ones who were deployed for four months) and five months (for the ones who were deployed for six months). No significant differences were shown between service members deployed for varying times in the variables under study. Data used in this article were collected amongst service members who (a) participated in either the European Union Force (EUFOR) in Bosnia-Herzegovina or the Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) in Afghanistan in 2006 (defining the target population) and (b) had their partner registered as contact person (defining those service members who are engaged in a serious relationship). Thus, only service members who were in a relationship were recruited and surveyed. The service members deployed to the two different missions (EUFOR versus TFU) did not differ significantly regarding demographic characteristics, such as age ($M = 35.7$ versus 34.0), rank, years in service ($M = 16.0$ versus 14.0), and number of children in the household ($M = 2.4$ among both). Moreover, they did not differ significantly in their scores on the variables under study, except for work-family conflict at time 2 and time 3, which was

significantly higher among service members who were sent to Afghanistan than those who were deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Because no differences were found in background characteristics, this may be explained by the difference in security situations of these mission areas and the perceived risks involved. It is plausible that when service members are sent to more hazardous missions (as opposed to more stable and routine ones), and families are confronted with more worrisome reports in the media, more strain is put on families, thus work interferes with family life to a higher extent.

Initially, questionnaires were sent to 867 service members. An accompanying letter was enclosed that annotated the purpose and course of the study, stressed the importance of filling out the questionnaires independently, and emphasized confidentiality. Various causes, however, led to reduced sample frames at the subsequent data waves (i.e., 788 at time 2 and 635 at time 3), including among other things, refusal to participate for various reasons, cancelled or delayed deployments, and dissolved relationships. At time 1, 303 service members agreed to participate, whereas 353 and 183 service members filled out the second and third questionnaire, resulting in response rates of 35, 45, and 29 per cent respectively. The number of service members whose data from all three data waves could be matched was 78. Special multivariate estimation methods are available in the computer program Amos as a result of which maximum likelihood estimates can be computed even in the presence of missing data (these methods for incomplete data are even found to generally outperform traditional methods) (Arbuckle, 2005; Kline, 2005). For this reason, we preferred to include all observations in the analyses, rather than using methods such as listwise or pairwise deletion or data imputation.

Attrition is a common problem in longitudinal research designs (Deeg, 2002) and it might even be more difficult to collect data among military personnel (especially in the course of military-induced separations) than among civilian employees. For instance, given the amount of media and research attention to military personnel they may feel reticent about filling out questionnaires or are just research-tired. Moreover, repeatedly asking participants to invest time and efforts during a challenging situation that requires all their time and efforts brings along the risk of

respondent dropping out in the course of data collection procedures. The scores of service members who dropped out along data collection procedures (i.e., who participated in the first data wave but did not in the final data wave) ($n = 192$) did not differ significantly from retained respondents' scores on the study variables ($n = 111$), except for levels of turnover intentions, which –before the separation– were significantly higher among the ones who dropped out in the course of data collection ($M = 2.14$) compared with the ones who still participated at Time 3 ($M = 1.88$) (but were still fairly low) [$t(292) = 2.22, p < .05$] (see Appendix G).

The sample predominantly included male service members, only 4 per cent was female ($N_{T1} = 303$; demographic characteristics did not considerably differ at the subsequent data waves). At time 1, their average age was 35 years ($SD = 9.16$) and, on average, they served 15 years in the military ($SD = 9.23$). They were enlisted men (24 per cent), noncommissioned officers (47 per cent), or officers (29 per cent). Generally, the service members were engaged in long-term relationships ($M = 11.30, SD = 8.85$), of whom 55 per cent was married and had children (with on average 2 children living at home). On average, the service members were deployed at least once before and the mean duration of the current deployment was five months.

6.3.2 Measures

The questionnaires mainly contained validated scales, a limited number of self-constructed items, and additional items to assess demographic variables. Respondents were instructed to think about the present time in which they anticipated their deployment/were away from home/had returned from their deployment.

Work-family conflict. The extent to which military personnel's job demands conflict with family life was measured by the Work-Family Conflict Scale (Netemeyer, et al., 1996). This short, self-report measure, consisting of five items, assesses the degree to which job demands interfere with family responsibilities (e.g., "The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life" and "The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities"). Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. The scores were summed, with higher

scores indicating higher levels of conflict between military job demands and family life. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the work-family conflict scales in the current study were .85 at time 1, .88 at time 2, and .90 at time 3, indicating good internal consistencies of the scales. Obviously, being physically absent from the family makes it difficult to perform family duties. However, in order to assess whether this actually interfered with family life, the work-family conflict scale was included in the questionnaires sent to service members during their absences (see also Westman et al., 2008, who measured work-family conflict before business travellers' business trips, during their stay abroad, and after their return).

General well-being. Given that the survey needed to be as short as possible due to over researched military personnel, the general well-being of service members was assessed by one item: "*Thinking about your life as a whole right now, on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being really bad and 10 being really good, how are things going for you right now?*". We acknowledge that single-item measures have certain drawbacks. Despite that, such measures are frequently used in similar research to assess overall well-being (e.g., Huebner & Mancini, 2005) and "a growing consensus has emerged within the research community regarding the robustness of such global measures for accurately reflect individuals' feelings" (McAllister, 2005, p. 8).

Relationship satisfaction. Fowers and Olson's (1993) ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale was used to assess satisfaction with different aspects of the relationship (e.g., "I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts" and "I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together"). Responses were given on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) and negatively worded items were reversed, so that higher scores reflect higher levels of satisfaction. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scale were .83 (time 1) and .88 (time 3), indicating good internal consistencies of the scales.

Turnover intentions. Service members' intentions to quit their job were measured through three items often used in research on turnover intentions, i.e., "I often think about quitting," "I will probably look for a new job in the next year," and "I would like to stay in this organization until I retire." Responses were given on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Negatively worded items were reversed and scores were summed, with higher scores indicating higher levels of turnover intentions. Cronbach alpha coefficients of the scale were .80 (time 1) and .86 (time 3), indicating good internal consistencies of the scales.

6.4 Results

6.4.1 Descriptive results

Table 6.1 presents means, standard deviations, ranges, and intercorrelations among the variables at the different data waves. Additionally, we have performed repeated measures tests to assess whether significant changes have occurred over time.

The means demonstrate that service members' turnover intentions are fairly low. However, a paired-samples t-test revealed that levels of turnover intentions are significantly higher after deployment compared with before [$t(106) = -3.77, p < .01$]. The eta squared statistic (.12) indicated a moderate effect size. Levels of relationship satisfaction, although fairly high, decreased significantly over time [$t(92) = 5.45, p < .01$] and the eta squared (.24) indicated a large effect size. Furthermore, the results display fairly high levels of well-being. Nevertheless, one-way repeated measures ANOVA revealed a significant effect for time [Wilks' Lambda = .92, $F(2, 71) = 3.23, p < .05$, multivariate eta squared = .08]. Levels of well-being are significantly –though not substantially– lower during and after deployment compared with before. Finally, levels of work-family conflict were moderate and one-way repeated measures ANOVA did not reveal a significant effect for time.

Table 6.1*Descriptives of and intercorrelations among the study variables at time 1, time 2, and time 3*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	Range	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>Time 1</i>													
1. Work-family conflict	2.88	0.86	301	1 – 5									
2. General well-being	7.99	1.05	297	1 – 10	-.32**								
3. Relationship satisfaction	4.21	0.50	256	1 – 5	-.24**	.32**							
4. Turnover intentions	2.05	1.00	294	1 – 5	.25**	-.35**	-.15*						
<i>Time 2</i>													
5. Work-family conflict	3.13	1.02	341	1 – 5	.46**	-.27**	-.02	.13					
6. General well-being	7.43	1.39	349	1 – 10	-.20**	.42**	.10	-.12	-.27**				
<i>Time 3</i>													
7. Work-family conflict	2.92	0.91	181	1 – 5	.50**	-.26**	-.11	.30**	.50**	-.31**			
8. General well-being	7.79	1.19	178	1 – 10	-.15	.46**	.16	-.25*	-.23*	.54**	-.38**		
9. Relationship satisfaction	3.93	0.56	165	1 – 5	-.24*	.32**	.50**	-.13	-.17	.06	-.34**	.49**	
10. Turnover intentions	2.20	1.02	176	1 – 5	.25**	-.15	-.04	.65**	.17	-.15	.32**	-.29**	-.20**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Concurrent and long-term correlations displayed are in expected directions. The test-retest correlations of the variables under study are significant. Furthermore, higher levels of work-family conflict are associated with lower levels of well-being, within and across time frames. Similarly, work-family conflict has concurrent and long-term relations with relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions. Higher levels of general well-being are associated with higher levels of relationship satisfaction and lower levels of turnover intentions, within and across times. Levels of relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions are negatively related, with lower levels of relationship satisfaction being associated with higher levels of turnover intentions.

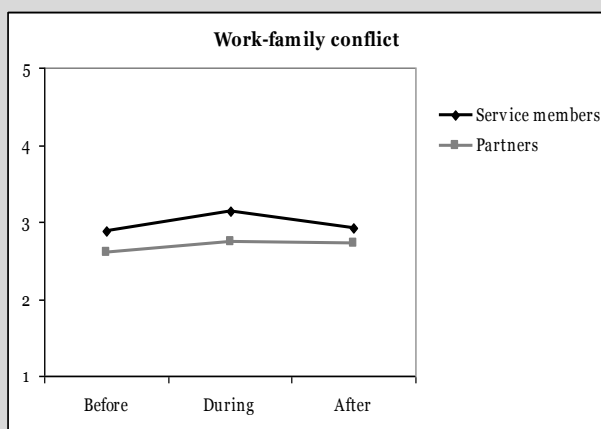
6.4.2 Model testing

We tested the hypotheses using structural equation modeling procedures with the method of maximum likelihood, which allowed us to test all the hypothesized relations simultaneously. Multiple fit indices were used to test the adequacy of the model: i.e., the chi-square statistic, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (*RMSEA*), the *PClose*, the Comparative Fit Index (*CFI*), and the Normed Fit Index (*NFI*) (Table 6.2 presents the overall fit indices of the models that were tested).

First, we tested a baseline model (Model 1), which only included stability paths. Covariances for exogenous variables were modeled, just as disturbances in order to account for shared common causes that are not included in the model and within-wave correlations (see also Sikora, Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2007). The model, presented in Figure 6.2 (standardized solution), displayed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2(24) = 28.24$, $p = .25$, $RMSEA = 0.02$, $PClose = 1.00$, $CFI = 0.99$, $NFI = 0.95$. The direct paths (all significant at $p < .001$) in the baseline model indicate only moderate (to weak) stability, except for turnover intentions, which was the most stable experience over the course of the separation (with an eight to ten months time lag between the two waves, i.e., Time 1 and Time 3), suggesting that service members who have more thoughts about leaving the organization prior to the deployment are likely to do so afterwards ($\beta = .66$). The variance explained in turnover intentions is 43 per cent. Relationship satisfaction displayed moderate stability over the course of the military-induced separation ($\beta = .53$), suggesting that service members who are less satisfied with their relationship before the separation are likely to feel so

Textbox

On average, service members experienced interference of their job demands with family life to a moderate degree. More specifically, 27 to 37 per cent experienced low levels of work-family conflict over the course of the deployment, 30 to 37 per cent experienced medium levels of work-family conflict, and 27 to 39 per cent experienced high levels of work-family conflict. Compared with their partners, service members experienced significant higher levels of interference of military job demands with family life before [$t(278)=-5.42, p<.01$], during [$t(186)=-4.61, p<.01$], and after [$t(160)=-3.06, p<.01$] the deployment (see figure). Service members who were married, had children, were deployed to Afghanistan, and were



officers or non-commissioned officers reported higher levels of work-family conflict compared with service members who were not married, did not have children, were deployed to Bosnia, and were enlisted (wo)men.

Before the deployment, 71 per cent of the service members were (very) satisfied with their relationship (i.e., scores were ≥ 4 on a scale from 1 to 5), afterwards, this was 50 per cent. Among 15 per cent of the service members, relationships deteriorated (> -1 SD); among 16 per cent, however, their relationship improved (> 1 SD) over the course of the deployment. 69 per cent of the relationships turned out to be fairly stable (within a margin of -1 SD and $+1$ SD).

Although the scores of the majority of the service members (64 to 70 per cent) indicated low levels of turnover intentions, the scores of one fifth (before) to about a quarter (afterwards) pointed to medium levels of intentions to quit. Moreover, before the deployment, one out of ten service members was thinking about leaving the workplace; afterwards, this was one out of eight. Service members who were younger, were not married, did not have children, served the armed forces less longer, and were enlisted (wo)men reported higher turnover intentions.

afterwards. The variance explained in relationship satisfaction is 28 per cent. It is certainly likely that other factors might explain additional variance in the construct.

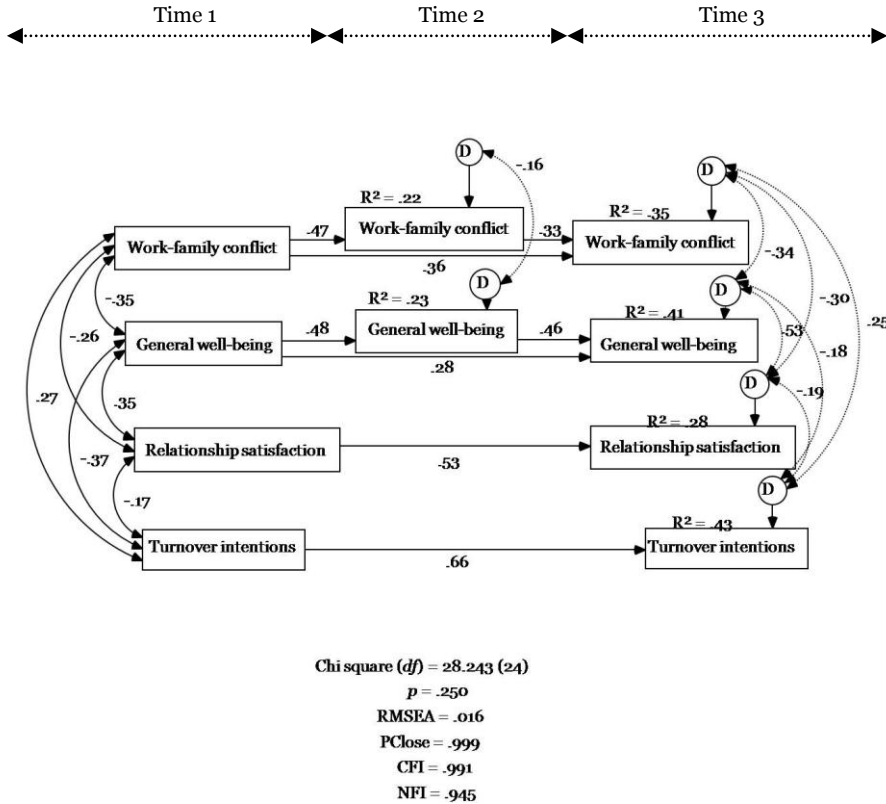


Figure 6.2. Stability relations of work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separation

Work-family conflict experiences were moderately stable from Time 1 (just before departure) to Time 2 (just past midway the deployment) ($\beta = .47$). However, the stability of work-family conflict experiences was rather weak between the second and third data wave ($\beta = .33$), as well as between Time 1 and Time 3 ($\beta = .36$). The variance explained in work-family conflict during the separation is 22 per cent, afterwards it is 35 per cent. General well-being was moderately stable over a four- to five-months time lag ($\beta_{T1toT2} = .48$; $\beta_{T2toT3} = .46$) and less stable over an eight- to ten-months time period ($\beta = .28$), over the course of job-induced separation. The variance explained in general well-being is 23 per cent at Time 2 and 41 per cent at Time 3.

Furthermore, within-wave correlations (between exogenous variables at Time 1 and between disturbances of endogenous variables at Time 2 and 3) were notable and all significant at $p < .05$. Work-family conflict is consistently negatively associated with general well-being ($r_{T1} = -.35$; $r_{T2} = -.16$; $r_{T3} = -.34$) and relationship satisfaction ($r_{T1} = -.26$; $r_{T3} = -.30$), and positively associated with turnover intentions ($r_{T1} = .27$; $r_{T3} = .25$). General well-being was associated with relationship satisfaction ($r_{T1} = .35$; $r_{T3} = .53$) and turnover intentions ($r_{T1} = -.37$; $r_{T3} = -.18$). And a weak but significant association was displayed between relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions ($r_{T1} = -.17$; $r_{T3} = -.19$).

Subsequently, we tested more complex models, including cross-lagged paths in addition to the stability paths (which were included in all models). We used the Chi square difference test to assess whether the models produced a significant improvement over the baseline model (also presented in Table 6.2).

Model 2 included the hypothesized cross-lagged relations. The multiple fit indices revealed that the model provided a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 (10) = 8.37$, $p = .59$, $RMSEA = 0.00$, $PClose = 0.99$, $CFI = 1.00$, $NFI = 0.98$. However, the model had to be modified as multiple paths did not reach statistical significance and therefore required deleting. According to the insignificant paths, work-family conflict at one point in time did not predict levels of well-being, relationship satisfaction, or turnover intentions at subsequent points in time, in the course of the job-induced separation; presumably because the cross-lagged effects do not outweigh the within-

time effects. Furthermore, general well-being was not longitudinally related to turnover intentions. The modifications (i.e., removing the insignificant paths) resulted in the final Model 2, presented in Figure 6.3 (standardized solution). The fit indices displayed an excellent fit of the model to the data: $\chi^2 (21) = 13.92$, $p = .87$, $RMSEA = 0.00$, $PClose = 1.00$, $CFI = 1.00$, $NFI = 0.97$. General well-being before the separation predicted relationship satisfaction afterwards ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$). Moreover, general well-being at one point in time predicted work-family conflict experiences at a subsequent point in time ($\beta_{T1toT2} = -.18$; $\beta_{T2toT3} = -.16$).

As was mentioned before, alternative models were tested for the purpose of comparability and to strengthen the evidence of the final model. Model 3 was similar to model 2, but excluded the cross-lagged relations from general well-being to work-family conflict. In literature, the relation between these two constructs have been conceptualized in three ways: a) work-family conflict acting as an antecedent of well-being, b) work-family conflict acting as an outcomes of well-being, and c) work-family conflict acting as an antecedent *and* an outcome of well-being (Rantanen, et al., 2008). In our model, in which the cross-lagged relations between these constructs were tested simultaneously, we found support for the second type of relation. However, in order to strengthen the evidence and rule out other possibilities, we tested an alternative model that excluded these effects and thus separately examined the effects of work-family conflict on well-being. The model, Model 3, did not uncover significant cross-lagged relations between work-family conflict and well-being (the relation between work-family conflict at Time 1 and general well-being at Time 2 was nearly significant, with $p < .10$). Moreover, this model, which displayed a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 (22) = 22.61$, $p = .42$, $RMSEA = 0.01$, $PClose = 1.00$, $CFI = 1.00$, $NFI = 0.96$) did not significantly improve the baseline model: $\Delta \chi^2 = 5.63$, $p = .06$ (in fact, model 2 was shown to be superior to model 3: $\Delta \chi^2 = 8.69$, $p < .05$). This suggests that the inclusion of cross-lagged paths from well-being to work-family conflict is substantial.

Model 4, then, tested cross-lagged relations from relationship satisfaction to work-family conflict and well-being. However, although a very good fit was demonstrated ($\chi^2 (17) = 11.47, p = .83, RMSEA = 0.00, PClose = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 0.98$), which would be a significant improve over the baseline model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 16.78, p < .05$), the added relations did not reach statistical significance. Removing them, results in the model presented as Model 2.

Finally, model 5 tested cross-lagged relations between relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions. Again, the model fitted well to the data ($\chi^2 (19) = 12.48, p = .86, RMSEA = 0.00, PClose = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, NFI = 0.98$), which would be a significant improve over the baseline model ($\Delta \chi^2 = 15.76, p = .01$). However, the relations did not reach statistical significance. Removing the paths results in the model presented as Model 2.

Therefore, we can conclude that Model 2 fitted the data best (see Figure 6.3).

The model demonstrates that stability coefficients of work-family conflict, general well-being, and relationship satisfaction were rather moderate to weak, in the course of the job-induced separation, thereby supporting hypotheses 1, 2, and 5. Hypothesis 8, however, stating that the stability coefficient of turnover intentions would be lower than was found by other researchers (i.e., $< .50$) was not supported. The model furthermore displays significant relations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions within time frames, rather than longitudinally. Therefore, hypotheses 3, 6, 9, and 10 were supported regarding the a-part (referring to within-time relations), whereas no support was found for the b-part (referring to cross-time relations). Cross-lagged relations were displayed from general well-being to work-family conflict, thereby supporting hypothesis 4. Moreover, general well-being at Time 1 is shown to predict relationship satisfaction at Time 3, in accordance with hypothesis 7.

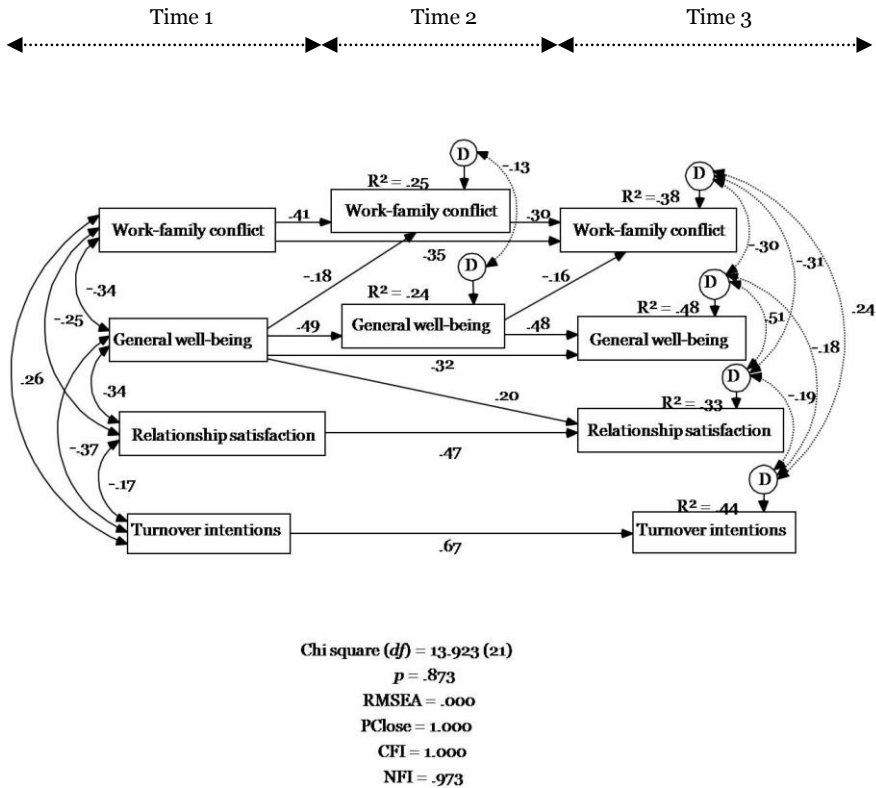


Figure 6.3. Stability and cross-lagged relations between work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separation

Table 6.2
Fit indices of the tested models

<i>Model</i>	χ^2	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>RMSEA</i>	<i>PClose</i>	<i>CFI</i>	<i>NFI</i>	$\Delta \chi^2$	<i>Sign.</i>
Model 1: Baseline model	28.24	24	0.25	0.02	1.00	0.99	0.95	N/A	N/A
Model 2: Stability and cross-lagged relations (hypothesized)	13.92	21	0.87	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.97	14.32	0.00
Model 3: Excluding Well-being → WFC	22.61	22	0.42	0.01	1.00	1.00	0.96	5.63	0.06
Model 4: Including Rel.sat. → WFC and well-being ^a	11.47	17	0.83	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.98	16.78	0.02
Model 5: Including Rel.sat. ↔ Turnover intentions ^a	12.48	19	0.86	0.00	1.00	1.00	0.98	15.76	0.01

Note. $\Delta \chi^2$ refers to the difference in χ^2 between the model concerned and the baseline model. WFC = work-family conflict, Rel.sat. = relationship satisfaction. ^a The fit indices refer to the model that included the added, though insignificant, relations (removing these insignificant paths resulted in the model presented as Model 2).

6.5 Conclusion and discussion

6.5.1 Reflection on the findings

The aim of this study was to examine the stability and cross-lagged relations between service members' work-family conflict, general well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of job-induced separations. The study contributes to existing knowledge given that work-family experiences in the course of job-induced separations have rarely been studied, despite the abundant research in the field of the work-family interface and the increasing incidence of organizations expanding activities globally, requiring employees to travel abroad for prolonged periods of times.

It has been argued that current states are often predictive of future states, unless a critical or intervening event influences that state, thereby producing instability in one's experiences (Leiter & Durup, 1996; Rantanen, et al., 2008). Job-induced separation most likely is such an event, given that, on the whole, stability coefficients displayed in this study were lower than researchers have found in other studies (these are no indisputable standards, however, we have used these as reference points). Turnover intentions were the most stable experience. Service members who were already thinking about quitting before the military-induced separation were likely to do so afterwards. The stability of turnover intentions in this study was not lower compared with findings of other researchers, who have examined turnover intentions in other contexts. It is conceivable that service members' intentions to leave, or stay in, the military are rather stable, even in the course of military-induced separations (given that they usually have consciously chosen a professional career in the armed forces). The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that it is not so much work-family conflict experiences, service members' well-being, or relationship satisfaction that accounts for turnover intentions (although significant within-time relations are displayed), rather, turnover intentions before a military-induced separation are the best predictor of turnover intentions afterwards.

Even though its stability is fairly high, turnover intentions have increased significantly in the course of the separation. It is worth mentioning that the respondents at Time 3 reported significantly lower levels of turnover intentions (at Time 1) than the group of service members who dropped out in the course of data collection procedures. Therefore, the effect may even be somewhat underestimated. Furthermore, while no significant changes were found in mean levels of work-family conflict, the results demonstrated that levels of general well-being and relationship satisfaction decreased significantly over time. Changes that manifest within such a relatively short time span must point to the impact of the separation in some way. However, given that our study design did not include a control group, caution is required in assigning findings (effects) to the deployment.

The results revealed that work-family conflict has significant immediate, rather than longer-term associations with variables in the family (i.e., relationship satisfaction) and the work domain (i.e., turnover intentions). According to the Conservation of Resources theory, loss of resources in the process of juggling work and family roles (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) evokes strain and dissatisfaction. Thus, work demands requiring employees' resources to such an extent that it causes a loss of resources available for the family domain elicits feelings of relationship dissatisfaction and thoughts about exiting the resource threatening situation (i.e., the workplace) in order to protect one's resources and pursue alternatives that enable a better distribution of resources, thereby decreasing the potential for conflict. These processes seem to operate within time frames, given that no cross-lagged effects were found, presumably because they did not outweigh the within-time effects.

A significant cross-lagged relation was found between general well-being before the separation and relationship satisfaction afterwards, suggesting that service members who feel well before their departure (e.g., they feel ready for it, this is what they have trained for; or, they feel comfortable leaving their family behind because they are convinced that they will manage) are likely to end up in more satisfying relationships than service members who report poorer well-being before the separation. Furthermore, significant cross-lagged relations were displayed between general well-

being and work-family conflict. That is, declining well-being leads to increased perceived conflict between work and family demands at a subsequent point in time, which, in turn, is associated with one's well-being within that time frame, and so on. This process endorses what the Conservation of Resources theory defines as *loss spirals*, assuming that resource loss can lead to additional resource loss, resulting in negative stress sequelae. However, instead of functioning downwards they may also operate beneficially, reinforcing one's strengths (e.g., individuals with higher levels of well-being are more likely to feel that they can manage work and family demands as a result of which they perceive lower levels of tension or conflict, which in turn is associated with increased well-being, and so on). Fully understanding the relation between these two constructs requires gathering more longitudinal empirical evidence and refining theory.

6.5.2 Theoretical and practical implications

This study has some theoretical and practical implications. Regarding the first, CoR theory views resource loss –and, in turn, resource gain– as critical components in the stress process. Therefore, identifying resources that contribute to stress resistance and adjustment –or hinder it– is imperative. Resources that help counteract loss of resources or are helpful in resource gain may play a significant role in the model, influencing the relations studied. Identifying such resources has practical relevance as well. This study demonstrated that when resources required in the work domain come at the expense of resources available for the family domain, the consequences are neither beneficial for families nor organizations. The latter, civilian or military, can not afford the risk of high qualified personnel leaving and many struggle to retain good employees. Retention and, the opposite, turnover are important issues in today's organizations. Therefore, work environments and interventions aimed at limiting resource loss (allowing individuals to adequately apply resources in the work and family domain, minimizing tensions between the work and family demands) and work environments and interventions that “add to people's resources and thus constitute resource gains” (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 348) are indispensable. More specifically, resources that are perceived valuable and aid adjustment might, among others, relate to time (e.g., for nonwork activities: free time, time with loved ones), social support (including support from co-workers and understanding from

employer), help with childcare, and personal health (see Hobfoll, 2001, for a more detailed overview of resources).

6.5.3 *Limitations and avenues for future research*

As with any study, there are some limitations that need to be addressed. First, it needs to be stressed that our sample almost exclusively included men. Therefore, future research regarding work-family conflict and its consequences for both institutions in the course of job-induced separations should focus on gender differences (e.g., testing the model for men and women).

Second, our study suffered from attrition (i.e., the loss of respondents' follow-up data), which is a long-recognized problem in longitudinal studies. As a result of respondents dropping out along data collection procedures, the composition of the samples slightly differed between the data waves, that is, respondents who were not married, did not have children, and were enlisted (wo)men were somewhat underrepresented at time 3 compared with time 1 (see Appendix B). We have tested whether the scores of the ones who dropped out along data collection procedures (i.e., who participated in the first data wave but did not in the final data wave) differed significantly from retained respondents' scores on the study variables. They did not, except for service members' turnover intentions at time 1, which were significantly higher among the group that dropped out compared with the group that stayed in the study (see Appendix G). Still, a significant increase was found in levels of turnover intentions. Levels of turnover intentions were higher among service members who – among other things – were not married, did not have children, and were enlisted. Given that these service members are somewhat underrepresented at time 3, levels of turnover intentions after the deployment may be somewhat underestimated.

Third, our sample solely included military personnel, but, given that working in the military is more often considered just any job (Moskos, 1977; Moskos & Wood, 1988), we believe that the findings are of interest to a larger public. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to examine whether replication of this study among employees confronted with job-induced separations other than military deployment produces similar results.

To conclude, although a certain level of work-family conflict may be inevitable, especially with the demands associated with military life (Adams et al., 2006, 184), making sure that tensions between the work and family demands are manageable, particularly in the course of job-induced separations, will benefit employees' well-being, family relationships, and organizations.

References

- Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., Burrell, L., Teitelbaum, J. M., Pehrson, K. L., & Hawkins, J. P. (2005). Direct and indirect effects of operations tempo on outcomes for soldiers and spouses. *Military Psychology, 17*(3), 229-246.
- Adams, G. A., Jex, S. M., & Cunningham, C. J. L. (2006). Work-family conflict among military personnel. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life. The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family*. Westport: Praeger.
- Adler, A. B., & Golembe, E. H. (1998). *The impact of Optempo on soldiers and families*: U.S. Army Medical Research Unit-Europe, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research, Research report 25.
- Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E. L., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5*, 278-308.
- Arbuckle, J. L. (2005). Amos 6.0 user's guide. SPSS Inc.
- Barling, J., & MacEwen, K. E. (1992). Linking work experiences to facets of marital functioning. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13*, 573-583.
- Beach, S. R. H., Katz, J., Kim, S., & Brody, G. H. (2003). Prospective effects of marital satisfaction on depressive symptoms in established marriages: A dyadic model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 20*(3), 355-371.
- Bedeian, A. G., Burke, B. G., & Moffett, R. G. (1988). Outcomes of work-family conflict among married male and female professionals. *Journal of Management, 14*(3), 475-491.
- Belsky, J., Perry-Jenkins, M., & Crouter, A. C. (1985). The work-family interface and marital change across the transition to parenthood. *Journal of Family Issues, 6*(2), 205-220.
- Burrell, L. M., Adams, G. A., Durand, D. B., & Castro, C. A. (2006). The impact of military life style demands on well-being, Army, and family outcomes. *Armed Forces & Society, 33*(1), 43-58.
- Casper, W. J., Eby, L. T., Bordeaux, C., Lockwood, A., & Lambert, D. (2007). A review of research methods in IO/OB work-family research. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*(1), 28-43.

- Conger, R. D., Rueter, M. A., & Elder, G. H. (1999). Couple resilience to economic pressure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76(1), 54-71.
- Coser, L. (1974). *Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment*. New York: Free Press.
- Deeg, D. J. H. (2002). Attrition in longitudinal population studies: Does it affect the generalizability of the findings? An introduction to the series. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 55, 213-215.
- Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., & Bulters, A. J. (2004). The loss spiral of work-pressure, work-home interference and exhaustion: Reciprocal relations in a three-wave study. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64, 131-149.
- Dijkers, J. S. E. (2008). *Work-home interference in relation to work, organizational, and home characteristics*. Tilburg University, Tilburg.
- Durand, D. B., Burrell, L., Stetz, M., & Castro, C. A. (2003). Work/family conflict issues for soldiers and families., from <http://www.dtic.mil/dacowits/briefings/WorkFamilyConflict.ppt>
- Edwards, J. R., & Rothbard, N. P. (2000). Mechanisms linking work and family: Clarifying the relationship between work and family constructs. *The Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 178-199.
- Fowers, B. J., & Olson, D. H. (1993). ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(2), 176-185.
- Friedman, S. D., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2000). *Work and family - allies or enemies? What happens when business professionals confront life choices*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict: Testing a model of the work-family interface. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77, 65-78.
- Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1997). Relation of work-family conflict to health outcomes: A four-year longitudinal study of employed parents. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 70(4), 325-335.
- Frone, M. R., Yardley, J. K., & Markel, K. S. (1997). Developing and testing an integrative model of the work-family interface. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 50, 145-167.

- Grandey, A. A., & Cropanzano, R. (1999). The Conservation of Resources Model applied to work-family conflict and strain. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 54, 350-370.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2001). Consequences of work-family conflict on employee well-being over time. *Work & Stress*, 15(3), 214-226.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Ensher, E. A. (2001). An examination of work and personal life conflict, organizational support, and employee health among international expatriates. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25, 261-278.
- Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *The Academy of Management Review*, 10(1), 76-88.
- Griffeth, R. W., Hom, P. W., & Gaertner, S. (2000). A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: Update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium. *Journal of Management*, 26(3), 463-488.
- Hellgren, J., Sverke, M., & Isaksson, K. (1999). A two-dimensional approach to job insecurity: Consequences for employee attitudes and well-being. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(2), 179-195.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (1989). Conservation of resources: A new attempt at conceptualizing stress. *American Psychologist*, 44(3), 513-524.
- Hobfoll, S. E. (2001). The influence of culture, community, and the nested-self in the stress process: Advancing conservation of resources theory. *Applied Psychology: An international review*, 50(3), 337-421.
- Hom, P. W., & Kinicki, A. J. (2001). Towards a greater understanding of how dissatisfaction drives employee turnover. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(5), 975-987.
- Houkes, I., Jansen, P. P. M., De Jonge, J., & Bakker, A. B. (2003). Specific determinants of intrinsic work motivation, emotional exhaustion and turnover intention: A multisample longitudinal study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 76, 427-450.
- Huebner, A. J., & Mancini, J. A. (2005). *Adjustments among adolescents in military families when a parent is deployed*. West Lafayette: Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University.

- Hughes, D., Galinsky, E., & Morris, A. (1992). The effects of job characteristics on marital quality: Specifying linking mechanisms. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 54(1), 31-42.
- Kinnunen, U., & Feldt, T. (2004). Economic stress and marital adjustment among couples: Analyses at the dyadic level. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 34, 519-532.
- Kinnunen, U., Geurts, S., & Mauno, S. (2004). Work-to-family conflict and its relationship with satisfaction and well-being: a one-year longitudinal study on gender differences. *Work & Stress*, 18(1), 1-22.
- Kline, R. B. (2005). *Principles and practice of structural equation modeling* (second ed.). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Kwon, H. K., Rueter, M. A., Lee, M. S., Koh, S., & Wha Ok, S. (2003). Marital relationships following the Korean economic crisis: Applying the Family Stress Model. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 316-325.
- Leiter, M. P., & Durup, M. J. (1996). Work, home, and in-between: A longitudinal study of spillover. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 32(1), 29-47.
- Matthews, L. S., Conger, R. D., & Wickrama, K. A. S. (1996). Work-family conflict and marital quality: Mediating processes. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 59(1), 62-79.
- Mauno, S., & Kinnunen, U. (1999). The effects of job stressors on marital satisfaction in Finnish dual-earner couples. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 20, 879-895.
- McAllister, F. (2005). *Wellbeing concepts and challenges*. London: Discussion paper prepared for the Sustainable Development Research Network (SDRN).
- Moskos, C. C. (1977). From institution to occupation. Trends in military organization. *Armed Forces & Society*, 4(1), 41-50.
- Moskos, C. C., & Wood, F. R. (1988). *The military: more than just a job?* New York: Pergamon-Brassey's.
- Neff, L. A., & Karney, B. R. (2004). How does context affect intimate relationships? Linking external stress and cognitive processes within marriage. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(2), 134-148.

- Netemeyer, R. G., Boles, J. S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work-family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*(4), 400-410.
- Noor, N. M. (2003). Work- and family-related variables, work-family conflict and women's well-being: some observations. *Community, Work & Family, 6*(3), 297-319.
- Parasuraman, S., Greenhaus, J. H., & Granrose, C. S. (1992). Role stressors, social support, and well-being among two-career couples. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13*(4), 339-356.
- Rabkin, N. J. (2000). *Preliminary results of DOD's 1999 survey of active duty members*, GAO/T-NSIAD-00-110: United States General Accounting Office.
- Rantanen, J., Kinnunen, U., Feldt, T., & Pulkkinen, L. (2008). Work-family conflict and psychological well-being: Stability and cross-lagged relations within one- and six-year follow-ups. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 73*, 37-51.
- Reed, B. J., & Segal, D. R. (2000). The impact of multiple deployments on soldiers' peacekeeping attitudes, morale, and retention. *Armed Forces & Society, 27*(1), 57-78.
- Roberts, N. A., & Levenson, R. W. (2001). The remains of the workday: Impact of job stress and exhaustion on marital interaction in police couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63*, 1052-1067.
- Rode, J. C., Rehg, M. T., Near, J. P., & Underhill, J. R. (2007). The effect of work/family conflict on intention to quit: The mediating roles of job and life satisfaction. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*.
- Roehling, P. V., & Bultman, M. (2002). Does absence make the heart grow fonder? Work-related travel and marital satisfaction. *Sex Roles, 46*(9/10), 279-293.
- Segal, M. W. (1986). The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society, 13*(1), 9-38.
- Shaffer, M. A., & Harrison, D. A. (1998). Expatriates' psychological withdrawal from international assignments: Work, nonwork, and family influences. *Personnel Psychology, 51*(1), 87-118.
- Sikora, P., Moore, S., Grunberg, L., & Greenberg, E. (2007). Work-family conflict: An exploration of causal relationships in a 10-year, 4-wave panel study. University of Colorado.

- Story, L. B., & Bradbury, T. N. (2004). Understanding marriage and stress: Essential questions and challenges. *Clinical Psychology Review, 23*, 1139-1162.
- Vandenberg, R. J., & Nelson, J. B. (1999). Disaggregating the motives underlying turnover intentions: When do intentions predict turnover behavior? *Human Relations, 52*(10), 1313-1336.
- Voydanoff, P. (2002). Linkages between the work-family interface and work, family, and individual outcomes: An integrative model. *Journal of Family Issues, 23*(1), 138-164.
- Voydanoff, P. (2005). Social integration, work-family conflict and facilitation, and job and marital quality. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*, 666-679.
- Weiss, H. M., MacDermid, S. M., Strauss, R., Kurek, K. E., Le, B., & Robbins, D. (2003). *Retention in the armed forces: Past approaches and new research directions*. West Lafayette: Military Family Research Institute, Purdue University.
- Westman, M., Etzion, D. L., & Gattenio, E. (2008). International business travels and the work-family interface: A longitudinal study. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 81*, 459-480.

Conclusion and discussion

7.1 Introduction

The interrelation between work and family life has long been recognized and in many of today's Western societies, both men and women face the challenges of combining work and family demands. The work and family domain both have demanding characteristics, laying claims to individuals' time and energies, resources that are finite. Conflict arises when multiple groups (or institutions) compete with one another regarding the allocation of these resources and participation in the one is made more difficult by participation in the other. This seems inevitable when one is confronted with job-induced separation, given that work requires undivided loyalty and commitment making individuals unavailable for the family for a certain period of time.

Literature on work affecting family life in the course of job-induced separation is scarce. Such separations induce, among other things, marital separation and reconciliation, which are ranked among the ten most critical life events linked to stress and health.¹ Moreover –and more specifically– military-induced separations expose families to a wide range of stressors (see, for instance, Adler, Bartone, & Vaitkus, 1994; Bartone & Bartone, 1997; Figley, 1993a, 1993b; Op den Buijs, Andres, & Bartone, 2010 for an overview of these stressors). Concerns arose regarding the effects of deployments on family life, and, more specifically, on couples' relationships. Speculations of rising divorce rates still come up frequently, but precise (and consistent) statistics are lacking. This study aimed at contributing to filling some of the voids in knowledge, above all by examining different family perspectives related to varying aspects of family life in the course of military-induced separations. Moreover, this study employed repeated assessments, in response to the need for longitudinal data given that much of the research that has been conducted in this field has employed cross-sectional designs. The central research question that guided this dissertation was: *how do military-induced separations affect family life and how can the (mal-) adaptation of family members be explained?* Five research questions were formulated, more specifically defining the focus of this study, each addressing a different perspective, and together providing an answer to the central research question.

Trying not to repeat too much, the main findings are summed briefly in the following section. Subsequently, this chapter describes theoretical considerations, practical implications, reflections, and avenues for future research.

7.2 Main findings

7.2.1 The partner's perspective

The first research question, elaborated in chapter 2, addressed nondeployed partners' perspectives: *how does work-family conflict relate to partners' perceived social support, well-being, and relationship satisfaction in the course of military-induced separations?* Partners were followed along the cycles of deployment and data were collected in three waves: before, during, and after the separation. The data showed that the degree to which partners felt that the military job demands interfered with family life were, generally, moderate. Moreover, these experiences did not change over time (i.e., before, during, and after the military-induced separation). A model was tested representing the interrelations between work-family conflict, psychological distress, relationship satisfaction, and social support. The results revealed that work-family conflict experiences were immediately, rather than long-term, negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. This relation was partly mediated by levels of psychological distress. Thus, partners who perceived higher levels of conflict between military job demands and family life experienced higher levels of psychological distress² and reported lower levels of relationship satisfaction.³ Regarding psychological distress, before and after the deployment nondeployed partners did not experience higher levels of distress than any other individual generally experiences. The actual separation was somewhat more stressful.

Furthermore, the results emphasized the beneficial effects of social support as it reduced levels of work-family conflict, psychological distress, and enhanced relationship satisfaction. An interesting new insight related to partners' levels of work-family conflict before the deployment acting as a precursor of perceived social support during the deployment. That is, partners who experienced higher levels of

work-family conflict before the separation perceived a depletion of resources during the separation. On the basis of the results of this study, families that adapted best to the military-induced separation were characterized by having higher levels of available support and less negative perceptions of service members' job demands interfering with family life. These families proved to be protected from adverse outcomes, given that higher levels of social support and more positive perceptions of work-family conflict were shown to be beneficial for one's well-being and relationship satisfaction.

7.2.2 Children

Chapter 3 focused on deployed service members' children and was guided by the question: *how can the experiences of children in the course of service members' deployments be described and what factors predict children's adjustment difficulties during parental absence and upon reunion?* The results demonstrated that, notwithstanding missing the presence of their parent, children generally adapted fairly rapidly and were doing quite well during the parent-child separation. When changes were observed in the children, they were not solely adverse (e.g., crying more often, having toilet-trained problems, or being stubborn or quickly tempered) but were also related to feeling more responsible, and being more helpful and caring. In a quarter of the families, the deployment was rather difficult for the children. Moreover, different ages involved different experiences (and difficulties). Generally, infants seemed too young to notice the absence of the parent (though it should be noted that this group is presumed susceptible to longer-term attachment problems, which was beyond the scope of this study). Younger children have difficulties keeping track of the duration of the absence, as they have no sense of time and even a few weeks seem to last forever. Older ones (i.e., school-age children) become more aware of the risks involved, which manifested itself in anxiety and concerns about the safety of the absent parent. The results furthermore emphasized the importance of interactions with the deployed parent through various means of communication. The reunion usually is a joyous event and the majority of the children rapidly took up the daily routine, although nearly a quarter had to grow accustomed to their returned parent again. Somewhat worrisome are the numbers that point to separation anxiety, which in some cases was still persisting three months after reunion. As much as forty

per cent of the mothers reported that the children were afraid that their father will leave again.

Furthermore, the results revealed that, generally, the nondeployed partners who were parents (in this study, they were all mothers) coped quite well with the separation, which was demonstrated by the moderate levels of parenting stress, work-family conflict, psychological distress, and the low levels of loneliness. Mothers' levels of psychological distress before the deployment and during the separation were significantly related to children's adjustment difficulties during the deployment. Mothers' levels of parenting stress during the separation significantly predicted children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion. These findings suggest that homefront partners who are parents' abilities to cope with the stressors of deployment are likely to pass on to their children's experiences.

Finally, the better service members believed their home front was coping with their absence, the more they reported the deployment was going well for them. Moreover, more stress experienced at home (reported by the partner) was related to service members reporting more negative deployment experiences, suggesting that the better the home front is coping with the separation the better the service members will function during the deployment.

7.2.3 *Deployed service members' parents*

Remarkably, up till now, the eyes of researchers studying military families were principally fixed upon spouses and children. Aiming at enhancing knowledge on parents' experiences during their sons' or daughters' deployments –of which only little is known so far– chapter 4 had a more exploratory character and addressed the following question: *how do parents appraise the deployment of their son or daughter with respect to the parent-child relationship, concerns, and need for support and how does this appraisal affect their support for the armed forces and its missions?* The results showed that parents' relationships with their deployed sons or daughters were strongly cohesive, whereby the mother-daughter and mother-son relations were significantly more cohesive than the father-son bonds. When parents observed changes in their returned children, far more parents perceived these

changes positively (e.g., having become more mature and independent, or being more social and attentive) than negatively (e.g., having become harder, indifferent, quickly tempered, or restless). Many parents believed that the deployment had strengthened the bond with their son or daughter.

Parents were committed and worried. Mothers worried more over their deployed sons than fathers did and parents worried significantly more when their child was sent to a more risky mission area. Moreover, parents who worried more perceived the deployment more negatively. Parents whose sons or daughters were deployed to (the more routine mission in) Bosnia-Herzegovina reported more positive and less negative deployment experiences than parents of service members deployed to Afghanistan (which was a new mission, perceived more hazardous). Generally, mothers had more negative experiences than fathers had. They also missed their child more than fathers did. Parents' greatest need of support was emotional support, a need that increased as the perceived risk of the deployment intensified. Finally, parents' attitudes towards the armed forces and its operations were more positive among: fathers who had a son deployed compared with mothers whose son was sent abroad; parents whose son or daughter was sent to a less risky mission area; parents whose child had been deployed more often; parents whose child lived at home; parents who had a more cohesive bond with their deployed child; and parents who appraised the deployment more positively.

7.2.4 Couples

Chapter 5 addressed the fourth research question: *how do service members and partners maintain their intimate relationship during the separation (through active verbal interactions) and how does this affect reconciliation processes and evaluations of the relationship afterwards?* Analyses of the data collected among service members and partners during the deployment and after reunion revealed that, during the separation, service members and partners adopted fairly high levels of active verbal interactions. This implies couples' efforts to preserve their intimate relationships despite the absence of physical contact. Moreover, the findings suggest that it is the quality rather than the quantity of communications that matters. Although reunion usually brings an end to the intense contact by the use of letters,

telephone, or e-mail, couples' levels of active verbal interactions after the separation were still fairly high. Yet, at both times, partners communicated more openly than service members did.

Furthermore, the results uncovered that reconciliation after deployment clearly involved a process of adaptation, which was more difficult for partners than for returned service members. Nonetheless, reconciliation generally passed off rather smoothly and many couples believed things went back to normal rather quickly. For the majority of the couples, things were stabilized three months after reunion, although levels of relationship quality –albeit still fairly high– had dropped significantly in the course of the separation. Service members' active verbal interactions during and afterwards attenuated difficulties harmonizing and adjusting after their return. Among partners, active verbal interactions after reunion rather than during the separation –of both themselves and their partners (i.e., the service members)– affected their reconciliation processes. Partners who reported higher levels of active interactions experienced that fewer efforts were needed to harmonize and adjust. Among both service members and partners, active verbal interactions during the separation and afterwards positively affected their evaluations of the relationship afterwards.

7.2.5 *Service members*

The final research question, elaborated in chapter 6, addressed deployed service members' perspectives: *how does work-family conflict relate to service members' well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of military-induced separations?* The data demonstrated that turnover intentions were the most stable experience over the course of the military-induced separation, that is, service members who were already thinking about quitting before the separation were likely to do so afterwards. The findings of this study, therefore, suggest that it is not so much work-family conflict experiences, service members' well-being, or relationship satisfaction that accounts for turnover intentions (although significant within-time relations are displayed), rather, turnover intentions before a military-induced separation are the best predictor of turnover intentions afterwards. Even though its stability is fairly high, turnover intentions have increased significantly in

the course of the separation. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that levels of general well-being and relationship satisfaction decreased significantly (though not substantially) over time, while no significant changes were found in mean levels of work-family conflict. Compared with their partners, service members experienced significantly higher levels of work-family conflict before, during, and after the separation.

The results revealed that work-family conflict has significant immediate, rather than longer-term associations with variables in the family (i.e., relationship satisfaction) and the work domain (i.e., turnover intentions). A cross-lagged relation was displayed between general well-being before the separation and relationship satisfaction afterwards, suggesting that service members who feel well before their departure are likely to end up in more satisfying relationships than service members who report poorer well-being before the separation. Interestingly, declining well-being leads to increased perceived conflict between work and family demands at a subsequent point in time, which, in turn, is associated with one's well-being within that time frame, and so on.

7.2.6 To conclude

The subquestions, elaborated in the preceding chapters and which main findings are briefly outlined in the foregoing, together contributed to answering the central research question: *how do military-induced separations affect family and how can the (mal-) adaptation of family members be explained?* Generally, on the basis of the findings of the studies, it can be concluded that military-induced separations affect families to a certain, though generally not problematical degree. On the whole, military families seem to adapt quite well to the separations, as was shown, among other things, by the greater majority of children that were doing well, partners' levels of psychological distress that were quite similar to levels of everyday life, and the fairly stable relationships. The studies also reveal that the adaptation (or maladaptation) of families can not be explained by merely one single factor, rather it is the interrelations between various factors. For instance, partners with higher levels of social support are likely to perceive lower levels of work-family conflict, which in turn influences their well-being and evaluations of the relationship. Notably, service

members reported higher levels of work-family conflict than partners did. Moreover, this study endorsed that work-family conflict experiences are associated with individual-, family-, and work-related outcomes.

7.3 Theoretical considerations

This study was designed to examine the factors –and their interrelations– pertaining to families’ adaptations in the course of job-induced separations due to military deployments, building on family stress and resilience theory, theory on single parenting, and military sociological perspectives. In addition to endorsing certain theoretical insights, for instance in demonstrating how perceptions and resources affect individual-, family-, and work-related outcomes in the condition of a stressful or challenging situation (or work condition), this study contributes to the existing knowledge in several ways.

First, it provides insights in *within-person changes over time*, that is, in the course of job-induced separations. Taking into account reports on social support, work-family conflict, well-being, relationship satisfaction, and intent-to-quit in preceding time frames revealed that current states are predictive of future states. For instance, individuals who experience higher levels of work-family conflict, poorer well-being, dissatisfaction with their relationships, or turnover intentions at one point in time are likely to do so at a later point in time along the deployment cycle. Nonetheless, significant changes were observed in the study variables over the course of the military-induced separation. Changes that manifest within such a relatively short time span must point to the impact of the separation in some way. Job-induced separation most likely is a significant event that changes a given emotional state, referring to Leiter and Durup’s (1996, p. 42) argument that “the current state is often the best predictor of future state (...) unless an intervening event influences that emotional state.” These insights add another dimension to the well-known and highly significant cumulative effects (or piling up) suggested by the double ABCX model.

Furthermore, the findings –particularly those presented in chapter 2 and 6– threw light upon the more complex nature of certain relations. More specifically, the results demonstrated that the temporal relation between work-family conflict on the one hand and social support (chapter 2) and well-being (chapter 6) on the other hand cannot exclusively be viewed as unidirectional. Among partners, levels of work-family conflict before the deployment preceded levels of perceived support during service members' absences, suggesting that those who experience higher levels of work-family conflict before the separation may perceive a depletion of resources during the separation as they may feel that adequate support resources are not available. In the study among service members, general well-being acted as a precursor of perceived conflict between work and family demands at a subsequent point in time, which, in turn, was associated with levels of well-being within that time frame, and so on. This implies that fully understanding the dynamics of such relations goes beyond theorized cause and effect and requires gathering more longitudinal empirical evidence and refining theory.

This study also demonstrated that job-induced separations touch upon different members of the family. Not only the worker and the spouse, but also their children and (the worker's) parents. In particular the focus on parents is lacking in theory and research, which involves a totally different type of relationship than the partner dyad. Family members' experiences have been found to be interrelated. Partners' conditions are shown to be related to children's adjustments and more stress experienced at home was related to service members reporting more negative deployment experiences (see chapter 3). These findings emphasize the interrelatedness of family members' experiences and adaptations in the course of stressful events/job-induced separations, even when family members are physically separated.

More theoretical and empirical emphasis should be placed upon *couples*, given the importance of dyadic coping and communications in the course of stressful events (see chapter 5) just as partners' shared, or different, perceptions of conditions. Dyadic coping can be distinguished from the individual coping strategies, such as emotion-focused coping and problem-focused coping (Bodenmann, Pihet, & Kayser,

2006). It involves spousal support and communications, which is clearly different from social support provided by (and interactions with) family, friends, neighbors, and others. When people encounter a stressful event, the partner is often the primary and most important source of support (Bodenmann, et al., 2006). Moreover, many stressful events, such as military-induced separations, affect both partners, which makes dyadic coping crucial in maintaining a well functioning relationship. Apart from several (cross-sectional) studies that emphasized the vital role of correspondence in the maintenance of intimate relationships (e.g., Moelker, Ambaum, Overbeek, & Schipper, 1999; Moelker & Van der Kloet, 2002, 2003; Pearson & Sessler, 1991), it has received little attention in theory and research in the field, concentrating on partners being physically separated. Furthermore, in addition to enduring job-induced separations together, as a couple, partners can have different perceptions regarding the conditions they find themselves in. This study revealed, for instance, that service members reported significantly higher levels of interference of military job demands with family life than partners did; this occurred before, during, and after the military-induced separation. Moreover, service members believed that these separations are a burden to their partners, much more than partners reported themselves (see also Andres, Moelker, & Soeters, 2008). Thus, in addition to crossover processes, partners' shared (or different) perceptions should be taken into consideration. Further studying these issues may help broaden our insight.

Although military-induced separations differ from other types of temporary separations in several ways, they also share some common factors. For instance, regarding the temporary nature of the absence and the return of the family member in the family again. Therefore, theoretical insights applied in this study may be important to a larger population of individuals and families who are confronted with job-induced separations.

In turn, theoretical insights of related fields, such as the rich field of research on job satisfaction (e.g., Vogelaar, 1990), may be included in future research studying work-family conflict, well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions, given that these insights help broaden our understanding of these matters.

7.4 Practical implications

The findings emphasize not to consider military families as a vulnerable or problematic population given that the greater majority adapt quite well to military-induced separations. The results of this research, for instance, demonstrated that partners are fairly resilient in terms of experiencing psychological difficulties. Although during the actual separation the highest levels of psychological distress were reported, after reunion levels of distress had decreased significantly and partners rebounded to levels equal to –or even a bit better than– before (see chapter 2). Moreover, partners' levels of psychological distress before and after the separation were similar to what people generally experience in daily life.⁴ Additionally, the greater majority of the children appeared to adjust quite well to the parent-child separation and reunion (chapter 3). Nonetheless, this does not alter the fact that a certain number of the families do experience difficulties. For instance, the scores of nearly one fifth of the partners during the separation pointed to evidence of distress,⁵ whereas the reports of another seven per cent indicated severe problems and psychological distress.⁶ Furthermore, for a quarter of the children the parent-child separation was rather difficult; 15 to 18 per cent of the relationships deteriorated;⁷ and about one fifth of the service members' parents had negative deployment experiences.

Although this research was not designed to formulate solutions, some patterns and trends in families' experiences in the course of military deployments come to the fore, on the basis of which a number of noteworthy points of interest can be formulated.

First, the findings of this study underline the importance of (and need for) fostering balance between work and family life. The results demonstrated that service members and partners have different work-family conflict experiences given that service members perceived significantly higher levels of interference of military job demands with family life than their partners did (although during the *interviews*, it was often put forward by partners that work required service members to be away from home frequently; that they thereby often had difficulties with planning; and that they –the partners/families– often had to make adjustments and concessions in

order to meet the demands posed by the military). Generally, levels of work-family conflict were moderate among both. However, one fifth to roughly a quarter of the partners (i.e., 20 to 26 per cent) and largely one quarter to nearly two out of the five service members (i.e., 27 to 39 per cent) reported high levels of work-family conflict over the course of the deployment (chapter 2 and 6). Furthermore, conflict between military job demands and family life was found to have adverse consequences for the family (i.e., well-being and relationship satisfaction) and work domain (i.e., turnover intentions). Organizations, civilian or military, cannot afford the risk of high qualified personnel leaving. Retention and, the opposite, turnover are important issues in today's organizations and many struggle to retain good employees. Therefore, work environments and interventions aimed at allowing individuals to adequately apply resources in the work and family domain, thereby minimizing tensions between the work and family demands, are imperative. Such interventions can, among other things, relate to creating opportunities for an equitable allocation of time (e.g., for nonwork activities: free time, time with loved ones), providing social support (including support from co-workers and understanding from employer), help with childcare, and an equal division of deployable troops /deployment load (see chapter 6).

In literature, much attention has been given to family-friendly policies and services that endeavor to help employees more effectively managing work and family demands, thereby reducing tensions between work and family life. But above and beyond formal policies, family-friendly *cultures* and *work-environments* (e.g., attitudes and behaviors of coworkers and unit leaders) and employees' *perceptions* regarding a supportive culture are suggested to be even more important in successfully combining work and family demands. Moreover, these are associated with important work and family outcomes, such as work-family conflict, intentions to leave or remain in the organization, and life satisfaction (e.g., Hammer, Cullen, Marchand, & Dezsofi, 2006; Huffman, Culbertson, & Castro, 2008; Huffman & Payne, 2006; Pitt-Catsouphe, 2002). For instance, if employees feel reluctant to use the services that are offered because they are concerned that their careers or work relations could be jeopardized, they will continue to experience work-family conflict and may "even be more attracted to other organizations where use of such supports is

the norm rather than the exception” (Hammer, et al., 2006, p. 235). It has been argued that “work-family conflict is a salient issue across different groups of employees” (Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001, p. 224). Furthermore, “some level of WFC may be inevitable, particularly with the demands associated with military service” (Adams, Jex, & Cunningham, 2006, p. 184). Yet, making sure that tensions between the work and family demands are minimal (and manageable) has shown to benefit employees’ and families’ well-being, family relationships, and organizations.

Second, this study has demonstrated the beneficial effects of informal social supports as it was shown to reduce partners’ perceptions of work-family conflict, and enhance their well-being and evaluations of the intimate relationship (chapter 2). Family and friends appeared to be important sources of emotional and instrumental support. Fellow military families were valuable as well, given that they are the ones who precisely know what a deployment means to a family and they usually are in possession of deployment-related (or mission-specific) information. Still, levels of perceived available support had decreased significantly during and after the separation compared with before. Military organizations should be concerned with families not getting isolated and having access to support in the course of military-induced separations.

In the Netherlands, institutional features such as military families being integrated in the military community, usually living on post or near the base (as was described in chapter 1) have disappeared. Dutch military families live dispersed across the country and have their own social networks, generally independently of the military. Institutionalized social support arrangements embedded in traditional military norms and values, characterized, among other things, by strong communitarianism (described in more detail in Moelker, et al., 2008) are assumed not to be effective in such societies. The study into the efficiency and effectiveness of social support arrangements in seven different nations –including the Netherlands– concluded that “the secret of providing support is to create a fit between the organizational structure of support offered and cultural arrangement of support relations” (Moelker, et al., 2008, p. 207). Naturally, seeking social support or networking usually takes place of one’s own accord. Nonetheless, fostering and facilitating possibilities of informal

social networking among military families, creating conditions that enable families to get connected should be a point of interest. Generally, in the Netherlands –although the organization of family support somewhat differs between the distinct forces– support groups (i.e., home front committees) are developed just prior to each deployment and suspended just after the medal ceremony. These committees are perceived very valuable as they organize all kinds of activities and as relatives of deployed service members (usually parents and partners) participate in it and therefore precisely know what it is like to have a family member deployed. However, attention should be paid to the *continuity* of these ‘networks’. For example, if service members return home with trauma-related symptoms –which often manifest months after the return– having an impact on the family, to whom should families turn regarding informal help or advice? Obviously, family and friends might not be able to meet such specific needs, simply because they lack the knowledge or experience regarding this instance. In Denmark, for instance, informal social networks of military families with a continuous character function quite well (see Moelker et al., 2008).

Third, pursuing on family support, military organizations should be concerned with suitable support and information for children, concentrating on diverse age groups, in particular school-age children and teenagers. Although diverse services (including books on father-child separation) are available for the younger ones, teenagers are sometimes perceived a ‘forgotten group’ in family support. These children are confronted with media reports and questions and comments from friends or schoolmates. Consequently, they become very aware of the risks involved. For that very reason, involving and informing children (e.g., making clear for what cause their parent has to leave) is imperative. Providing such information may even be carried through to society at large in order to ease families from difficult questions, comments, or incomprehension from their living environment. Furthermore, the results of this research demonstrated that parents’ experiences are found to be related to children’s adjustments (chapter 3), thus, helping spouses cope with the absences of the service members is likely to increase the chances that children will also be doing well in the course of parental absence. But above all, focusing on

families rather than individuals –as family members and their experiences are strongly related– should be central in family support interventions.

A fourth point of interest proceeding from this study relates to interventions that seek to foster (positive) family relationships. The results demonstrated that couples' levels of relationship satisfaction were generally fairly high, though had decreased significantly three months after the separation compared with before. According to the well-known emotional cycles of deployment (DeSoir, 2000; Logan, 1987; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994), relationships are assumed to have stabilized three months after reunion. The results of this study displayed that 69 to 71 per cent of the relationships were quite stable (within a margin of -1 SD and $+1$ SD), whereas 11 to 16 per cent of the relationships improved (> 1 SD) and 15 to 18 per cent deteriorated (> -1 SD) in the course of the military-induced separation. Maintaining an intimate bond during the temporary separation was found to positively affect couples' reconciliation processes and evaluations of their relationships afterwards (chapter 5). Hence, providing and facilitating means to communicate when sending personnel abroad is of uppermost importance, given that these means enable couples/families to stay in touch (and informed and involved about what is going on), as a result of which they are less likely to become estranged from each other. Today, various means of communication enable deployed service members and their home front to remain interconnected while being physically separated and it should be noted that the great majority of Dutch service members and partners reported to be satisfied with the existing means to communicate during the separation (see also Andres & Moelker, 2008). Providing couples with information about the benefits of active communications in the course of temporary separations may become part of family support programs. Although every individual or couple will communicate and cope with the separation differently, for them to be aware of certain benefits may help maintaining a well functioning relationship in the course of the separation.

Fifth, and finally, service members' parents are an elementary component of military families. Although parent-child relationships change when children grow older, "parents continue to provide affection, support, and nurturance to their adult children" (Hay, Fingerman, & Lefkowitz, 2008, p. 104). They are concerned and

committed. Parents who worried more perceived the deployment more negatively. Furthermore, mothers were less supportive of the objectives of the mission and did to a lesser degree believe in the credibility of missions abroad. Hence, the potential for discontent and protest is probably larger in mothers than in fathers.

7.5 Reflection and future research

There are still many courses to take and much research to be conducted regarding families' adaptations to military-induced separations. This section reflects on certain aspects of this study and offers avenues for future research.

One thing that should be noted is that the service members in this study were almost exclusively men, whereas the partners were almost all women (see chapters 2, 5, and 6). The underrepresentation of female service members and male partners impedes the examination of gender differences in service members' and partners' experiences in the course of military deployments. In the study among parents (presented in chapter 4), the proportion of men (fathers) and women (mothers) was more equally distributed (that is, 39 per cent male and 61 per cent female) and gender differences were clearly present. With regard to male and female military personnel, the Netherlands armed forces employ 91 per cent male ($N = 42,139$) and 9 per cent female service members ($N = 4,125$). Examining the effects of job-induced absences of women (and mothers) is highly relevant –though this is expected to be accomplished more easily in larger militaries (e.g., in the United States) which have larger numbers and percentages of women employed. Literature suggests that the gender gap between men's and women's involvement in the home is getting smaller as a result of men's increasing share of domestic responsibilities and women's decline in time spent on household labor (Baxter, 2002). Nevertheless, women still tend to devote almost twice as much energies (e.g., time, involvement) on familial responsibilities than men do (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer, & Robinson, 2000) and role expectations are far from equal (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000). Consequently, women are assumed to experience more difficulties in balancing work and family demands. However, research does not reveal consistent gender differences in the

prevalence of work-family conflict and its consequences. Moreover, only few studies have centered upon mothers experiencing deployment (Kelley, et al., 2001; Kelley, et al., 2002). The effects of maternal absence on *families* have even been studied less (if at all). Therefore, future research should concentrate on this.

It is worth noticing that data have been collected through self-report measures. Surveys are typically self-administered and therefore are subjective in nature (Castro, 2003). Moreover, survey data are susceptible to common method variance, which might affect the strengths of the relationships. It has been asserted that “survey research is most effective when used in conjunction with interviews, because interviews and surveys balance quite nicely the strengths and weaknesses of the other” (Castro, 2003, p.23). We believe that the additional qualitative data, obtained through interviews, and the collection of data among multiple sources (e.g., service members and partners) diminish certain drawbacks of solely relying on survey data and that the method not severely biased our findings. Future research should consider including a control-group in order to compare deployed and nondeployed (perhaps even civilian) families’ experiences. Furthermore, more in-depth qualitative data are needed to understand more thoroughly the impact of job (or military)-induced separations on intimate relationships. For example, how do relationships evolve months or even a year following the reunion? And what exact role do the (frequent) separations play in couples’ decisions to either stay together or go apart (or to stay in or leave the military)? Unfortunately, time was lacking –leaving out of consideration that the latter groups would be difficult to trace given that people are likely to move after a relationship is ended, or may have left the organization in the meantime– though it is expected to produce valuable (new) information.

The effects of work on family have been examined by the construct of work-family conflict, assessing the extent to which military job demands interfered with family life. Apart from the effects of occupational demands, service members may have undergone traumatic experiences as a result of which they may encounter serious hardships and develop psychological problems, including posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). If service members return home with stress-related symptoms, it most likely will impact the family (and family life) significantly, with respect to family

members' well-being, intimate relations, but also attitudes towards the organization and turnover intentions. Moreover, more and more attention is called to service members being involved in severe violence and even killing during operations abroad, not always being able to just *turn the switch* when they return home. (This is, for instance, impressively covered in the documentary *Operation Homecoming: Writing the wartime experience*, 2007).

In their study conducted among 425 partners of returned service members, Moelker and Van der Kloet (2002, 2003) found a small but significant relation between the danger soldiers experienced and a scale measuring partners' depression. Research also demonstrated that if individuals suffer from PTSD, family members may also develop psychological problems. For example, a study of Dirkzwager and colleagues (Dirkzwager, Bramsen, Adèr, & Van der Ploeg, 2005) among partners and parents of Dutch peacekeepers revealed that "partners whose peacekeepers showed posttraumatic stress symptoms reported significantly more PTSD symptoms themselves, more somatic problems, more sleeping problems, and more negative social support and also judged the marital relationship as less favorable than did partners of peacekeepers without PTSD symptoms" (Dirkzwager, et al., 2005, p. 223). Among parents, however, no significant differences were found between parents of service members with various levels of posttraumatic stress. But, interestingly, a gender effect was found among parents, revealing that mothers reported more PTSD symptoms, sleeping problems, and somatic problems than fathers did. This finding is particularly interesting considering our findings regarding mothers' more difficult 'deployment experiences' compared with fathers' reports. More research should be done among service members' parents, including collecting longitudinal data and data on parents' well-being. Moreover, a relevant and necessary line of research lies in the effects of service members' deployment experiences on family life, including the prevalence and antecedents and outcomes of secondary traumatization. For example, how do posttraumatic stress disorder and family functioning relate to one another? How do service members' stress symptoms affect the family, and may it even be likely that service members are more susceptible to PTSD when it does not go well with the family at home?

Just recently (at the time of finishing this dissertation), the Dutch media reported on a research report that addressed posttraumatic stress symptoms and its relations with service members' and their partners' relationships and health (Goedhart & Solleveld, 2009). This research endorses the importance of the issue. However, the tendency of the report was quite alarming. For instance, the researchers found that the presence of domestic problems rather than severe mission experiences was associated with posttraumatic stress symptoms and health problems. It is worth mentioning that the study was conducted among 69 service members and 29 partners (the number of couples was 22) who had filled out online questionnaires (the sample was taken at random among union members). The number of respondents who reported domestic problems was 10. Moreover, the researchers reported that a second remarkable finding relates to the relative poor health conditions of deployed service members' partners. These findings are conflicting with the findings presented in this thesis, particular the ones presented in chapter 2 and 3 (also briefly described in the foregoing: see section 7.2.1 and 7.2.2), which demonstrated that, in a general sense, partners did not experience higher levels of distress than any other individual generally experiences. The interrelations between family members' experiences – even while they are physically separated– are also described in chapter 3, just as the importance of focusing on families rather than individuals in family support interventions. Thus, the studies agree upon the significance of partner-relationships, social support, and involving partners (or families) in support programs (e.g., aftercare). However, caution is imperative in drawing conclusions regarding the interrelations between family functioning and stress- or trauma-related symptoms. Fully understanding the nature and direction of these relations requires gathering longitudinal empirical evidence among a representative and sufficient sample of service members and their partners.

Furthermore, in this study, data on children's responses (presented in chapter 3) have been collected by surveying and interviewing nondeployed mothers, whose subjective reports may be biased by their own deployment experiences. However, the inclusion of the absent fathers' reports added another perspective to the data, which revealed that the perceptions of both parents were quite similar. Mothers' reports were even somewhat more positive. Collecting data among children is not always

possible or desirable (for instance, among the youngest children) and is very difficult methodologically (varying techniques may be required among children in different age groups). Therefore, it was decided to collect data on children's responses to the separation through parents' reports, given that parents are assumed to be able to depict (changes in) their children's conditions conscientiously. The data did not allow for examination whether boys' responses differed from that of girls', as our questionnaires did not include an item regarding the gender of the children. Previous research suggests that deployment has diverse effects on male and female children (Hillenbrand, 1976; Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996), therefore, future research should incorporate this. Furthermore, future research revolving around children in the course of their parents' deployments should focus on longer term attachments and the effects of support arrangements. Regarding the first, more knowledge on long-term effects is needed to more accurately determine the impact of temporary parent-child separation (and deployment in particular) on children's well-being and attachment. Regarding the second, many interviewees emphasized the importance of suitable support (including information) for children, concentrating on diverse age groups. It should be noted that most military organizations offer a wide range of support to service members and their families, including children, and that the majority of the families valued the support offered by the military, as was shown by analyses of the data of this research project published elsewhere (Andres & Moelker, 2008). Nonetheless, efforts aimed at helping children cope with the parent-child separation and examining its effects on children's adjustments should be put on the policy and research agendas.

With respect to providing support, this study demonstrated the beneficial effects of partners' social supports in reducing perceived work-family conflict and enhancing well-being and relationship satisfaction (chapter 2). Service members' levels of available support (provided by coworkers and unit-leaders, for instance) in the course of military-induced separations was beyond the scope of this study. This is a major avenue for future research.

This thesis concludes by emphasizing that military-induced separations touch upon different aspects of family life, as well as different members of the family. Understanding military families' adaptations and experiences and the underlying processes in the course of military-induced separations –from a multidisciplinary perspective– contributes to grasp how the demands of work and family life can be managed successfully, which in turn helps maintaining well-functioning families *and* organizations.

References

- Adams, G. A., Jex, S. M., & Cunningham, C. J. L. (2006). Work-family conflict among military personnel. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life. The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family*. Westport: Praeger.
- Adler, A. B., Bartone, P. T., & Vaitkus, M. A. (1994). *Family stress and adjustment during a peacekeeping deployment*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles.
- Andres, M. D., & Moelker, R. (2008). Militaire gezinnen en uitzending (III). Evaluatie van de thuisfrontzorg [Military families and deployment (III). Evaluation of family support]. *Militaire Spectator*, 177(11), 603-614.
- Andres, M. D., Moelker, R., & Soeters, J. (2008). Militaire gezinnen en uitzending (I). Partners met een missie [Military families and deployment (I). Partners with a mission]. *Militaire Spectator*, 177(9), 487-500.
- Bartone, J. V., & Bartone, P. T. (1997). *American army families in Europe: Coping with deployment separation*. Brussels: Royal Military Academy.
- Baxter, J. (2002). Patterns of change and stability in the gender division of household labour in Australia, 1986-1997 *Journal of Sociology*, 38(4), 399-424.
- Bianchi, S. M., Milkie, M. A., Sayer, L. C., & Robinson, J. P. (2000). Is anyone doing the housework? Trends in the gender division of household labor. *Social Forces*, 79(1), 191-228.
- Bodenmann, G., Pihet, S., & Kayser, K. (2006). The relationship between dyadic coping and marital quality: A 2-year longitudinal study. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 20(3), 485-493.
- Castro, C. A. (2003). Considerations when conducting psychological research during peacekeeping missions: The scientist and the commander. In T. W. Britt & A. B. Adler (Eds.), *The psychology of the peacekeeper. Lessons from the field*. (pp. 11-27). Westport: Praeger.
- DeSoir, E. L. J. L. (2000). Hoe beleeft het thuisfront een uitzending? De emotionele stadia bij langdurige inzet [How does the home front experience a deployment? The emotional stadia during prolonged deployments]. *Kernvraag*, 123(1), 19-26.

- Dirkzwager, A. J. E., Bramsen, I., Adèr, H., & Van der Ploeg, H. M. (2005). Secondary traumatization in partners and parents of Dutch peacekeeping soldiers. *Journal of Family Psychology, 19*(2), 217-226.
- Figley, C. R. (1993a). Coping with stressors on the home front. *Journal of Social Issues, 49*(4), 51-71.
- Figley, C. R. (1993b). Weathering the storm at home: War-related family stress and coping. In F. W. Kaslow (Ed.), *The military family in peace and war* (pp. 173-190). New York: Springer.
- Friedman, S. D., & Greenhaus, J. H. (2000). *Work and family - allies or enemies? What happens when business professionals confront life choices*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Goedhart, A. W., & Solleveld, H. A. (2009). Aanzet tot een proactieve zorgstrategie na vredesmissies. Een inventarisatie van gezondheidsaspecten van militairen na vredesmissies en van de samenhang van gezondheidsaspecten met missie-ervaringen, persoonlijke omstandigheden en de biopsychosociale gezondheid van partners [Incentive to a proactive support strategy following peace operations. An inventory of service members' health aspects following peace operations and the relation between health aspects and mission experiences, personal circumstances, and biopsychosocial health of partners]. Thuis-Front-Zorg, United Brains for Management, Goedhart Instituut, Holland.
- Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2001). Consequences of work-family conflict on employee well-being over time. *Work & Stress, 15*(3), 214-226.
- Hammer, L. B., Cullen, J. C., Marchand, G. C., & Dezsofi, J. A. (2006). Reducing the negative impact of work-family conflict on military personnel: Individual coping strategies and multilevel interventions. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military Life. The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family*. (pp. 220-242). Westport: Praeger.
- Hay, E. L., Fingerman, K. L., & Lefkowitz, E. S. (2008). The worries adult children and their parents experience for one another. *International Journal of Aging and Human Development, 67*(2), 101-127.
- Hillenbrand, E. D. (1976). Father absence in military families. *The Family Coordinator, 25*(4), 451-458.

- Holmes, T. H., & Rahe, R. H. (1967). The social readjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 11(2), 213-218.
- Huffman, A. H., Culbertson, S. S., & Castro, C. A. (2008). Family-friendly environments and U.S. Army soldier performance and work outcomes. *Military Psychology*, 20(4), 253-270.
- Huffman, A. H., & Payne, S. C. (2006). The challenges and benefits of dual-military marriages. In C. A. Castro, A. B. Adler & T. W. Britt (Eds.), *Military life. The psychology of serving in peace and combat. Volume 3: The military family* (pp. 115-137). Westport: Praeger.
- Jensen, P. S., Martin, D., & Watanabe, H. K. (1996). Children's responses to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35, 433-441.
- Kelley, M. L., Hock, E., Bonney, J. F., Jarvis, M. S., Smith, K. M., & Gaffney, M. A. (2001). Navy mothers experiencing and not experiencing deployment: Reasons for staying in or leaving the military. *Military Psychology*, 13(1), 55-71.
- Kelley, M. L., Hock, E., Jarvis, M. S., Smith, K. M., Gaffney, M. A., & Bonney, J. F. (2002). Psychological adjustment of Navy mothers experiencing deployment. *Military Psychology*, 14(3), 199-216.
- Leiter, M. P., & Durup, M. J. (1996). Work, home, and in-between: A longitudinal study of spillover. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 32(1), 29-47.
- Logan, K. V. (1987). The emotional cycle of deployment. *Proceedings*, 43-47.
- Moelker, R., Ambaum, J., Overbeek, E., & Schipper, M. (1999). Beter luisteren, meer sex? [Better listening, better sex?]. *Militaire Spectator*, 168(2), 98-104.
- Moelker, R., Poot, G., Andres, M. D., Jelusic, J., Juvan, J., Parmar, L., et al. (2008). News from the home front: Communities supporting military families. In G. Caforio, G. Kümmel & Bandana (Eds.), *Armed forces and conflict resolution: Sociological perspectives*. (pp. 187-214): Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2002). *Partneronderzoek. Wat partners vinden van de uitzending van hun militair. [Partner research. How partners feel about the deployment of their soldier]*. The Hague, The Netherlands: Gedragswetenschappen

- Moelker, R., & Van der Kloet, I. E. (2003). Military families and the armed forces. A two sided affair? In G. Caforio (Ed.), *Handbook of the sociology of the military* (pp. 201-223). New York: Kluwer.
- Op den Buijs, T., Andres, M. D., & Bartone, P. T. (2010). Managing the well-being of military personnel and their families. In J. Soeters, P. Van Fenema & R. Beeres (Eds.), *Managing Military Organizations. Theory & practice*. London: Routledge (in press).
- Pearson, J. C., & Sessler, C. J. (1991). *Family communication and health: Maintaining marital satisfaction and quality of life*. Paper presented at the Annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Chicago.
- Peebles-Kleiger, M. J. K., & Kleiger, J. H. (1994). Re-integration stress for Desert Storm families: Wartime deployments and family trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 7(2), 173-193.
- Pitt-Catsoupes, M. (2002). Family-friendly workplace. from Sloan Work and Family Research Network, Boston College:
http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/encyclopedia_entry.php?id=232&area=All
- Vogelaar, A.L.W. (1990). Arbeidssatisfactie. Een consequentie van behoeften-structuur en kenmerken van werk en werksituatie. Doctoral dissertation, Rijksuniversiteit Leiden, the Netherlands.

Notes

- ¹ According to the Holmes and Rahe (1967) Stress Scale, which is still widely used as an indicator of the amount of stress individuals experience.
- ² Before and during the separation.
- ³ Before and afterwards.
- ⁴ Scores were between 11 and 12, which is defined as *typical*, according to the General Health Questionnaire scoring.
- ⁵ Scores were > 15, which is defined as *evidence of distress*, according to the General Health Questionnaire scoring.
- ⁶ Scores were > 20, which *suggests severe problems and psychological distress*, according to the General Health Questionnaire scoring.
- ⁷ With more than 1 standard deviation.

Appendixes

Appendix A – Overview of nonresponse

Category	N (%)	Reason for nonresponse	n	%
<i>Recruited</i>	911 couples (100%)			
Incorrect address	44 (5%)			
Both partners participated in all measurements	66 (7%)			
One of the partners participated in all measurements	115 (13%)			
Participation of at least one partner in at least one –but not all– data waves	436 (48%)	Suddenly unreachable	12	(3%)
		Relationship dissolved during data collection procedures/ deployment	5	(1%)
		Service member being repatriated	4	(1%)
		Service member deceased (during data collection procedures)	2	(0.5%)
		Reason unknown	413	(95%)
No participation at all (both partners)	250 (27%)	Refusal to participate	26	(10%)
		Cancelled or delayed deployment	12	(5%)
		Dissolved relationship (just before deployment)	6	(2%)
		Both partners deployed	6	(2%)
		Living abroad (language problems)	2	(1%)
		Reason unknown	198	(79%)

Appendix B – Description of the sample

Table B.1

Description of the sample partners and service members

Partners						
	<i>Time 1</i>		<i>Time 2</i>		<i>Time 3</i>	
	<i>N (453)</i>	%	<i>N (386)</i>	%	<i>N (235)</i>	%
Gender						
Male	12	2.6	11	2.9	5	2.1
Female	441	97.4	372	97.1	230	97.9
Children						
Yes	258	57.0	220	57.6	143	61.1
No	195	43.0	162	42.4	91	38.9
Marital status						
Married	265	58.8	219	57.2	143	61.4
Unmarried	186	41.2	164	42.9	89	38.6
Employment						
Yes	384	85.1	328	86.1	199	84.6
No	67	14.9	53	13.9	36	15.3
Number of prior deployments						
0	123	28.2				
1	140	32.1				
2	109	25.0				
3	47	10.8				
4	14	3.2				
≥ 5	3	0.7				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	32.9	9.35	33.2	9.17	33.9	9.01
Duration of the relationship	11.0	8.53	11.2	8.80	11.8	8.06
Number of children	1.1	1.11	1.1	1.13	1.2	1.17
Service members						
	<i>Time 1</i>		<i>Time 2</i>		<i>Time 3</i>	
	<i>N (303)</i>	%	<i>N (353)</i>	%	<i>N (183)</i>	%
Gender						
Male	290	95.7	334	94.6	176	96.7
Female	13	4.3	19	5.4	6	3.3
Military branch						
Army	278	92.1			163	90.1
Navy	5	3.0			8	4.4
Air Force	9	1.7			3	1.7
Military police	10	3.3			7	3.9
Rank						
Enlisted	72	24.0			26	14.2
Noncommissioned officer	141	47.0			97	53.2
Commissioned officer	87	29.0			59	32.4

Service members (continued)						
Number of prior deployments						
0	81	27.4				
1	96	32.4				
2	74	25.0				
3	33	11.1				
4	11	3.7				
≥ 5	1	0.3				
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	34.5	9.16	35.0	9.37	37.1	8.68
Duration of current deployment	4.9	0.92			5.0	0.83
Years of service	14.5	9.23				

Table B.2
Description of the sample parents

Parents		
	<i>N (1098)</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender		
Male	429	39.2
Female	666	60.8
Gender service member		
Male	1041	95.3
Female	51	4.7
Deployed son/daughter living at home		
Yes	551	50.4
No	543	49.6
Having other children		
Yes	1023	93.5
No	71	6.5
Deployed service members' rank		
Enlisted	744	68.2
Noncommissioned officer	225	20.6
Commissioned officer	118	10.9
Number of prior deployments		
0	613	56.0
1	268	24.5
2	139	12.7
3	55	5.0
≥ 4	19	1.7
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	53.5	7.55
Age deployed son/daughter	25.5	6.35
Number of other children	1.7	0.99
Years of service deployed son/daughter	6.39	5.69
Duration of current deployment	4.6	0.87

Note. In all tables: age in years, duration of the relationship in years, duration of the deployment in months.

Appendix C – Scales used

C.1 Work-family conflict

Work-family conflict scale ¹		
1. The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
2. The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
3. Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
4. My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
5. Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1

Note. The items presented to partners required slight wording modifications as this study addressed interference of service members' job demands with family life (i.e., *my job* was replaced by *my partner's job*).

Cronbach alpha coefficients: service members T1 ($\alpha = .85$), T2 ($\alpha = .88$), T3 ($\alpha = .90$);

Cronbach alpha coefficients: partners T1 ($\alpha = .87$), T2 ($\alpha = .86$), T3 ($\alpha = .86$).

¹ Source: Netemeyer, R.G., Boles, J.S., & McMurrian, R. (1996). Development and validation of work- family conflict and family-work conflict scales. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 81(4), 400-410.

C.2 Relationship satisfaction

ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale ²		
1. My partner and I understand each other perfectly.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
2. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
3. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
4. My partner completely understands and sympathizes with my every mood.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
5. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
6. Our relationship is a perfect success.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1

² Source: Fowers, B.J. & Olson, D.H. (1993). ENRICH Marital satisfaction scale: A brief research and clinical tool. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 7(2), 176-185.

7. I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
8. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
9. I have some needs that are not being met by our relationship. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
10. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
11. I am very pleased about how we express affection and relate sexually.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
12. I am not satisfied with the way we handle our responsibilities as parents (if applicable). (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
13. I have never regretted my relationship with my partner, not even for a moment.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1

14. I am dissatisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
15. I feel very good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.	Strongly disagree	O 1
	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1

Note. *Marriage* was replaced by *relationship*; Item 2 and 5 had to be removed during data collection procedures, item 12 had been removed because it decreased the *N* dramatically.

Cronbach alpha coefficients: service members T1 ($\alpha = .83$), T3 ($\alpha = .88$);

Cronbach alpha coefficients: partners T1 ($\alpha = .85$), T3 ($\alpha = .87$).

C.3 *Psychological distress*

General Health Questionnaire - 12³

In the past weeks, have you:

1. Been able to concentrate on what you're doing?	Better than usual	O 0
	Same as usual	O 1
	Less than usual	O 2
	Much less than usual	O 3
2. Lost much sleep over worry?	Not at all	O 0
	No more than usual	O 1
	Rather more than usual	O 2
	Much more than usual	O 3
3. Felt that you are playing a useful part in things?	More than usual	O 0
	Same as usual	O 1
	Less than usual	O 2
	Much less than usual	O 3

³ Source: Goldberg, D.P. (1992). *General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12)*. Windsor: NFER-Nelson.

4. Felt capable of making decisions about things?	More than usual	O ₀
	Same as usual	O ₁
	Less than usual	O ₂
	Much less than usual	O ₃
5. Felt constantly under strain?	Not at all	O ₀
	No more than usual	O ₁
	Rather more than usual	O ₂
	Much more than usual	O ₃
6. Felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?	Not at all	O ₀
	No more than usual	O ₁
	Rather more than usual	O ₂
	Much more than usual	O ₃
7. Been able to enjoy your normal day to day activities?	More than usual	O ₀
	Same as usual	O ₁
	Less than usual	O ₂
	Much less than usual	O ₃
8. Been able to face up to your problems?	More than usual	O ₀
	Same as usual	O ₁
	Less than usual	O ₂
	Much less than usual	O ₃
9. Been feeling unhappy or depressed?	Not at all	O ₀
	No more than usual	O ₁
	Rather more than usual	O ₂
	Much more than usual	O ₃
10. Been losing confidence in yourself?	Not at all	O ₀
	No more than usual	O ₁
	Rather more than usual	O ₂
	Much more than usual	O ₃
11. Been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?	Not at all	O ₀
	No more than usual	O ₁
	Rather more than usual	O ₂
	Much more than usual	O ₃
12. Been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?	More than usual	O ₀
	Same as usual	O ₁
	Less than usual	O ₂
	Much less than usual	O ₃

Cronbach alpha coefficients: partners T1 ($\alpha = .84$), T2 ($\alpha = .84$), T3 ($\alpha = .85$).

C.4 Social support

Social provisions scale ⁴		
1. There are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
2. There is someone I could talk to about important decisions in my life.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
3. There is no one I can turn to for guidance in times of stress. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
4. If something went wrong, no one would come to my assistance. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
5. I have close relationships that provide me with a sense of emotional security and well-being.	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
6. There is no one I feel comfortable talking about problems with. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1
7. I lack a feeling of intimacy with another person. (<i>reversed</i>)	Strongly agree	O 5
	Agree	O 4
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O 3
	Disagree	O 2
	Strongly disagree	O 1

⁴ Source: Cutrona, C.E. & Russell, D.W. (1987). The provisions of social relationships and adaptation to stress. *Advances in Personal Relationships*, 1, 37-67.

Cronbach alpha coefficients: partners T1 ($\alpha = .77$), T2 ($\alpha = .64$), T3 ($\alpha = .77$).

C.5 Loneliness

UCLA Loneliness Scale ⁵		
1. How often do you feel alone?	Always	O 4
	Sometimes	O 3
	Rarely	O 2
	Never	O 1
2. How often do you feel that there are people who really understand you? (<i>reversed</i>)	Always	O 4
	Sometimes	O 3
	Rarely	O 2
	Never	O 1
3. How often do you feel that there are people you can turn to? (<i>reversed</i>)	Always	O 4
	Sometimes	O 3
	Rarely	O 2
	Never	O 1
4. How often do you feel isolated from others?	Always	O 4
	Sometimes	O 3
	Rarely	O 2
	Never	O 1

Cronbach alpha coefficients: partners T1 ($\alpha = .61$), T2 ($\alpha = .61$), T3 ($\alpha = .69$).

⁵ Source: Russell, D.W. (1996). UCLA Loneliness Scale (Version 3): Reliability, validity, and factor structure. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 66(1), 20-40.

C.6 *Turnover intentions*

Turnover intentions		
1. I often think about quitting.	Strongly agree	O ₅
	Agree	O ₄
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O ₃
	Disagree	O ₂
	Strongly disagree	O ₁
2. I will probably look for a new job in the next year.	Strongly agree	O ₅
	Agree	O ₄
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O ₃
	Disagree	O ₂
	Strongly disagree	O ₁
3. I would like to stay in this organization until I retire.	Strongly agree	O ₅
	Agree	O ₄
	Neither agree, nor disagree	O ₃
	Disagree	O ₂
	Strongly disagree	O ₁

Cronbach alpha coefficients: service members T1 ($\alpha = .80$), T3 ($\alpha = .86$).

Appendix D – Items used to measure children’s adjustment difficulties

D.1 During the separation

As a result of the deployment, my children...

1. ... ask for more attention.
2. ... are more irritable.
3. ... are more disobedient.
4. ... have more trouble sleeping.
5. ... have more often trouble with bedwetting.
6. ... have more trouble at school.
7. ... are ill more often.

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: $\alpha = .85$.

D.2 Upon reunion

1. The homecoming was a burden for my children.
2. The children really had to grow accustomed to their returned parent.
3. The children did not accept their returned parent’s authority.
4. The children are afraid that their father/mother will leave again.
5. The children rapidly took up the daily routine. (*reversed*)

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: $\alpha = .79$.

Appendix E – Items used among parents

E.1 Parent-child cohesion⁶

1. My son/daughter and I really help and support each other.
2. My son/daughter and I have a feeling of togetherness.
3. My son/daughter and I don't do things together. (*reversed*)
4. My son/daughter and I really get along well with each other.
5. My son/daughter and I avoid contact with each other. (*reversed*)

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: $\alpha = .74$.

E.2 Parents' worries

1. I perceived this deployment as very hazardous.
2. I worried about the safety of my son/daughter in the mission area.
3. I worried about the opportunities to remain in touch during the deployment.
4. I worried whether my son/daughter would be changed.

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: $\alpha = .72$.

⁶ Items adapted from the subscale 'Cohesion' of Bloom's (1985) Family Functioning Scale.

Bloom, B.L. (1985). A factor analysis of self-report measures of family functioning. *Family Process*, 24, 225-239.

E.3 *Parents' support for the armed forces*

1. How do you feel about the armed forces in general?
2. How do you feel about the cause of the mission in which your son/daughter participated?
3. How do you feel about a conceivable future deployment?
4. I support the efforts to establish peace and security in post conflict areas.
5. I completely support my son's/daughter's choice to work for the armed forces.

Responses were given on a scale ranging from 1 to 5; questions 1 up to 3: 1 (*extremely negative*) to 5 (*extremely positive*); questions 4 and 5: 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Cronbach alpha coefficient: $\alpha = .78$.

Appendix F – Items used to measure couples’ active verbal interactions and reconciliation

F.1 Active verbal interactions during the physical separation

When my partner and I have contact:

1. I keep all bad news from my partner. (*reversed*)
2. I avoid everything that could upset my partner. (*reversed*)
3. I ask how my partner feels.
4. My partner extensively shares his/her experiences with me.
5. I share all my experiences.
6. I try to discuss the issue, when I feel sore about something.
7. I show affection.
8. I ask/give advice about issues at home.

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: service members $\alpha = .79$;

Cronbach alpha coefficient: partners $\alpha = .72$.

F.2 Active verbal interactions following reunion

1. I avoid everything that could upset my partner. (*reversed*)
2. I ask how my partner feels.
3. My partner extensively shares his/her experiences with me.
4. I share all my experiences.
5. I try to discuss the issue, when I feel sore about something.
6. My partner is a good listener.

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: service members $\alpha = .75$;

Cronbach alpha coefficient: partners $\alpha = .70$.

F.3 *Couples' reconciliation*

1. I really had to get used to my partner.
2. My partner and I have become estranged from each other.
3. I worry about our relationship.
4. I/my partner had difficulties adjusting to the routines at home.
5. My partner and I have renegotiated our roles.
6. The atmosphere is tensed.

Responses were given on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.
Higher scores indicate that more efforts are needed to harmonize and adjust.

Cronbach alpha coefficient: service members $\alpha = .81$;

Cronbach alpha coefficient: partners $\alpha = .80$.

Appendix G – Drop-out analyses

192 of the 453 partners who participated at Time 1, also participate at Time 3;
 n (retained) = 192, n (dropped out) = 261

111 of the 303 service members who participated at Time 1, also participated at Time 3;
 n (retained) = 111, n (dropped out) = 192

Independent samples t-tests have been conducted to examine whether the ‘dropped out-group’ scores differed from the ‘retained-group’ scores on the study variables. The results are presented below.

Partners				
<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i> <i>(retained)</i>	<i>M</i> <i>(dropped out)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
Work-family conflict (T1)	12.93	13.10	0.37	446
Work-family conflict (T2)	14.13	13.51	-1.02	288
Psychological distress (T1)	11.49	12.05	1.23	444
Psychological distress (T2)	12.21	13.16	1.64	288
Social support (T1)	31.76	31.36	-1.02	444
Social support (T2)	29.46	29.63	0.34	286
Marital Satisfaction (T1)	50.24	49.93	-0.44	419
Service members				
<i>Variable</i>	<i>M</i> <i>(retained)</i>	<i>M</i> <i>(dropped out)</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
Work-family conflict (T1)	14.55	14.33	-0.44	299
Work-family conflict (T2)	15.90	16.34	0.59	169
General well-being (T1)	8.07	7.95	-1.00	295
General well-being (T2)	7.81	7.47	-1.95	171
Marital Satisfaction (T1)	51.19	50.10	-1.42	254
Turnover intentions (T1)	5.64	6.43	2.22*	292

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Summaries

Summary

The interrelation between work and family life has long been recognized and in many of today's Western societies, both men and women face the challenges of combining work and family demands. Above and beyond the widespread prevalence of work affecting family, work is especially likely to bear upon family life in the course of job-induced separations. In such instances, work requires undivided time, loyalty, and commitment, making individuals unavailable for the family for a certain period of time. Therefore, the significance of studying (military) families in the course of job-induced separations is evident.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach, relying on psychological and sociological theories on family stress, family resilience, single parenting, and perspectives of military sociology, *this research aims at enhancing knowledge on job-induced separations affecting family life, by examining military families in the course of military deployments, the factors that are associated with families' (mal-) adaptations, and their interrelations.* The studies presented in this thesis throw light upon military families from different perspectives: partners, children, service members' parents, couples, and service members. They address various themes, including intimate relationships, well-being, parents' appraisals, couples reconciliation, and service members' intentions to leave or stay in the military. The central research question that guides the thesis is:

*How do military-induced separations affect family life
and how can the (mal-) adaptation of family members be explained?*

Five research questions have been formulated. Each addresses a different family perspective with congruous variables of interest. Together, they provide an answer to the central research question and contribute to a comprehensive representation of families' adaptations in the course of military deployments. The research questions are elaborated in the chapters 2 up to 6 of this thesis. Additionally, chapter 1 provides a sketch of the context in which the study is embedded –including several trends and developments that have affected the military, the family, and the work-family

interface– and the study’s conceptual and technical design. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis by briefly representing the main findings, theoretical considerations, practical implications, reflections, and avenues for future research.

Research question 1 (chapter 2): How does work-family conflict relate to partners’ perceived social support, well-being, and relationship satisfaction in the course of military-induced separations? Partners were followed along the cycles of deployment and survey data were collected in three waves: before ($N = 453$), during ($N = 386$), and after ($N = 235$) the separation. Generally, perceived interference of military job demands with family life was moderate and no significant changes were found over the course of the military-induced separation. Furthermore, levels of available social support during and after the deployment were significantly lower in comparison with before. In a general sense, before and after the deployment, nondeployed partners did not experience higher levels of distress than any other individual generally experiences. The actual separation was somewhat more stressful. And relationship satisfaction declined slightly but significantly in the course of the separation. Partners who experienced higher levels of work-family conflict reported higher levels of psychological distress (before and during the separation) and lower levels of relationship satisfaction (before and afterwards).

Moreover, social support demonstrated its beneficial effects in reducing levels of work-family conflict, psychological distress, and enhancing relationship satisfaction. Interestingly, partners who experienced higher levels of work-family conflict before the separation perceived a depletion of resources during the separation. On the basis of the results of this study, partners who adapt best to the deployment can be characterized by having higher levels of available support and less negative perceptions of service members’ job demands interfering with family life, given that higher levels of social support and more positive perceptions of work-family conflict were shown to be beneficial to partners’ well-being and relationship satisfaction.

Research question 2 (chapter 3): How can the experiences of children in the course of service members' deployments be described and what factors predict children's adjustment difficulties during parental absence and upon reunion? Data on children were collected among their parents. That is, predominantly among the nondeployed parents –who were all mothers in this study– but questions regarding their children were also posed to the deployed fathers. On the whole, according to the mothers, the children adapted fairly rapidly and were doing quite well during the parent-child separation. When changes were observed in the children, they were not solely adverse (e.g., crying more often, having toilet-trained problems, or being stubborn or quickly tempered) but were also related to feeling more responsible, and being more helpful and caring. In a quarter of the families, the deployment was rather difficult for the children.

Different ages involved different experiences (and difficulties). Younger children usually have difficulties keeping track of the duration of the absence, as they have no sense of time and even a few weeks seem to last forever. Older ones become more aware of the risks involved, which manifests itself in anxiety and concerns about the safety of the absent parent. After reunion, the majority of the children rapidly took up the daily routine, although nearly a quarter had to grow accustomed to their returned parent again and forty per cent of the mothers reported that the children were afraid that their father would leave again. Mothers' levels of psychological distress before the deployment and during the separation were significantly related to children's adjustment difficulties during the deployment. Mothers' levels of parenting stress during the separation significantly predicted children's adjustment difficulties upon reunion. These findings suggest that nondeployed parents' abilities to cope with the stressors of deployment are likely to pass on to their children's experiences. Furthermore, the findings imply that the better the home front is coping with the separation the better the service members feel during the deployment.

Research question 3 (chapter 4): How do parents appraise the deployment of their son or daughter with respect to the parent-child relationship, concerns, and need for support and how does this appraisal affect their support for the armed forces and its missions? Data were collected among 1098 parents whose sons or daughters had just returned home from a mission abroad. Analyses of the data demonstrated that parents' relationships with their deployed sons or daughters were strongly cohesive and many parents believed that the deployment had strengthened their bond. Furthermore, parents were committed and worried. Mothers worried more over their deployed sons than fathers did and parents worried significantly more when their child was sent to a more risky mission area. Moreover, parents who worried more perceived the deployment more negatively. Parents whose sons or daughters were deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina reported more positive and less negative 'deployment experiences' than parents of service members deployed to Afghanistan. Generally, mothers had more negative experiences than fathers had. Parents' greatest need for support was emotional support. Finally, attitudes towards the armed forces and its operations were more positive among: fathers who had a son deployed compared with mothers whose son was sent abroad; parents whose son or daughter was sent to a less risky mission area; parents whose child had been deployed more often; parents whose child lived at home; parents who had a more cohesive bond with their deployed son or daughter; and parents who appraised the deployment more positively.

Research question 4 (chapter 5): How do service members and partners maintain their intimate relationship during the separation (through active verbal interactions) and how does this affect reconciliation processes and evaluations of the relationship afterwards? By the use of various means of communication, service members and partners generally engage in active interactions during the separation, implying their efforts to preserve the intimate relationship despite the absence of physical contact. Although reunion usually brings an end to the intense contact by the use of letters, telephone, or e-mail, couples' levels of active verbal interactions were still fairly high afterwards. Furthermore, reconciliation after deployment clearly involved a process of adaptation, which was easier for returned service members than for their partners. Nonetheless, reconciliation generally passed off rather smoothly

and many couples believed things went back to normal rather quickly. For the majority of the couples, things were stabilized three months after reunion. Service members' levels of active verbal interactions during and after the separation attenuated difficulties harmonizing and adjusting after their return. Among partners, active verbal interactions afterwards rather than during the separation –of both themselves and the service members– affected their reconciliation processes. Among both, active communications during and after the separation positively affected their evaluations of the relationship afterwards.

Research question 5 (chapter 6): How does work-family conflict relate to service members' well-being, relationship satisfaction, and turnover intentions in the course of military-induced separations? Survey data among service members were collected before ($N = 303$), during ($N = 353$), and after ($N = 183$) the military-induced separation. The results revealed that work-family conflict has significant immediate, rather than longer-term relations with relationship satisfaction and turnover intentions. Over time, turnover intentions before the separation were the best predictor of turnover intentions afterwards, that is, service members who were already thinking about quitting before the separation were likely to do so afterwards. Nevertheless, turnover intentions have increased significantly in the course of the separation. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that levels of general well-being and relationship satisfaction decreased significantly (though not substantially) over time, while no significant changes were found in mean levels of work-family conflict. A cross-lagged relation was displayed between general well-being before the separation and relationship satisfaction afterwards, suggesting that service members who feel well before their departure are likely to end up in more satisfying relationships than service members who report poorer well-being before the separation. Interestingly, declining well-being leads to increased perceived conflict between work and family demands at a subsequent point in time, which, in turn, is associated with one's well-being within that time frame, and so on.

Generally, on the basis of the findings of the studies, it can be concluded that work affects family in the course of military deployments to a certain, though generally not problematical degree. On the whole, military families seem to adapt quite well to military-induced separations. The studies also reveal that the adaptation (or maladaptation) of families can not be explained by merely one single factor, rather it is the interrelations between various factors. Notably, service members reported higher levels of work-family conflict than partners did. Moreover, this study evinced that perceptions of work-family conflict are associated with consequences for the individual, the family, and the work domain.

Although this research was not designed to formulate solutions, some patterns and trends in families' experiences in the course of military deployments come to the fore, on the basis of which a number of noteworthy points of interest can be formulated (described in more detail in chapter 7). These relate to, among other things, fostering balance between work and family life (e.g., creating work environments, cultures, and interventions aimed at allowing individuals to adequately apply resources in the work and family domain, thereby minimizing tensions between the work and family demands), fostering and facilitating possibilities of informal social networking among military families (centered upon informal social networks of military families with a rather continuous character), and fostering positive family relationships.

To conclude, military-induced separations touch upon different aspects of family life, as well as different members of the family. Understanding military families' adaptations and experiences and the underlying processes in the course of military-induced separations –from a multidisciplinary perspective– contributes to grasp how the demands of work and family life can be managed successfully, which in turn helps maintaining well-functioning families *and* organizations.

Samenvatting (summary in Dutch)

De relatie tussen werk en familielevens wordt lang erkend en in veel huidige Westerse samenlevingen worden zowel mannen als vrouwen geconfronteerd met de uitdaging om de eisen van het werk en familielevens met elkaar te verenigen. Het is heel gangbaar dat het werk het gezinsleven beïnvloedt, maar dit is bovenal aannemelijk wanneer het werk tijdelijke scheidingen teweegbrengt. In dergelijke situaties vereist het werk namelijk onverdeelde tijd, loyaliteit en toewijding waardoor men gedurende een bepaalde tijd onbeschikbaar is voor het gezin. Het belang van onderzoek naar (militaire) gezinnen gedurende werkgerelateerde scheidingen moge daarmee overduidelijk zijn.

Vanuit een interdisciplinaire benadering, uitgaande van psychologische en sociologische theorieën over gezinsstress, veerkracht van het gezin, eenouderschap en militair sociologische perspectieven is het doel van dit onderzoek *het vergroten van kennis over hoe werkgerelateerde tijdelijke scheidingen het gezinsleven beïnvloeden, door onderzoek te verrichten naar militaire gezinnen gedurende militaire uitzendingen, de factoren die gerelateerd zijn aan de (mal-) adaptatie van gezinnen en hun onderlinge verbanden*. De onderzoeken die in dit proefschrift gepresenteerd worden belichten militaire gezinnen vanuit verschillende perspectieven: partners, kinderen, ouders van militairen, stellen en militairen. Ze behandelen verscheidene thema's, waaronder relaties, welbevinden, ouders' ervaringen, *verzoening* en overwegingen van militairen de organisatie al dan niet te verlaten. De centrale onderzoeksvraag die deze dissertatie leidt luidt:

*Hoe beïnvloeden militaire uitzendingen het gezinsleven
en hoe kan de (mal-) adaptatie van gezinsleden worden verklaard?*¹

¹ Een meer precieze vertaling van *military-induced separations* is door het militaire beroep veroorzaakte tijdelijke scheidingen. In deze Nederlandse samenvatting hanteren we de meer vrije vertaling *militaire uitzendingen*, aangezien dit in dit onderzoek de lading dekt.

Vijf onderzoeksvragen zijn geformuleerd. Elk van hen benadert een verschillend gezinsperspectief met bijbehorende onderzoeksvariabelen. Samen verschaffen deze vragen een antwoord op de centrale vraagstelling en dragen zij bij aan een veelomvattend beeld van gezinsaanpassingen gedurende militaire uitzendingen.

De onderzoeksvragen worden behandeld in de hoofdstukken 2 tot en met 6 van deze dissertatie. Daarnaast beschrijft hoofdstuk 1 een schets van de context waarin dit onderzoek plaatsvindt –inclusief verschillende trends en ontwikkelingen die invloed hebben (gehad) op de krijgsmacht, gezinnen en de relatie tussen werk en familielevens– evenals het conceptuele en technische ontwerp van het onderzoek. Hoofdstuk 7 eindigt de dissertatie met een korte beschrijving van de belangrijkste bevindingen, theoretische overwegingen, praktische implicaties, een reflectie en aandachtspunten voor toekomstig onderzoek.

Onderzoeksvraag 1 (hoofdstuk 2): Hoe houdt conflict tussen werk en familielevens verband met partners' ervaren sociale steun, welbevinden en relatietevredenheid gedurende militaire uitzendingen? Partners zijn gevolgd gedurende de uitzendingencyclus en gegevens zijn verzameld door middel van vragenlijsten op drie momenten: voor ($N = 453$), tijdens ($N = 386$) en na ($N = 235$) de uitzending. Over het algemeen ervaren partners een gemiddelde mate van verstoring van het gezinsleven als gevolg van de eisen van het militaire beroep en hierin zijn geen significante verschillen gevonden gedurende de uitzending. Verder was de mate van beschikbare sociale steun tijdens en na de uitzending significant lager dan ervoor. Over het algemeen ervaren partners voor en na de uitzending geen hogere mate van gezondheidsklachten dan individuen normaliter ervaren. De daadwerkelijke scheiding was enigszins stressvoller. De relatietevredenheid nam lichtelijk maar significant af in het verloop van de uitzending. Partners die een hogere mate van conflict tussen werk en familielevens ervaren, rapporteren een hogere mate van gezondheidsklachten (voor en tijdens) en een lagere mate van relatietevredenheid (voor en na de uitzending).

Sociale steun vertoont gunstige effecten in het verminderen van ervaren conflict tussen werk en familielevens en gezondheidsklachten en het bevorderen van relatietevredenheid. Interessant is de bevinding dat partners die voor de uitzending een hogere mate van conflict tussen werk en familielevens ervaren een vermindering in hulpbronnen tijdens de uitzending ervaren. Op basis van de resultaten van deze studie kunnen partners die zich het best aanpassen aan de uitzending worden gekenmerkt door een hogere mate van beschikbare sociale steun en een minder negatieve perceptie van een verstoring van het gezinsleven door de eisen van het beroep van de militair. De resultaten tonen namelijk aan dat hogere maten van sociale steun en lagere maten van conflict tussen werk en familielevens gunstig zijn voor partners' welbevinden en relatietevredenheid.

Onderzoeksvraag 2 (hoofdstuk 3): Hoe kunnen de ervaringen van kinderen gedurende uitzendingen worden beschreven en welke factoren voorspellen aanpassingsmoeilijkheden van kinderen tijdens de afwezigheid en na terugkomst? Gegevens over kinderen zijn verzameld onder ouders. Dit waren hoofdzakelijk de niet-uitgezonden ouders –in dit onderzoek waren dat allen moeders– maar ook de uitgezonden vaders hebben vragen over hun kinderen beantwoord. In de ogen van de moeders pasten de kinderen zich over het algemeen tamelijk snel aan en verliep de uitzending goed voor de kinderen. Wanneer er veranderingen bij de kinderen werden opgemerkt waren dit niet alleen negatieve veranderingen (zoals meer huilen, zindelijkheidsproblemen, recalcitrant of snel boos zijn), maar hadden deze ook betrekking op het hebben van meer verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel en behulpzamer en zorgzamer zijn. In een kwart van de gezinnen verliep de uitzending moeilijker voor de kinderen.

Verschillende leeftijden gaan gepaard met verschillende ervaringen (en moeilijkheden). Jongere kinderen vinden het doorgaans moeilijk de duur van de afwezigheid te bevatten aangezien zij nog geen tijdsbesef hebben en een paar weken voor hen al een eeuwigheid lijkt te duren. Oudere kinderen worden zich meer bewust van de risico's die uitzendingen met zich meebrengen, wat zich uit in angst en zorgen over de veiligheid van hun afwezige ouder. Na terugkomst pakt de grote meerderheid van de kinderen de draad snel weer op, hoewel bijna een kwart weer echt moest

wennen aan de teruggekeerde ouder en veertig procent van de moeders rapporteerde dat de kinderen bang waren dat hun vader opnieuw weg zou gaan. Verder blijkt dat het welbevinden van moeders voor en tijdens de uitzending significant samenhangt met aanpassingsmoeilijkheden van kinderen tijdens de uitzending. De mate van opvoedingsstress bij moeders tijdens de uitzending voorspelt aanpassingsmoeilijkheden van hun kinderen bij de hereniging. Deze bevindingen maken het aannemelijk dat het vermogen van niet-uitgezonden ouders om te gaan met de stressoren van uitzending de ervaringen van hun kinderen beïnvloedt. Ten slotte impliceren de bevindingen van deze studie dat hoe beter het thuisfront omgaat met de tijdelijke scheiding hoe beter militairen de uitzending ervaren.

Onderzoeksvraag 3 (hoofdstuk 4): Hoe ervaren ouders de uitzending van hun zoon of dochter met betrekking tot de ouder-kind relatie, zorgen, steunbehoeften en hoe hangen deze ervaringen samen met hun draagvlak voor de krijgsmacht en haar operaties? Gegevens zijn verzameld onder 1098 ouders wier zoon of dochter zojuist was teruggekeerd van een missie in het buitenland. Analyses van de gegevens tonen aan dat de ouders zich sterk verbonden voelen met hun uitgezonden zoon of dochter en veel ouders waren van mening dat de uitzending hun band had versterkt. Ouders zijn betrokken en bezorgd. Moeders maken zich meer zorgen dan vaders en ouders maken zich meer zorgen wanneer hun kind is uitgezonden naar een risicovoller missiegebied. Ouders die zich meer zorgen maken ervaren ook de uitzending negatiever. Ouders wier zoon of dochter was uitgezonden naar Bosnië-Herzegovina rapporteerden meer positieve en minder negatieve 'uitzendervaringen' dan ouders van militairen die waren uitgezonden naar Afghanistan. Over het algemeen hadden moeders meer negatieve ervaringen dan vaders. De grootste steunbehoefte van ouders was emotionele steun. Ten slotte, de houding ten opzichte van de krijgsmacht en haar operaties was positiever bij: vaders met een uitgezonden zoon in vergelijking met moeders met een uitgezonden zoon; ouders wier zoon of dochter was uitgezonden naar een minder risicovol missiegebied; ouders wier kind vaker is uitgezonden; ouders wier kind thuiswonend is; ouders die een sterkere band hebben met hun uitgezonden zoon of dochter; en ouders die de uitzending positiever hadden ervaren.

Onderzoeksvraag 4 (hoofdstuk 5): Hoe behouden militairen en hun partners hun intieme relatie tijdens de separatie (door middel van actieve communicatie) en hoe beïnvloedt dit processen van afstemming en evaluaties van de relatie na de hereniging? Door gebruik van verschillende communicatiemiddelen onderhouden militairen en hun partners over het algemeen intensief contact tijdens de tijdelijke scheiding, wat duidt op hun inspanningen om de relatie goed te houden ondanks de afwezigheid van fysiek contact. Hoewel de hereniging doorgaans een einde brengt aan het intense contact door brieven, telefonie, of e-mail, bleven stellen ook na de uitzending actief met elkaar communiceren. Verder blijkt dat de *verzoening* na de uitzending duidelijk een proces is van aanpassen, wat gemakkelijker verliep voor teruggekeerde militairen dan voor hun partners. Desalniettemin blijkt dit over het algemeen tamelijk vloeiend te verlopen en zijn veel stellen van mening dat zij de draad weer snel hebben opgepakt. Voor de grote meerderheid van de stellen was alles drie maanden na de hereniging weer gestabiliseerd. De mate waarin militairen actief communiceerden met hun partners tijdens en na de uitzending vergemakkelijkte het harmoniseren en aanpassen na terugkomst. Voor partners blijkt intensief contact *na* de uitzending in plaats van tijdens –van zowel henzelf als de militairen– het verzoeningsproces te beïnvloeden. Voor beiden heeft actieve communicatie tijdens en na de uitzending een positief effect op hun evaluaties van de relatie na de hereniging.

Onderzoeksvraag 5 (hoofdstuk 6): Hoe houdt conflict tussen werk en familielevens verband met het welbevinden van militairen, relatietevredenheid en overwegingen de organisatie te verlaten in het verloop van militaire uitzendingen? Gegevens onder militairen zijn verzameld door middel van vragenlijsten voor ($N = 303$), tijdens ($N = 353$) en na ($N = 183$) de uitzending. Conflict tussen werk en familielevens blijkt – binnen tijdstmomenten en niet op langere termijn– significant samen te hangen met relatietevredenheid en overwegingen de organisatie te verlaten. Overwegingen de organisatie te verlaten voor de uitzending zijn de beste voorspeller van overwegingen de organisatie te verlaten na terugkomst, dus wanneer militairen vooraf al die intentie hebben zullen zij dat zeer waarschijnlijk na de uitzending ook hebben. Toch zijn intenties om de organisatie te verlaten significant toegenomen gedurende de uitzendperiode. Verder blijkt dat algemeen welbevinden en relatietevredenheid (enigszins, maar toch significant) zijn afgenomen, terwijl de mate van ervaren conflict

tussen werk en familielevens geen significante verschillen vertoont gedurende de uitzending. Algemeen welbevinden voor de uitzending blijkt samen te hangen met relatietevredenheid na. Dit impliceert dat militairen die zich beter voelen voor vertrek meer tevreden zijn over hun relatie na terugkomst dan militairen die minder lekker in hun vel zitten voorafgaand aan de uitzending. Een interessante bevinding is dat verminderd welbevinden leidt tot een toename in ervaren conflict tussen werk en familielevens op een volgend moment in de tijd, wat weer samenhangt met verminderd welbevinden op dat moment en zo verder.

Over het algemeen kan op basis van de onderzoeksresultaten geconcludeerd worden dat gedurende militaire uitzendingen het werk in enige, maar doorgaans niet problematische mate het gezinsleven beïnvloedt. Over het geheel blijken militaire gezinnen zich behoorlijk goed aan te passen aan de door het militaire beroep veroorzaakte tijdelijke scheidingen. De onderzoeken tonen tevens aan dat niet één enkele factor de adaptatie (of maladaptatie) van gezinnen beïnvloedt maar dat het een samenhang is van verschillende factoren. Het is vermeldenswaardig dat militairen significant hogere maten van conflict tussen werk en familielevens rapporteren dan partners. Verder toont dit onderzoek duidelijk aan dat percepties van werk-familie conflict gevolgen hebben voor het individu, het gezin en het werk.

Hoewel dit onderzoek niet ontworpen is om oplossingen te formuleren, maakt het patronen en trends in ervaringen van gezinnen gedurende militaire uitzendingen inzichtelijk, op basis waarvan een aantal noemenswaardige aandachtspunten geformuleerd kan worden (welke uitgebreider worden beschreven in hoofdstuk 7). Deze hebben onder meer betrekking op het bevorderen van een balans tussen werk en gezinsleven (bijvoorbeeld door het creëren van werkomgevingen, culturen en interventies die streven naar een adequate inzet van middelen in het werk en gezinsdomein, waarbij spanningen tussen de eisen van het werk en gezin worden geminimaliseerd), het bevorderen en faciliteren van mogelijkheden tot informeel netwerken tussen militaire gezinnen onderling (gericht op informele sociale netwerken van militaire gezinnen met een continu karakter) en het bevorderen van positieve familierelaties.

Afsluitend kan gesteld worden dat door het militaire beroep veroorzaakte tijdelijke scheidingen effect hebben op verschillende aspecten van het gezinsleven en op verschillende gezinsleden. Kennis betreffende de adaptatie en ervaringen van militaire gezinnen en de onderliggende processen –vanuit een multidisciplinair perspectief– helpt te begrijpen hoe de eisen van het werk en gezinsleven succesvol kunnen worden gemanaged, wat bijdraagt aan het behouden van goed functionerende gezinnen *en* organisaties.

About the author

Manon Andres was born on the 4th of November 1980 in Breda, the Netherlands. She obtained a Bachelor degree in Human Resource Management at Avans College in Breda and a Master degree in Organisation Science at Tilburg University. After graduating in 2005, she started this PhD research project on military families in the course of military deployments, of which the dissertation lies in front of you. Being employed by the Ministry of Defense and attached to Tilburg University, her workplace was at the Netherlands Defense Academy in Breda, where Prof. dr. Joseph Soeters (Tilburg University and Netherlands Defense Academy) and dr. René Moelker (Netherlands Defense Academy) supervised the research project. Among other topics, the study was directed at family life, work and family conflict, well-being, social support, quality of family relationships, children's reactions to parent-child separation and reunion, and parents' experiences in the course of their sons' or daughters' deployments. Apart from this research project, she joined in with dr. René Moelker in an international comparative study regarding the organization of family support, supervised students in writing a Bachelor or Master thesis, and has done some teaching.