



# Parentification in military families: Overlapping constructs and theoretical explorations in family, clinical, and military psychology



Lisa M. Hooper<sup>\*</sup>, Heather M. Moore<sup>1</sup>, Annie K. Smith<sup>2</sup>

Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology, and Counseling, The University of Alabama, Box 870231, 315 B Graves Hall, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487, United States

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 22 October 2012

Received in revised form 1 February 2014

Accepted 4 February 2014

Available online 12 February 2014

### Keywords:

Parentification

Military youth

Military families

Family functioning

Psychopathology

Resiliency

## ABSTRACT

This article reviews select literature that describes unique aspects of the challenges, roles, and responsibilities that family members may face as a result of the military culture and military family system. A particular systemic construct and clinical process that may be especially relevant to military families is *parentification*. Parentification has long been linked with negative outcomes investigated in the family and clinical psychology literature. This article summarizes the overlap in constructs and theoretical frameworks related to parentification, which appear in the family and clinical psychology literature that may have transportability to the youth and family military literature base. Directions for future family, clinical, and military psychology research directed toward youth and family functioning are proffered.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

## 1. Introduction

Interest in the United States military family has waxed and waned over the last century, specific attention has been informed by the scope and activities of military operations at any given point in time (Everson & Figley, 2011; Hall, 2008; Willerton, Wadsworth, & Riggs, 2011). The two world wars, the Vietnam conflict, and the first Gulf War and its associated pernicious aftereffects have received much attention from the scientific community, whereas the conflicts associated with Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have only recently received attention from researchers, practitioners, and scholars (e.g., Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2011; Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008; Huebner, Mancini, Wilcox, Grass, & Grass, 2007). Although studies have explored the impact of combat deployment on the mental and physical health of individual military members and sometimes that of their spouses or partners, little research exists with regard to the complex psychological aftereffects of military service, and thereby of military culture, on family functioning, family wellness, and family-related pathological outcomes (American Psychological Association Presidential Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families, and Service Members [APA], 2007; Everson & Figley, 2011; Harrison & Albanese, 2012). In particular,

military children—an understudied population—may experience unique and diverse stressors and outcomes beyond those experienced by their civilian counterparts (White, De Burgh, Fear, & Iversen, 2011). Understanding the positive and negative sequelae of war and of life in a military context is a complicated, multilayered challenge. Yet there is a critical need to understand how best to culturally tailor interventions and treatments—that is, consistent with the culture of the military family and military support systems—that are directed toward the specific short- and long-term needs of military children and their families.

The specific psychology and ecology of the military family lack consensus because the clinical and empirical research remains sparse (Chandra et al., 2011; Harrison & Albanese, 2012). Of particular concern for policy makers is how periodic and extended separation from and absence of a parent as a result of deployment—and even death—affects the health, development, and functioning of military children and families (APA, 2007). The literature base of general family and clinical psychology is rich with descriptions of individual-, family-, and contextual-level factors that affect the behaviors, roles, and responsibilities of children, including the short- and long-term effects on these children and on the adults they become (Harrison & Albanese, 2012; Hooper, 2013; Hooper, DeCoster, White, & Voltz, 2011). This body of literature includes clinical and theoretical reviews, empirical investigations, and randomized clinical trials. Some of the findings accumulated in this expansive body of literature may be translatable to military families and may have relevance for a better understanding of their psychology, ecology, and culture.

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 205 348 5611; fax: +1 205 348 5487.

E-mail address: [lhooper@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:lhooper@bamaed.ua.edu) (L.M. Hooper).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +1 205 348 5611.

<sup>2</sup> Tel.: +1 205 348 8087.

Because an increasing number of individuals on active duty are supporting families with children, the military has been compelled to consider the significant impact that military service has on the family as a whole (Gilreath et al., 2013; Huebner et al., 2010; Lester et al., 2011). For example, how do military families function in the absence of their military member (or members, in some cases)? How do they cope with the military member's return, especially when that individual is physically or psychologically injured? How individuals function within families, and how families in turn function within the military system, are increasingly important considerations for today's military and for those who are in a position to assist these families during difficult times. The significant changes in the demographic composition and family dynamics of military forces also underscore the importance of military family functioning and its subsequent impact on the military service member's performance, both at home and particularly in combat situations abroad (Lester et al., 2011). Though family functioning has long been studied as a precursor to child and adolescent outcomes, little is known about how the context of the military service system and culture affects family functioning, and about how the stressors and adversity associated with military service interact with the family system and contribute to child and adolescent outcomes (e.g., family discord, child maltreatment, family violence, and interpersonal violence; Everson & Figley, 2011). These changing dynamics raise ample concern and call for research to consolidate what is known about family systems with what is now emerging in the military literature.

To fill a gap in the military and youth literature, this article reviews the literature that has described the unique aspects of the military family system; the challenges, roles, and responsibilities that family members may face as a result of the military culture and military family system; and some constructs and processes described in the family and clinical psychology literature that may have particular relevance for military psychology practitioners and researchers. Although most of the literature has been informed by qualitative investigations, the emergent themes in the military clinical and research base may overlap with the themes evidenced in the family and clinical psychology literature.

Specifically, parentification is a particular construct and clinical process that has been discussed and investigated in the family and clinical psychology literature (Champion et al., 2009; Fitzgerald et al., 2008; Hooper, L'Abate, Sweeney, Gianesini, & Jankowski, 2014; Hooper et al., 2011; Locke & Newcomb, 2004). Parentification, although implicitly linked, is being discussed in the context of military families with greater frequency than in the past. This article attempts to extract, assemble, and make explicit this body of investigations—albeit qualitative in nature—that has appeared in the literature.

This article examines the parentification construct for likely relevance and links to numerous processes and outcomes related to war, family systems and functioning in a military context, and the military culture (Harkness, 1993; Harrison & Albanese, 2012; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). In addition, this article elucidates how constructs and theoretical frameworks that appear in the military literature overlap with constructs and theoretical frameworks that appear in the family and clinical psychology literature.

## 2. Parentification

Parentification is a ubiquitous phenomenon that occurs in families to varying degrees, with both positive and negative consequences (Byng-Hall, 2008; Earley & Cushway, 2002; East, 2010; Hooper, 2007b; Hooper, Marotta, & Lanthier, 2008; Jankowski, Hooper, Sandage, & Hannah, 2013; Kam, 2011). Parentification has been defined as a distortion of, disturbance in, or lack of appropriate boundaries between family subsystems, resulting in a functional or emotional role reversal in which the child takes on adult responsibilities that are inappropriate for his or her developmental stage and age (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Hooper, 2012; Jurkovic, 1997; Kerig, 2005). In addition to the diffusion

of boundaries, the hierarchical structure is often inverted, such that the children compose the executive subsystem, where the power exists and family decisions take place (Hooper, Doehler, Wallace, & Hannah, 2011; Kerig, 2005).

The term *parentification* was introduced by family systems theorists Minuchin, Montalvo, Guerney, Rosman, and Schumer (1967), who asserted that in the process of parentification, "the parent(s) relinquishes executive functions by delegation of instrumental roles to a parental child or by total abandonment of the family psychologically and/or physically" (p. 219). Other terms used interchangeably with *parentification* have included *adultification* (Burton, 2007), *spousification* (Sroufe & Ward, 1980), *role reversal* (Macfie, McElwain, Houts, & Cox, 2005), *adultoids* (Galambos & Tilton-Weaver, 2000; Greenberger & Steinberg, 1986), *little parent* (Byng-Hall, 2008), *mature minor* (Garber, 2011), and *young carers* or *young caregivers* (Aldridge & Becker, 1993; Siskowski, 2006). Garber (2011) provided a comprehensive review of how some of these terms may be defined, operationalized, and differentiated.

Two types of parentification are generally described in the literature (Jurkovic, 1997; Minuchin et al., 1967). These are *emotional parentification*, when a child attempts to fill an emotional or psychological void for a parent or siblings, and *instrumental parentification*, when a child attempts to engage in behaviors and activities to assist a parent or siblings. Taken together, the behaviors are typically directed toward reducing anxiety and increasing stability in the family system (Hooper, 2007b). Emotional parentification appears to be the more deleterious of the two types of parentification, representing a maladaptive solution to family or parental anxiety and a destructive force for the child and for the adult he or she becomes (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Chase, 1999; Hooper et al., 2011; Minuchin et al., 1967). The effects of parentification in childhood can be persistent throughout the lifespan and can span multiple generations (Chase, 1999; Hooper et al., 2011). Recently researchers and practitioners have expanded the understanding of the implications of parentification based on cultural or social determinants, including the cultural context in which parentification takes place. For example, new culturally relevant considerations related to the roles and responsibilities of parentified youth include language brokering, prolonged and multiple military deployments, and gender-focused considerations (East, 2010; Hooper, 2012; Kam, 2011; Maysseless & Scharf, 2009; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009).

Given the cultural context in which military families are embedded, investigations related to deployment-derived parentification should be considered (Harrison & Albanese, 2012). This family systems construct is particularly relevant to military families due to the stress, adversity, and trauma usually associated with military deployment and the potential psychological burden experienced by military partners and children (Harkness, 1993). Balanced examinations that look at a range of antecedents and outcomes—the positive and negative aftereffects recently reported in the family and clinical psychology literature—should be considered in the context of military families as well (Smyth, Cass, & Hill, 2011).

In the sections that follow, we first briefly describe the military family system, contexts, and roles that may lead to parentification. We then provide an overview of the method we used to select the articles included in this review. Finally, we suggest directions for future research.

## 3. Military family system

Military families face many of the same daily stressors that civilian families do, including concerns about childcare, education, extended family, parenting, and career choices. Nevertheless, military families also face unique stressors and challenges in daily living beyond those that civilian families face (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003; Lester et al., 2011). Military families have less control over their lives—especially where they live, whom they live near, and what schools their children attend. Military families are expected to move repeatedly,

adjust quickly, and live courageously to support their service member (McFarlane, 2009). The culture or way of life of those in the military is therefore considered to be far different from the neighborhood and community culture of their civilian counterparts (Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009). The military maintains a collective value and belief system, with a focus on the needs of the military system, the mission, and group cohesion rather than on any individual achievements (Warchal, West, Graham, Gerke, & Warchal, 2011). Frequently the goals and accomplishments of the military mission take precedence over all else, even family.

A number of systemic and contextual factors such as family composition, family functioning, family structure, and deployment characteristics (e.g., length of deployment, number of deployments, and type of deployment) appear to be important in understanding the experiences and stressors that military families and children face (Bowen & Martin, 2011). Although members of military families feel specific normative pressures of military life directly, many of the pressures exerted on military families are hypothesized to occur indirectly, through the physical, psychological, and emotional effects on the military service member (Palmer, 2008). For those who remain at home, fear, insecurity, concerns about safety, overwhelming burden, financial hardship, and confusion about family roles sometimes take an extraordinary toll on spouses (or partners) and children alike (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; Lester & Bursch, 2011; Willerton et al., 2011).

Several factors appear to have a significant impact on military families. For example, the number, frequency, and length of deployments; single- and dual-military careers in a family; and reserve status all can inform family and individual functioning. This literature review considers important factors that may impinge upon the military family system and its members, especially the extent to which these factors affect both positive and negative outcomes and a common process seen in family systems: parentification.

### 3.1. Military deployment

Today's military families face the daunting reality of military life, particularly frequent and extended deployments and separations. Deployment is defined as a "long-term assignment, usually to a combat or war zone" (Hall, 2008, p. 289). Given the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, military personnel regularly deploy to violent locations, where men and women face treacherous daily living conditions, situations of imminent danger, and sometimes death (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, et al., 2010; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011). Many return to their families as changed individuals, frequently suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), emotional detachment, and other injuries both visible and invisible (Gorman, Fitzgerald, & Blow, 2010; Harkness, 1993). In particular, invisible injuries may include complex emotional problems related to the experience of extreme violence, loss and grief, captivity and torture, and substance abuse. These invisible injuries, along with traumatic brain injury or hearing loss, may be less apparent than physical injuries such as amputation, spinal cord injury, and severe burns (Cozza & Guimond, 2011; McFarlane, 2009; Warchal et al., 2011).

Both the absence of a military parent and the ambiguity of his or her presence engender numerous challenges for families and children. This is particularly true for older children, who have the capacity to understand the dangers and negative aftereffects of war (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011) as well as the ability to help provide daily care for a parent with medical needs, physical challenges, or chronic medical conditions (Cozza & Guimond, 2011).

The deployment of a family member who is not the parent may also have deleterious effects on the family system and family functioning. Rarely addressed in the literature is the family whose child (e.g., the oldest) leaves for military service (Rodriguez & Margolin, 2011). These families also suffer a void that may affect family functioning and psychosocial adjustment. The impact of military-induced separation for these

families often depends upon the roles that older children play in the family's functioning and upon the emotional stability of the parent(s) in relation to the void. When the deployed service member is an older sibling, younger siblings may experience disruptions similar to those experienced when a parent leaves the family unit. Research has supported the occurrence of role ambiguity and boundary renegotiation among military families when a parent is deployed, according to Rodriguez and Margolin (2011), but theories of stress spillover and ambiguous loss have not been applied to the family of origin when a single nonparental service member such as a sibling is deployed, creating a role vacancy.

In their qualitative study using undergraduate students who experienced the deployment of a sibling ( $N = 8$ ; 50% male), Rodriguez and Margolin (2011) examined open-ended narratives to identify specific themes related to shifts in family roles, responsibilities, and relationships, as well as changes in how others (e.g., community members) perceive the service member or the family after deployment. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 22 years, including four White Americans, one Asian American, one Black American, one Hispanic American, and one multi-ethnic individual. Four participants described the process of shifting roles when the service member leaves the family system, including their own need to protect the parents emotionally to keep them from being lonely or sad. Although the implications of this research are based on a small sample, family members can be deeply affected by the absence of a sibling or older child, particularly when these absences leave gaps in the family system that shift roles and responsibilities to younger siblings, who may not be emotionally or developmentally ready for these roles (Rodriguez & Margolin, 2011).

### 3.2. Single-parent, female soldier, and dual-career military families

Single parents, female soldiers, and dual-career families (with both parents on active duty) are found in a higher percentage of military families than ever before (Kelley, Doane, & Pearson, 2011; Lester et al., 2011). Not all military families are equipped to handle the strain and changing roles and responsibilities that come with deployment of a parent. Family dynamics and individual family member's psychological health and coping styles that exist before deployment play a major role in how families adjust before, during, and after the separation (Amen, Jellen, Merves, & Lee, 1988; Bowen & Martin, 2011). The remaining parent or caregiver's ability to cope with new responsibilities, as well as any emotional instability of their children, contributes significantly to the functional adjustment of the family and the psychological adjustment of the children (Riggs & Riggs, 2011).

The recent increase in the number of women in the military, particularly those with combat-related duties, has heightened the concern about the impact of military service on families and their children. Military women who are also mothers struggle to balance their military service and motherhood. They face their own unique challenges when the military requires them to be away from their children for extended periods (Drummet et al., 2003; Kelley et al., 2011), although other deployed service members do not always leave a mother with children at home.

Dual-career families, in which both parents are in the military, represent another increasing percentage of U.S. military families (Everson & Figley, 2011; Hall, 2008). Dual-career families have their own set of difficulties in responding to military duties. For example, parents who both deploy at the same time, like single parents who deploy, must find temporary caregivers for their children, sometimes on short notice. These substitute caregivers may not understand the emotional needs of the children, may not have the same routines or family values, and may have their own physical or emotional limitations. When military children must move to the home of a substitute guardian, they can be further isolated from familiar networks, peers, and military resources (Drummet et al., 2003).



### 3.3. Reserve forces and the military family system

The families of National Guard and Reserve Forces face additional challenges (Chandra, Martin, et al., 2010; Chandra et al., 2011; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; Faber et al., 2008). The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics (Huebner et al., 2010) estimates that National Guard and Reserve Forces contribute as much as 45% of deployed service members, even though these groups were not previously called upon in this capacity. In contrast to active-duty members, Reserve and National Guard members often do not live near military installations, do not receive daily military training, and are less likely to have established military support networks. These families are accustomed to weekend and two-week separations for training, but they are not prepared for rapid and prolonged deployment (Faber et al., 2008; Huebner et al., 2010). When these military members are deployed, their families become “military” suddenly and precipitously (Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009), while lacking the understanding and social support typically available to active-duty families living on or close to military installations. Reserve and National Guard families typically live and work in civilian communities with few other children and families who know and experience the same struggles. Many experience a reduction in family income or lose civilian jobs due to extended deployment (APA, 2007; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; Willerton et al., 2011). Mental health providers, teachers, and employers in civilian communities may also not recognize the unique situations faced by families and children of Reserve or National Guard members, and they may not understand what it means to have a family member deployed to a potentially dangerous environment.

In a pilot study of military children ( $N = 192$ ) ages 7 to 14 years ( $M = 10.4$  at baseline) and their caregivers ( $N = 192$ ), Chandra et al. (2011) examined the deployment experience of children and youth attending a military-sponsored summer camp. Participants were recruited from a summer camp program sponsored by the National Military Family Association for children with a parent either currently or previously deployed or a parent deploying in the near future. Children were assessed at three time points, and parents were surveyed at two time points, resulting in a 57% completed family pair response rate ( $n = 110$ ). National Guard and Reserve families represented nearly 39% of the final sample. Of the youth participants, 51% were boys and most were White American (83%). Among key findings, children from Reserve and National Guard families indicated less connection with other children from military families (15%, compared to 27% of children from active-duty families) and less connection to those who understand military life. For example, 27% of children from National Guard or Reserve families reported that their teacher understands what it is like to be a military child, whereas 35% children from active-duty military families thought that their teacher understands. In addition, National Guard and Reserve families reported more difficulties upon reintegration of the deployed parent (100%, compared to 55% of active-duty participants), suggesting greater levels of role confusion upon parental return. Children from National Guard and Reserve families also reported taking on more responsibilities at home than their civilian peers reported (76.9% vs. 63.1%, respectively) and more often caring for siblings (64.5% vs. 58.0%, respectively).

### 3.4. Military children and adolescents

Most military children and families exhibit resilience and function well despite the additional demands of the military culture and system (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Lester & Bursch, 2011). However, many children experience varied psychological symptomatology as a result of the strains of parental absence and imbalanced family functioning (Saltzman et al., 2011). A number of researchers have consistently demonstrated increases in childhood anxiety, depression, externalizing and internalizing behaviors, and related emotional health consequences of

parental deployment (see Chandra et al., 2011; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; Jensen, Martin, & Watanabe, 1996; Kelley et al., 2011; Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009). Yet, few researchers have examined childhood adaptation and processes that contribute to both pathology and health, wellness, and balance in family functioning. Maladaptive family functioning can take a tremendous toll on the mental health and well-being of children during childhood and into adulthood. To meet the challenges and dysfunction evinced in some military families, parents or caregivers may parentify their children and adolescents (Harkness, 1993; Harrison & Albanese, 2012).

The parentification of military children—i.e., children taking on roles and responsibilities usually reserved for adults—is of particular relevance because of its relation to both risk and resilience among disrupted military families (Harrison & Albanese, 2012; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Adjusting and readjusting to changing roles and responsibilities within the family system can be a stressful process for parents and their children, particularly adolescents, for whom the period of reunification can be especially difficult (Reed, Bell, & Edwards, 2011). During deployment, many adolescents take pride in their new adult-like roles in the family system (Lester & Bursch, 2011; Mmari, Roche, Sudhinaraset, & Blum, 2009), and they embrace their new independence and maturity (APA, 2007). In this family context, adolescents tend to take on more household responsibilities, such as additional chores and caring for siblings, and they are more inclined to assume the role of the missing parent, particularly in terms of emotional support (APA, 2007; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2010). Adolescents who possess strong coping skills may gain personal satisfaction and value from helping and caring for others, whereas those with less effective coping skills may feel overwhelmed, angry, or resentful about the additional burdens placed on them as a result of deployment (Lester & Bursch, 2011).

Adolescents also tend to struggle more with renegotiation of roles and boundaries upon the military family member's return (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, et al., 2010; Lester et al., 2010). Adolescents may have difficulty giving up new responsibilities and roles from which their self-confidence, maturity, and independence have emerged (Huebner et al., 2007). That said, the benefits that adolescents originally experience through these new, parent-like roles and responsibilities may be compounded when the deployed parent returns with an injury or disability that requires additional care from family members. In such cases, adolescents may be asked to do even more when the deployed parent returns, including caring for the injured parent (Gorman et al., 2010). When children are required to assume the role of a caregiver, such intimate contact can be confusing (Cozza & Guimond, 2011), especially for adolescents who are struggling to form their own independent identity. For military adolescents, maintaining the roles associated with a parentified youth may be equally as deleterious as stopping these roles when the deployed parent returns.

For example, in a qualitative study of military adolescents conducted by Mmari et al. (2009), results revealed that renegotiating roles and responsibilities was one of the most marked sources of stress for families, primarily during the period of reunification when the deployed parent returns. Eleven focus-group discussions were conducted with military adolescents, parents, and school personnel serving military installations in Texas, Kansas, Colorado, New York, and North Carolina. Four focus groups consisted of military adolescents ( $n = 39$ ; 61% female); three were conducted with parents of military youth ( $n = 24$ ); and four included school personnel ( $n = 35$ ). Students in the youth focus groups ranged in age from 12 to 18 years ( $M = 14.6$ ), and 89.7% had experienced a parental deployment at least once. Students were racially diverse, with 56.4% of students reporting their race as White American, 20.5% as Black American, 12.8% as Hispanic, 2.5% as Native American, and 2.5% as other.

Consistent with other studies, Mmari et al. (2009) identified several areas of stress experienced by adolescents, including worry about

the safety of the deployed parent, concerns about the emotional strain experienced by the nondeployed parent, and shifts in roles and responsibilities within the family. The acquisition of new responsibilities, such as taking care of younger siblings, appeared to lead to both positive and negative outcomes. Some youth reported feeling overburdened and missing out on extracurricular activities, but some reported feeling pride in their new adult roles, enabling them to mature more quickly and become more responsible. The challenges of a deployed parent's return seemed to pose greater stress for the nondeployed parents and adolescents alike, including challenges related to becoming reacquainted, particularly when adolescents have aged and matured considerably during the deployed parent's absence. School personnel–participants also reported observations similar to those of parents and students. For example, one participant from a school serving a naval base said:

I have military families who the parents are crisis-oriented and they have a hard time coping. But the child comes in and seems to manage the family. Again, it is an inward peace that the child is able to exude in the family setting and keep things together. When the mother is all in pieces and upset, this child comes in and says, "okay, what do I need to do," and does it. I have seen that, a "junior mother" I call it. It is very personal and individual.

[Mmari et al. (2009, p. 467)]

This observation illustrates how a child or adolescent can promote and maintain homeostasis in the military family system, just as a child or adolescent can promote and maintain homeostasis or stability in a nonmilitary family when a separation or disruption to the family system occurs (e.g., divorce). When a deployed parent returns, family life is disrupted once again, because the parent's return requires the family to readjust and renegotiate roles and responsibilities, often in the context of getting to know each other all over again. Adolescents in particular are reluctant to relinquish their new, more mature roles and may become frustrated when the returning parent fails to recognize the sacrifices that the adolescent and the family have made during the deployed parent's time away (Mmari et al., 2009; also see Bradshaw, Sudhinaraset, Mmari, & Blum, 2010; Chandra, Martin, et al., 2010; Huebner et al., 2007). Of significance, failing to recognize and appreciate the contributions of adolescents during a parent's deployment is likely to exacerbate individual- and system-level negative outcomes in military families, similar to the findings reported in nonmilitary families (Hooper, 2007b, 2012).

#### 4. The present review

The breadth of unique and significant issues that military families face is unquestioned. These systemic issues may lead to or result in the parentification of military children (Harrison & Albanese, 2012). Since the terms *parentification*, *parentified child*, and *adult child* were introduced into the developmental, clinical, and family psychology nomenclature (Boszormenyi-Nagy & Spark, 1973; Hooper, 2012; Hooper et al., 2012; Jurkovic, 1997; Kerig, 2005; Minuchin et al., 1967), families in the United States have changed. Military families have also changed (Everson & Figley, 2011; Hall, 2008; Kelley et al., 2011). Given the extant literature on military families in general, we established three aims for the present review:

- Clarify how parentification (or alternate descriptions) and its corollary outcomes have been viewed in military families (Harrison & Albanese, 2012).
- Describe the current terms used to characterize parentification in the military family systems.
- Compile the empirical literature—both quantitative and qualitative—that has examined parentification specifically (see Table 1).

## 5. Method

### 5.1. Location of reviewed literature

The purpose of the literature search was to locate the population of reviews and studies that have examined the parentification construct for likely relevance and links to processes and outcomes related to war, family systems and functioning in a military context, and the military culture. We searched the following computerized databases from their origin up to December 2012: PubMed, PsychInfo, Social Service Abstracts, ERIC, and Dissertation Abstracts. Our search procedure identified articles whose titles or abstracts paired terms related to parentification (*parentification*, *parentified*, *adultification*, *spousification*, *role reversal*, *young caregiver*, *young career*, *burdened children*, and *invisible carers*) with terms related to military families, systems, children, youth, adolescents, and culture. These procedures identified potential studies for our review. Our next step was to determine whether the identified studies fit the boundaries of our review. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- The empirical study must contain a specific focus on parentification (i.e., not just a brief mention of parentification).
- The article must be quantitative or qualitative in nature.
- The article had to be written in English.

We next examined the abstracts of the identified articles to create a "reduced candidate list" of articles, removing those that clearly did not contain data relevant to our review. We then examined the full text of these articles, finally locating 14 that fit our inclusion criteria.

Table 1 highlights a list of 14 relevant empirical studies that examine parentification in military families. The studies include empirical investigations and randomized clinical trials, which examine the challenges of extended deployment, dual-career military families, military family system, and military children and adolescents. Spanning 16 years (from 1996 to 2012), the research is organized by factors and themes and includes research designs, sample sizes, and theoretical approaches, where applicable.

## 6. Parentification and military systems

### 6.1. Parentification in military families

The military family presents a unique context for the emergence of parentification (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Charles, Stainton, & Marshall, 2009; Gorman et al., 2010; Warchal et al., 2011). War-induced separations present both positive and negative challenges and outcomes for families and children (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Harrison & Albanese, 2012; Lester & Bursch, 2011; Palmer, 2008), and they test the psychological, physical, social, and economic coping mechanisms that can increase or reduce the effects of parentification in children.

### 6.2. Parentification in the military literature: terms and definitions

Accelerated maturation, or "growing up too fast," among military children is not a new consideration for military family scholars. In 1988 Amen and colleagues described particular feelings and subsequent behaviors of children at various ages in response to the absence of a military parent. Preschool children may experience feelings of guilt about their mother's sadness and in turn "attempt to care for the mom," while adolescents may "feel like the man of the house [or] feel like mom's companion" (Amen et al., 1988, p. 443).

More recently, scholars have used similar phrases and terms to describe child and adolescent responses to parental absence due to military service. For example, Lester and Bursch (2011) referred to the "man in the family" in relation to the sense of responsibility assumed by boys (also see Huebner et al., 2007, 2010). Other terms such as *confidant* or *emotional partner* (Chandra, Martin, et al., 2010; Drummet

**Table 1**  
Empirical studies examining parentification in military families.

Author(s)	Year	Title	Research design and sample size	Theoretical approach	Overlapping terms & constructs
Bradshaw, C. P., Sudhinaraset, M., Mmari, K., & Blum, R. W.	2010	School transitions among military adolescents: A qualitative study of stress and coping	Qualitative study using focus groups ( $N = 93$ )	Family stress theory	Parentification; growing up too fast; emotional and social maturity
Chandra, A., Burns, R. M., Tanielian, T. & Jaycox, L. H.	2011	Understanding the deployment experience for children and youth from military families	Quantitative study using child and caregiver reports at multiple time points ( $N = 110$ pairs)	Emotional cycle of deployment for families framework; family stress theory	Role confusion; more responsibility at home; caring for siblings; demonstration of maturity
Chandra, A., Lara-Cinisomo, S., Jaycox, L. H., Tanielian, T., Burns, R. M., Ruder, T., & Han, B.	2010	Children on the homefront: The experience of children from military families	Quantitative study using telephone interviewing with children and nondeployed care givers ( $N = 1507$ )	None	Role shifting; role acquisition
Chandra, A., Martin, L. T., Hawkins, S. A., & Richardson, A.	2010	The impact of parental deployment on child social and emotional functioning: Perspectives of school staff	Qualitative study using focus groups and semistructured interviews of school personnel ( $N = 148$ )	None	Increased home responsibilities; co-parent; emotional partners; supporting the caregiver
Faber, A. J., Willerton, E., Clymer, S. R., MacDermid, S. M., & Weiss, H. M.	2008	Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime	Qualitative, longitudinal study using interviews at seven time points ( $N = 34$ )	Ambiguous loss theory	Boundary ambiguity; distribution of family roles
Harrison, D., & Albanese, P.	2012	The "parentification" phenomenon as applied to adolescents living through parental military deployments	Qualitative study using data from 61 semistructured interviews conducted ( $N = 61$ )	Ambiguous loss theory	Adult roles; parentification
Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Wade, K. E., McElhaney, S. J., Wiles, B. B., Butler VI, J. L., & Ford, J. L.	2010	Resilience and vulnerability: The deployment experiences of youth in military families	Qualitative study using focus group interviews with youth ( $N = 85$ )	Double ABC-X model of adjustment and adaptation	Parental or parenting roles; role strain; assumption of adult roles
Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Wilcox, R. M., Grass, S. R., & Grass, G. A.	2007	Parental deployment and youth in military families: Exploring uncertainty and ambiguous loss	Qualitative study using focus groups ( $N = 107$ )	Ambiguous loss theory; double ABC-X framework	Ambiguous presence; ambiguous absence; boundary ambiguity; shifting roles and responsibilities; child as "man of the house"
Jensen, P. S., Martin, D., & Watanabe, H.	1996	Children's response to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm	Quantitative study using self-report data from children and remaining caregiver ( $N = 180$ )	None	Psychological stress, anxiety, and depression
Kelley, M. L., Doane, A. N., & Pearson, M. R.	2011	Single military mothers in the new millennium: Stresses, supports, and effects of deployment	Quantitative study using two time-points of self-report data from deploying and nondeploying mothers ( $N = 154$ )	None	Psychological adjustment
Lester, Peterson, K., Reeves, K., Knauss, L., Glover, D., Mogil, C., Beardslee, W.	2010	The long war and parental combat deployment: Effects on military children and at-home spouses	Quantitative study using computer-assisted interviewing with parents and children ( $N = 500$ )	None	Psychological symptomatology
Mmari, K., Roche, K. M., Sudhinaraset, M., & Blum, R.	2009	When a parent goes off to war	Qualitative study using focus groups with students, parents, and school personnel ( $N = 98$ )	None	New roles and responsibilities; role redistribution
Reed, S. C., Bell, J. F., Edwards, T. C.	2011	Adolescent well-being in Washington state military families	Quantitative, cross-sectional study using Washington State 2008 Healthy Youth Survey ( $N = 10,606$ )	None	Role responsibility; family role renegotiation
Rodriguez, A. J., & Margolin, G.	2011	Siblings of military service members: A qualitative exploration of individual and family systems reactions	Qualitative study using verbal, interviewer-generated, open-ended narratives ( $N = 8$ )	Stress spillover; ambiguous loss theory	Role shift; role ambiguity; boundary redefinition; role vacancy

et al., 2003; Warchal et al., 2011), *junior mother* (Mmari et al., 2009), and *young carers* (Charles et al., 2009) are also used. However, the military literature lacks consistency and consensus in relation to the concepts traditionally used to describe parentification. Other terms proffered by the military literature to describe parentification include *role reversal*, *role ambiguity*, *role vacancy*, and *role shifting*. More specifically, although the concepts of role reversal, role ambiguity, role vacancy, and role shifting are typically discussed within the context of military families (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, et al., 2010; Chawla & Solinas-Saunders, 2011; Huebner et al., 2010; McFarlane, 2009; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Rodriguez & Margolin, 2011), these terms are loosely defined, not thoughtfully examined or measured in empirical studies.

Until very recently, military research scholars rarely used the term *parentification* to describe the assumption of parental roles by children, though several have begun to connect the construct to military family research (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Charles et al., 2009; Gorman et al., 2010; Jacobvitz, Riggs, & Johnson, 1999; Warchal et al., 2011). In a qualitative study related to school transitions among military adolescents, Bradshaw et al. (2010) used the terms *accelerated maturation* and *parentification* to describe children's management of adult emotions and responsibilities, as reported by school personnel and parents.

In another recent study, Harrison and Albanese (2012) described the differential effects of parentification on adolescents ( $N = 61$ ) based on gender, the quality of their relationships with their parents who were not deployed, and the extent to which their schools and school staff recognized the difficulties that military families and youth experience. In Harrison and Albanese's qualitative study, females reported more severe and extensive effects of parentification than their male adolescent counterparts did. Females described their engaging in a range of instrumental and emotional activities often described in the parentification literature. Many participants from the self-selected, convenience sample of primarily White American adolescents—both female and male—also suggested that the school staff were uninformed about and insensitive to the unique needs of students who had family members in the military. Significantly, the participants contended that school staff were inflexible and minimized the plight of adolescents who were experiencing short- and long-term parentification and the associated aftereffects. Finally, in Harrison and Albanese's study, and consistent with the theoretical military literature, participants described the emotional impact of loss related to both the parent who was present and the parent who was deployed. That is, the adolescents described losses related both to the deployed parent who is physically absent and to the nondeployed parent who is emotionally absent but physically present.

This form of early or accelerated maturation can significantly affect healthy child development, psychological health or distress, and emotional functioning, in terms of contributing both to resiliency (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Gorman et al., 2010; Hooper, 2007b; Hooper et al., 2008) as well as to psychopathology (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Hooper et al., 2011; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). The military literature simply describes these concepts as taking on adult roles (Drummet et al., 2003; Mmari et al., 2009) or assuming more responsibilities at home (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; Lester et al., 2011; Reed et al., 2011).

Children and adolescents of deployed parents may contribute to the family's functioning by caring for siblings (Chandra et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2010) or by taking on other caregiving routines not typically assigned to children (Cozza & Guimond, 2011; Gorman et al., 2010; Saltzman et al., 2011). Drummet et al. (2003) described the nondeployed parent's overdependence on his or her children in situations where other support networks are minimal, causing a child to assume an adult role as confidant (also see Warchal et al., 2011). *Co-parent* is another term used to describe a child who assumes significant aspects of the family functioning.

Chandra, Martin, et al. (2010) used terms such as *emotional partner* and *co-parent* when discussing the results of their qualitative study using focus groups and semistructured interviews with teachers,

counselors, and administrative staff. To examine the impact of parental deployment on child social and emotional functioning, Chandra and colleagues conducted 24 focus groups in 12 schools ( $N = 148$  staff) serving two Army installations in two different regions of the country, including two school districts per installation. Schools included elementary, middle, and high schools, with two focus groups per school: one for teachers and one for counselors. Participants who were interviewed included eight school counselors, two principals, two teachers, and four district-level staff members. Of these participants, eight worked in elementary schools, one at a junior high, and two at senior high schools. Participants included personnel from schools in 11 different states, including California, New York, South Carolina, and Minnesota. No other demographic information was provided.

Chandra, Martin, et al. (2010) found that school personnel perceived many children and families to be coping well with parental deployment. However, school personnel also perceived a significant number of children to be struggling with a range of deployment-related difficulties, which had an impact on school performance and other areas of functioning. Consistent with the risks of parentification, teachers reported that some children could not do their homework because they were too busy doing chores. One teacher described a young student who had to get her siblings up for school, feed them breakfast, dress them, and get them and their backpacks ready, all before she could get herself ready for school. By the time she arrived at school, the student would sometimes say that she was already too tired to pay attention or do her work in class. Teachers also reported that many of their students became emotional partners to their nondeployed parent, which the teachers found to be an inappropriate burden on their lives (Chandra, Martin, et al., 2010). These increased or age-inappropriate behaviors, roles, and responsibilities have long been described in the family psychology literature and are termed *parentification*.

### 6.3. Parentification in the military literature: the process

#### 6.3.1. Boundary ambiguity

Similar to the concept of role ambiguity, boundary ambiguity is a concept used to address the process of parentification within military families. Stemming from Boss's (2004) theory of ambiguous loss, *boundary ambiguity* has been described as a situation in which a parent is physically absent but emotionally present, or emotionally absent but physically present (Faber et al., 2008). Family boundaries identify who has proximity to whom, who plays what roles in the family, and the extent to which they play those roles (Drummet et al., 2003). In the context of the military family, boundary ambiguity can cause confusion as families adjust and readjust to roles and responsibilities when members temporarily enter and exit the family system (Chawla & Solinas-Saunders, 2011; Rodriguez & Margolin, 2011).

Faber et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study using seven waves of interviews with individuals on active duty and civilian members of military Reserve families. The researchers sought to examine the longitudinal trajectory of ambiguous loss, as well as how and by what means or methods these families cope with ambiguous loss over time. Participants included both Reserve members ( $n = 16$ ; 14 male and 2 female) and family members ( $n = 18$ ), such as a spouse, significant other, or parent. All participants were recruited from the same Army Reserve unit, with 119 members deployed to Iraq for 15 months, using a maximum variation sampling strategy. The average age of Reserve member participants was 29 years ( $SD = 8.7$ ), with 87% being White American and the rest being Black American. Of the Reserve members, 69% were married or cohabitating, 12% were separated, and 19% were single; 56% had children. The average age of family member participants was 38 years ( $SD = 12.5$ ), with 89% being White American and 11% Black American. The total sample included 10 matched soldier-spouse pairs, four matched soldier-parent pairs, two unmatched reservists, and two unmatched family members.



In their study, Faber et al. (2008) found that results were consistent with role and boundary ambiguity. Spouses reported having difficulty taking on the roles and responsibilities of the deployed family member, speculating about what that person would do or decide, and trying to keep the reservist at least partially engaged in his or her role and family decision making. For the nondeployed family member at home, the lack of information and communication leads to confusion, in relation to both a decision at hand and the acceptance of decisions when the reservist returned home. The results indicated that as reunion approaches, boundary ambiguity shifts from anxiety about household management to worries about reunion, such as how the returning reservist will rejoin the family system and how the reservist's personality or behavior might have changed, making redistribution of roles and responsibilities difficult.

Warchal et al. (2011) described boundaries as the rules and regulations that distinguish the family system from other external systems and define the family subsystems within. When these lines are blurred, triangulation can occur whereby a child, or even the military itself, becomes a third party in the couple's subsystem. For military families, boundaries are often blurred when members deploy but maintain some degree of presence through communication, attempting or not attempting to play their respective roles from afar (Huebner et al., 2007; Warchal et al., 2011). Role confusion may also result from boundary ambiguity when a member returns from combat. Families who have resolved the ambiguity of roles among those left behind may experience significant stress and confusion when the family member is reintegrated and attempts to reestablish his or her roles as they existed prior to deployment (Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009; McFarlane, 2009). Family members who have assumed new duties—such as a parentified child—may in turn be reluctant to relinquish their own new roles (Drummet et al., 2003), and frustrations may mount as family members begin to accept the impossibility of resuming life as it was prior to deployment (Faber et al., 2008). In the family and clinical psychology literature, the strength and type of boundaries evinced in the family system have long been linked to family functioning, wellness, and pathology. Boundaries appear to be equally as important in the context of military families as they are in nonmilitary families.

### 6.3.2. Ambiguous loss

In a qualitative study of adolescents, Huebner et al. (2007) used focus groups to explore uncertainty and ambiguous loss among youth experiencing parental deployment. Study participants included youth ages 12 to 18 ( $N = 107$ ) attending free, voluntary summer camps in five states (Washington, Hawaii, Texas, Virginia, and Georgia) sponsored by the National Military Family Association. The participants in the sample consisted of 46% females and 54% males; 61% were White American, 17% Black American, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 3% Pacific Islander, 1% Native American, and 10% biracial. All participants had experienced parental deployment, and 36% of youth were from Reserve and National Guard families. Huebner et al. conducted 14 focus groups with a mix of boys and girls.

To illustrate uncertainty and ambiguous loss, Huebner et al. (2007) analyzed the results and categorized them into four main themes: (a) overall perceptions of uncertainty and loss, (b) boundary ambiguity, (c) changes in mental health, and (d) relationship conflict. Perceptions of uncertainty and loss were typically described in negative terms, such as “confused,” “isolated,” or “mad” (Huebner et al., 2007, p. 116). Boundary ambiguity (i.e., parentification) became evident as participants discussed the changes they experienced in roles and responsibilities—changes that provoked stress for some and led others to perceive opportunities. For example, one youth stated, “When my dad's not there, I'm not, you know, the child anymore. I have to like kind of almost fill in for the other parent because the only thing my mom really cares

about is that I am ready to babysit” (Huebner et al., 2007, p. 117). In relation to frustrations regarding reunion, another youth stated:

Because there were responsibilities taken up by each of us and then when dad came home, we didn't have the responsibilities anymore, but we were used to them and so that caused a change also. And so it's just like, okay, what do we do now. We can't go back to being who we were because we're not that anymore. We have to move forward, but it's also something you have to do as a whole family.

[Huebner et al. (2007, p. 117)]

### 6.4. Parentification in the military literature: theoretical frameworks

Predeployment family functioning is an important factor in how families and children respond to the stress associated with separations, entrances, and exits. Several theoretical frameworks that have been used to examine military family responses lend support for the examination of preexisting conditions, level of family functioning, and adjustment processes that can lead to parentification.

#### 6.4.1. Family stress theory

Much of the early research on the association between military parent separation and child and adolescent behavior identified responses and significant relations consistent with family stress theory (Chandra et al., 2011). Specifically, a number of child and adolescent psychological symptomatology have been associated consistently with parental deployment, including increased stress and anxiety, internalized and externalized behaviors, higher levels of depression, and disciplinary problems. Parental stress and psychological distress have also been consistently identified as significant predictors of child and adolescent psychological distress (Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009; Lester et al., 2010). Similarly, the ability of each family member to cope effectively with life stressors affects the entire family's ability to adapt during periods of transition and increased tension (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Drummet et al. (2003) suggested that cultural factors, as well as the military culture itself, play a significant role in the way military families handle relevant stressors and their willingness to seek supportive services for their family (also see Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009). In addition, the family coping mechanisms, as well as the psychological functioning and distress, that are present prior to deployment are key indicators of how well a family will manage the additional stress associated with deployment and reunion. All these factors contribute to or detract from the development of parental functioning and therefore the psychological outcomes among military youth.

Bradshaw et al. (2010) used the family stress theory as a framework to examine transition-related stressors among military youth. In this qualitative study ( $N = 93$ ), 11 focus groups were conducted in five states (three in Colorado and two each in Kansas, New York, North Carolina, and Texas) with military students ( $n = 34$ ), parents ( $n = 24$ ), and school staff ( $n = 35$ ). Student participants ranged in age from 6 to 12 years ( $M = 14.6$ ) and included a slight majority who were female (61%) and White American (56.4%); 21.5% were Black American and 12.8% were Hispanic American. Of the student sample, 89.7% had experienced parental deployment at least once. Parentification issues emerged most clearly within the goal of describing the efforts used to assist students in coping with their stress. Although parents, school staff, and students identified a blend of adaptation and coping strategies, all agreed that military students are perceived as more mature and more responsible. A common belief among school staff was that military students are more adaptable than their civilian counterparts and experience an accelerated maturation, which may be beneficial, especially for those attending college. However, some students and



parents expressed uncertainty about the effect of growing up too fast, with one parent stating,

I don't know if that [growing up too fast] is good or bad. In some cases it's good and some cases it's kind of sad that your kids are almost forced to grow up a little bit quicker and have to step up to the plate. . . [I] have young sons and my husband is deployed. [So] they kind of step up and are the man of the house. A lot of them try to take on that role, which is a great help to us moms. I know that myself. But it's sad in a way too. [It] takes away a little of their youth. [Bradshaw et al. (2010, p. 96)]

Bradshaw et al.'s results indicated that military youth, especially those with deployed parents, manage many adult emotions and responsibilities, characterized by some researchers "as *parentification*, whereby children take on adult roles and responsibilities that are not developmentally appropriate, which in turn can result in adjustment problems (Byng-Hall, 2002)" (Bradshaw et al., 2010, p. 96).

#### 6.4.2. Ambiguous loss

The work of Boss (2004) on ambiguous loss provides a useful theoretical framework for exploring how military families perceive and respond to parental deployment (Faber et al., 2008; Huebner et al., 2007). Boss identified two distinct types of ambiguous loss. *Ambiguous absence* occurs when a person is physically absent but is perceived by family members as emotionally or psychologically present. *Ambiguous presence* is the converse: the family member is physically present but is perceived as emotionally or psychologically absent from the family. One element of the culture unique to today's military—as compared to the military system from decades ago—is the ability of the media and telecommunications to keep families informed and connected with their deployed service members (Drummet et al., 2003). Nevertheless, this increased level of communication and connection can create further ambiguity in relation to the deployed service member's participation in family functioning and decision making (Faber et al., 2008). In addition, the level of media exposure detailing the effects of war can create a heightened sense of uncertainty about the service member's safety and his or her likelihood of return (Huebner et al., 2007). This is especially true for children exposed to these media stories.

Military families face a complex situation of uncertainty and loss each time a member is deployed. Ambiguous loss can be psychologically, physically, and structurally problematic within the family, because it can lead to feelings of hopelessness, uncertainty, and confusion, as well as boundary ambiguity within the family system (Boss, 2004; Faber et al., 2008). Loss and uncertainty are not only situational but also perceptual. Thus each family member's actual experience of an ambiguous loss may be very different. Boundary ambiguity, a complex result of ambiguous loss, presents a host of challenges both during and after deployment. These challenges, such as role negotiation and similar stressors related to reintegration, can be particularly problematic when the service member returns from combat with physical or psychological injuries (Chawla & Solinas-Saunders, 2011; Rodriguez & Margolin, 2011).

#### 6.4.3. Resiliency framework

Although some families and youth fare poorly as a result of multiple and prolonged deployments, research has suggested that some military families adjust well to the military culture and routine deployments. Several authors have used a resiliency theoretical framework for the study of military families (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Lester et al., 2011; Saltzman et al., 2011). *Resilience* is often defined as a dynamic process characterized by positive adaptation when facing significant adversity or trauma (Harkness, 1993; Hooper, 2007b). Resilience is not a personality trait per se but is rather a two-dimensional construct that implies positive adjustment when exposed to adverse events or conditions (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000).

Saltzman et al. (2011) suggested using the resiliency framework to describe potential risk factors and mechanisms associated with the impact of military deployment and culture on family systems. This framework, they asserted, can facilitate the understanding, development, and evaluation of resilience-enhancing interventions to improve military family resiliency and family and child outcomes. Saltzman et al. identified five interrelated sets of family processes as potentially amenable risk mechanisms for families exposed to adversity and trauma, such as wartime deployment or parental combat operational stress. These five family processes are as follows: incomplete or inaccurate understanding of deployment and developmental expectations, impaired family communication and emotional expression, impaired parenting, impaired family organization and structure, and lack of guiding belief systems. Saltzman et al. theorized that each of these mechanisms of risk can lead to proximal outcomes that can have a positive or negative impact on family functioning. For example, overly rigid or chaotic family structure can lead to poorly defined boundaries, roles and responsibilities, or inconsistent care routines, any of which can subsequently affect the psychological functioning of children.

#### 6.4.4. Resiliency model of role performance

Consistent with the resiliency framework and discussions of role adjustment, role reversal, and negotiation within family systems, Bowen and Martin (2011) proposed a resiliency model with a specific focus on role performance. This model presents a heuristic framework to account for differing abilities among service members and their families to adjust to role shifts and new responsibilities in the face of challenges and potential adversities of military life. This conceptual perspective stems from role theory and models of family stress, coping, and social support.

Using a "road of life" metaphor, Bowen and Martin (2011) described role trajectories and transitions in the context of military family life, with a focus on family adaptation and individual strengths. Bowen and Martin defined *resilience* as a process that reflects an individual's capacity for functional role performance in the midst of developmental transitions, adversities, and positive challenges. *Resiliency*, in contrast, is defined as an outcome of the resilience process. The concept of resilience applies ecologically to individuals and multiple contexts (e.g., families, groups, military units, and communities) and can be evaluated over time in terms of role performance. The resiliency model proposed by Bowen and Martin consists of four major concepts with reciprocal relationships that influence role performance. These four concepts are as follows: social connections, individual assets, self-orientations, and behavioral health. Based on its theoretical grounding in concepts of family functioning, the resiliency model of role performance offers an opportunity for further discussion and research aimed at identifying positive adaptation and possibly posttraumatic growth among military families and their children (Harrison & Albanese, 2012), similar to what has been seen in nonmilitary families (Hooper, Marotta, & DePuy, 2009).

#### 6.4.5. Process model of family function

Gorman et al. (2010) presented a similar systemic model—the process model of family functioning (Skinner, Steinhauer, & Sintarenios, 2000)—as a potential framework for examining military family processes that contribute to maladaptive as well as healthy family functioning. The process model includes seven constructs: task accomplishment, role performance, communication, affective expression, involvement, control, and values and norms (Skinner et al., 2000). These constructs are similar to those identified by Saltzman et al. (2011) as potential risk mechanisms in the resiliency framework.

Attachment and family systems theories, when taken together, offer a promising framework for the study of military family dynamics, the after-effects of wartime deployment, and military culture—particularly in relation to parentification of military youth (Gorman et al., 2010; Hooper, 2007b; Riggs & Riggs, 2011). Consistent with prior research

on parentification and research on military families, these frameworks could shed considerable light on childhood parentification within the unique circumstances of the military family, especially following multiple and extended military deployments and combat injury. Attachment theory helps clarify the process of parentification as it involves the relationship between the child and his or her parent or caregiver, and family systems theory clarifies the context in which parentification takes place (Byng-Hall, 2008). Internal working models act as the mechanisms through which parentified children experience divergent and bimodal outcomes, both positive and negative (Hooper, 2007a). In addition, attachment theory combined with family systems theory can guide clinical and research investigations where parentification exists. Guided by these theoretical conceptualizations of parentification, the investigations may offer unique perspectives from which to examine the developmental trajectories, individual-level correlates and outcomes (e.g., coping strategies), and system-level correlates and outcomes (e.g., deployment factors) relevant to the military family, the parentified child, and the adult he or she becomes.

A range of theory-informed, military- and community-based interventions have been implemented to support military families before, during, and after deployment. However, empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of these programs, and of the theoretical constructs they measure, is lacking (APA, 2007; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011; McFarlane, 2009). Although numerous qualitative studies have been conducted, to our knowledge, no studies have used validated instruments designed to measure or assess factors related to parentification within military families. Further research is needed to address this gap and to further align the plethora of clinical and family psychology literature with the relative dearth of military family research related to the impact of parental deployment and military-induced parental absence on the lives of military children. As military members and their families are called to make extraordinary sacrifices to serve and protect the United States and other nations, a response from the scientific community is warranted to support the well-being of their families and the positive development of their children and adolescents.

#### 6.4.6. Family attachment network model

Both attachment theory (e.g., Ainsworth, 1989; Bowlby, 1969) and family systems theory (e.g., Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974) present opportunities to explain why parental psychological health and emotional support during the stressful processes of adaptation to military culture, deployment, and reintegration are important to the emotional, psychological, and physical well-being of children. Family and clinical psychologists and researchers have reported how these theories, taken together, can inform family systems research in general and research on parentification in particular (see Byng-Hall, 2008; Hooper, 2007a).

However, Riggs and Riggs (2011) contended that although these two theories are complementary, they may not converge neatly when applied to family processes and patterns. Riggs and Riggs presented a family attachment network model, consisting of multiple relationships at multiple system levels, to describe how military families adapt and adjust during deployment and reintegration. Within each system level are rules and attributes specific to that level, though inextricably intertwined and interrelated with other levels and with the family system as a whole. Similarly, each attachment relationship within the family system is unique, resulting in varying attachment behaviors toward other members of the family.

## 7. Implications and future directions

This preliminary review has attempted to connect the military family literature with the parentification literature and to show where these two bodies of research intersect with overlapping and relevant concepts, contexts, and theories. Policy makers, researchers, and family systems and child advocates agree that the physical, psychological, and

social welfare of military families and children is of critical concern (Willerton et al., 2011). Military youth are generally resilient in the face of deployment and military culture-related stressors. However, when stress becomes chronic and adequate support is unavailable, emotional and behavioral problems and psychological distress, including those associated with parentification, can occur (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011). Children from National Guard and Reserve families, as well as those in families experiencing multiple deployments, prolonged deployments, and diverse types of deployments (e.g., deployed to a combat zone versus engaged in combat) may be in the greatest need of support services that enhance resiliency and reduce psychological risk. Findings distilled from the current review have implications for practice and research with military families.

### 7.1. Implications for practice

Importantly, when military children and adolescent family issues go unrecognized the consequences can be serious and destructive. As described in the literature, some far-reaching clinical effects of parentified children and adolescents include poor academic performance, inability to form positive relationships, and feeling overburdened and overwhelmed. Educators, school psychologists, and mental health providers are in a position to be watchful of common signs and symptoms (e.g., anxiety, lethargy, preoccupied, distracted, and depressed) that may emerge when parentification exists. Systematic evaluation of parentification should be considered to determine the level and extent of parentification. Screening tools such as the Parentification Inventory (Hooper, 2009) or the Parentification Questionnaire (Jurkovic & Thirkield, 1998) may be useful in assessing when parentification has been experienced in military families especially among families where there are frequent deployments. Given that some children and adolescents report increased resiliency and competency as a result of parentification positive outcomes must be assessed as well. A strength-based approach to treatment (e.g., posttraumatic growth; see Hooper, 2007b) is equally as important as the commonly seen problem-focused approach to treatment. It could be that the child or adolescent has experienced the parentification process as constructive rather than destructive. Toward this end, the Parentification Inventory (Hooper, 2009; Hooper & Doehler, 2012) assesses the extent to which individuals experienced benefits, if any, from being parentified. Jurkovic (1997) contended that clinicians should take into consideration the specific context (e.g., military context) and role (e.g., instrumental and emotional) adopted during the parentification process in order to inform intervention and treatment strategies for clients with a history of parentification.

### 7.2. Implications for research

The current review has implications for future research as well. Researchers should consider examining the extent to which multiple deployments, prolonged deployments, and diverse types of deployments engender varied outcomes. Military families offer a unique context for the study of factors that contribute to resiliency and healthy family adjustment in the face of parental separation, adversity, and trauma (Harkness, 1993; Huebner et al., 2010; Palmer, 2008; Riggs & Riggs, 2011; Saltzman et al., 2011). Understanding resiliency in healthy family adjustment offers the mental health community numerous opportunities to foster and improve the process of appropriate roles and functions of unique family structures, including military families. Future research has the potential to inform mental health providers in the care of parentified military children, adolescents, and their families. There are several specific issues that ought to be examined in future studies.

First, early clinical observations of military children could provide professionals with evidence-based practices for prevention and intervention. Adequate and appropriate support for individuals and families who experience parentification can be more effectively translated and

culturally tailored once predictors, mediators, and moderators between parentification and diverse outcomes are uncovered.

Second, in light of the important findings focused on emotional partners such as school personnel (see Chandra, Martin, et al., 2010), future research should include the impact of the role and support schools play in the lives of military children and adolescents. As previously mentioned, educational institutions and their resources could provide a significant environment and intervention point for understanding parentification in military families. Such environments could supply a needed service for these families, particularly those serving in the National Guard and Reserve. Unlike active duty members, National Guard and Reserve members typically do not have the benefit of base-related support and base communities (Bradshaw et al., 2010). For these military children, schools become the context where they spend a large portion of their time. Unfortunately, many times schools are ill prepared to support individuals and families who are experiencing parentification. School personnel are not always aware of the children of deployed National Guard and Reserve families enrolled in their facilities. Therefore, the chances of the schools having a systematic process and plan in place to support these families are limited. Occasionally and inadvertently, school policies and procedures may produce adverse or additional distress for military families. The obstacles can range from the ability for children to participate in special mental health or educational programs (e.g., gifted and talented) to high school graduation delays (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Researching these issues is vital to the social, psychological, and ecological well-being of military families.

Third, research specifically on parentification of children and adolescents can help the military better understand and provide adequate resources to support the unique family structures and cultures of military families. Currently, there is more research (i.e., clinical and family psychology) examining parentification in a variety of contexts that is moving the discussion forward and establishing proper culturally-relevant interventions when appropriate. The issues of parentification in military families demand similar empirical research. Although much of the military research on parentification and select outcomes is based on qualitative investigations, research using a qualitative design is a starting point for future culturally-relevant hypothesis-testing quantitative research.

## 8. Conclusion

This article focuses on the challenges, roles, and responsibilities that family members may face as a result of the military culture and military family system. This focus is consistent with the majority of research to date. Nevertheless, it is critical to address some of the positive correlates and outcomes that research indicates occur for these military adolescents and families. Due to the increased tendency for parents to rely more heavily on children for functional and emotional support, and due to the specific developmental stressors associated with adolescence, more research is needed to better understand and disentangle the unique features of parental deployment and military culture with regard to normative adolescent development, psychological health, and physical health (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Huebner et al., 2010; Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009; Reed et al., 2011). Research with military families and children may reveal important opportunities for understanding resilience because military culture frequently demands adaptability, and military members are specifically selected and trained to be ready to respond and adapt at any time (Willerton et al., 2011).

## References

- Ainsworth, M. (1989). *Attachments beyond infancy*. *American Psychologist*, 44, 709–716.
- Aldridge, J., & Becker, S. (1993). Children as carers. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, 69, 459–462. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/adc.69.4.459>.
- Amen, D. G., Jellen, L., Merves, E., & Lee, R. E. (1988). *Minimizing the impact of deployment separation on military children: Stages, current preventive efforts, and system recommendations*. *Military Medicine*, 153(9), 441–446.
- American Psychological Association (APA) Presidential Task Force on Military Deployment Services for Youth, Families, and Service Members (2007). *The psychological needs of U.S. military service members and their families: A preliminary report*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Boss, P. (2004). Ambiguous loss research, theory, and practice: Reflections after 9/11. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66, 551–566.
- Boszormenyi-Nagy, L., & Spark, G. (1973). *Invisible loyalties: Reciprocity in intergenerational family therapy*. Hagerstown, MD: Harper & Row.
- Bowen, M. (1978). *Family therapy in clinical practice*. New York, NY: Jason Aronson.
- Bowen, G. L., & Martin, J. A. (2011). The resiliency model of role performance for service members, veterans, and their families: A focus on social connections and individual assets. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 21, 162–178. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2011.546198>.
- Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss: Vol. 1. Attachment*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bradshaw, C. P., Sudhinaraset, M., Mmari, K., & Blum, R. W. (2010). School transitions among military adolescents: A qualitative study of stress and coping. *School Psychology Review*, 39, 84–105.
- Burton, L. (2007). Childhood adultification in economically disadvantaged families: A conceptual model. *Family Relations*, 56, 329–345. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2007.00463.x>.
- Byng-Hall, J. (2002). Relieving parentified children's burdens in families with insecure attachment patterns. *Family Process*, 41, 375–388.
- Byng-Hall, J. (2008). The significance of children fulfilling parental roles: Implications for family therapy. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 30, 147–162. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6427.2008.00423.x>.
- Champion, J. E., Jaser, S. S., Reeslund, K. L., Simmons, L., Potts, J. E., Shears, A. R., et al. (2009). Caretaking behaviors by adolescent children of mothers with and without a history of depression. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23, 156–166. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0014978>.
- Chandra, A., Burns, R. M., Tanielian, T., & Jaycox, L. H. (2011). Understanding the deployment experience for children and youth from military families. In S. M. Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *Risk and resilience in U.S. military families* (pp. 175–191). New York, NY: Springer.
- Chandra, A., Lara-Cinisomo, S., Jaycox, L. H., Tanielian, T., Burns, R. M., Ruder, T., et al. (2010). Children on the homefront: The experience of children from military families. *Pediatrics*, 125, 16–25.
- Chandra, A., Martin, L. T., Hawkins, S. A., & Richardson, A. (2010). The impact of parental deployment on child social and emotional functioning: Perspectives of school staff. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 46, 218–233. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2009.10.009>.
- Charles, G., Stainton, T., & Marshall, S. (2009). Young carers: Mature before their time. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 18, 38–41.
- Chase, N. (1999). An overview of theory, research, and societal issues. In N. Chase (Ed.), *Burdened children* (pp. 3–33). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Chawla, N., & Solinas-Saunders, M. (2011). Supporting military parent and child adjustment to deployments and separations with filial therapy. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 39, 179–192. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2010.531647>.
- Cozza, S. J., & Guimond, J. M. (2011). Working with combat-injured families through the recovery trajectory. In S. M. Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *Risk and resilience in U.S. military families* (pp. 259–277). New York, NY: Springer.
- Drummet, A. R., Coleman, M., & Cable, S. (2003). Military families under stress: Implications for family life education. *Family Relations*, 52, 279–287. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3729.2003.00279.x>.
- Earley, L., & Cushman, D. J. (2002). The parentified child. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 7, 163–178.
- East, P. L. (2010). Children's provision of family caregiving: Benefit or burden? *Child Development Perspectives*, 4, 55–61. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1750-8606.2009.00118.x>.
- Esposito-Smythers, C., Wolff, J., Lemmon, K. M., Bodzy, M., Swenson, R. R., & Spirito, A. (2011). Military youth and the deployment cycle: Emotional health consequences and recommendations for intervention. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 25(4), 497–507. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0024634>.
- Everson, R. B., & Figley, C. R. (2011). *Families under fire: Systemic therapy with military families*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Faber, A. J., Willerton, E., Clymer, S. R., MacDermid, S. M., & Weiss, H. M. (2008). Ambiguous absence, ambiguous presence: A qualitative study of military reserve families in wartime. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(2), 222–230.
- Fitzgerald, M. M., Schneider, R. A., Salstrom, S., Zinzow, H. M., Jackson, J., & Fossil, R. V. (2008). Child sexual abuse, early family risk, and childhood parentification: Pathways to current psychosocial adjustment. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22, 320–324. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.22.2.320>.
- Galambos, N. L., & Tilton-Weaver, L. C. (2000). Adolescents' psychosocial maturity, problem behavior, and subjective age: In search of the adultoid. *Applied Developmental Science*, 4, 178–192. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0404.1>.
- Garber, B. D. (2011). Parental alienation and the dynamics of the enmeshed parent-child dyad: Adultification, parentification and infantilization. *Family Court Review*, 49, 322–335.
- Gilreath, T. D., Cederbaum, J. A., Astor, R. A., Benbenishty, R., Pineda, D., & Atuel, H. (2013). Substance use among military-connected youth: The California health kids survey. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 44, 150–153.
- Gorman, L. A., Fitzgerald, H. E., & Blow, A. J. (2010). Parental combat injury and early child development: A conceptual model for differentiating effects of visible and invisible injuries. *Psychiatric Quarterly*, 81, 1–21.
- Greenberger, E., & Steinberg, L. (1986). *When teenagers work: The psychological and social costs of adolescent employment*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Hall, L. K. (2008). *Counseling military families*. New York, NY: Routledge.



- Harkness, L. L. (1993). Transgenerational transmission of war-related trauma. In J. P. Wilson, & B. Raphael (Eds.), *International handbook of traumatic stress syndromes* (pp. 635–644). New York, NY: Plenum.
- Harrison, D., & Albanese, P. (2012). The “parentification” phenomenon as applied to adolescents living through parental military deployments. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth*, 4, 1–27.
- Hooper, L. M. (2007a). The application of attachment theory and family systems theory to the phenomena of parentification. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 15(3), 217–223. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1066480707301290>.
- Hooper, L. M. (2007b). Expanding the discussion regarding parentification and its varied outcomes: Implications for mental health research and practice. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, 29, 322–337.
- Hooper, L. M. (2009). *Parentification inventory*. (Available from L. M. Hooper, Department of Educational Studies in Psychology, Research Methodology, and Counseling, The University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL 35487).
- Hooper, L. M. (2012). Parentification. In R. J. R. Levesque (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of adolescence*, Vol. 4. (pp. 2023–2031). New York, NY: Springer.
- Hooper, L. M. (2013). Parentification. In K. D. Keith (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of cross cultural psychology* (pp. 965–971). Malden, MA; New York, NY: Wiley-Blackwell. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781118339893>.
- Hooper, L. M., & Doehler, K. (2012). Assessing family caregiving: A comparison of three retrospective parentification measures. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 38, 653–666. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1752-0606.2011.00258.x>.
- Hooper, L. M., DeCoster, J., White, N., & Voltz, M. L. (2011). Characterizing the magnitude of the relation between self-reported childhood parentification and adult psychopathology: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 67, 1028–1043.
- Hooper, L. M., Doehler, K., Wallace, S. A., & Hannah, N. J. (2011). The Parentification inventory: Development, validation, and cross-validation. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 39, 226–241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01926187.2010.531652>.
- Hooper, L. M., Doehler, K., Jankowski, P. J., & Tomek, S. E. (2012). Patterns of self-reported alcohol use, depressive symptoms, and body mass index in a family sample: The buffering effects of parentification. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 20, 164–178. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1066480711435320>.
- Hooper, L. M., L'Abate, L., Sweeney, L. G., Gianesini, G., & Jankowski, P. J. (2014). *Models of psychopathology: Generational processes and relational roles*. New York, NY: Springer-Science.
- Hooper, L. M., Marotta, S. A., & DePuy, V. (2009). A confirmatory factor analytic study of the posttraumatic growth inventory among a sample of racially diverse college students. *Journal of Mental Health*, 18, 335–343. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09638230802522502>.
- Hooper, L. M., Marotta, S. A., & Lanthier, R. P. (2008). Predictors of growth and distress following parentification among college students. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 17, 693–705.
- Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Wade, K. E., McElhaney, S. J., Wiles, B. B., Butler, J. L., et al. (2010). Resilience and vulnerability: The deployment experiences of youth in military families. Retrieved from: [http://www.fcs.uga.edu/cfd/docs/resilience\\_and\\_vulnerability.pdf](http://www.fcs.uga.edu/cfd/docs/resilience_and_vulnerability.pdf)
- Huebner, A. J., Mancini, J. A., Wilcox, R. M., Grass, S. R., & Grass, G. A. (2007). Parental deployment and youth in military families: Exploring uncertainty and ambiguous loss. *Family Relations*, 26, 112–122.
- Jacobvitz, D., Riggs, S., & Johnson, E. (1999). Cross-sex and same-sex family alliances: Immediate and long-term effects on sons and daughters. In N. D. Chase (Ed.), *Burdened children: Theory, research, and treatment of parentification* (pp. 34–55). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jankowski, P. J., Hooper, L. M., Sandage, S. J., & Hannah, N. J. (2013). Parentification and mental health symptoms: Mediator effects of perceived unfairness and differentiation of self. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 35, 43–65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6427.2011.00574.x>.
- Jensen, P. S., Martin, D., & Watanabe, H. (1996). Children's response to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 35, 433–441.
- Jurkovic, G. J. (1997). *The plight of the parentified child*. New York, NY: Brunner/Mazel.
- Jurkovic, G. J., & Thirkield, A. (1998). *Parentification questionnaire*. (Available from G. J. Jurkovic, Department of Psychology, Georgia State University, University Plaza, Atlanta, GA 30303).
- Kam, J. A. (2011). The effects of language brokering frequency and feelings on Mexican-heritage youth's mental health and risky behaviors. *Journal of Communication*, 61, 455–475.
- Kelley, M. L., Doane, A. N., & Pearson, M. R. (2011). Single military mothers in the new millennium: Stresses, supports, and effects of deployment. In S. M. Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *Risk and resilience in U.S. military families* (pp. 149–173). New York, NY: Springer.
- Kerig, P. K. (2005). Revisiting the construct of boundary dissolution: A multidimensional perspective. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 5(2), 5–42. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J135v05n02\\_02](http://dx.doi.org/10.1300/J135v05n02_02).
- Lemmon, K. M., & Chartrand, M. M. (2009). Caring for America's children: Military youth in time of war. *Pediatrics in Review*, 30, e42–e48. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1542/pir.30-6-e42>.
- Lester, P., & Bursch, B. (2011). The long war comes home: Mitigating risk and promoting resilience in military children and families. *Psychiatric Times*, 28–29 (Retrieved from <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/military-mental-health/content/article/10168/1905105>).
- Lester, P., Leskin, G., Woodward, K., Saltzman, W., Nash, W., Mogil, C., et al. (2011). Wartime deployment and military children: Applying prevention science to enhance family resilience. In S. M. Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *Risk and resilience in U.S. military families* (pp. 149–173). New York, NY: Springer.
- Lester, P., Peterson, K., Reeves, K., Knauss, L., Glover, D., Mogil, C., et al. (2010). The long war and parental combat deployment: Effects on military children and at-home spouses. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 49, 310–320.
- Locke, T. F., & Newcomb, M. D. (2004). Child maltreatment, parent alcohol- and drug-related problems, polydrug problems, and parenting practices: A test of gender differences and four theoretical perspectives. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 18, 120–134. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0893-3200.18.1.120>.
- Luthar, S. S., & Cicchetti, D. (2000). The construct of resilience: Implications for interventions and social policies. *Development and Psychopathology*, 12, 857–885.
- Macfie, J., McElwain, N. L., Houts, R. M., & Cox, M. J. (2005). Intergenerational transmission of role reversal between parent and child: Dyadic and family systems internal working models. *Attachment & Human Development*, 7, 51–65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616730500039663>.
- Maiseless, O., & Scharf, M. (2009). Too close for comfort: Inadequate boundaries with parents and individuation in late adolescent girls. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 79, 191–202.
- McFarlane, A. C. (2009). Military deployment: The impact on children and family adjustment and the need for care. *Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 22, 369–373. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/YCO.0b013e32832c9064>.
- Minuchin, S. (1974). *Families and family therapy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Minuchin, S., Montalvo, B., Guerney, B., Rosman, B., & Schumer, F. (1967). *Families of the slums*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Mmari, K., Roche, K. M., Sudhinaraset, M., & Blum, R. (2009). When a parent goes off to war. *Youth and Society*, 40(4), 455–475.
- Palmer, C. (2008). A theory of risk and resilience factors in military families. *Military Psychology*, 20, 205–217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08995600802118858>.
- Reed, S. C., Bell, J. F., & Edwards, T. C. (2011). Adolescent well-being in Washington state military families. *American Journal of Public Health*, 101, 1676–1682.
- Riggs, S. A., & Riggs, D. A. (2011). Risk and resilience in military families experiencing deployment: The role of the family attachment network. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 25, 675–687.
- Rodriguez, A. J., & Margolin, G. (2011). Siblings of military service members: A qualitative exploration of individual and family systems reactions. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 42, 316–323. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0024527>.
- Saltzman, W. R., Lester, P., Beardslee, W. R., Layne, C. M., Woodward, K., & Nash, W. P. (2011). Mechanisms of risk and resilience in military families: Theoretical and empirical basis of a family-focused resilience enhancement program. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 14, 213–230.
- Siskowski, C. (2006). Young caregivers: Effect of family health situations on school performance. *The Journal of School Nursing*, 22, 163–169. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/10598405060220030701>.
- Skinner, H., Steinhauer, P., & Sintarenos, G. (2000). Family assessment measure (FAM) and process model of family functioning. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 22, 190–210.
- Smyth, C., Cass, B., & Hill, T. (2011). Children and young people as active agents in care-giving: Agency and constraint. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 33, 509–514.
- Sroufe, L. A., & Ward, M. J. (1980). Seductive behavior of mothers of toddlers: Occurrence, correlates, and family origins. *Child Development*, 51, 1222–1229.
- Telzer, E. H., & Fuligni, A. J. (2009). Daily family assistance and the psychological well-being of adolescents from Latin American, Asian, and European backgrounds. *Developmental Psychology*, 45, 1177–1189. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0014728>.
- Warchal, J. R., West, P. L., Graham, L. B., Gerke, S. B., & Warchal, A. J. (2011). Families in crisis: When the veteran returns home. Retrieved from: [http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas11/Article\\_16.pdf](http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas11/Article_16.pdf)
- White, C. J., De Burgh, H. T., Fear, N. T., & Iversen, A. C. (2011). The impact of deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan on military children: A review of the literature. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 23, 210–217. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3109/09540261.2011.560143>.
- Willerton, E., Wadsworth, S. M., & Riggs, D. (2011). Introduction: Military families under stress: What we know and what we need to know. In S. M. Wadsworth, & D. Riggs (Eds.), *Risk and resilience in U.S. military families* (pp. 1–19). New York, NY: Springer.