

**Young children's understandings
and
experiences of parental deployment
within an
Australian Defence Force family**

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CANDIDATE'S CERTIFICATION

I declare that the research presented here is my own original work, except where otherwise acknowledged.

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.



Candidate's signature

ABSTRACT

Military deployment is considered a stressful period for families (Palmer, 2008), typically lasting three to nine months for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel. To date, insufficient research has been conducted concerning children who experience deployment (Siebler, 2015). This study seeks to provide valuable insights into young children's understandings and experiences of their parents' military deployment in an Australian context. An adapted research framework, based on the policies from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2015) and Clark and Moss (2011), has been created to listen to and privilege the often marginalised child's voice. Employing a qualitative research approach known as Mosaic research, multiple methods of data collection are combined to gather various insights into children's experiences. Embracing an interpretivist epistemology, the researcher aims to create shared knowledges of children's understandings and experiences, progressively building insights into the child's experience and inviting discussions to take place about their experiences. The study found that young children's experiences of parental deployment included stressors, responses, adaptations and protective factors. Another major finding was that children's understandings of parental deployment were often underestimated by parents. Children's understandings were strongly influenced by time, place, acculturation, narrative, digital technology, cognitive development, adult reinforcement and the use of age and culturally appropriate resources. The central goal of Mosaic research 'is not to make children's knowledge unquestionable, but to raise it to such a level that children's knowledge about their lives is central to adult discussions' (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 65). Such knowledge about children's understandings and experiences of deployment can inform effective support strategies for parents, educators and professionals who work with these children in the ADF and wider community.

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Some say that doing a PhD is like eating an elephant. Others say it is a test of character, rather than intelligence. And still others say it is the worst thing you ever do because it's a long, lonely road and many things will start to unravel in your life during the journey. In my experience, these sayings are true. What I didn't realise, however, was the depth of people's goodwill and kindness to help you through these challenges.

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DEDICATION

TO MUM AND SISTERS, FOR EVERYTHING.

TO MY CHILDREN AND EXTENDED FAMILY, FOR EVERYTHING ELSE.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Term	Explanation
ADF	Australian Defence Force comprising of Airforce, Navy, Army, public servants, reservists and GAP year participants.
Authenticity	This moves beyond reliability and validity to include a belief that research should also be trustworthy, represent participants fairly and benefit society (Lewis & Porter, 2007).
Chaplain (ADF)	Commissioned ADF personnel who are also members of their church. They give pastoral support and spiritual ministry to personnel and their families, regardless of their faith backgrounds. They do not ordinarily provide social work support.
Bibliotherapy	The reading of books as a means of supporting people with personal challenges.
Diversity	People who represent a range of backgrounds, race or ethnicity, family types, gender, lifestyles, abilities, culture, beliefs, sexual persuasions, traditions and economic circumstances.
DCO (ADF)	Defence Community Organisation is a national social work organisation of the ADF formed in 1996.
DFA	Defence Families of Australia are a support organisation who act as a voice for defence families, while maintaining the view of the ADF
Deployment	Time spent away from the personnel's regular base. This can be either overseas, or in Australia. It can involve a range of duties in combat, support, administration, construction, medical, peace-keeping.
DHA (ADF)	Defence Housing Australia started in 1988 and manages over 18,000 residences in all states and territories either owned by ADF or via private lease, which is more common.
DVA	Department of Veteran's Affairs is a Commonwealth department who are responsible for supporting current and previously serving ADF members.
Emancipatory research	Research that proposes to empower participants through acknowledging and addressing the power differences between the researcher and the participants (Hartas, 2010)
Epistemology	The nature of knowledge and how we can derive understanding of reality (O'Toole & Beckett, 2013).
Ethnographic research	Research that involves the close scrutiny of societies, or communities, or groups of people by the researcher immersing themselves in their lives (Walter, 2013b).
IED	Improvised Explosive Devices are homemade explosives used in and made in unconventional ways.

Term	Explanation
Inclusion	Proactive, intentional and sustained involvement of a broad range of people, including those who could be marginalised or from a minority group (Turner & West, 2003).
Interpretivist Paradigm	An epistemological stance that involves the researcher understanding the subjective understandings of social deeds (Hughes, 2001).
Marginalised	Downgraded, sidelined or disregarded.
Narrative research	Qualitative research which involves the elicitation, analysis and retelling of the stories of people and their experiences (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an individual's reaction after direct or indirect exposure to extreme traumatic stress.
Mosaic research	Qualitative research that aims to privilege marginalised voices. It involves multiple ways of data collection, including visual, interview, individual and group sessions that culminate in rich, thick data that is examined through thematic analysis (Clark & Moss, 2011).
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation founded on the 1949 Military Intergovernmental Treaty.
NWCC (ADF)	National Welfare Coordination Centre – helpline call centre to provide information and referral for personnel, families and relatives.
Positivism	An epistemological stance which promotes the research of absolute truth through scientific knowledge (Hughes, 2001).
Qualitative	Research which privileges words and concepts rather than numerical data and interpretation or the quest for facts (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005).
REDLO (ADF)	Regional Education Liaison Officer.
Paradigm	The current state of thinking, or world-view on a particular topic (Walter, 2013b).
Reflexivity	The researcher's awareness of their own effect on the collection and interpretation of data which takes into account the researcher's involvement in the production of knowledge (Phelan & Kinsella, 2012).
Secondary transference of PTSD or Secondary PTSD	Secondary transference of PTSD can occur in support workers, spouses, children and grandchildren through the knowledge of the trauma, care of the patient and empathy with them (O'Brien, 2004).
UN	United Nations is a group of nations formed in 1945 who work together on law, security, human rights, politics, economics and social issues.

Chapter 1. My journey into the research field

1.1. Personal beliefs about the voice of the child and the family

As an early childhood educator and a pre-service teacher educator, my beliefs have always been centred on the importance of listening to children. What children communicate about the events that are affecting their lives is often masked by other behaviours and problems that are easier to respond to than the causes, especially if the adult responding is tired and stressed. Uncovering the underlying challenges takes patience, time and a high degree of social and emotional intelligence. Families are often the key to deciphering what is affecting the children. Families can add to the picture educators have of the child, clarify educator's thoughts and perceptions, and add richness to their observations and conversations with the child. The child's voice, when it is finally heard, is often insightful, and when relayed to parents can be a catalyst for much needed change.

Families are the children's context for development (Grace, Hayes, & Wise, 2016) and forming genuine, strong and collaborative relationships is defined in the *Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* (DEEWR, 2009) as a key element of good quality practice. Educators' strong relationships with parents supports our ability to work with children to assist their flourishing (Wilson, 2016). Supporting all parents is essential, and even families who appear confident and resilient often seek educator support, referral or advocacy and search for strategies to assist them to deal with situations as they arise with the child. This research study is grounded in the personal beliefs and perspectives outlined above.

In researching the literature, I explored the thesis of Siebler (2009) who researched Australian military families. I was able to contact him and discuss possible gaps in the literature and he said no one had focused on children in Australia, or on the role of educators. Listening to children's voices in matters that concern them was mandated in 1989 by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2015), Since then, there has been an increase of participatory research with children in a number of areas to start

addressing this requirement. I believe that a key to listening to children's voices is to also listen to the voices of their family.

1.2. My family history

While I have no Australian Defence Force (ADF) members within my immediate family, like many Australians, my family history is coloured by war and defence service. My mother's brother was conscripted and served in the Vietnam war as a tradesman for one year. He did not want to serve and was glad when the experience was over and he returned to Australia. However, due to the use of chemical weapons during the war, he developed a rash that caused mild problems over the years. Although essentially removed from combat, he did witness a number of confronting sights, but did not talk much about his experiences, unless asked. He did not march on Anzac Day until his retirement, when he made contact with his regiment again.

His father, my maternal grandfather, did not want to serve in World War II. Philosophically he had alternate views about war and his favourite historical figure was Gandhi. At the time, my grandmother was confined to a wheelchair and was unwell (mentally and physically) after losing their first baby at birth due to a medical error. At the conscription office, he stated he did not feel he could leave my grandmother but would be willing to serve in another way on the home front. He was given work at the ammunitions factory in Brisbane near where they lived. He was sent white feathers, a symbol of cowardice a number of times; this was a common bullying tactic employed by those who tried to persuade men to enlist.

The only other mention of war within my mother's family was that my grandmother also spoke of her uncle's service in the Boer War. Her relatives watched the parade of soldiers before they departed on the boat, and they commented that it was very sad that the fittest men were sent to be killed and maimed.

My father was too old to be considered for conscription for Vietnam. My father's younger brother was already serving with the ADF when the Vietnam War started. The family told me he served in Vietnam three times and eventually rose in rank to become an advisor to the

American generals in jungle warfare and was highly decorated. Despite the decorations, his time in Vietnam adversely affected his mental health. Although a heavy drinker before the war, he became an alcoholic and a chain smoker after the war. As a child, I remember watching him light up the next two cigarettes with his shaking hands before extinguishing the two he had just smoked. He talked a lot about the war. Despite his charm and good looks, I was always wary of him because of his temper outbursts, especially when drunk, and the way he shouted at his wife and children. He pointed a knife at his son's throat when the son woke him one night. My uncle's family suffered and the marriage broke up as his mental health deteriorated. Eventually, he was hospitalised and when my father visited he noticed that the whole ward and a number of other wards were filled with Vietnam veterans. He said, 'Nobody knows this is going on'. It was a number of years later that media attention was given to the plight of Vietnam veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), other mental health conditions, and secondary transference of these to their families. Sadly, my uncle died in hospital wearing a strait jacket at the age of forty-two. At first his son, and later his grandsons, marched wearing my uncle's medals every year on Anzac Day.

My uncle's father, my paternal grandfather, enlisted and fought in World War II. He eventually became a spy and served in various places including Darwin, Papua New Guinea, Borneo and Singapore. He had an internal injury from shrapnel and recovered for six months in a military hospital in Wollongong before returning home to Hornsby. Eventually, the family was offered a shared soldier settlement farm from the Australian government and they moved to a rural coastal area. My grandfather did not know much about farming, and he spent a lot of time away from home by himself, fishing and smoking, perhaps dealing with the effects of war. Physically, he suffered from bleeding internally for many years and died early when my father was only twenty-one. It was believed my father was the first male not to do active defence service for many generations within his family, who considered military service a very manly and honourable pursuit.

Interestingly, there was jealousy between my mother's and father's families about war service. My grandfather not enlisting, my uncle being a conscript rather than a volunteer and then serving as a tradesman, rather than a soldier, were criticised openly by my father's family. Heavy drinking, smoking and mental health conditions were frowned upon by my

mother's. They believed that if the other family gave up smoking and excessive drinking they would not have so many problems.

Opinions on these matters were shared readily with the grandchildren, such as myself. Even as children, we knew each family believed their own stories, despite the differences in experiences and interpretations. In general, family stories and storytellers were highly valued in my immediate and extended family. We looked forward to times together where family stories were told, re-told, embellished and enjoyed. These experiences have shaped my attitudes and beliefs about war, military service and narrative research. In this way I was enculturated too, during this time. From my father's family, I learned that national service could be viewed as manly and honourable. From my mother's, that it was perceived as something you have to do if asked if there is no alternative and assisting in the war effort in other ways are valid alternatives. I also learned that war is complicated and leaves physical and mental scars that affect not only the returned defence personnel but also their families, through the generations in various ways. During this research project, I needed at times to remind myself to avoid bias, but my background also assisted me in creating the narratives from the children's data. This type of epistemological dichotomy can be explained to some extent by standpoint theory, outlined by Harding (1987) from a feminist perspective.

Some proponents of standpoint theory argue that socially constructed knowledge of a particular group may 'endow the subject with a privileged access to truth' that has been created in various ways (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002, p. 315). The example in this case would be the limited cultural knowledge and experiences of military families and service I experienced as a child. Conversely, other proponents of standpoint theory argue that those who don't have such knowledge are better able to identify and communicate the social behaviours, customs and attitudes a group has, because they are the outsider within the group (B. J. Allen, 1996) and enact change for social justice if needed (Collins, 2010). In my example, although there is some family history of military service within my extended family, I myself am not from a military family. Therefore, in some ways I fit into this outsider category, giving me a unique position to give voice to those within military families as described by Swigonski (1993).

1.3. Becoming involved with the ADF research field

In 2012, I was approached by a colleague who had a strong connection with families from the ADF through her two sons. One of her sons was still with the ADF at that time, although the other was unfortunately killed by an improvised explosive device (IED) in the Afghanistan war. Friends of her late son were having difficulties with their young children, who were struggling to understand what was happening during their parent's deployment. They complained to her about the lack of early childhood resources for defence families to assist with these challenges. My colleague invited me to write children's books for the families as a volunteer because of my early childhood educator background and because I taught pre-service teachers in the areas of working with families, creative arts and children's communication. In researching the books, I interviewed two defence families and found their narratives fascinating. Similar to my own family narratives, what they had to say was told through differing perspectives and nuanced in many ways. I decided to examine the literature and was surprised to find a need for Australian research and a dearth of research with young children globally. From this children's storybook project, the idea for a research project emerged.

1.4. Research focus

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) currently employs around 58,000 full-time personnel (Parliament of Australia, 2014). In 2012, over 85% of these were under 45 years of age, with over 60% aged 25–44 (Australian Government, 2017). This means that the majority of personnel have a young family, or are likely to start a family during their employment with the ADF.

Deployment occurs when personnel are moved away from their own base, which can either be elsewhere in Australia or overseas. Over 2000 service personnel are deployed at any one time overseas in active combat, strategic defence and peacekeeping operations (Australian Defence Force, 2013a), undertaking a variety of occupations in both combative and supportive roles. Many personnel are deployed in Australian border patrol within Australia, yet away from their base. About 64% have been deployed at least once previously (Department of Defence, 2010); however, this number varies greatly depending upon

Australian government policies on national and international situations. In May 2011, over 20% of personnel had been deployed within the last twelve months (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012). Deployment for personnel generally lasts three to nine months, but can be longer.

Repeat deployment is estimated at 22% overall, varying within each of the individual arms of the forces: 37% in the air force; 45% in the navy and 52% in the army (Department of Defence, 2010). Deployments include a range of challenges for both defence personnel and their families. The defence family member is generally granted leave once during deployment and may return home depending upon the length of deployment and the distance from home. Separation from families is cited as one of the major reasons for personnel leaving the ADF forces (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2012; Siebler, 2009; K. Thomas & Bell, 2007), although Hogbin (2002) believes more research in this area is needed for conclusive correlation of the effects of family and children on attrition rates. Both combat and peacekeeping deployments result in similar difficulties faced by personnel and their families (Siebler, 2009). Contrary to this, a number of commentators argue that Iraq and Afghanistan afford greater stressors overall due to the widespread use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) increasing the risk for traumatic brain injury (Boserio, 2013).

On their return, ADF personnel are confronted with a range of social and emotional adjustments. Difficulties arise both at home and within the ADF itself. Accessing appropriate support can be an additional challenge in a system still grappling with the changing face of war and a new generation of veterans (Crompvoets, 2012). Combat survival rates of up to 90% are higher now than in any other time in history, increasing the need for effective support for families as they deal with factors relating to deployment (McFarlane, 2009; Minton, 2008; DeVoe & Ross, 2012). The next section gives further contextual information about the ADF related to arenas of operation and service provision. Additionally, the reader may find the 'Definition of Terms' in the front section of this thesis may be useful as a reference point.

1.4.1. ADF context

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) reported that during the 2010–2011 financial year, Australia was the thirteenth largest defence spender in the world, with 2.1% of GDP allocated to defence expenditure. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is one of the largest employers in Australia and is made up of the airforce, army, navy, Australian Public Service (civilian personnel) and gap year (school leaver short-term) participants, bringing the total to over 100,000 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Service in the ADF and the reserves is through enlistment, not conscription. Personnel in the regular forces are typically employed in a full-time capacity, while reservists are generally part-time employees who usually juggle their ADF commitments with their regular career. Reservists number over 25,000 with over 1500 of these having part-time ADF careers. Reservists can be called to active service duty in times of need. Concerns about the ongoing capacity of the ADF to retain and recruit skilled staff have been expressed in the current challenging labour market (Department of Defence, 2012; K. Thomas & Bell, 2007).

At the time of writing, the ADF is currently involved in operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, Lebanon and other areas of the Middle East, Egypt, South Sudan, Southern Indian Ocean and other Australian maritime interests (Australian Defence Force, 2013a). Periodic operations can include the South China Sea and Indian Ocean, South West Pacific and South West Pacific Nations.

The ADF provides a range of services to families, such as reserved-place childcare through long day care centres, family day-care and after-school care in some areas, and also operates a number of their own centres at certain bases. Defence Housing Australia (DHA) provides housing for personnel and their families in a number of ways. Depending upon the availability, location and the length of time they will be stationed at a particular base, housing or accommodation may be available at the army base villages, or within a nearby town or city. Housing on a base provides close contact with other defence families for support and access to facilities that may include community centres with a number of services for children. DHA own over 18,000 properties and also lease properties from private clients. Long-term options for eligible personnel include purchasing their own property with subsidised loan assistance through the ADF (Defence Housing Australia, 2015). Other

provisions include limited financial funds for partner education and employment assistance depending upon rank and needs. The Defence Families of Australia (DFA) also provide assistance for families through newsletters, online materials and other support.

Support from DHA, has created difficulties for some defence families that have been identified in previous research. For example, Siebler (2009) identified concerns with hierarchy at the base housing community in line with the position of the ADF member of the family; for example, officers' families were considered far above privates' families. Other problems included lack of privacy and ongoing maintenance problems that were very slow to be resolved (Siebler, 2009).

1.5. Thesis structure

The outline displayed in Figure 1.1 gives a visual overview of this thesis to guide the reader. The literature review in Chapter 2 provides further information about the context, research gaps and resulting research question, while Chapter 3 covers methodology and describes the way the research was undertaken. The data was analysed into themes and these are presented in Chapters 4–6 and again in Chapter 7 with a separate set of data. Chapters 8 bring the two sets of data together and summarises the themes. Chapter 9, the reflections chapter, discusses where the findings are placed within the field and explores the implication of these findings. Finally, Chapter 10 contains recommendations outlining the way the findings might be applied.

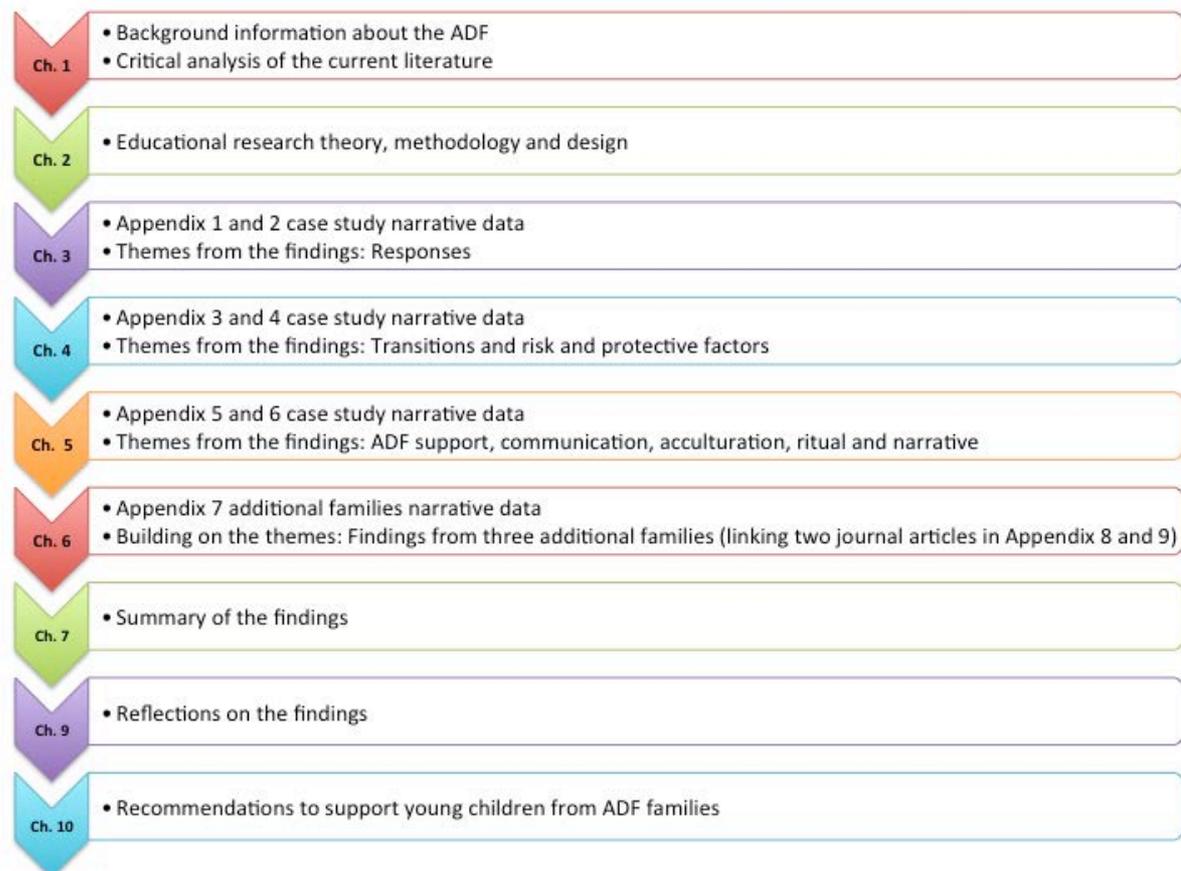


Figure 1-1: Structure of thesis

1.6. Personal goals

At a personal level, I hoped this study might provide me with a greater knowledge of what military children and their families experience and what strategies they employ to cope and survive. I anticipated this might inform me in my creation of early childhood storybooks and other resources for military children. I have always found storybooks an effective tool to open up discussions with children about matters that concern them. I anticipate the resources I have created might in turn provide parents with a starting point to openly discuss with their children their experiences and understandings about parental deployment. Furthermore, I hope that this thesis will be useful to those who make policy decisions and who work with defence children and families, enabling them to more effectively support them.

The next chapter reviews the literature in this research field.

Chapter 2. Critical analysis of the current literature

2.1. Introduction

In this chapter I discuss several previously documented difficulties families face during the deployment cycle, particular concerns for children, family resilience and benefits (financial and personal), along with the responses and strategies employed by both the ADF and the children's educators. The implications of these findings will be discussed, followed by the identification of gaps in the literature. To conclude, a research question will be identified with the intent to address this gap.

2.1.1. An overview of the challenges families face within the deployment cycle

Deployment is generally considered stressful for families (Palmer, 2008). Factors contributing to stress have been researched in the USA (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011) and to a lesser extent in the UK (MacManus et al., 2012), but very little research has been conducted with Australian families (Siebler, 2009; McFarlane, 2009).

Siebler's (2009) PhD thesis used a qualitative methodology to examine peacekeepers and their families' experiences during deployment, including their experience with social work, policy and practice. To answer the research questions, data was collected face-to-face via in-depth interviews with ADF families involving 76 participants comprising of 32 couples and 12 individuals. The data was analysed using NVivo 2.0 software resulting in very useful and enlightening Australian data. The thesis gives a balanced account of the challenges and benefits of a military lifestyle, the effects of deployment on the family and the successes and failures of the ADF structures in supporting them.

The Timor-Leste Family Study (McGuire et al., 2012) focused on Australian ADF families who managed to survive the system of deployment and remained with the ADF long after the Timor-Leste deployment, indicating a high level of personal and family resilience. Surveys containing both qualitative and quantitative questions were completed by 2,854 personnel and 1,332 of their partners. Partners were only invited if the personnel agreed for them to be

invited, reducing the likelihood of capturing a broad range of military family issues, especially from those who found deployment problematic. Interestingly, 24 ex-partners participated but unfortunately their data was excluded to protect their identity, although the data would likely offer some useful insight into partner relationships affected by the deployment cycle. It is a shame the data was not blended to assist with de-identification and then reported. The literature review afforded a relatively thorough review of the literature globally and the scant literature within Australia. While the study offers useful data in the areas of well-being and health indicators, it is limited in its ability to capture the broader picture because although ex-serving personnel were invited, the study does not seem to differentiate the data gained from current and ex-serving personnel. This means that the data from those who were resilient enough to remain with the ADF was most likely to subsume the data from the minority that participated in the study who had left the ADF. Similar to the Siebler (2009) study, the data collected about the children was from secondary sources only, not from the children themselves.

In other overseas studies, the majority of researchers have employed a deficit model, often from a psychological perspective. From these studies, the factors contributing to stress within the deployment cycle have been identified and summarised, and these are outlined in Figure 2.1. They include situations that occur during pre-deployment, deployment, leave during deployment and post-deployment phases. The stages are often blurred rather than discrete.

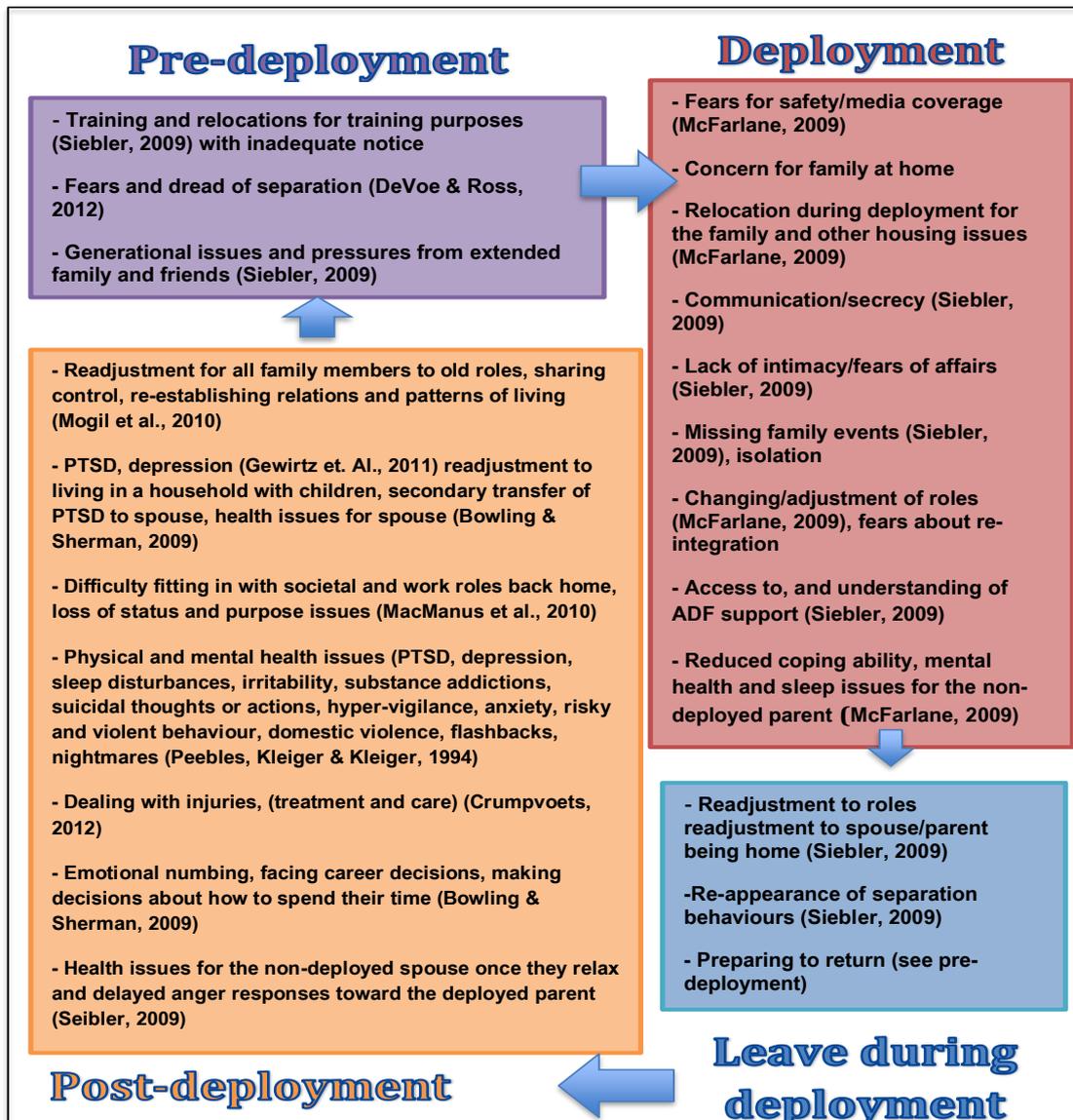


Figure 2-1: Challenges facing families during the deployment cycle

2.2. Challenges during deployment

During deployment there are a number of challenges for families. These include communication, family mobility and support, and deployment length.

2.2.1. Communication

Siebler (2009) reports that communication is seen as both a positive and a negative issue for families during deployment. Positive aspects include feeling closer to a partner and children by hearing their voices on the telephone, sorting through certain household situations, rekindling a degree of intimacy through private telephone conversations and reassurance for the family that they were safe. Protecting the deployed parent from family concerns by either opting for secrecy or downplaying particularly sensitive problems was generally encouraged in ADF family pre-deployment information sessions. This strategy is designed to assist the deployed family member to concentrate on the job at hand, rather than being preoccupied with household matters that may resolve themselves. Siebler (2009) reports that this includes diagnoses of illnesses among the parents or children. The negative aspects of communication were listed as queuing for phones, expensive calls, lack of communication during blackouts, privacy issues, fighting with family members on the phone and the timing of calls due to time-zone differences (Siebler, 2009). Since this study, the video-conferencing software Skype™ has also brought new opportunities and dilemmas for families. These include family members being able to observe and talk to the deployed parent relatively cheaply. Difficulties include access and time zone differences.

2.2.2. Mobility and family support

Other impacts, such as moving the family around to different military bases within the deployment cycle, also affect all family members and increase risk factors for families (McFarlane, 2009). The rates of family mobility are somewhat alarming, with a Families Survey in 2009 reported by the Australian Human Rights Commission (2012) revealing almost 10% of families had moved up to ten times, 26% had moved between four to six times and 42% had moved one to three times in their period of service. Siebler (2009) stated that family mobility affects children's ability to learn, offers few benefits for the children, and can undermine families' support systems. Changes in the children's wellbeing and difficulty accessing Defence support were cited as problems for some families, while isolation from extended families and their original communities was a major difficulty for affected families (Siebler, 2009). Children's increased insecurity of attachment to parents has been attributed to the disruptive nature of deployment (Medway, Davis, Thomas, Chappell, & O'Hearn, 1995). Contrary to this, other changes in living arrangements during deployment could

improve the coping abilities of the at-home parent. These changes included moving closer to relatives (funded by the ADF) and sleepovers with grandparents a few nights a week to assist the at-home parent (Siebler, 2009). This necessitates additional adjustments at the conclusion of deployment.

Defence Housing Australia provides accommodation, especially in ‘married patches’ (quarters for families), and was identified as a source of support for many families who were away from their extended family (Siebler, 2009). Issues of cliques, gossip and the inherited rank system of the deployed partner were cited, but overwhelmingly, families perceived these communities as places where they could be understood (Siebler, 2009). Community centres within the villages often had Defence Community Organisation (DCO) and family liaison officers conducting family social groups such as playgroups, recreation activities, craft and social events (Siebler, 2009). The centres are also places to seek additional advice and support, such as counselling. The villages often provided a swimming pool, media room or cinema, internet access and a church. Siebler (2009) noted that a number of families identified churches as another layer of support.

2.2.3. Length of deployment and multiple deployments

MacManus et al. (2012) found that any increase in the length of deployment resulted in a statistically significant increase in the levels of violence on return from deployment, including the likelihood of domestic violence (see the next section). Siebler (2009) reported poorer family outcomes with longer deployment and Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, and Richardson (2010) advocate for increased, targeted support for families affected by longer deployment or frequent redeployment. Contrary to these findings, a study by K. N. Lowe, Adams, Browne, and Hinkle (2012) did not reveal any significant increase in negative effects. Additionally, the Timor-Leste Family Study (McGuire et al., 2012) found that multiple deployments did not significantly affect the health and wellbeing of partners. This result is potentially skewed, as personnel who left the ADF after the first deployment, or were deemed mentally or physically unfit, were probably much less likely to be volunteer for the study. This is an important omission in the large study because the MacManus et al. (2012) study highlighted the increase in reported violence was higher in those personnel who had left the forces after deployment. However, McGuire et al. (2012) did concede that multiple

deployments did affect the non-deployed spouse's attitudes to the negative effects of deployment on both their spousal relationship and their perceptions of the negative effects on their children's health and wellbeing.

2.3. Challenges after deployment

The literature revealed a number of challenges families experienced after deployment. These included reintegration for the family (Andres & Coulthard, 2015), reintegration into the civilian community (Dekel, Wadsworth, & Sanchez, 2015), mental health, and access to support for mental health (Bowen, Martin, Mancini, & Swick, 2015), injuries (Siebler, 2009) and female veterans (Boserio, 2013). These are discussed in the following sections.

2.3.1. Reintegration for the family

Siebler (2009) identified the prevalence of challenges associated with reforming the family unit after deployment (see Figure 2.1). Also, Bowling and Sherman (2008) explain that these family readjustments require high levels of flexibility and communication. There needs to be willingness by the at-home spouse to relinquish total control and accept the other person's way of doing things again. Children have often gone through substantial periods of development (e.g., physical, social, emotional, cognitive) and adjustment while the deployed parent is away. To create a united front with the children, a re-moulding of parenting practices is required (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Ongoing matters about control are difficult for families to navigate (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). This may be due to the at-home parent's increased, or new-found confidence and reported personal growth (Siebler, 2009). They may be reluctant to relinquish their newly acquired influence and self-sufficiency to then start working again as a team, co-parenting effectively.

Discipline is often a concern for those returned service personnel who do not feel ready to take on that parental responsibility immediately. This can further test the patience of the at-home parent who has been without assistance for a long time and seeks immediate additional support. Conversely, others return home with unrealistic expectations about family compliance to strict rules to which they have been accustomed in the forces (Bowling &

Sherman, 2008). This aligns with the MacManus et al. (2012) study, which demonstrated a spike in both domestic and other violence outside the home (including verbal, emotional and physical) in the weeks and months after return from deployment. The intense emotions often experienced by returned service personnel may prove a challenge for self-regulation and for those with whom they live (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Many returned service personnel over-react to noise, especially the sudden noises that children often make, thus causing household frictions. This hyper-vigilance can also affect their readjustment within the broader community.

2.3.2. Reintegration to civilian life

Unchannelled residual aggression and rapid re-entry into life within a civilian community is a major and longstanding dilemma for a number of returned service personnel (Dekel et al., 2015; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994). Within their home community, for example, they report involuntarily reactions sending them into combat mode when a car backfires, or if there is a sudden loud noise. This can cause embarrassment in public to both themselves and their family, loss of confidence and the resurfacing of traumatic feelings. They can at times feel superfluous to their families and communities because the family seems to be coping without them (Bowling & Sherman, 2008).

Military parents often feel emotionally numb, guilty and tired when they return home, making it difficult to readjust. Emotional numbing is useful for service personnel in combat as it promotes better workplace functioning (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Readjustment to intimate relationships at home, and feeling the full gamut of emotional bonding, can be challenging. The at-home spouse and children often confine themselves emotionally as a self-protection device to assist them to cope without the deployed family member. Most families are able to release these emotional confines and reconnect again. Problems are ongoing when communication lines between family members are weak due to pre-existing problems or an unwillingness to explore each other's experiences. Bowling and Sherman (2008) explain the struggle many family members have with the factors discussed above, especially children, because they fear they might break down emotionally and are afraid of repeated deployments. Increasing the difficulties, a number of families deal with reintegration and redeployment preparation at the same time when back-to-back deployments occur.

2.3.3. Mental health

While resilience levels in military families are reported to be high, deployments create their own difficulties (Gibbs, Martin, Kupper, & Johnson, 2007). Deployed parents, at-home parents and the children are all affected. Deployments are related to stress and behaviour problems in children, which in turn increase the stress parents at home are experiencing. Gibbs et al. (2007) argue that parents respond to this increased stress with either creative positive behaviours or with dysfunctional responses (or a mixture of both depending upon their stress levels). Military families often display a range of risk factors associated with child abuse (Siebler, 2009), including family isolation from support networks, geographic isolation, frequent separations and job stresses. While a few studies have pointed to higher levels of child maltreatment or neglect, McFarlane (2009) stresses the necessity for caution when estimating the risks for children in military families and notes comparisons need to be made with non-military families in the same communities.

The mental health and anxiety level of the at-home partner is a vital determinant of family resilience, which highlights that effective support is needed (McFarlane, 2009). The effects on the at-home spouse will decrease with education from the ADF about the likely manifestations of stress and impacts on family relationships (McFarlane, 2009). The mental health of the ADF family member was strongly linked to the health and wellbeing of the spouse in the Timor–Leste Family Study (McGuire et al., 2012), adding weight to the concern of secondary transfer of PTSD to other family members. Returned military personnel are vulnerable to PTSD, which is an individual's reaction after direct or indirect exposure to extreme traumatic stress, usually involving intense levels of 'fear, helplessness or horror or disorganized or agitated behaviour' (O'Brien, 2004, p.3). Secondary transference of PTSD can occur in spouses, children and grandchildren through the knowledge of the trauma, care of the patient and empathy with them (O'Brien, 2004).

If secondary transference does not occur, other intimate relationship problems or mental health conditions for the spouse can present difficulties (Monson, 2005). PTSD increases the risk of domestic violence (McFarlane, 2009; MacManus et al., 2012) and is reported to affect as many as 30% of returned personnel (Boserio, 2013). In the United States, statistics revealed that the number of returned soldiers who committed suicide was much higher than

those killed in battle, with alarming statistics for those who had deployed multiple times to Afghanistan or Iraq (Boserio, 2013). This highlights the moral injuries of war and the true cost to the personnel who had been deployed, along with their families. Moral injury can also be difficult to address as it involves complex feelings of guilt (Sherman, 2010) and shame. It can also lead to loss of confidence in themselves, their role in the operation, their employer and their code of beliefs. Age, race, histories of violence and living arrangements are all cited as risk factors for domestic violence, so programs should identify these and intervene (McCarroll et al., 2003). Additionally, McGuire et al. (2012) identified domestic violence affecting both partners and children to be a problem for ADF families.

2.3.4. Accessing support for mental health

Getting returned service personnel to access assistance can prove difficult. Both stigma and deployment at short notice have been identified as major barriers to intervention programs being created and effectively utilised. Cromptvoets (2012) identified the fear of being deemed unfit to return to deployment as another barrier to intervention. There is an endemic distrust of any Department of Veteran Affairs support as personnel suspect they will report back to the ADF, hampering the advancement of possible career opportunities that deployment can bring (Cromptvoets, 2012). Combat duty in Iraq and Afghanistan is associated with high rates of mental health problems, which in turn, is linked with high attrition rates within the forces (Hoge, 2006) and a sharp rise in suicide rates amongst veterans in the United States (Boserio, 2013). Little research has been conducted examining the effectiveness of Australian programs and services for returned and current service members (McFarlane, 2009).

Overall, it is difficult to persuade ADF personnel to access support, and to a slightly lesser extent, ADF families. Most ADF personnel prefer to be self-reliant and are often reluctant to access support for themselves. Apart from stigma about mental health conditions in military personnel (Kawano & Fukuura, 2015), there is often an inability to recognise the support as either necessary or effective. While the uptake of support is still an concern, any programs or support services targeted to ADF families, rather than individual personnel, are more likely to be utilised. If the support can be viewed as effective for other members of the family, rather than just the service personnel, it is more likely to be accessed and treatment implemented. In turn, this increases the potential impact of the support (McFarlane, 2009) because it assists

personnel to avoid admitting they themselves require assistance. Contrary to this, Galovski and Lyons (2004) state that many military personnel are reluctant to involve their family in treatment because they are reluctant to believe their military service has affected their family. Particular families find it harder to access ADF support due to their diversity or complex histories. Female personnel and those with injuries face particular challenges that are outlined in the next section.

2.3.5. Supporting injured or female veterans

Physical and brain injuries present the family with new levels of difficulty when the service personnel return home (Dekel et al., 2015; Siebler, 2009). Apart from grief and loss, accessing services and treatment through the ADF can be fraught with problems. Siebler (2009) reports,

Given the potential for injury and severe mental health conditions on deployment, military families may have to confront the reality upon return of a member suffering from injury or mental illness. This may entail role changes from breadwinner to a secondary status and adjustment of family members in taking on caring roles (p.28).

Cromptvoets (2012) reports that female veterans seem particularly vulnerable in trying to access relevant support, as the system seems to be organised for male veterans from a different era. Military sexual trauma, sexual harassment, gender issues and maternal separation are reported as inadequately catered for, both at policy and practical levels (Cromptvoets, 2012).

2.4. Challenges children face

Children's lives are affected in many ways during the deployment cycle. The challenges are listed in Table 2.1 and are based on various research studies, including Agazio et al. (2012), Chandra et al. (2010), Chartrand, Frank, White, and Shope (2008), Engel, Gallagher, and Lyle (2010), McCarroll (2009), McFarlane (2009) and Siebler (2009). These studies suggest that children of all ages suffer from emotional, physical and cognitive manifestations of stress.

Table 2-1: Challenges affecting children and their families within the deployment cycle

Identified challenges from the literature	Stages and ages			
	Babies and Toddlers 0–2 years	Pre-schoolers 3–5 years	Primary schoolers 5–12 years	Teenagers 13–19 years
Increased sleep disturbances or nightmares	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fears for safety of the deployed parent		✓	✓	✓
Increased internalised behaviours	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased physical manifestations of stress e.g. bedwetting, clingy behaviour, physical outbursts, sickness	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased behavioural problems	✓	✓	✓	✓
Regression in developmental behaviours or milestones previously met	✓	✓	✓	
Decreased academic performance or ability to learn		✓	✓	✓
Increased display of emotions e.g. irritability, tearfulness, sadness, moodiness, whinging, attention seeking, impulsiveness	✓	✓	✓	✓
Use of avoidance strategies rather than dealing with the emotions		✓	✓	✓
Negative effects of family mobility and increased family stress	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased stress and mental health conditions	✓	✓	✓	✓

Cognitive behaviour programs are recommended by Friedberg and Brelsford (2011) to assist children and parents to cope with the effects of deployment. In the United States, researchers in the field of social work have called for the widespread implementation of Child-Parent-Relationship-Training which has proved to be effective there (Jensen-Hart, Christensen, Dutka, & Leishman, 2012). In Australia, various family support strategies are available, although access can be a major barrier (Crompvoets, 2012). There seems to be a lack of uniform accessibility, and it is difficult for each family to understand what is available, due to the communication, stigma and access difficulties as previously mentioned (Siebler, 2009). Additionally, Siebler (2009) notes that many ADF families report the resources that they are offered, or those available, are sometimes either age or culturally inappropriate, whereas Crompvoets (2012) highlighted the inadequacy of the timely distribution of information. Despite this, military children and families often display great resilience (J. Brooks, 2011),

and there are benefits that deployment brings, such as financial gain and potential promotion. These are discussed in the next section.

2.5. Overall resilience and benefits

It is important to note that many military families demonstrate great resilience at times and can identify a number of benefits that deployment brings. The increased income during deployment eases financial burdens, reduces family debt and curbs spending amongst personnel (Siebler, 2009). Once families are reunited, families who can create a shared sense of meaning through family stories are able to facilitate family cohesion. These narratives may be about deployment, combat, war and reunification (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). Military families are more likely to cope well if they can focus on the meaning of the sacrifices of their lifestyles (J. Brooks, 2011).

The non-taxable allowance for deployment is viewed as a large benefit that improves each family's financial situation. It is calculated on the amount of risk involved, work conditions and type of work, and as such, rates vary from \$56 to over \$200 per day with allowances for additional leave also accrued (Australian Defence Force, 2013b). Other positives for deployment as reported by ADF personnel include personal growth, increased time for reflection, new appreciation of their own country and job satisfaction in assisting people in need. While this is not the norm, a number of families find that their relationships with spouses actually strengthen after such a testing time, and relationships with extended family and friends improve (McGuire et al., 2012). Non-deployed spouses also report increased confidence, coping skills, stronger friendships and improved extended family ties. According to Bowling and Sherman (2008) most returned service personnel are able to reintegrate themselves well into their family and society within a reasonable amount of time.

2.6. Factors and services affecting resilience

Family resilience is generally attributed in the literature to strength in relationships, positive social ties and effective support strategies (see Figure 2.2). Individual character strengths, along with mental and physical health, influence these factors. These will be further discussed in the results chapters with particular reference to Bowling and Sherman (2008), DeVoe and Ross (2012); Faran, Weist, Faran, and Morris (2004); Gewirtz et al. (2011), McCarroll (2009), McGuire et al. (2012) and Siebler (2009).

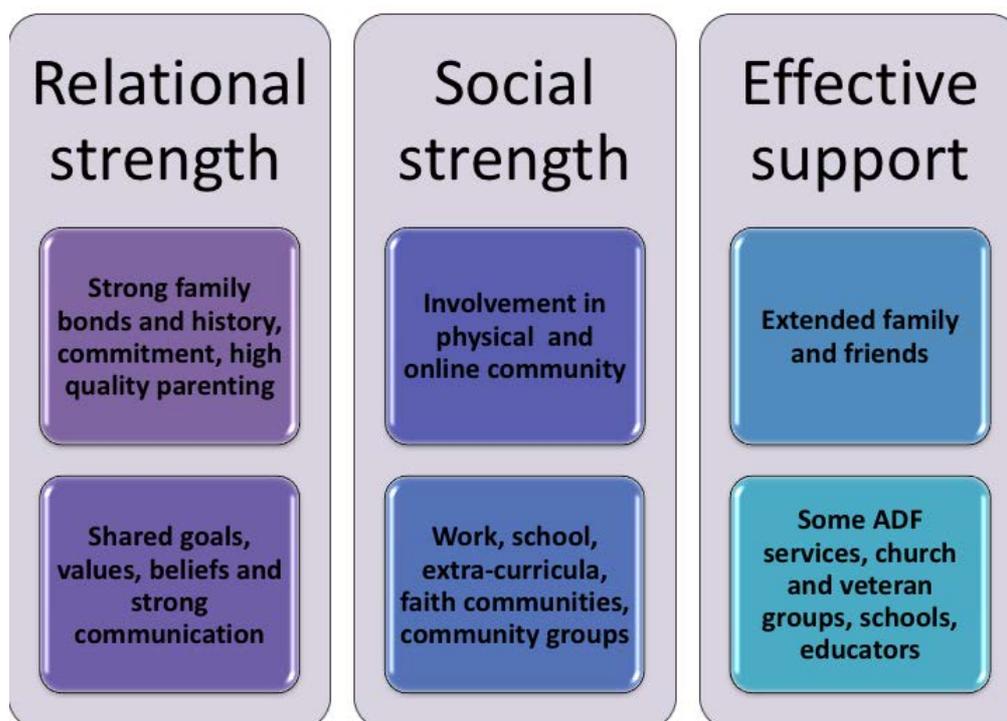


Figure 2-2: Factors influencing resilience

In military families, resilience typically involves strong links with extended family, a robust spousal relationship prior to deployment, strong family history, a solid faith and a durable basis of love in the relationship (Chapin, 2009). Indeed, ‘The family who can balance their physical and emotional needs as well as the needs of the military mission is viewed as the archetype military family’ according to Siebler (2009, p. 21). While this notion is popular, it can be a huge barrier stigmatising the effective utilisation of available support when it is required.

2.6.1. Responses and effective strategies employed by the ADF

Siebler (2009) identified six areas of support within the ADF for families. These are displayed in Figure 2.3 below, revealing most support focuses on the deployed and non-deployed parent, rather than on the children.



Figure 2-3: Various support structures and policies of the ADF
Adapted from Siebler (2009)

A review in 2002 into ADF support highlighted its disjointed approach and inadequate communication between parties (Siebler, 2009). Families and personnel are at times confused regarding which part of the organisation is responsible for problems as they arise and they are uncertain of the relationships between the different parts. While partnerships with veterans' associations and new organisations have been formed, effective implementation of these policies has been hampered by lack of staff. No coordinator positions were created and fragmentation remains, creating a maze of paperwork and disconnected services that families are required to navigate to access appropriate services. At times services are under-staffed, poorly advertised and unsuitable for families. Families are encouraged to be proactive in utilising existing community or volunteer support and resources because the ADF support is

limited by financial constraints. ADF chaplains or command personnel may form family support groups, host social functions, provide home maintenance, offer contact with families and other support, depending on which armed force is involved. This policy can therefore be very *ad hoc* in practice. For example, in a 2016 survey of ADF families revealed 54 – 81% of families did not know that pre-deployment information sessions were available to them (Department of Defence, 2016). What is offered to families within each unit is based on the time, attitude, focus and energies of individual staff members. Being faced with the emotional imbalance and outbursts from ADF personnel, secondary transfer of PTSD may also affect these staff members.

Due to commissioned reports identifying a need for greater access to quality support, the Defence Community Organisation (DCO) began in 1996 as the national social work organisation for the ADF. There are about thirty area officers situated near the bases and they report back to a Canberra control centre. Of interest to this study are the employed staff, who include regional educational liaison officers (REDLOs), civilian social workers, family liaison officers, military support officers and chaplains (who do not provide social work support ordinarily). They work to support families at all times, regardless of deployment status (Siebler, 2009). However, ‘The assistance offered by military family support organisations was variable in terms of quality according to interviewees’ noted Siebler (2009, p. 173). This in turn affects a spouse’s attitude towards their partner leaving the ADF. Tellingly, the Department of Defence (2016) Families Survey Report indicated only 30–40% wanted their spouse to stay in the ADF for an extended period or until retirement. The report also indicated a perceived lack of support from the Defence Community Organisation and a feeling of isolation when families faced difficulties during deployment and reintegration.

2.7. Responses and effective strategies employed by educators

A number of families in the Siebler (2009) study indicated that they viewed schools, preschools and childcare centres as a source of support and social networks. In a United States study, Harrison and Vannest (2008) recommended training for all educators and service providers to be aware of possible negative impacts on children’s wellbeing if they are not supported through deployment. Identifying the unique resilience needs of children from

military families, they believed staff should be trained in ways to assist children cope when deployment occurs. They recommended activities to increase children's ability to adjust and to provide an opportunity to reduce feelings of isolation by connecting with other children with similar experiences (Harrison & Vannest, 2008). Effective classroom supports for children included incorporating activities related to deployment into curriculum requirements in various subjects (e.g., history, social studies, technology, maths). Harrison and Vannest (2008) advocated the creation of a school-based 'Family Readiness Group' that meets once a fortnight to prepare students (and their educators) in the weeks before deployment. In the Middle East, educators have found that bibliotherapy (book-reading to assist with personal problems) has opened avenues of expressiveness during trying times and facilitated teachers' insights into military children's internal struggles (Hashemy & Hayati, 2012). Interestingly, there are very few educational based studies with children and educators within the body of literature. No early childhood study based in Australia was found. Since the commencement of my research, MacDonald (2016a) has reported on a new study at James Cook University that is focused on defence families during deployment and primary and high school teacher's interactions with students utilising REDLOs and other supports.

2.8. Ritual, acculturation and narrative

Children from defence families are often actively involved in national commemorative day marches and services, such as Anzac Day, Remembrance Day and other military anniversaries. These days are marked with many rituals, many of which are not fully understood by the children or the general public. The rituals do not require participants to understand everything to participate or for observance to be made; however, they add an element of mystery, heightening acculturation and the sense of identity that these events foster. Monrouxe and Poole (2013) state the development of identity is both personal and socially co-constructed and people often live up to the expectations the community places upon them. Within the ADF, for example, Siebler (2009) discusses the creation of an idealised stoic military family, who places service and sacrifice above individual and family needs and identities. Such expectations, roles and rules affect and regulate interactions within communities (Deaux & Martin, 2003), adding to the acculturation processes. To create this level of acculturation, narratives and meta-narratives are employed, alongside regular ritual events (Baber, 2016). Importantly, identities change over time among both children and

adults, although as humans, we tend to create relatively stable identities of others in our mind to simplify this complexity (Monrouxe & Poole, 2013).

2.9. Implications of literature findings

The predicted outcomes for children and families who are not able to display resilience are poor. Early intervention and support services during the critical reintegration process of the deployed parent back into the family are necessary (Bowling & Sherman, 2008).

Respondents in the Siebler (2009) study indicated that most military people were very reluctant to ask for assistance so social workers needed to display empathy and a more proactive role in offering support. Other suggestions included linking families to improve support, working with schools to assist the children, and utilising the internet to disseminate information and bringing people together. Further to this, Siebler (2009) notes that ‘It is critical that the Australian Government, policymakers in the Department of Defence and military family support agencies pay heed to their concerns and capture the voices of other family members such as children and adolescents that have yet to be heard’ (p. 299). Adding weight to the argument for a greater understanding of the stresses children and families face, Flake, Davis, Johnson, and Middleton (2009) conclude that the ‘Military, family and community supports help mitigate family stress during periods of deployment’ (p. 271). Jensen, Martin, and Watanabe (1996) highlights that ‘additional information from children, teachers, or other knowledgeable informants is necessary to determine the nature and extent of absence effects on children’ (p. 440), because parental information alone is an incomplete picture.

2.10. Gaps in the literature – identified area for research

McFarlane (2009) voices the necessity for research conducted in countries outside of the United States and especially research involving non-traditional families (single parents, separated or divorced parents, female veterans) who may not be able to access the support provided by the ADF, and families with increased needs. Siebler (2009) states:

The most pressing need for further research is children and adolescents. The lack of research in this area is a glaring omission from Australian military family research and urgently needed given the tempo and nature of contemporary deployments to 'theatres of war' such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Qualitative research would be well suited to interviewing children and adolescents. In the context of Australia's ongoing deployments, how are Australia's military children faring with respect to mental and physical health, education attainment, incidence of trauma and child abuse (p. 298).

While there has been significant survey research with United States families, the bulk has focused on the negative impacts of deployment (Siebler, 2009). He goes on to argue that 'The applicability of this research in the Australian context is questionable' (p.3), meaning that the results are hard to translate into a different country, culture and defence force.

McFarlane (2009) emphasises many gaps that include lack of research in areas such as:

- military forces other than the United States;
- family adjustment and the need for care within the ADF;
- non-traditional families, such as single parent families, families where the mother is employed, or families where a post-deployment separation has occurred;
- the different requirements for reservists versus families where deployment occurs in combat zones;
- the effectiveness of intervention strategies and programs to support veterans and their families;
- the improved take-up of programs and strategies by veterans when family members and children are involved (as it reduces stigma);
- the relationship between the amount of exposure to violence and suffering of the deployed parent and the behavioural differences once they are home; and,
- the ways in which the non-deployed parent adjusts to PTSD of their spouse.

Siebler (2009) adds weight to this argument, finding only two family Australian-based studies (from a social science perspective), unpublished, and of limited scope in this area before his own research (Kelley, 2000 and Power, 2000 *in* Siebler, 2009). He states that 'Australian military families have been almost entirely ignored in research designs, and knowledge about them is therefore scant' (p. 4). At the time of his research, no work had been conducted on the mental health of Australian military families even though the secondary traumatisation has been proven for over a decade, and deployments have increased

dramatically since 1999 (Siebler, 2009). The current Mental Health Outcomes Program study is hopefully addressing this (Department of Defence, 2010). No research into domestic violence and child abuse in Australian military families had been done before 2009, according to Siebler (2009). He also indicates that ‘No research has been conducted on Australian military families to determine whether children in military families are a high-risk group for developing mental health problems’ (p.32). Until 2009, Australian studies were limited to the mental health of the personnel during and after deployment, along with their experiences of obtaining support once they were back home. Families had not been included in these studies directly, although a few mention family-related issues. As a result of the Timor-Leste Family Study, McGuire et al. (2012) have recommended longitudinal studies to examine the effect of stress in different life stages of the families, research the effects of multiple deployments and the overall stress and loneliness experienced by family members.

Bowling and Sherman (2008) note the major lack of research in the reintegration area, making the problems more difficult for the development and implementation of effective support programs and services. They emphasise that there is even less research on diverse populations and families navigating reintegration. The bulk of military family research has been quantitative and from a deficit model (Siebler, 2009). To balance this, Siebler (2009) argues, there is a real demand for rich qualitative data to illustrate what experiences military families have during the deployment cycle, especially involving Australian families. Previous research has focused its attention on the negatives and stress factors associated with deployment for military families. Siebler (2009) reports that a number of researchers have called for a paradigm shift from a deficit approach to *strengths-based resilience research*.

Siebler (2009) notes, the most glaring gaps in Australian Defence research are with children and adolescents. He goes on to explain:

The findings of this study suggested children and adolescents struggle with many serious issues, and it is important to gain a fuller understanding of their experiences. As silent sufferers, children are not at the front-line of the Department’s family support response and are likely to be a population at considerable risk (p. 298).

Studies into Australian families affected by military deployment are scarce (McFarlane, 2009), especially by independent researchers. To date, research with Australian children who

experience deployment within their family is virtually non-existent (Siebler, 2009) and increasingly vital so we have insights into their experiences and understandings.

2.11. Research Question

From this literature review, I have highlighted the main challenges and understandings in the area of the effects of deployment on families and children. I also discovered the research gap in lack of understanding about children's experiences and understanding of deployment within the Australian context limits the way we can support these potentially vulnerable children and their families. To address this knowledge gap, I have formulated the research question:

What are young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family?

To best respond to this question, I have explored the aspects of educational research theory, methodology and design that are outlined in the next chapter.

Chapter 3. Educational research theory, methodology and design

3.1. Introduction

This methodology chapter unpacks the research question that has arisen from the literature review. It outlines a conceptual framework reflecting the current state of thinking about the importance of researching with children on challenges and services that affect them, such as education and care. The qualitative Mosaic approach that has been applied to examine the research question is discussed. Chosen data collection methods and selected tools are described with insights into the relative strengths and weaknesses of these methods. Data analysis techniques are outlined, along with important ethical considerations, and limitations of the study are discussed with reference to the relevant literature and legislation.

3.1.1. The importance for marginalised voices to be heard

There are important reasons why we as a society must to listen to children's views and perceptions on matters and services that affect them. While researchers aim to find ways to enhance the lives of children and their families, most research before the mid-1990s was focused *on* the child, rather than *with* the child, thus 'ignoring the views of children as active agents and key informants in matters pertaining to their health and wellbeing' (Darbyshire et. al., 2005, p. 419). Reporting on policies from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 2015), Lewis and Porter (2007) and Harcourt and Mazzoni (2013) advocate for children to participate and have opportunities to express their beliefs and ideas about situations that involve them. To listen to marginalised voices, a robust framework for research is required.

3.1.2. Theoretical stance

I believe the research question will be best answered by situating this study within an interpretivist epistemology. I believe that our view of reality and understandings of the nature of being in the world (ontology) (O'Toole & Beckett, 2013; Walter, 2013a) are influenced by each individual's differences, which would be described as a postmodernist ontology (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). My understanding of the nature of knowledge (epistemology) or 'how people know' (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 323) is that it is interpreted through human experience (interpretivist). Interpretivism rejects the belief of an independent reality that positivism promotes and stresses the importance of subjective understandings that mould our knowledge (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005). Additionally, interpretivism ensures the focus of the research is on the uniqueness of human understanding, intent, emotion and motivation, and it is assumed that meaning is a creation of people's experience of their world (Denscombe, 2002; Walter, 2013a). However, although it is interpretive and focuses on the child's experience, this research intends to create shared knowledge of the children's understandings and experiences in a manner similar to that explained by Israel (n.d.). That is, by using an interpretivist approach, shared knowledge and understandings are co-constructed (Hughes, 2001) between the children and the researcher by building insight into the child's experience and inviting discussions to take place about the experiences.

3.2. Research question and sub-questions

Research on Australian families affected by military deployment is scarce (McFarlane, 2009) and generally relies upon survey and interview data with the parents. To date, Australian research focusing on children who experience deployment within their family is virtually non-existent (Siebler, 2009), yet it is vital for insight into their experiences and understandings. By privileging children's voices in this area, I hope to increase our knowledge in this field, thereby assisting those who create policy and work with these children to support them more effectively. To reiterate, one key research question arose from the literature review:

What are young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family?

For this study, young means children from birth to five years. Also, the study seeks to examine children's experiences during the parental deployment cycle and what they understand about parental deployment rather than what they understand about their experiences.

The Mosaic research approach privileges children's voices through its unique and varied approach to listening to what children have to say. By using the qualitative Mosaic research approach, children's perspectives are gleaned in multiple ways, increasing the ability to develop and disseminate a shared understanding. The next section outlines the research aims and objectives.

3.2.1. Research sub-questions

The overriding aim of this research is to increase our awareness and understanding of children's experiences and understandings of deployment to ensure their perspectives are taken into account when decisions that affect them are being made. Additionally, further understanding should inform educators and practitioners who work with military children and families. Other sub-questions include:

- How do young children experience the challenges they face within the deployment cycle?
- How can we increase our knowledge of children's understandings of parental deployment?

Armed with this deeper, co-constructed knowledge, educators, the ADF, parents and other adults who care for, or work with, children at this vulnerable time will have a surer foundation on which to base their support.

3.3. Developing a framework for listening to children

The accepted framework adopted by Mosaic researchers focusing on children's participation is outlined in the next section, along with the extended framework that I employed in this study.

3.3.1. The existing framework

Qualitative researchers are generally interested in revealing information about how the participants in the study understand and feel about their experiences and related perceptions. Meaning, therefore, becomes a product of the individual's, or in this case, the child's experiences of the world, that are shared with the researcher, through co- construction. Horner (2016) defines co-constructed research as 'research that facilitates equal partnership in research between at least one academic party and one non-academic party' (p. 8). Children are traditionally considered limited in their ability to convey their understanding of their experiences, but a more recent reconceptualisation of childhood emphasises the rights and competencies of the child (Clark & Moss, 2011; Clark & Statham, 2005; Darbyshire, McDougall, & Scheller, 2005; Greenfield, 2011). The framework introduced by Clark and Moss (2011), describes a Mosaic research approach and it includes three basic elements about young children that are outlined in Figure 3.1.

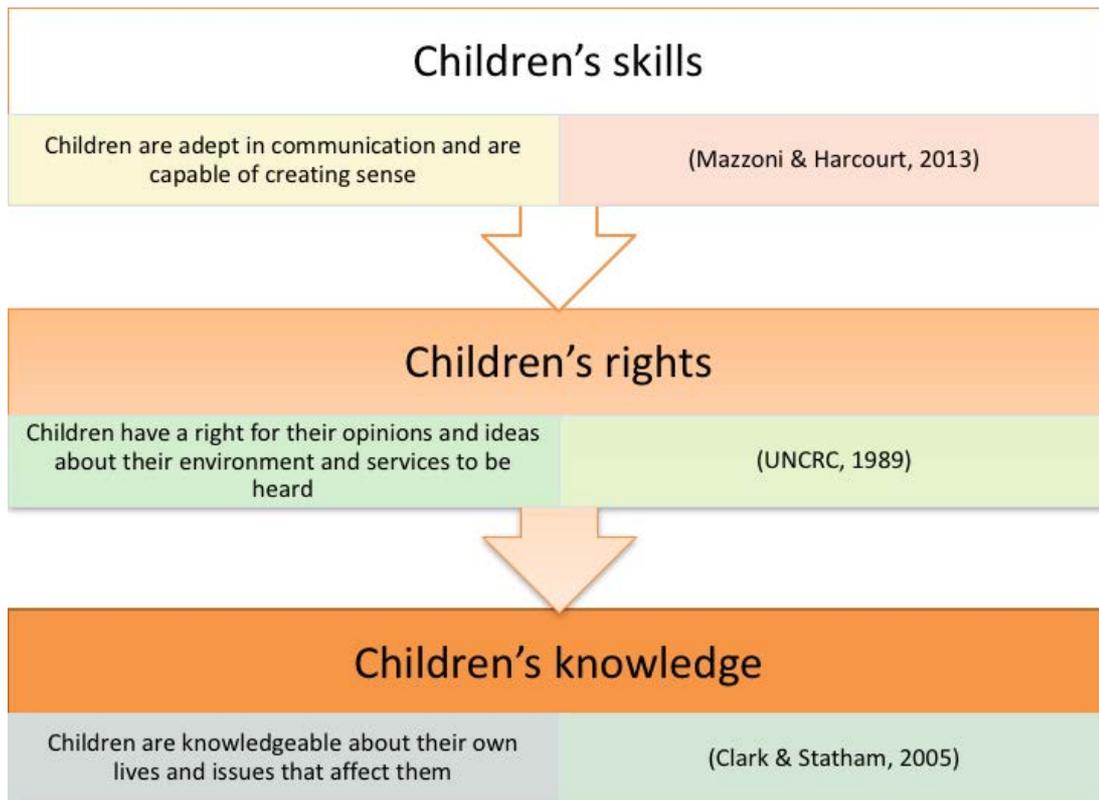


Figure 3-1: Framework for Mosaic research
Adapted from (Clark & Moss, 2011)

3.3.2. The expanded framework

I agree with the ideology of this original framework, but believe it needs to be expanded and clarified to include additional elements (see Figure 3.2). While concentrating on children, there seems to be little acknowledgement of the important role of parents and educators within the children's lives. The framework does draw upon the knowledge the adults in children's lives have. The expanded model links to the Figure 3.1 framework as depicted in the orange bubble. The green bubbles are areas I have added to the framework: elements of research power and the important role of caring adults in children's lives. Issues of *power* in research require a more complex approach than the one currently utilised in participatory research with children (Gallagher, 2008). Power should not be thought of as a commodity that demands equal distribution (Kesby, 2005). Participation itself is a type of positive power (Kesby, 2005) and Walker, Jones, Roberts, and Fröhling (2007) illustrate its ability to empower marginalised people. Indeed, Kesby (2005) goes further to say power is not 'inherently negative, limiting or repressive' (p. 2040). This is elaborated further in the ethics

section. Additionally, children live within the context of their family, community, educational and care settings. As such, the adults in children’s lives can give unique insights into children’s ways of thinking and being, or offer additional assistance with the verification of themes during data analysis. It is also beneficial for children (and the adults in their lives) to have their opinions heard, giving voice to the issues that affect them. Such research can be of use to policy and decision makers, which has also been added to the new expanded framework.

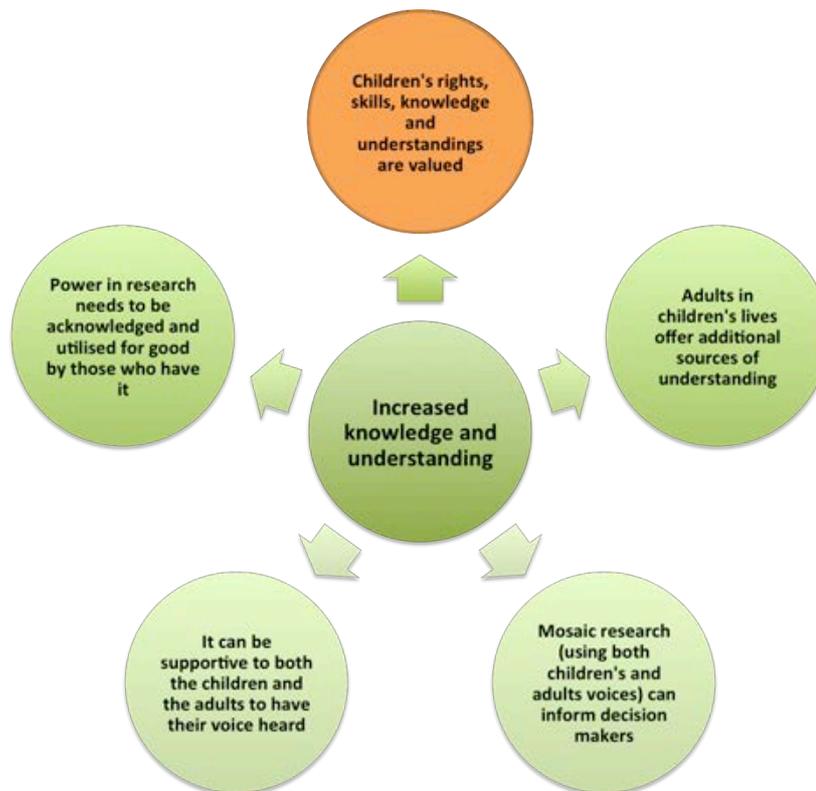


Figure 3-2: My expanded framework for listening to children's voices

The expanded framework will be explored further in the Chapter 9 Reflections on the findings. It will be employed as a basis for both listening to children’s voices and analysing their understandings and experiences. During data collection a range of qualitative research tools that have been implemented successfully by other Mosaic researchers, such as Greenfield (2011), were employed. In this study, these were utilised with a number of participants initially, then as a case study approach with children and parents at an early childhood service. Using a case study approach within various research methods helps the researcher to create a deeper study (Walter, 2013b) or to create a ‘typical or exemplary’

example (O'Toole & Beckett, 2013, p. 51). Case study 'focuses on individual instances rather than on a broad spectrum' (Walter, 2013b, p. 382). Details of the research tools are clarified in the next section.

3.4. The Mosaic research approach

Clark and Moss (2011) have explored multiple methods of qualitative data collection to elicit children's perceptions and perspectives for well over a decade. Mazzoni and Harcourt (2013) explain that in handing the research tools over to the child, researchers provide a way for children to demonstrate what they value in a range of expressive languages. Clark (2001) explains that:

The Mosaic approach brings together the tools of observation and interviewing with participatory tools to construct a composite picture or 'mosaic' of children's lives (p. 117).

A mosaic picture is made up of small pieces that should be viewed together as a whole, to make sense. Stepping back from the mosaic picture, one can view patterns or themes. Stepping back further gives enough distance and perspective to observe the whole picture clearly. Similarly, with Mosaic research, a synthesis of verbal, physical and the visual expressions of children means that rich data can be collected and analysed using thematic analysis. The richness of these data types, and the multiple forms of data collection, make the Mosaic research method ideal for examining the understandings and experiences of young children in regard to parental deployment. This is because Mosaic researchers are able to investigate the phenomenon from a variety of children's perspectives and in differing situations in their lives. Additionally, the research question aligns strongly with the underpinning principles of Mosaic research that are outlined below.

3.4.1. Underpinning principles

Mosaic research draws on various conceptual frameworks, including the Reggio Emilia approach (Malaguzzi, 1998), social research with disempowered populations as well as narrative and ethnographic principles (Clark & Statham, 2005). Mosaic research may, therefore, seem to be random in its tactics at times, but there are underlying values to the approach that are essential as philosophical underpinnings. These values involve

relationships, procedures and the benefit of ascertaining children’s ideas (see Figure 3.3). The overarching principles of Mosaic research are that the research should be beneficial for the educators and children (Greenfield, 2011) and endeavour to increase our understandings of children’s views about their world by listening to their often marginalised, voices. At this point, it is important to note that I believe empowerment is not a redistribution of power, but rather a strengthening of confidence by individuals and groups to claim their rights and to have more say (and responsibility) in their own lives (Oxford University, 2016), a view reflected in this reference.

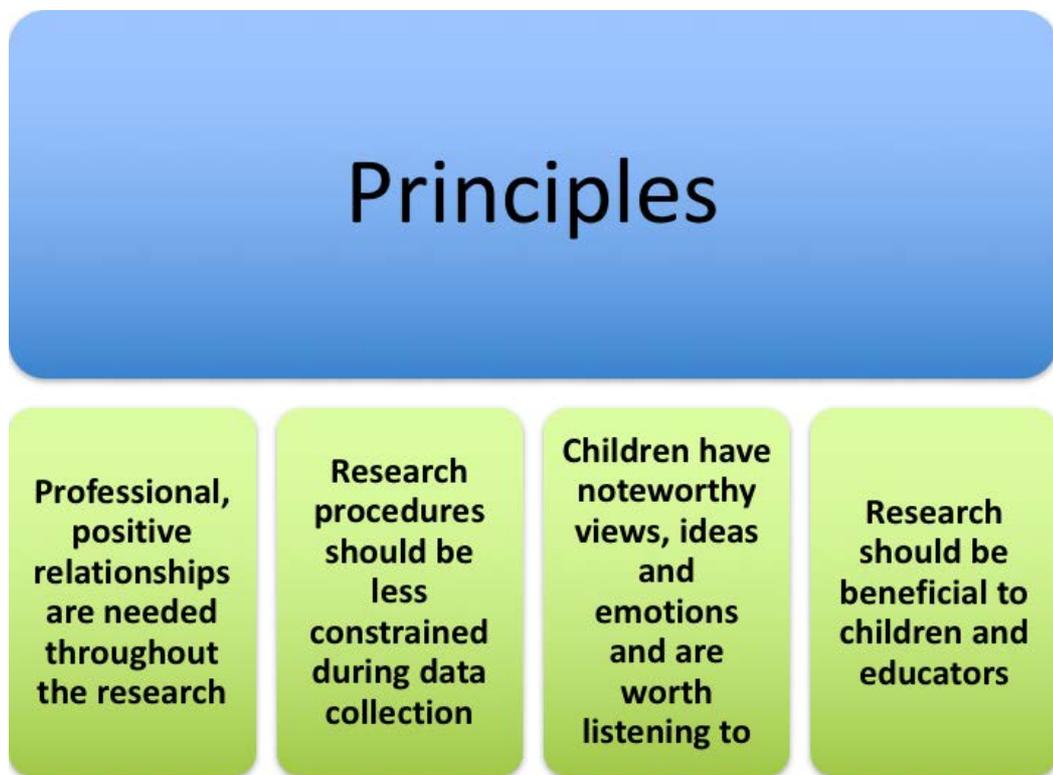


Figure 3-3: The philosophies of the Mosaic research approach. Adapted from (Greenfield, 2011)

3.5. Research methods

A vital consideration for qualitative researchers is their ability to portray the lived experience in an authentic way, that is, ‘flexibly, collaboratively and variously’ (Lewis & Porter, 2007, p. 229). Importantly, the interpretive paradigmatic approach I have employed here privileges the child’s voice. This type of emancipatory research concentrates on the participant’s own knowledges and understandings (Hartas, 2010). An interpretive approach to research means that children’s understandings are constructed through their knowledge and experiences of the world, facilitated by the Mosaic research approach. The selected research tools also enabled various ways for children to express their experiences and understandings at different stages of the research, both as individuals and through collaboration with multiple entry and exit points. That is, they were able to be involved in a selection of activities and not others, depending upon their attendance at the centre, and their interest in different methods of data creation. Flexibility and responsiveness to children is a feature of Mosaic research that assists with authenticity when working with children.

The following section offers an overview of the context, participants, procedure, preparation for data collection and the chosen research methods for this research. It also discusses authenticity, closure, flexibility and inclusion within this study.

3.5.1. The research context

Highlighted in the literature review was the necessity for Australian-based research, especially with how diverse families experience parental deployment (Siebler, 2009). Diverse families stand out as being a priority for investigation because these families may find accessing support through the ADF challenging and require more effective, targeted support (McFarlane, 2009). In this study, research was conducted in an early childhood centre near an ADF base to increase access to these diverse families. Diversity may have included families who were from different ethnic origins; Indigenous; single-parent, divorced or blended; dual-deployment families (two parents who deploy), and same-sex parents.

To sample across the full range of diverse families and reduce the likelihood of marginalisation (Kellet, 2011), the early childhood setting (called a centre in this research)

was purposely chosen to provide a larger cohort of potential research participants. To create the greatest opportunity for participant inclusion, the centre chosen:

- Was located nearby an ADF base where there was a cluster of children from ADF families;
- had a diverse range of families, and
- was managed independently of the ADF.

While all these requirements were met, only a few of the targeted areas of diversity were evident in the participant sample.

3.5.2. The research sample

Initially, I planned the research sample for this study to include only one participant group from one centre. It was anticipated participant children from this centre would be:

- between three and five years old, or a sibling of a three to five year old from the centre;
- have one at least one parent within an ADF deployment cycle; (That is, they were either currently deployed, about to be deployed or had been deployed in the recent past, that is the last eighteen months). The parent deployed could have been involved in combat, peace keeping, overseas or Australian deployment in any role. They may have been from any section of the ADF forces (e.g. navy, airforce or army) or related services (e.g. NATO, UN).
- have a non-deployed parent, guardian or grandparent who could provide consent;
- ideally include some types of families who have been previously omitted from such studies, including single parents, ethnically diverse families, Indigenous families, blended families and families with same-sex parents.

Ultimately the sample included two children who were 2.5 years old but were able to express themselves verbally. The parents had expressly asked if they could be involved in the study because they were experiencing parental deployment or lengthy parental training. There were no dual-military families and all families identified as heterosexual. There were no families who identified as Indigenous, although one educator did. There was one single-parent family in the sample, and one parent who identified as having ethnic diversity within their heritage, although the family had been in Australia for a number of generations.

Initial and secondary data was collected with all of the children from the centre who met the criteria listed above. Also, a small sample of six children was selected from the initial group for additional case study data collection. They were chosen on the basis of their parents or carers assenting to being involved in further research, their diversity and on their initial responses.

As the study evolved over time, to increase diversity, an additional three families were included in the research. The families were from three different military bases and different geographic states. Also included, were a family who had left the ADF and another family who had experienced the death of a parent on deployment, providing rare data. I did not work with the children in these families, although I did meet with them and recorded observations. A narrative research approach was employed for data collection for these three families, which will be discussed further within this chapter. In summary, while the study aimed to be as inclusive as possible, the availability and willingness of families was a limiting factor in regard to sampling.

In summary, nineteen children were included in the study, from eleven families. The participants in the study consisted of:

- six case study children at the centre (more detail provided in Table 3.1)
- four other children at the centre
- the non-deployed parent of each of these children
- four siblings of these case study children (secondary data)
- five children from the additional families (secondary data)
- parents from the three additional families

The additional three families were interviewed in places that suited each family at the time, which included their home, a restaurant and a park. These three families continued to communicate via phone and email during the project to update me on what was happening in their family.

3.5.3. Summary of the six case study children

Information regarding case study children's family structures and their experiences with deployment and training is summarised in Table 3.1 and explained further in this section. After the first day of data collection, Blake said goodbye to his father who then drove away, leaving for a six-week training session in central Australia. On the second day of the data collection, Emily experienced taking her father to the airport as he left for a four to five-month deployment to the Middle East. This was her first experience of parental deployment, although both Emily and Blake had already experienced parental absence during lengthy training sessions. Both Emily and Blake's mothers worked full time and had the major

caregiver roles at home. Additionally, Blake has a sister Bella (2.5) who was Emily's friend at preschool and also a case study child.

When data collection commenced, Bethany's father was half way through a six-month deployment in Africa, whereas Cassie's father was on a seven-week training session within Australia. This was Bethany's first experience of parental deployment, although her older sister experienced it as a baby. Both Bethany and Cassie have experienced lengthy parental absences for military training. Cassie has a younger brother Oscar (8 months), and their mother worked full-time. The family employed an au pair to help with the children. Bethany has an older sister Nancy (9) and brother, Ule (6), and their mother worked full-time.

Bella and Jack's experiences with parental deployment and training are summarised in Table 3.1, which also gives insight into the family make-up. At the time of data collection, Jack was experiencing the end of his father's fourth deployment since he was born. On the second last day of data collection, Jack's father arrived home from an eight-month deployment. Jack's mother worked full time so he was enrolled in full-time childcare in the centre at the base. Bella was also enrolled full time with her brother Blake, as their parents both worked full-time. There had been no parental deployment; however, their father was being prepared for deployment and this had included lengthy training sessions away. As mentioned previously, their father left the day after data collection commenced.

Family information about other participant children is also provided in Table 3.1. Also mentioned in the narrative retelling of Bella's and Blake's data are Natalie (3), Andrew (4), Toby (2) and Ivan (3). Natalie experienced her father's deployment when she was a toddler, but her mother said Natalie did not remember much about that time. Andrew and Toby are brothers and both experienced parental deployment about eighteen months previously. They have a baby brother Justin. Ivan experienced his father's deployment when he was a toddler but his mother reported he did not recall much about this. Themes from the data for these participants are summarised in the next section. The additional three families will be introduced in Chapter 7.

Table 3-1: Family information for participant children at the centre

Child, age and position in family	Family make-up	Experience of deployment / which parent deployed	Lengthy training sessions	Case study	Notes
Emily (2.5) only child	Father, Troy, Mother Lara	Currently experiencing first deployment – Father deployed during the data collection period for 4–5 months	Yes	Yes	The father has deployed multiple times in the last 27 years. The family experienced two other deployments before Emily was born.
Blake (5) and Bella (2.5)	Father Quentin, Mother Fern, Bella (2.5) (case study child)	Nil	Yes	Yes	The father is being prepared for deployment and is likely to deploy in 2014.
Jack, 4 years, only child	Mother (Leanne) Father (Paul)	Fourth deployment in four years.	Numerous	Yes	Jack's father has been deployed for combined total of over two years since Jack's birth
Bethany (4) youngest child	Father, Peter, Mother Queenie, Nancy (9) and Ule (6)	Currently experiencing first deployment . Father was deployed for 4–5 months, including the period of data collection	Yes	Yes	The father deployed for 6 months when the oldest child, Nancy, was 6 months old. The family has experienced multiple relocations.
Cassie (3) eldest child	Father Davin, Mother Wendy, Oscar (8 months)	Nil	Yes	Yes	The father was the major caregiver from when Cassie was 6 months to 2.5 years when they moved to the USA for Wendy's work. Both parents will be engaged in lengthy training sessions within the near future.
Andrew (4) and Toby (2)	Mother (Veronica) and father, (Lewis) Justin (1)	Once (father) but he returned 12 months prior to data collection	Yes	No	Andrew remembers his father's deployment, whereas Toby remembers events that happened during that time and can link the two.
Ivan (3)	Mother (Tahlia) and Father (Alex)	Once (father)	Yes	No	Ivan was a toddler when his father was away. The mother is the primary caregiver.
Natalie (3.5)	Mother (Lisa) and	Once (father) who returned 12 months	Yes	No	Natalie finds it difficult to remember the deployment.

Child, age and position in family	Family make-up	Experience of deployment / which parent deployed	Lengthy training sessions	Case study	Notes
	father (Owen)	prior to data collection			

3.5.4. Procedure

This study involved a number of implementation stages:

1. initial organisation
2. a phase of acquaintance with the participants
3. initial data collection
4. narrative data write-up
5. initial thematic data analysis
6. secondary data collection including case study data collection
7. secondary data analysis and case study analysis
8. narrative data collection with the three additional families (parents only)
9. narrative data write-up
10. thematic analysis
11. thesis writing

The first three stages listed above are explored in greater detail in Table 3.2. The next section details data collection, which involved a number of the multiple qualitative tools favoured by Mosaic researchers.

Table 3-2: Procedure

Stage	Task	Steps involved
1	Identifying the research centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sought advice from the ADF about suitable research sites. - Approached possible preschools or centres with information about the study, the intended participants, including written and verbal discussions about the nature of the research, the ethical considerations and the consent process.
1	Identifying the participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provided Participant Information Letter to the centre for their distribution to the applicable families identified by the centre staff. The consent form was given to the non-deployed parent by the centre staff and included an information sheet and contact details for further clarification. Families who consented were provided with additional information about the study and the planned timeframe. The centre staff were notified that we would accept all eligible families for inclusion and that we hoped to promote diversity within the study group. No family was under any pressure to join the study. Moreover, children participating were asked to give assent before each activity, regardless of the parental consent. (This is discussed further in the ethics section).
1	Informing other families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Notified all families that the study was taking place in the centre and what activities they may observe occurring around data collection via a General Information Letter. The letter also informed them that their child may choose to participate in parallel activities, but that none of their personal data would be collected purposely, and no identifying features would be included.
1	Building relationships prior to data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Familiarisation with the setting, routines, activities, children, staff and families at the centre was achieved by joining in activities with the children within the centre as recommended by Harcourt and Mazzoni (2013), spending time with the children. Relearning the many languages and intelligences of children helped this process. Successful data collection in Mosaic research is dependent upon an authentic relationship between the researcher and the children and significant adults in their lives (Greenfield, 2011; Harcourt & Mazzoni, 2013).
2	Data collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commenced data collection and data analysis.

3.5.5. Data collection tools

By using multiple methods of data collection, I gathered insights into children’s experiences and observed different ways of experiencing phenomena from different perspectives as recommended by Darbyshire et al. (2005). The broadness of qualitative data collection in Mosaic research enhances research findings, as described by Darbyshire et al. (2005). In this study, various data collection tools were employed to ensure the nuances of children’s lived experiences of deployment were expressed.

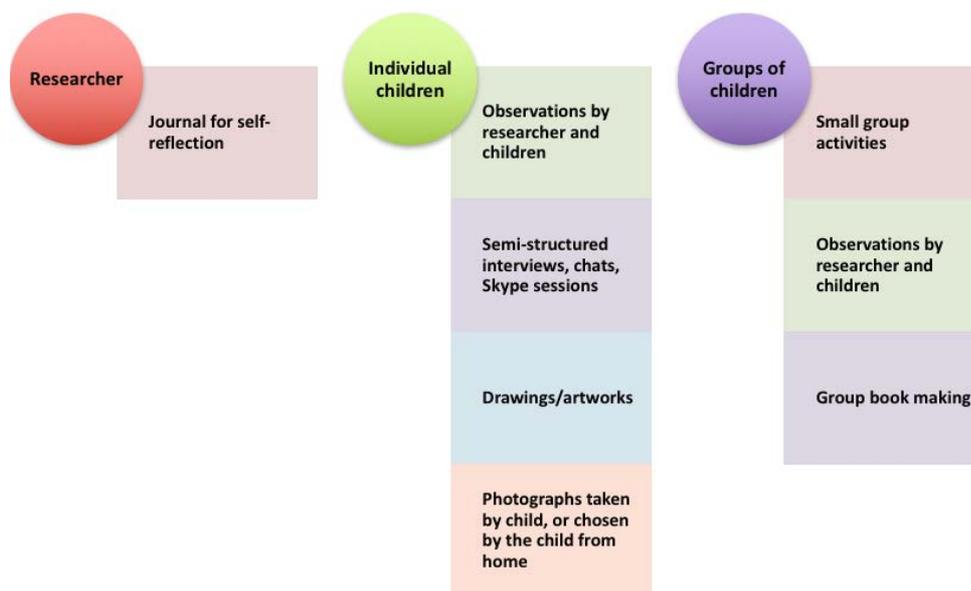


Figure 3-4: Data collection tools for researcher, individual children and groups of children

At the centre, data collection tools were utilised during sessions with both individual and groups of children each day. I timetabled the activities to suit the centre’s activities and the children’s interests. This meant that I arrived at the centre very early each day, because most children arrived at around 6.30 am. Most activities were scheduled in the morning before and after morning tea. I was also able to also organise a small group activity in the afternoon. Groups of children were selected to include participants and sometimes non-participant friends also joined in, although their data was not collected. The involvement of peers was necessary because the children had strong peer relationships and often wanted to be involved in the special research activities. Additionally, I maintained a self-reflection journal (see

Table 3.3) to record my journey, reflections, observations, questions, plans, wonderings and challenges. These journal notes were later entered into a word document and used as part of the thematic analysis as well as a reference for presenting the data in narrative form. The journal informed my thinking but is not referred to throughout the thesis. All above-mentioned tools were utilised, except the group book-making activity did not eventuate. Instead, a group rap recording was created. Additionally, the children's parents took a few photographs because their child was in the photograph. The techniques, timing and rationale for data collection are explained in more detail in Table 3.3.

Table 3-3: Data collection details, tools, timing and rationale

Data collection tool	Explanation/ Procedure	Proposed Timing/ Place	Rationale and issues
Journal for self-reflection	- Maintained brief professional reflections that were included as data.	- Continuous process before data collection, between each data collection episode and during analysis.	Greenfield (2011) explains the necessity of journaling in qualitative participatory research. I thought it would be useful in the data analysis and write up stage, so I wrote in it before, during and after each day of data collection. I found I revisited the journal many times.
Semi-structured interviews, chats, (some were audio recorded)	- These were child or researcher initiated. They included prompts such as photos or drawings.	- Occurred in the centre.	Open-ended questions and statements were constructed using the Mosaic framework for child conferencing (Clark & Moss 2001; 2005).
Observations	- Researcher notes taken during and after data collection episodes with the child.	- Occurred when children were participating in group activities, educator and family conversations, or individual data activity.	Child observations are an integral piece in Mosaic research as they facilitate the researcher's initial listening to the child (Clark & Statham, 2005). They serve to validate data and add richness to the overall mosaic picture.
Drawings and/or other artwork	- Children were invited to engage in open-ended drawing/collage/ painting activities related to 'deployment'.	- These were available at the centre during specific sessions.	The younger the child, the less able and favourable it is to rely on verbal responses (Clark & Moss, 2011).

Data collection tool	Explanation/ Procedure	Proposed Timing/ Place	Rationale and issues
Photographs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Taken by the child with the disposable camera provided. 'Camera packs' that contained instructions given to the child and non-deployed at pick-up time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Where ever possible, when the 'camera pack' was returned, I chatted about the photos with the child. 	<p>Clark (2005) believes that cameras are a participatory device that young children can use to relay their understandings and experiences. As all children will want access to a camera, access should be provided for each child involved (Darbyshire et al., 2005). Packs were rotated between families.</p>
Small group time activities (audio recorded)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Art work, learning web and story book-elicitation to promote conversations and interviews. - Puppet skits and stuffed animal play - Simple role playing, action songs, movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Story books written by the researcher about deployment, (yet to be published), were employed to create discussion, along with pictures and photos - Following on from the books, the children engaged in puppet skits acting out a selection of the themes, events and emotions portrayed in the books. 	<p>Researchers must be imaginative and accommodating (Darbyshire et al., 2005). The use of puppets (Cunningham, Walsh, Dunn, Mitchell, & McAlister, 2004) and role playing (Clark and Moss, 2011) with young children can be very useful in data collection. 'The more creative the tools, the more likely adults are to build up a clearer picture of young children's perspectives' (Clark, 2001, p. 339).</p>

3.5.6. The roles of the researcher and children

In this study, the role of researcher was shared with the participants by inviting the children to take the reins sometimes and become co-researchers. This tended to happen most days with the older children, who had the verbal skills to adapt the activities of the group. With the younger children, it happened only very occasionally. The researcher also assumed the role of participant when the need arose to enter into the world of children's play or activity. To assist with this role, the 'show me' method was utilised, whereby I asked the children to demonstrate to me what they were doing or explain what was meant. The role of 'authentic novice', preferred by Clark (2010, p. 120) was also employed, whereby I sought to gain a deeper understanding of the children's thinking by asking appropriate questions to elicit their responses, seeking clarification and confirm concepts and themes. These themes were often

arrived at by listening to common phrases in the children's discussions and comments and repeated subjects within their art work. Interviews and discussions with parents and educators provided further themes.

I noted that the co-researcher role of children changed according to their strengths and preferences. Knowledge was produced through co-construction between the children and the researcher through both data collection and data analysis tools as recommended by Clark and Moss (2005). Rather than adults solely facilitating, supporting and scaffolding children's learning and knowledge construction, I as an adult also became a co-learner (Clark, 2010). This aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivist research is based on the premise that a researcher and participant are linked by their knowledge and understandings of their experiences. They cannot be separated from this knowledge, but can negotiate shared understandings of their worlds. Researchers employing an interpretivist approach acknowledge the subjective nature of both their and their participants' understandings and knowledges; however, by exploring them together, greater understandings of reality are reached (Hughes, 2001). Within this study, children and adult participants as co-researchers validated analysis of children's experiences. There was, however, an element of adult researcher interpretation that limited the findings.

3.6. Narrative research

Data from three additional families were collected using narrative research methods (see Appendix 7 and Chapter 7). Narrative research studies the stories people tell (Polkinghorne, 2007) but emphasis is placed on the meaning behind the stories participants recall about events that have occurred. The meaning created by narrative brings together humans' experiences and behaviours (Polkinghorne, 1986) and how they relate to each other and other living things. Stories that we tell are embedded in our socio-cultural traditions and beliefs (Moen, 2006) and membership of the culture requires a general knowledge of the collection of narrative meanings (Polkinghorne, 1986). In fact, there has never been a culture that does not have narrative according to Barthes and Duisit (1975) because the experience of humans is always narrated (Moen, 2006). The objective of narrative research is to give us insight into the life of the participant, valuing their experiences and providing an opportunity to view life from a different perspective. (Reissman, 2008) asserts the goal of this type of social research is to view human experience in a way that provides insight into the meaning of life at the

time the participant tells their stories, producing intense human value. Polkinghorne (1995) explains that the researcher uses narrative analysis to produce assembled stories in an attempt to explain the 'events and happenings' of the participants (p. 5).

3.7. Reporting all data through narrative

Holloway and Freshwater (2007) report on the difficulties researchers have in choosing the words, style and interpretation when writing up data in narrative form. Indeed, the audience only has access to the researcher's imitation of what the participants have communicated (Reissman, 2008), creating ethical and validity problems. Although the researcher is the master artist, the participants have also influenced the final narrative (Holloway & Freshwater, 2007), although researchers undertake narrative enquiry in order to report on an aspect of humanity, rather than for their own pleasure (Polkinghorne, 2007). It is important, however, for the researcher to address the validity of their research in narrative enquiry, as in any other form. Narrative researchers are examining narrative truths rather than historically accurate truths, allowing the audience to judge the worth of the research, according to Polkinghorne (2007). Importantly, the rich storied experiences allow the researcher to portray the richness and nuances of the participant's experiences (Polkinghorne, 2007). Additionally, assembled narrative stories are more easily translatable and of interest to a wider audience than traditional academic communities (see Appendix 7).

In this study, data from the children was divided and reported in narrative form for each of the six case study children (see Appendix 1–6). Other children from the sample were included in the narrative retelling of the data for comparison and contrast. (Reissman, 2008) asserts that not all participants are able to solely use spoken language to tell their story, and therefore rely on other methods. Narrative retelling of data allowed for the small pieces of data collected through the Mosaic approach to be reported in a coherent story for each case study child. Data for the three additional families was compiled into a magazine style narrative, with distinctions between the families.

Wertz, Nosek, McNiesh, and Marlow (2011) explore the difficulty of the task for researchers when writing up data in narrative form. They explain the necessity to find a texture and

structure to provide ‘the fullness and richness of the experience to the reader so that it is alive’ (para. 3). In the appendices, the reader will find the narratives written in various voices to suit both the story of the child and the type and detail of data the child and non-deployed parent created. For example, Emily (2.5) created many small pieces of data, while her mother and the educators were able to fill in many of the details. Hence, Emily’s narrative best suited a layered approach, while most were written in a direct style. A few of the narratives were written in first person, while others were in third person.

3.8. Data analysis

The following sections explore the analytic strategies employed, including thematic analysis, thematic verification, case study analysis, photographic and drawing analysis.

3.8.1. Analytic strategies including thematic analysis

According to Clark (2001) the stages in Mosaic research analysis (see Figure 3.5) are not necessarily linear and can be revisited throughout the research process. In this study, data analysis was conducted in phases, both during and after data collection as in other qualitative research studies (Thorne, 2000). Data analysis is often described as a coordinated quest for meaning (Leech & Onwuegbuzie, 2007), which is a rather misleading description for such a seemingly messy and time-consuming task. Braun and Clarke (2006) describes thematic analysis as ‘poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used analytic method’ (p. 77). A benefit of thematic analysis is flexibility, however it involves a number of complex choices by the researcher. Decisions I needed to make were: what to include as a theme, whether to focus on all of the data, or a small part of the data in more detail, whether to use inductive or theoretical analysis, whether to use semantic or latent themes, and whether to analyse data using realist or constructionist epistemology, as described by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I chose themes that seemed that added to the research field or was pertinent to the research question, I used all of the data, inductive analysis, latent themes and constructionist epistemology. These choices are depicted in italicised text in Table 3.4.

Table 3-4: Decisions involved in using thematic analysis (Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006)

Decisions using thematic analysis		
Choosing themes	Frequency of theme	<i>Importance of theme in relation to the field and research question</i>
Focus of analysis	Some of the data	<i>All of the data</i>
Type of analysis	<i>Inductive</i>	Theoretical
Type of themes	Semantic	<i>Latent</i>
Epistemology	Realist	<i>Constructionist</i>

In this study, all data was documented in a narrative form. For the six case study children, data from two were compared and contrasted at a time during the initial stage. This provided both a concentration of the very large amount of data and facilitated ease of case study comparison. Sometimes data contrasted with other case study children’s experiences and understandings. Indeed, Stake cautions researchers to avoid only focusing on those characteristics of the case study that can be compared and therefore potentially missing the richness the case study data provides. Within each narrative write-up, other participant children’s data were also included to add richness to the findings and to highlight themes. After this initial binary analysis, data was then presented in themes including all children at the centre, for the results chapters 4–6. For the additional three families, narrative write-up involved all three families. Thematic analysis using the socio-cultural model designed by Bronfenbrenner (1986) was applied using existing themes while searching for additional ones.

Urie Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) socio-ecological model provided a useful model for child development in his seminal text, ‘The ecology of human development’. This model consists of the child at the centre of a number of concentric layers, starting with the microsystem. Within the microsystem are the people and settings the child has frequent contact with and therefore the most influence on, including family, peers, educators, faith groups and health

workers. It is important to note that the child is not passive and will also influence and impact upon those within the microsystem and other systems. The level of congruence between those in the child's microsystem is termed the mesosystem, referring to how well the microsystem elements work together for the child's best interests (Grace et al., 2016). Within the next layer, the exosystem, are settings and people the child does not have frequent direct contact with (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These may include extended family, parental workplaces, government and community organisations. Within the outer level, or macrosystem are the culture, economy and global issues that affect the child. The changes over time are termed the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) that include changes in circumstances and developmental changes as the child matures.

Applying Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological model assisted me to position the child within the contextual layers of influence within their lives, including family, peers, services, community, parental workplaces and Australian society. Importantly, these layers are influenced by the child themselves according to temperament, age, gender, health and other variables. These contextual layers include the microsystem, in which people the child will have frequent contact with have a significant impact on their lives. This would include family, peers, educators, faith groups, neighbours and health services. The level of congruence between the players within the microsystem is called the mesosystem (Grace et al., 2016). The next layer of influence is the exosystem that includes family friends, neighbours, local government, parental workplaces and the media. Following outward from this is the macrosystem, including the Australian government, global events and the cultural beliefs and norms. The passage of time is also depicted as the chronosystem, indicating the changes that occur as circumstances change, events occur and children develop.

During the thesis writing stage, I selected specific data to illustrate a point, rather than displaying all of the data as explained by Glaser (1965). Thesis writing is an additional analysis tool in itself because of its usefulness in clarifying the thoughts and understandings of the researcher, as described by Dey (1993). I followed the analysis model proposed by Clark (2001) illustrated in Figure 3.5.



Figure 3-5: Mosaic research analysis Adapted from (Clark, 2001)

3.8.2. Thematic verification and case study analysis

All children were invited to discuss their data and the interpretation of data with the researcher. Additionally, assenting children revealing interest and attention to data analysis tasks were asked to assist during this stage as a way to verify themes, or recurring patterns of data. This involved small group activities such as reviewing photos, artworks and other types of data (refer to Table 3.3). This was at times difficult to manage because it was a time-consuming process in which a few children were not interested, a difficulty identified by Coad and Evans (2008), although maintaining the children’s views as a central focus was very important and worth the effort. Some thematic case analysis, whereby selected data from particular children was chosen for individual in-depth analysis after data collection had begun, was employed. This was a method successfully applied by Cremin and Slatter (2004). These children were invited based on their responses and data, their differing opinions and diversity. During data collections, a few children were invited to participate because their data confirmed or expanded a theme, or their data suggested a divergent or opposing theme. Case study narratives were compared and contrasted with other case studies to help confirm and compare nuances of the themes.

3.8.3. Photo analysis

Careful planning of how visual data could be analysed within the design of the research was essential in this study, as recommended by Prosser and Loxley (2010). Photographic data was created by the children, often with assistance from their parents, at home and by the researcher within the centre. It was collated and reviewed by the researcher and children during collection, analysis and the gathering of other data sources. In line with other Mosaic research, themes were identified, confirmed and reported by using a selection of the methods outlined above. I adopted a conscious awareness as recommended by (Pink, 2007) during photo analysis to avoid misinterpretation due to preconceived ideas and to ensure awareness of social contexts and time management. Fasoli (2003) found the process of photo analysis to be difficult, time-consuming and greatly influenced by the images of childhood they would bring to mind. Verification from children and other adults who knew the children assisted with this.

3.8.4. Drawing analysis

Most drawings were analysed with the aid of the child, who transcribed their drawings to me as researcher or to an educator. Additionally, I was able to note children's talk during activities in my journal or as an audio recording in many of the session. Children's talk during their drawing and their communication about the drawing afterwards can yield rich information about the drawing and the child's representations (Coates & Coates, 2006). Indeed, it is almost impossible to separate the dual components of drawing and talking, according to Coates and Coates (2006). Children arrange their drawings in a purposeful way and they understand the potency of drawing to represent themselves, others and what is happening as part of their construction of meaning (Cox, 2005). They also define reality as they construct their representations in an active way (Cox, 2005) as members of a human community in a socio-cultural context. Furthermore, Vygotsky and Cole (1978) states they are 'active participants in their own learning within the supportive contexts of community and family' as described by (p. 132). The children's drawings were viewed as an important additional language, voicing their inner thoughts and experiences, as described by (Whimmer, 2014). Additionally, the drawings were considered a powerful meaning-making tool because they were created in a collaborative and communicative way as asserted by M. Brooks (2009).

The ‘person, house, tree’ drawings were approached and analysed using anthroposophical techniques. Rudolf Steiner developed art therapy and art teaching using an anthroposophical approach he began utilising in 1921 (Arts Therapy London, 2016). Since then, educators and art therapists have built upon this work. Using anthroposophical techniques, the preparation for the ‘person, house, tree’ drawing required a series of exercises to engage both sides of the child’s brain and prepare them to draw a significant representation of themselves and their family. The children were only asked to draw a person, house and a tree, but the drawing may include other items.

3.9. Output formats

Output formats refers to the way the results are presented. The most common medium of nearly all research is a written report in some form (Pritchard, 2010). Time was allocated to give considered attention to the plans and possibilities of using images to illustrate the findings. Prosser and Loxley (2010) recommend this early planning because images add another layer of potential challenges. Table 3.5 identifies the outputs of this study.

Table 3-5: Actual and potential research outputs

Potential output	Explanation
Conference presentations during research at UNE	Presentation of methodology and a selection of results at two UNE Postgraduate Conferences (2016–2017)
Other conference presentations during research	Presentation of findings to educators and academics: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at the Early Childhood Australia 2016 Darwin conference about the implications of findings for educators working with children whose parents work away; and at the International Early Childhood Art 2017 Bhutan conference about the benefits and challenges with using art to privilege children’s voices including images of children’s artworks.
Publication of a research based children’s storybook	Publication of ‘Liam’s story: Why do I wear Dad’s medals?’ (Baber, Fussell & Porter, 2015) based on data
Publication of journal articles	Publication of journal articles based on data from three additional families: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children Australia article, Narrative, ritual and acculturation (Baber, 2016) SAGE Open Access, ‘Protective factors in families: Themes from a

Potential output	Explanation
	socio-ecological study of Australian Defence Force families experiencing parental deployment' in press.
Thesis	Submission of PhD thesis containing the following outputs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identified key themes describing children's experiences of deployment • conceptual framework for practitioners to use when interpreting children's experiences of deployment • case studies describing significant children and their experience of deployment (including both positive and negative aspects)
Conference presentation after research at UNE	Presentation a selection of results at the UNE Postgraduate Conference (2018) with presentations
Recommendations report	Emailed or posted presentation of summarised findings to the ADF and the centre where the data was collected with a presentation using Prezi and Powtoon software, including images and children's works

3.10. Ethical implications

Ethics were considered in the early stages of research question design, research structure planning and methodology as recommended by N. Thomas and O'Kane (1998). The researcher employing a visual method of research with children (such as the Mosaic Method) may face many significant ethical moments (Phelan & Kinsella, 2012) as outlined in Figure 3.6. Phelan and Kinsella (2012) explain that many of these significant moments are difficult to predict and rely heavily on the reflexivity and ethical awareness of the researcher to overcome conflict dilemmas professionally. There were delicate moments that required strong researcher integrity and they are elaborated upon here in the form of procedural ethics and ethics in practice. Additional research and considerations were necessary for the use of photographs within the study. I was guided by the Code of Ethics (Early Childhood Australia (ECA), 2016) that state early childhood educators should promote the wellbeing of children by always putting their best interests first. Additionally, Flannery Quinn and Manning (2013) raised my awareness about areas that required reflection within this study, including assent, representation of reality, the need for photographs, the imbalances of power and to continually question if we are promoting the best interests of the child.



Figure 3-6: Ethical considerations for reflective researchers
Adapted from (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013)

3.10.1. Procedural ethics

An application was made for approval from the UNE Ethics Committee, the centre (including the management committee), educators, parents, and other organisations (e.g., centre community management committee). Each application was written formally following the procedure required by each organisation. After consulting an ADF employee who had researched families previously, I realised ADF ethics were not necessary, because consent to work with the children and non-ADF parents did not require this. Additionally, parents were assured that both their name and the names of their children would be replaced by pseudonyms at all times. Child protection measures were addressed through the researcher deciding the centre would use their own policy if required.

While parents consented to their child's involvement in the research, assent was also obtained from the children (Phelan & Kinsella, 2012). Children's assent was sought in various ways according to their skills and age. For those participants for whom a signature or mark requires great amounts of time and effort, a recorded verbal assent was an accepted part of the ethics procedures. I prepared to use Phelan and Kinsella's (2013) recommendation of pictorial

representation and age-appropriate language to represent the major concepts from the information sheet and consent form. These would have been useful for younger children to prevent them from having to read a document. I found, however, that children gave their verbal assent or occasionally said they did not want to be involved in the research activity if they chose to continue their play. Sometimes they came to complete the activity at a later stage, either by asking to be involved, or assenting when asked again. Assent was revisited at each stage of the research and the children were not pressured or questioned if they chose not to participate, as recommended by Lewis and Porter (2007) and Phelan and Kinsella (2013). Parental consent was also revisited between the two data collection stages in the form of a follow-up email. Initially, I collected all artwork during data collection activities; however, a difficulty arose when one child wanted to take his drawing home. The educators assisted by suggesting I use the photocopier, so colour photocopies were made after each activity so the children could take home a copy of their work.

Secondary involvement in this research study by other people was also addressed. This included individuals (relatives) being photographed or spoken about in detail. Permission from adults, children and parents was required in these instances and I utilised the system Phelan and Kinsella (2013) applied in which each child had a folder with permission slips included.

3.10.2. Ethics in practice

While procedural ethics are useful and necessary, they do not really guarantee how micro ethical problems are dealt with on a day-to-day basis during the data creation (Mazzoni & Harcourt, 2013). Most ethical procedures common to all research are heightened in researching with children due to their nature and their perceived increased vulnerability (N. Thomas & O'Kane, 1998). Both Phelan and Kinsella (2013) and Handley and Doyle (2012) explain that power imbalances can cause dilemmas for researchers and limitations in the study whenever children are research subjects or participants. These include concerns that the children will try to answer just to please the researcher, rather than express their own voice. As researchers, we should think about more mature and complex ways to view power (Gallagher, 2008), especially ways researchers, professionals and adults can use their power for good. Reporting children's voices also raises problems including 'privacy, safety and

dignity' (Phelan & Kinsella, 2013, p. 87) although it is the ethical responsibility of the researcher to ensure their voices are heard.

In practice I needed to be responsive to verbal and non-verbal cues around assent for young children. As the children were co-researchers I was required to follow their lead at times, ensuring they not only wanted to be engaged in research at particular times but also inviting them to guide the activities at times. Researching at the centre definitely affected how the research was conducted because data collection was conducted towards the end of the year, when many of the children were keen for distraction from their everyday activities. I needed to be careful that my activities did not overtake what the educators had prepared during free outdoor playtime. This was partially alleviated by a separate playground attached to the preschool room where I undertook most of my activities. Children would come to me in small groups during free outdoor playtime.

A number of ethical considerations were planned for before research began, thus I

- recognised that particular children may feel that I was an intrusion and that there needs to be a space for children's privacy (Clark & Moss, 2011);
- acknowledged special care required when representing children as their representation also raised concerns about how the child might feel in later years (Phelan & Kinsella, 2012);
- undertook training in secure data storage, harm prevention, avoidance of deception and what to do when abuse is disclosed to alleviate and avoid problems (Kellett, 2011);
- planned for reflexivity to avoid these dilemmas with disclosure, power balances and children's voices and images (Phelan and Kinsella, 2013), and
- planned carefully to consider how the findings would be applied for decision-making and action.

As a researcher, how I utilised the findings for decision-making and action also necessitated applying an ethical lens. This will be discussed in detail within the recommendations in Chapter 10.

3.11. Methodological limitations

In this section I explore some of the methodological limitations of Mosaic and narrative methodology. This discussion centres on authenticity, time, flexibility and inclusion.

3.11.1. Authenticity and time

The authenticity of Mosaic research is interesting in a number of ways as many advocates barely address the concern at all. For example, Clark and Moss (2011) do not mention the word authenticity or validity within their entire textbook entitled *Listening to Young Children: The Mosaic Approach*; however, authenticity does rate a passing mention by the foreword author, Margaret Carr. Advocates of Mosaic research generally point to the cross validation of children's visual expressions as a means of authentication along with their verbal explanations. Researchers also seek out the child's meaning through informal interviews and conversations (Clark, 2010; Harcourt & Mazzoni, 2012).

The verification of data has the added bonus of revisiting data so that children can consider and expand on their views (Clark & Statham, 2005). Time can also be a barrier to verification of data (Pichon, 2012) and validation of themes (Darbyshire et al., 2005), so careful time management was necessary to ensure this was not overly compromised by allocating specific time for verification of data and validation of themes. Overall, Mosaic research is a very time-consuming methodology (Clark & Moss, 2011) and represents a snapshot in time, rather than a broad picture. In this study, while I have focused on gathering the children's voice, the data gathered from the additional families in the sample relied solely on secondary data, affecting the interpretation. In this way, it cannot be employed to examine the changes in children's experiences over the course of a deployment cycle, or as a longitudinal study highlighting children's changing understandings and experiences.

Within narrative research, researchers need to address authenticity because the stories people tell may promote, exaggerate, hide or forget certain parts of the experiences or events. Polkinghorne (2007) believes the storied narrative that is constructed by the participant is limited by: language, limitations in awareness of nuanced meanings, the participant's desire

to be socially acceptable and the co-constructed nature of the assembled narratives because of the interplay between the participant and the researcher.

The researcher needs to communicate to the reader if the assembled narrative is a faithful representation of the participant's experience, or is it co-constructed, interpreted and nuanced (Polkinghorne, 2007) by the participant, researcher and to some extent, the reader. Denzin (1989) asserts these assembled narratives are more likely to be commentaries on the world rather than of the world. Chase (2011) states whatever method is used in narrative research, there are always issues with the 'research relationship, ethics, interpretation and validity' (p. 423).

The verification of data has the added bonus of revisiting data so that children can consider and expand on their views (Clark & Statham, 2005). Time can also be a barrier to verification of data (Pichon, 2012) and validation of themes (Darbyshire et al., 2005), so careful time management was necessary to ensure this was not overly compromised. Overall, Mosaic research is a very time-consuming methodology (Clark & Moss, 2011) and represents a snapshot in time, rather than a broad picture. While I have focused on gathering the children's voice, the data gathered from the additional families in the sample relied solely on secondary data, affecting the interpretation. In this way, it cannot be employed to examine the changes in children's experiences over the course of a deployment cycle, or as a longitudinal study highlighting children's changing understandings and experiences. I allocated specific time for verification of data and validation of themes.

3.11.2. Flexibility and inclusion

Without the inclusive approach to diversity, this research project was in danger of becoming impoverished as described by Turner and West (2003). Inclusion in this research was sought by targeting certain family types. In many ways, the flexibility of multiple methods of qualitative data collection allow for children (within the inclusion criteria), with different strengths and interests to participate (Clark & Statham, 2005; Pichon, 2012). Without this, the study may be simply voicing the views of certain dominant family cultures. Promoting children's multiple entry and exit points into the study alleviated several inclusion concerns

and allowed for a more flexible design. For example, this was useful with children who experienced high absenteeism during the time of the research or who only attended the centre on a part-time basis.

3.12. Limitations of this study

The limitations of this study include the sample, the generalisability, the chosen methodology and the effects of the researcher (both experimenter and tools). This study occurred in four research sites: the centre, a family home, a park and a restaurant. The data from the centre was collected with one group of children within a bounded sample case study. Due to the time constraints of the study, it cannot be employed as a comparison between various groups, locations or ages. However, it has provided valuable insights into the range of understandings and experiences of young children from families experiencing parental deployment and military life. Mosaic research and the tools I utilised have their own weaknesses. My role as a researcher and inherent power, and the children's perceptions of both, raise concerns about the authenticity of the data, including children trying to give the answer they believed an adult would want to hear. The interpretation of the data through thematic and case study analysis all have implications for authenticity as an adult interprets and reports on a child's perspective.

3.13. Findings employed for decision-making and action

From the outset of the project, I employed honest communication to all those concerned about the plan to communicate the findings to influential people, as emphasised by Lewis and Porter (2007). I hope that this research provides a bridge for adults and young children to consider together some of the issues of children's understandings and experiences about deployment. This information will be presented with care to those who make decisions, which is ADF management, ADF social workers, family liaison officers, REDLOs, early childhood educators and parents.

3.14. Conclusion

The 'hundred languages of children' described by Malaguzzi and other Reggio Emilia educators is often quoted when discussing Mosaic research (Clark & Statham, 2005). Less is spoken about the hundred ways of listening. Mosaic research aims to listen to marginalised voices such as children's and provide a platform to discuss their ideas, understandings and experiences. The central goal to Mosaic research 'is not to make children's knowledge unquestionable, but to raise it to such a level that children's knowledge about their lives is central to adult discussions' (Clark & Moss, 2011, p. 65). Such knowledge about children's understandings and experiences with deployment can only be useful for the parents, educators and professionals who work with these children.

Chapter 4. Themes from the findings: Responses

4.1. Introduction

The next three chapters examine the results from the study in clusters of themes that emerged from the data through thematic analysis. The raw data is presented in narrative form in Appendix 1 to 6 as six case studies that should be read prior to reading these three chapters.

4.2. Themes from the data

From the data, children's responses and understandings of deployment display differences according to age, development, temperament and resilience levels. Within each child's family, different themes emerged within the layers of the socio-ecological family model as depicted by Bronfenbrenner and Ceci (1994). Even for children within the same family, such as Blake and Bella, experiences and understandings of parental deployment differed. This was due not only to their own unique characteristics and individual responses but also the way they interacted with those in their microsystems and the way these people responded to them. Additionally, individual children's unique microsystems and other qualitative variables were also evident. These include supports from the family, educators, peers and extended family. Interplay with elements from the exosystem, including the parents' work and social networks, impacted the child and their family. As part of the exosystem, the ADF offered a number of supports, but these were not always accessed or welcomed. Within the exosystem, a demanding workplace with rigid shift work hours put pressure on the non-deployed parent, thus creating difficulties for the family.

Overarching this, the macrosystem has a profound effect on the children's and parents' lives. The macrosystem encompasses government decisions in response to times of war and peace, and community attitudes. The chronosystem (changes to the systems over time) was also evident from the data. The thematic analysis revealed eight emerging themes that are displayed in Figure 4.1. They include responses, managing transitions, risk factors, protective factors, ADF support, communication, acculturation and ritual, and narrative. These themes will be explored in the subsequent sections in this chapter, and in the following two results chapters.

Importantly, the themes are not mutually exclusive, and data examples given often overlapped across particular themes. For ease of discussion, in this chapter I will consider the responses to deployment. Chapter 5 will focus the management of transitions risk and protective factors, while Chapter 6 will focus on ADF support, communication, ritual and acculturation, and narrative.



Figure 4-1: The eight emerging themes from the data

4.3. Responses to deployment and training episodes

The next three sections explore the emotional, physical and cognitive responses to parental absence in the case study families.

4.3.1. Emotional

The data revealed emotional responses of the child, the non-deployed parent and the interplay of responses between the parents within a co-parenting relationship.

Children's individual responses over time (chronosystem)

Lester and Flake (2013) explain that young children often respond to parental separation through 'struggling with daily routines, regressing behaviourally, withdrawing emotionally and sometimes acting out' (p. 124). Within military families, frequent and prolonged absences of a family member are stressful for all concerned (Tomforde, 2015) and the psychological strain sits heavily on personnel and family (Varoglu, Ercil, & Sigri, 2015). From the data, Emily demonstrates that minor frustrations and emotional discomfort are triggers for major emotional responses during the first weeks of deployment. Increased episodes of crying and whining signified her emotional state. Mogil et al. (2010) emphasise the difficulty of losing a parent as a source of emotional support during deployment. For Emily, the ability to express what was upsetting her was hampered by her age, in particular, her cognitive and expressive language skills. In discussing the effects of deployment on children, K. N. Lowe et al. (2012) state that 'children often communicate through behaviour because they lack the communication skills necessary to verbalise their feelings' (p.18). Flake et al. (2009) report that 'Early in deployment, the child can be overwhelmed, sad, anxious and clingy', although these behaviours generally decrease as the children enter a 'readjustment stage' (p. 272). Based on the evidence given by her mother and educators, Emily seemed to be entering this stage toward the end of data collection. Her ability to verbalise her frustrations and attribute her feelings to events were improving. This was displayed when she attributed being upset to missing her father.

At the age of five, Blake was able to express his emotions in the modelling clay picture (see Figure 4.2). He was able to attribute his father's absence to his change of emotions. It also indicated his ability to perceive a 'correct' response that could be more socially acceptable and therefore pleasing to the adult, in this case myself. When introducing the activity, I invited each child to make a face showing how they felt when their parent was leaving to go away for work and on the other side of the paper, their face when the parent came home.

Another case study child (Jack aged 4) was adamant that he had a happy face on both sides; however, Blake corrected him saying it needed to be happy on one side and sad on the other.

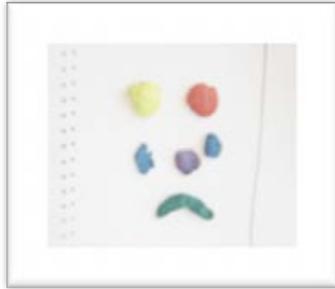


Figure 4-2: Bake's modelling clay face: 'My face when Dad goes away, the tears are blue'

According to Lincoln, Swift, and Shorteno-Fraser (2008), having a parent deployed to a war zone may be one of the highest stresses of childhood. Feelings of ambiguous loss are prominent within military families (Lincoln et al., 2008). Bethany, who had a close relationship with her father, struggled emotionally with this separation. Her separation anxiety was displayed through increased resistance to daily activities such as preparing to go to the centre and going home at pick-ups. Emotional outbursts at home generally involved going off to her room and crying increased in frequency. Children's struggles with previously established routines is a typical response during parental deployment (Lincoln et al., 2008). Anger can be displayed by children through small acts of defiance and disobedience (Linke, 2007), such as Bethany's refusal to come to her mother at pick-up, or turning away from classroom activities with her arms crossed (see Figure 4.3). This added further strain to her mother, Queenie, who worried about this behaviour and the wellbeing of the children during deployment, a situation described by (Dursun & Sudom, 2015). Both the mother and the siblings tried to assist Bethany to manage this emotional loss while dealing with their own. Linke (2007) describes the way preschoolers develop the ability to seek support from other family members and educators to cope. Bethany demonstrated her reliance on her older siblings, who smooth over difficult situations when Bethany was reacting behaviourally.

The close nature of these supportive relationships is portrayed in Bethany's clay models of her family (see Figure 4.4). In this model of her family, the members are holding hands, demonstrating their support for each other and interestingly they are all of similar height, perhaps displaying her sense of equality within the family. Fortunately for the whole family,

these disruptions to routines decreased after the initial month of deployment, but were still a regular feature of family life. Bethany also indicated a burgeoning ability to control her emotions. This was displayed when she was able to delay gratification in being able to have her drawing immediately after a research activity and move onto another learning activity in the knowledge that she would receive a coloured photocopy of her picture at a later time. The skill of emotional regulation is one that bodes well for resilience (Walsh, 2003) and needs to be fostered. Bethany’s strong relationships with her mother and siblings helped her develop emotional regulation within her microsystem.



Figure 4-3: Bethany’s typical stance when displaying a small act of defiance; sitting side on and pretending not to engage



Figure 4-4: Bethany’s clay model of her family with two members holding hands

Malchoiodi (1998) reflects the usefulness of house drawings, which he describes as environmental pictures, giving options to ask the child about ‘what is going in inside and outside of the house’ (p. 177). In Bethany’s drawing (refer to Figure 4.5), the red door

heavily coloured with a black outline is a prominent feature of her house. According to anthroposophical drawing techniques, artistic expression represents what is happening within the child's psyche (Arts Therapy London, 2016). Using this type of analysis, the red door colour typically represents anger within the house, which verified the account from Queenie about Bethany's emotional outbursts, uncooperative behaviour and small acts of defiance. The one-sided tree may also indicate issues of emotional imbalances, although further drawings would need to be gathered for clearer insights to be made. These drawings may also be reflective of Bethany's frequent relocations and consequent readjustments. Military children generally relocate more frequently and over larger distances than non-military children (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003) and, along with separation, these movements are considered a feature of a defence military lifestyle (Department of Defence, 2014).

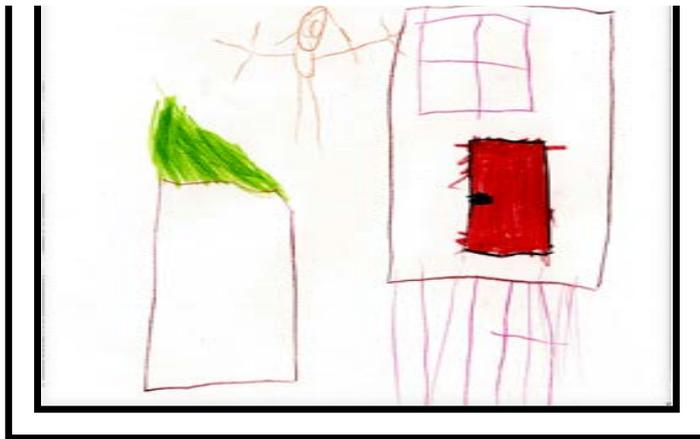


Figure 4-5: Bethany's person, house tree drawing

Cassie's family also struggled with her small acts of defiance and uncooperative behaviour. Cassie, who was a year younger than Bethany, refused any assistance from her mother and au pair once her father returned home. These small acts of defiance caused stress for both parents and the au pair. The rejection created obstacles for the mother and the father to sustain the constant care Cassie was demanding. As the oldest child, Cassie was testing the parental barriers in a manner that is part of the ambiguity in relationship boundaries military families deal with regularly during transition times (Drummet et al., 2003). Cassie's mother Wendy admitted they were struggling to know where to put the boundaries once her father returned home and full co-parenting was resumed alongside shared care with the au pair.

Wendy expressed her confusion over how typical Cassie's behaviour was, and how much difficult behaviour to tolerate during the reunion and readjustment stage. These stages feature the redefining and renegotiating of relationships and roles that are paramount to successful reintegration (Department of Defence, 2014) and are stressful for military families (Andres, De Angelis, & McCone, 2015). For both Cassie and Bethany, what was happening in the family with the separation of a parent was beyond their control. What they were displaying was something they were able control; that is their behaviour. They were able to express their frustration, grief, anger, confusion and loss that this separation created.

Bella (2.5) displayed angry emotional outbursts before deployment. The parents found this verbal aggression surprising and distressing. Lincoln et al. (2008) cite aggressive, demanding and attention-seeking behaviour as a way young children in a military family demonstrate their vulnerability. Mogil et al. (2010), Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler (2007) and Lincoln et al. (2008) discuss the higher prevalence or increased intensity of such behaviours in military children due to these unique stressors. Additionally, increases in mood changes are also common (Barker & Berry, 2009).

Jack was able to represent his emotions when his father was away in his clay model response displayed in Figure 4.6. At first he depicted both sides as happy, whether his father was home or away, and he said he was not sad when his Dad was away. This might indicate an ability to understand that he was not sad all the time, or that he thought it was undesirable to display sadness. Jack changed his response after other older children commented, demonstrating that he was strongly influenced by peers. His changed response is revealed below in Figure 4.6, showing a sadder face when the father was home. Leanne had stated that both she and Jack were an emotional mess for the first month of deployment. This correlates to research that significantly links maternal depressive symptoms to a child's difficulties or sadness during deployment (Chandra et al., 2009; Kelley, Finkel, & Ashby, 2003; White, de Burgh, Fear, & Iversen, 2011).



Figure 4-6: Jack's clay model faces for when his father is away (left) and home (right)

Jack also drew a picture of the family reunion at the Singapore airport where his father met them while he was on leave. He drew this when asked to draw a picture about his father going on deployment, demonstrating the significance of this event for him in the middle of the fourth deployment (see Figure 4.7). Interestingly, also included in the picture was a drawing of his great-grandmother. He asked the educator to draw the figure for him even though the great-grandmother was not at this reunion. Leanne reported that Jack often cried asking for his father when he was upset, but more recently has asked for his mother's grandmother. Jack asked an educator to draw the plane that can be seen at the bottom of the page in yellow along with a picture of the great-grandmother.



Figure 4-7: Jack's picture of him meeting his father in Singapore at the airport

The children's developing ability to navigate the emotional roller coaster of parental deployment was dependent upon their mothers' responses and other supports within the family system. Children's emotional development begins when they are babies (Gonzalez-Mena & Widmeyer Eyer, 1997) and is dependent on social support (Hayes, 2013).

Emotional responses of the non-deployed parent (microsystem)

Hollingsworth (2011) reports on the increased stress levels of at-home partners and spouses during deployment, citing a heightened prevalence of depressive symptoms, loneliness and lower coping abilities compared with the general population. At the time of the interview with Emily's mother Lara, it had almost been three weeks since Troy's deployment. Lara reported that the first few days were very emotional and difficult for both Emily and herself. She explained that her most difficult emotional time was always around three to four weeks into deployment. Lara believed that during Troy's last training session, she and Emily had fed off each other emotionally. The mental health of the non-deployed parent has a major impact on the responses of the child to parental deployment (Siebler & Goddard, 2014). From observations, Emily was exhibiting a developing empathy, which she displayed in the mimicking episode with her peer Felicity (see Appendix 2). This skill facilitated recognition of her mother's stress and she adjusted her mood accordingly. In turn, this may have assisted her to process her stress in a more externalised way. This may have been beneficial for Emily, so long as Lara was able to remain positive on the whole and recover fairly quickly from highly emotional episodes. Mogil et al. (2010) state,

Children may rely on the non-deployed parent for more comfort than normal during the deployed parent's absence. However the non-deployed parent's own coping abilities may be taxed during deployment, as she assumes the responsibility of both parents, while also dealing with her own concerns about the deployed parent (p.11).

Blake's mother, Fern, believed her emotional state was also impacted by sleep deprivation. She reported the highest levels of negative emotions and anxiety at the end of the training sessions when she was overtired and less in control of negative thoughts. Lester and Flake (2013) explain that sleep problems can impact family life and marriages in military families experiencing deployment. Interestingly, and at odds with his clay model faces, Blake has depicted his mother smiling and putting on a brave face when their father left for training in

Figure 4.8. This positive attitude may have benefited Blake as he transitioned into the adjustment stage described by Flake et al. (2009) at a faster rate.



Figure 4-8: Blake's drawing: 'My Dad is getting in the car to go to Ayers Rock'

Both Wendy (Cassie's mother) and Queenie (Bethany's mother) described difficulties coping at times, but like Lara, especially at three to four weeks into the training session or deployment. For Wendy, coping when she was experiencing sleep deprivation compounded the challenges. The data also revealed that Talia (Ivan's mother) found it painful to recall her experiences during her husband's previous deployment because it was such a difficult time for herself and Ivan (3). Bethany's mother reported difficulty with keeping the children in a routine and dealing with Bethany's episodes of non-compliance. Drummet et al. (2003) reiterate this experience by commenting that

the remaining parent is likely to encounter separation strain, loneliness, role overload, role shifts, financial concerns, changes in community support, increasing parenting demands and frustration with the military bureaucracy (p.281).

Interestingly, Bethany features her mother in two of her drawings depicting the family's experiences with deployment (see Figure 4.9 and 4.10). Both drawings portray her mother waiting for the father by herself, positioned outside of the home, rather than with the children in the home. Perhaps Bethany identified her mother's loneliness or she could see her mother struggle with parenting alone. Possibly, Bethany had overheard her mother expressing a number of these emotions to others, including to her father or even to the other children. Bethany's drawings highlight the impact of the social and cultural influences of the family

and home within children's meaning-making as outlined by Anning and Ring (2004). The impact of the socio-cultural influence was demonstrated by the way her mother was portrayed in the drawing. In the defence culture that surrounded Bethany at the early childhood centre and the defence community, she saw other parents passively waiting for their spouses to come home and enduring the loneliness of this separation. This highlights the pervasiveness of a culture within families that is unique to military organisations, as described by Dursun and Sudom (2015).

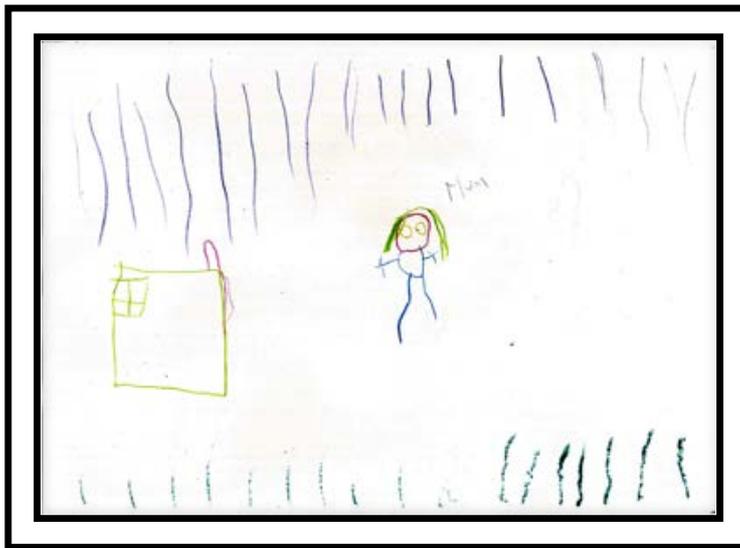


Figure 4-9: Bethany's drawing: 'Mum is waiting for Dad to come home. Ule, Nancy and I are at home. Nancy is looking after us'

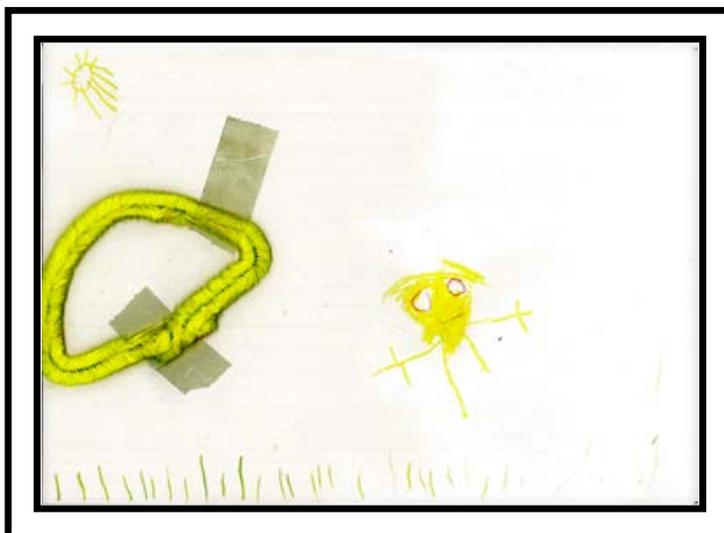


Figure 4-10: Bethany's drawing: 'Mummy is waiting for Daddy who is on deployment'

Jack's mother Leanne reported a number of behaviours she engaged in to construct meaning during her spouse's deployment as she experienced the loss of her spouse. By doing this she was engaging in what Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) describe as 'constructing a new reality' (p.36). During the deployment cycle, Leanne attempted to make sense of the loss, found benefits in her new situation and a renewed sense of identity, as described by Gillies and Neimeyer (2006). To prepare themselves for this loss, a month prior to deployment, both Leanne and Paul began to emotionally distance themselves from each other. Pincus et al. (2007) describe this process as common, as is a large argument, often the result of fearing impending loss. It is easier for couples to respond in anger than to face the fear of loss deployment brings (Pincus et al., 2007). Leaving home is harder when home is associated with happiness, so unconsciously creating an unhappy atmosphere will mean it is easier to leave on deployment. For the first month after departure, Leanne stated she worked through intense feelings as she made sense of the loss. To allow herself time to grieve, she abandoned the routine she and her spouse had in the household. Leanne viewed one of the benefits of deployment as her special time and deepening relationship with Jack when her spouse was deployed. She had also used part of the time to complete her Higher School Certificate via distance education. This may have also built her sense of identity. Interestingly, higher parental education levels are an important variable in how a family reacts to the stress of deployment (Hollingsworth, 2011). Higher education levels were linked to better outcomes for children and families in the study.

Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) believe this type of identity change Leanne was engaging in builds resilience, independence and confidence, as social relationships change and they increase in their empathy and emotional links to others. Leanne's time with friends and her different timetable, independent of her spouse, indicated her willingness to find the benefits of her new situation. Conversely, it also brought with it a heightened vulnerability to repeat losses (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006), such as multiple deployments. This was demonstrated when she spoke of her resentment and bitterness, which she tried to avoid feeling. Drummet et al. (2003) discuss the disenchantment military families confront when they are faced with the usual stress of families, the heightened stress of relocations and deployment and the pressure to conform to the ideal stoic military family. Pittman, Kerpelman, and McFadyen (2004) describe the effects of workplace demands on the quality of family life. The higher the misfit of the two, the more internal adaptation needs to take place. Internal adaptation requires adjustment to communication, marital relationships, managing the home, personal wants and needs and child rearing (Pittman et al., 2004).

Pincus et al. (2007) states that in spite of the difficulties, most spouses and family members navigate deployment and look ahead to reunification. For Leanne, there were mixed feelings of looking forward to the reunion and the reality of the readjustment. Leanne explained her emotional struggles as she prepared herself and Jack a month before Paul's return. Reunification brings with it difficulties for many military families as they struggle to readjust to redefined roles and routines (Lincoln et al., 2008) and the new sense of personal development the non-deployed parent may have experienced (Department of Defence, 2014). Further, Lester and Flake (2013) argue that the reintegration stage after reunion is the most difficult part of the cycle, yet one we know least about. Leanne reported that the first month after Paul returned was very emotional and difficult to navigate. So in essence, during a deployment cycle, Leanne's family was in a very high emotional state for four months; however, resilience was demonstrated through her 'positive adaptation' as described by Saltzman et al. (2011, p. 214). Further to this, Leanne recognised the need for emotional space by promoting Paul and Jack's extended time together before and after deployment, and perceived her own need to have time to rest from parenting duties. In addition to emotional responses, the children also displayed physical responses to parental deployment and training that are highlighted in the next section.

Parenting conflicts as a response

Gewirtz et al. (2011) outline the difficulties of keeping parenting consistent and united during deployment and reintegration. They attributed the changes in parenting expectations to the at-home parent's levels of fatigue and possibly a way of dealing with the guilt about the effect of deployment on the child. Emily's mother Lara reported increased tensions and disagreements over parenting with Emily's father, Troy, after he left for deployment. Lara was very frustrated that Troy parented over the internet from another continent. She felt, as the in-situ parent, she could handle the situation in her own way based on what she was faced with. While Lara could understand that Troy viewed his interventions as helpful and supportive as a co-parent, she wanted him to relinquish that control when he was deployed. Siebler (2009) found that the at-home parent gained new-found confidence with coping by themselves at home and found it hard to relinquish the control at the end of deployment. Children often perceive parental differences and stress involving parenting, which can cause problems during reintegration (Bowling & Sherman, 2008; Mogil et al., 2010).

Thus, deployment can create or heighten differences in co-parenting. Expectations about involved distant parenting and parenting in person were very different for Lara and Troy. In addition to these parental emotional responses, children displayed physical responses to parental deployment and training that impacted members of their immediate family that are explored in the following section.

4.3.2. Physical responses (individual) and the impacts this has on the family (microsystem)

Wadsworth (2010) states that children display an array of internalised and externalised symptoms during deployment. Physical reactions to parental deployment are common and are described by Hollingsworth (2011) as an externalising behaviour. Friedberg and Brelsford (2011) believe that sleep disturbances are often signs of emotional stress. After deployment, Emily had increased toileting accidents and waking episodes during the first night, which was highly unusual for her. The data revealed Blake had sleep problems during his father's lengthy training episodes. This included wanting to always sleep with his mother, bedwetting and taking longer to get to sleep. This caused further strain on his mother, Fern, both physically and mentally.

Many preschoolers regress in their personal skills, such as being able to sleep alone, during parental deployments (Pincus et al., 2007). Bethany had slept in her mother's bed since her father deployed and required her mother to lie next to her while she went to sleep. This took extra time and energy for Queenie on a nightly basis and meant that she had less time to do housework and other parenting tasks. The data revealed other ways Queenie tried to compensate for the father's absence. Bethany's older sister Nancy was learning piano and Queenie tried to listen to her practise several times a week, as her father typically did. Queenie appeared exhausted in all of our meetings during data collection and in the photos and video supplied by the family and yet still had three months more of deployment to manage (see Figure 4.11). Epel et al. (2004) explains that apart from looking 'haggard', perceived or actual psychological stress over long periods accelerates aging and has been proven to affect the body at a cellular level, including the ability to combat disease (p.17312).

Hindering Queenie's support were the frequent relocations the family had endured, separating them from extended family and close family friends at regular intervals over the past decade. These typical geographical relocations (Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2006; Dursun & Sudom, 2015) included placement in various states and ADF bases, one of which they had moved in and out of twice. Even if the non-deployed parent is enthusiastic about the benefits of a military family lifestyle, there are still the stresses associated with loss of their social network (Drummet et al., 2003) and emotional support with each move. Added to this is the effort required to form these new networks quickly within a new environment when recovering from the physical demands of a move.

Cassie's sleep patterns were not unduly affected. Despite this, Wendy (Cassie's mother) had found caring for their eight-month-old baby, working full-time and attending to Cassie's needs all took their toll during Davin's training. Wendy found that this impacted on her emotionally although she found having her sister and brother-in-law close very beneficial. The baby's sleep patterns may have been affected by the mother's stress and the parental separation more than the parents realised. Linke (2007) explains that babies demonstrate distress, often exacerbated at bedtime when a loved one is absent, which may affect their sleep routines. There is a misconception among a number of adults that babies and toddlers are too young to realise that a parent has gone, or that it would not affect them. Linke (2007) explains that babies and children under three

don't have the language and understanding to comprehend what is happening to them, so the loss of someone very close to them is likely to be more difficult. It is as if someone they depended on just disappears out of their lives, and there is no real knowledge that the person will return. Because they don't have the words to express their feelings, people may not realise they are upset. Adults may say things like 'He is too young to know' or 'She is too young for it to matter'. This is wrong. For the very young it matters a great deal (p.10).



Figure 4-11: Nancy's photo: 'Mum giving Bethany a cuddle; Bethany gets quite upset when she thinks of Dad and needs an extra hug'

During deployment in Jack's family, Leanne relied on her mother-in-law to mind him at nights when she was on shift work hours. This occurred during data collection and Leanne reported Jack's interrupted sleep and crying in the night when she had to leave him with his grandmother. This raised Leanne's anxiety levels and diminished her ability to sleep when she was off-duty. Mogil et al. (2010) explains that children often rely on the non-deployed parent for extra emotional sustenance as their support has diminished. When Jack also faced his mother's absence at night during shift work, he did not cope with this new separation even though he enjoyed time with his grandmother.

In Blake's data in Appendix 2, Blake and Bella's mother Fern commented on Bella's difficulty getting to sleep, bedwetting and seeking comfort in her bed during training sessions. This caused fatigue for Fern and diminished her ability to cope. Barker and Berry (2009) discuss the common occurrences of sleep disturbances and the stress of parenting young children alone, as in effect they are 'taking on the role of single parent' (Burrell et al.,

2006, p. 45). Also, Lemmon and Chartrand describe these types of short-term stresses as something most military children are able to cope with due to the buffering effect of caring and connected adults who provide a safety net. Pincus et al. (2007) reiterate this by saying ‘Despite all these obstacles, the vast majority of spouses and family members successfully negotiate the sustainment stage’ of deployment, that is, the actual deployment (p. 5). Repetition of deployment and training episodes, however, decreases the ability of the non-deployed family members to respond as they did during the first deployment; thus Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) describe an increased susceptibility when grief and loss recur. Lester and Flake (2013) argue that the deployment cycle should be renamed the deployment spiral, ‘a word that captures the accumulative and transformation of experience, both positive and negative, as the child and family grow’ (p. 124).

In addition to these compelling physical responses, the cognitive understandings of the children to parental deployment or training are noteworthy and are explored in the next section.

4.3.3. Cognitive understandings

The children’s ability to understand and make sense of their experiences during parental deployment are outlined in this section. I explore a number of ways the children employed cognitive coping strategies to navigate these difficult times, which included play and transferral objects.

Understanding the concept of time

Very young children struggle with the concept of time (Linke, 2007). Exacerbating these difficulties are the large percentages of their lives that parental deployment and training take. Emily’s understandings of the concepts of time were developmentally appropriate. Paris, DeVoe, Ross, and Acker (2010) and Kelley (1994) confirm that ‘developmental capabilities’ create unique challenges for young children when dealing with the ‘uncertainty and ambiguity’ of their parent’s departure and arrivals (p. 612). The difficulty for both Emily and her family was exacerbated due to deployment as she tried to grasp the significance of the

father being away for such an extended period and remember from one day to the next that he was still away.

For Bethany, her father's six-month deployment was a large part of her four-year life, equating to 12.5%. Bethany and Cassie both constantly questioned their mothers as to when their fathers were coming home. When asked, Bethany gave differing answers to adults as to when her father was coming home. The various responses included, 'I don't know', 'A long time' and at other times she said 'Easter'. This may indicate the confusion she had with the concept of time or it may have been a strategy to deflect questions. It may reflect the way in which her older siblings', mother's and father's answers were different or varied at various times.

To assist Cassie with the concept of the length of her father's absence, the parents utilised a calendar to indicate when her father would return from training, as depicted in Figure 4.12. Cassie marked off the days with stickers. Bethany's family tried to link the length of time her father would be away by anchoring his absence to specific dates he would miss, such as sibling birthdays and Christmas, and the events he would be home for, such as Easter. Cassie's emotional outburst when her father closed the door behind himself to go to the toilet demonstrated her inability to understand the difference between the minutes taken to go to the toilet and lengthy training sessions of seven weeks. In that moment, the shut door meant Cassie did not have access to her father and she panicked, thinking it was a return of a lengthy separation that she had just endured, rekindling feelings of grief and loss.

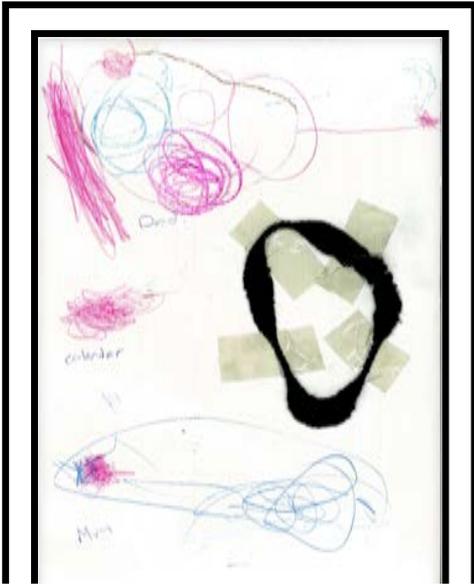


Figure 4-12: Cassie's picture 'D is for Deployment' depicting what happens in her family during deployment or training, including the calendar (centre left)

Interestingly, Bethany's pictures were typically based in the future, rather than the present or the past. For example, Blake's depictions of his father leaving to go on training to Ayers Rock in his car were set in the past (see Figure 4.8). Zimbardo (2010) discusses the differences between future and past oriented individuals and societies. He recommends we place value in understanding the time perspectives of ourselves and others so that we appreciate and understand varying perspectives (Zimbardo, 2010).

This understanding is especially pertinent for the parents and educators of children who are struggling with the concept of time in a military family. For example, Blake displayed good memory and significant interest in past events. By building on these strengths and knowledge, adults could work on improving his concept of time and then work on future dates, such as his father's homecoming, scaffolding his understanding of time in relation to military parental separation. In Bethany's case, she displayed an understanding and strength of imagining future events, such as her father coming home, and an acute understanding of present tense of waiting for her father's return. Adults could utilise this strength by working on extending her concept of past tense through recalling past events to assist her understanding of military parental separation.

Jack's persistent questions about when his father would return, coupled with his inability to understand lengths of times beyond 'tomorrow', 'yesterday' and 'after a sleep' were typical for a four-year-old. Confirming this, Geist (2009) observed that children's early time vocabulary consists of words such as 'yesterday, today and tomorrow' (p. 199) and their early concepts of tense are very concrete, even if not quite correct. Sperry Smith (2006) comment that children are present oriented, hence Jack's limited time descriptors.

Like Cassie, Bella also demonstrated an inability to understand that when her father announced he was going away, it did not mean it was a permanent arrangement. Generally, children only fully grasp time concepts during the primary school years (Sperry Smith, 2006) because learning about time involves understandings of both space and measurement (Bobis, Mulligan, & Lowrie, 2013). Although their employment and understanding of the language of time begins in early childhood, it takes many years to master (Sperry Smith, 2006). From the data in this study, it is evident that the concept of time is a major hurdle for families with young children who experience parental absences.

Play themes and role-playing to make meaning through play and co-construction

Dramatic play involves pretence, imitation of speech or actions, props (real or imaginary), experience and knowledge of context and character (Wood & Attfield, 2005). Emily was observed engaging in a number of brief dramatic role-play episodes during data collection activities with Bella and at other times in the centre. Within the data, these episodes demonstrated Emily's ability to assume a role, engage with language and social customs during play, explore emotional behaviour and play with the narrative her parents had provided. Wood and Attfield (2005) outline the higher level of skills involved in this type of play, explaining that dramatic and socio dramatic play 'make complex and often high cognitive and socio-affective demands on children' (p. 41). They define socio-dramatic play as involving two or more people, with play based on the interaction between players participating in their roles through actions and verbal interaction. They outline six elements of such play episodes that I have listed in the headings in Figure 4.13. Under each heading, Emily's and Bella's employment of these elements is displayed.

Role play by imitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imitating members of the family (voice and words) • Imitating social customs (kissing goodbye)
Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions displayed shared understandings, connection, enjoyment and friendship
Make believe with objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using pencils to represent characters of the family
Make-believe with action and situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching up high to show the plane • Jumping when explaining where her father was
Verbal communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both interactions showed understanding of language conventions and high levels of expression
Persistence in the role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pencil play lasted a few minutes • The acting play lasted less than a minute

Figure 4-13: Elements of dramatic and socio-dramatic play observed with Emily and Bella
Headings sourced from Wood and Attfield (2005)

By employing the six elements displayed in Figure 4.13, Emily and Bella were playing with the language, experiences and understandings of parental deployment and training within their families. Many aspects of these play episodes are typical of toddlers, such as the limited time spent on each play episode. It was evident, however, by the difficult concepts, language, social constructs and roles they were playing with, that they were acting at a high skill level within the play for two-and-a-half-year-olds. Furthermore, they were also possibly acting at a higher skill level than they were able to display in everyday situations. These playful experimentations appeared to be facilitating co-construction of their own narratives and creating sense about what was happening in their lives.

Dramatic play gives children an opportunity to explore culture, customs, social norms, narratives and roles to recreate their own world without consequence (Bird, Donelan, Freebody, O'Toole, & Sinclair, 2012). At home, Cassie enjoyed pretending to talk to her father on the phone during play episodes. In doing this, Cassie was practising skills needed to

keep in contact with her father when he was away. She was also re-enacting a few of the emotions and situations experienced during his absence. This re-enacting may have also been a way of taking control of her communications with her father, even in a pretend situation, where she could rekindle selected positive emotions she felt when her father was actually talking on the phone. She was also practising language skills and customs along with acting out the narratives about his absence through play and language. As such, she embellished the narrative with her own thoughts and ideas, becoming a co-constructor of the family narrative within her own safe make-believe world.

The data demonstrated the way Bethany engaged in parallel play with a map puzzle to initiate a conversation with an educator and another peer, Andrew (4), about her experiences with relocations. Bethany also discussed her emotional attachment to her previous house located in another city.

Bethany pointed on the map puzzle to the Sydney dot.

Bethany: Ule and I were born there.

Ursula: ... Have you lived here long?

Bethany (looking thoughtful): I miss my old house (in a sad tone). But someone is looking after our old house in Sydney when we are not living there. It's another army man. A friend of Dad's.

Bethany: We live in a different house now, we moved.

In discussing these situations, Bethany and Andrew compared stories as they have both experienced regular relocations and connected through a common experience.

Andrew: We are going to move house soon.

Ursula: Here, or in another city?

Andrew: Oh, no. It's near our house. I have been there and seen it.

Fellowes and Oakley (2014) believe this type of conversation aids children in 'establishing and maintaining relationships, discovering new information, sharing personal experiences and viewpoints' (p. 71). This type of conversation normalises the experience, which builds resilience through positive relationships (Department of Health and Ageing, 2014)

Lancy (2008) believes that play is a universal element of childhood and that children will utilise any opportunity to play during the day, regardless of their environment, set tasks or the adult management of play within Western societies. Children will actively bring into their play episodes everyday activities (Crowther, 2011) and activities that will engage much of their adult life (Lancy, 2008; Rogoff, 2003). Jack's play episode involving driving two cars on a track he had co-constructed with a friend was an example of this. He chose to role-play with his father as the driver of one vehicle and himself as another. In role-play, a child takes on real and imagined roles acting out family circumstances (Harley, 2010). Jack's play theme was perhaps a continuation from home when his father was not deployed, or an opportunity to keep his father fresh in his mind as he engaged in play in the preschool room.

Jack's peer, Andrew (4), particularly engaged well with the puppet play activity after the reading of 'Anthony's story: Now that I am big'. He asked for that activity many times. It involved acting out selected emotions of the book's characters as they struggled with the reintegration stage of deployment. Andrew possibly identified with a few of these emotions in his experiences of his father's deployment so that he found the puppet play particularly relevant. Dramatic play can facilitate children's practise of inhibitory control, delaying gratification, gaining confidence, perceiving another's perspective, copying behaviours and actions, strengthening communication and working through strong emotions that may otherwise be stressful (Crowther, 2011). Natalie (3) also acted out the role plays enthusiastically as seen in Figure 4.14. Jack engaged readily in acting out the emotions using stuffed toys after a reading of 'Mary's Alphabet Slippery Dip' (see Figure 4.15). Bella also engaged in many play episodes about deployment with Emily that were described in Chapter 4.



Figure 4-14: Natalie acting out the character's interactions from 'Anthony's Story' through puppet play



Figure 4-15: Jack engaging in animal play with peers acting out emotions displayed in ‘Mary’s Alphabet Slippery Dip’

Play afforded opportunities for the children to create and play with narratives about deployment and events within their lives. This gave them an opportunity to safely explore a number of the high-level emotions involved in departures and reunions and gave them licence to adapt the narrative imaginatively.

Understanding the concepts of deployment

According to Robertson (2000), drawing is a valid form of communication if we are to believe in the notion of the hundred languages that children employ, as described by Malaguzzi (1998). From the children’s drawing data, we can see that Bella (2.5) was able to connect her father going away for training with the reading of the storybook ‘Ann’s Story: D is for Deployment’ and drew her father in the related art activity (see Figure 4.16). Natalie (3) and Andrew (4) also made these connections with added detail in Figure 4.17 and Figure 4.18. Natalie drew her father engaged in an activity which she thought he might do during deployment or at work, while Andrew related his drawing to the book reading of ‘D is for Deployment’ where a group of defence personnel were digging in one of the photos. Importantly, he was able to adapt the narrative to incorporate the fantastical element of ‘many suns’. Kolbe (2005) describes this process where children combine known elements of their experience with other elements to construct new realities. Being able to have Andrew tell me what the drawing was about meant that I was given insight into his imagination, and it gave him the sense that his drawings were a representation of his ideas on paper and the process

was just as valuable as the end product (Robertson, 2000). In Figure 4.19 we see Andrew's response to the reading of 'Rose's story: Waiting for Daddy', containing the image of the plane he asked an educator to draw and his drawing of his father in the plane going on deployment and his family waving goodbye. The educator also wrote the names of family members but these have been replaced with pseudonyms. Overall, the children displayed nuanced understandings of deployment. The next section reveals a few of the children's transference of affection to objects and pets.



Figure 4-16: Bella's second D is for Deployment picture



Figure 4-17: Natalie's 'D is for Deployment' drawing 'Daddy at work playing music'



Figure 4-18: Andrew's D is for Deployment picture 'I have practiced my D's and coloured them in. There are many suns so all the boys can work outside on deployment. The lady is digging on deployment'.

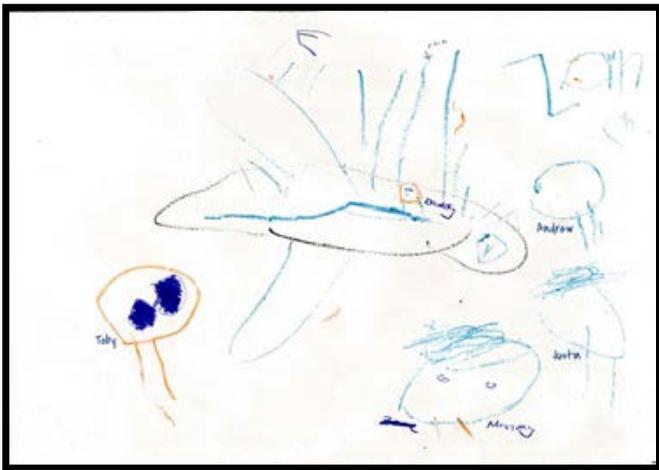


Figure 4-19: Andrew's picture 'Daddy is going to Afghanistan' (the educator drew the plane on his instruction)

Increased attention to or transferral of affection to object or pet in parent's absence

The data also displayed that children sometimes transfer their affection to an object or person when a parent is absent, as a coping strategy. Straker (2014) calls this a transition object on which children bestow the characteristics of the parent, as toddlers do with a comfort blanket or toy. This process is a division of the parent within the child's mind to assist the child to cope when the parent is not present (Straker, 2014). Blake took a few photographs at home as part of the camera pack research activity. Included in these was a photograph of his father's chair. The mother explained that it was included because the chair seemed to take on heightened significance for Blake and Bella when their father was away.

Another example can be seen in Blake's detailed drawing (see Figure 4.20). After reading the book 'Rachel's Story: What do you do when you miss your parents?', the children were asked to draw what they like to do when they are missing their parents.

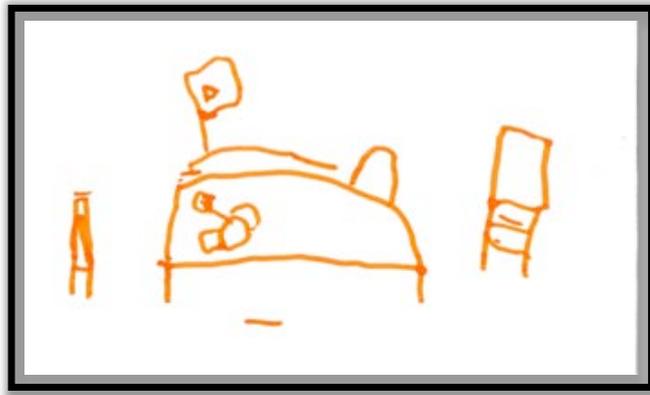


Figure 4-20: Blake's drawing of what he likes to do when he is missing his father

Within the socio-ecological framework, this demonstrates the escalated significance of objects as the holder of relational memories for the child (e.g., photo-album and recordable picture book) in the absence of his father during long-term training or deployment. Adding weight to this, the interview with Blake's mother revealed that she believed Blake was better able to adjust to his father's long training sessions now that he was older. She reported at times he would go to his room by himself and listen to his recordable storybook if he was feeling sad so he could hear his father's voice. He also looked through his special photo album at these times to review photos of what he enjoyed doing with his father. This data revealed the way Blake utilised objects to self-soothe at times of emotional stress. In the drawing example above, Blake continued to explain 'The lump on the end of my bed is my dog Kuta. I like to cuddle him in bed when Dad is away'. This suggests the increased importance of animals within some children's lives during deployment.

Bayne (2002) asserts that connections between animals and people are often based on affection. When describing a family, many people include their pets as part of the family (Levin & Trost, 1992). During times of changes, movement, difficulties and loss, pets are perceived as being of greater value by families (Walsh, 2009). Military families 'reported that at times of disruptive relocation their pet provided support and stability' as noted by Walsh

(2009, p. 482). Pets seem to provide comfort and confidence that can act as a buffer during times of high stress. When one parent is absent, due to marital separation, markedly higher levels of bonding are evident between the children and their pets (Walsh, 2009). Blake's mother Fern indicated this when she reported that she let the family dog inside when Quentin was away on training to protect the family. Emily's parents bought her a puppy just before deployment, demonstrating their belief that it might comfort her during the difficult times ahead. In this way, Emily's parents initiated a coping strategy and passed on their cultural beliefs.

The next chapter explores the way families manage transitions that parental deployment and training bring, along with the protective factors and ADF support that assists them.

4.4. Conclusion

The thematic analysis provided a snapshot of understandings and experiences of the children attending the centre. These experiences and understandings were shaped by the children's family and culture. The theme discussed in this chapter comprised children and family members' responses to deployment that have been revealed in previous research. The responses were emotional, physical and cognitive, with children displaying coping strategies in a number of ways during family transitions that will be explored in the next chapter.

Park (2011) reminds us of the fact that when one person joins the military, the whole family serves. This was very evident in the data, as the children struggled with the demands of an institution that demands total availability, a willingness to deploy and relocate whole families at a moment's notice (Drummet et al., 2003). While this policy seemed to work during the era of conscription, the voluntary basis of servitude still has the same policies. How this translates to families with dual careers, children and extended family and friends is difficult to justify when the effects on the children and family are evident. Despite this, military families such as these seem to cope with the demands of the lifestyle in return for a secure income and an opportunity to serve their country. The study revealed protective factors and support for the children and their families within the complex layers of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological model and indicated that these support systems assist the child and

family during parental military absence. This will be discussed in greater detail in following chapters.

Chapter 5. Themes from the findings: Transitions and risk and protective factors

5.1. Introduction

This chapter continues to explore the themes from the analysis.

5.2. Managing transitions within the deployment cycle (chronosystem)

The effects of deployment vary within the deployment cycle (Hollingsworth, 2011) and families respond in different ways to the changes parental deployment and training brings. Managing these transitions is a challenge for the family as individuals and the whole family unit is required to adjust. Pincus et al. (2007) discuss the emotional stages within the deployment cycle that need to be managed by each member of the family. An inability to negotiate these stages causes ‘strife’ for the family and the absent parent (Pincus et al., 2007). The families in this study displayed a range of strategies to manage the transitions within the deployment cycle, and these strategies changed over time within the chronosystem as the children and families grew. In the following pages, I discuss critical transition periods within the deployment cycle and how these were managed.

5.2.1. Pre-deployment or training

Jack’s mother Leanne reported the high stress time period in the month before deployment. She also reported that during this time Jack overheard his father talk about deployment. This caused an increase in anxiousness with Jack sleeping in his parents’ bed from then on, creating sleep difficulties for the family unit. Leanne had experienced this highly emotional stage many times previously and just seemed to let this time happen, rather than resist it by pretending everyone was coping. Bella’s father tried to navigate this emotional time by having extra cuddles and time with the children. This was met with resistance and anger by Bella. As a couple, Simon and Fern supported each other during this time and Fern sought

help from the director of the centre for age-appropriate resources in dealing with Bella's high emotional outbursts.

5.2.2. Deployment or training

Earlier in the year, when Emily's father was away for the six-week training, Emily had been highly emotional. Emily's mother, Lara, found it very difficult to console Emily because she was so upset herself. Lara attributed the emotional mix within the household as a barrier to their ability to cope. Perhaps this display of grief was needed for Emily and Lara to be able to move forward after the initial settling-in period. In Blake and Bella's family, to help compensate for their father's absence, their mother Fern had tried having special time and activities. These adaptations to routine and coping strategies during deployment and training indicated the different ways families tried to deal with the changing family landscape and relationships. Mogil et al. (2010) describe this by saying,

Military families must continually accommodate to the presence and absence of a deployed parent, reorganising and readjusting to changing roles and routines. They often have fewer resources and adapt to these events relatively smoothly, whereas others may have more difficulty responding when the family's typical way of functioning is disrupted (p.11).

Within Blake's 'person, house, tree drawing', the significance of his father leaving could be interpreted through the size of the car and his father, in comparison to the house and Blake himself within the drawing (see Figure 5.1). While it may be argued that that is only an interpretation, Anning and Ring (2004) believe that children's drawings 'may tell us much more about childhood than we ever imagined' (p.124). This drawing suggests that the focus within the family has been on the father's departure, and it could perhaps communicate Blake's feelings about this as he made sense of what was happening within the family unit.

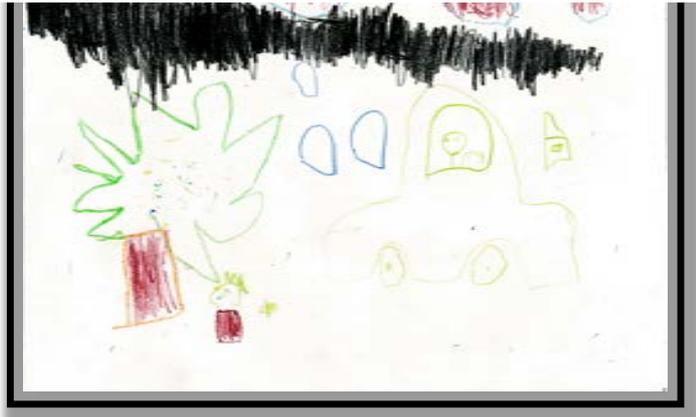


Figure 5-1: Blake's person, house, tree drawing

Contrary to this, Figure 5.2 displays Blake's employment of more balanced proportions for the house and person, although this was not done using the same 'person, house, tree' drawing techniques. Malchoiodi (1998) argues that interpreting children's artwork can be problematic, but that it provides children with the chance to tell their stories. By using multiple drawings or contexts, it is more likely that the drawings are understood in a meaningful way (Malchoiodi, 1998). It could be argued that the house in the 'person, house, tree' drawing was done as an afterthought and there was little room left. His description could indicate this, when he said, 'I have to draw the house small, cause Dad's car is far away from it. He is driving far away from it'. Matthews (1999) describes this type of drawing phase in preschoolers as transitional. During this time, they perceive concerns in their drawings and try to fix them by adjusting elements within the drawing by being creative with size, perspective and view (Matthews, 1999).



Figure 5-2: Blake's drawing of the letter 'D' to match the pipe-cleaner 'Dad is hopping in his car to go to Ayers Rock for work'

Along with children's stress responses, the data also revealed the stress parents felt during deployment and training episodes. For example, Leanne described her disorganisation and high emotions during the first month of Paul's deployment. Pincus et al. (2007) reports that 'some military spouses report feeling disoriented and overwhelmed.' (p.3). Hollingsworth (2011) discusses the high prevalence of increased rates of stress in the non-deployed spouse, whereas Pittman et al. (2004) report on the high stress levels for the whole family during military deployment. During the last month of deployment, Leanne had another high state of emotions where she also had to prepare Jack and herself for Paul's reintegration into the family. Bella's mother, Fern found the last three weeks the hardest, when she imagined something awful might happen. Many spouses find this a difficult time as there is excitement twinged with anxiety for the reintegration period where decisions that have been made in the spouse's absence may be questioned (Pincus et al., 2007) and independence may be curbed (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). This reintegration stage is the most important stage for the couple, according to Pincus et al. (2007).

5.2.3. Reintegration

In preparing for reintegration, Bethany depicted in her drawing a future time when she portrayed herself waiting at the airport for her father's return in Figure 5.3. Similar to Figures 3.9 and 3.10, waiting for the father's return is portrayed as a lonely activity. Using drawing to express her emotions and depictions of what this transition might feel like may have helped Bethany process this difficult adjustment. Matthews (2003) believes such opportunities are a 'developmentally significant, representational and expressive activity vital to the intellectual and emotional growth of young children' (p. 4).



Figure 5-3: Bethany's drawing. I am 'waiting at the airport for Daddy. It is raining at the airport.'

Cassie's artwork depicted what happens in her family when her father returns or what she would like to happen. In Figure 5.4, Cassie is undertaking an activity with her father. Interestingly, her picture included only herself and her father in an activity that would require the high level of the parental one-to-one attention that she is craving. This is confirmed with the mother's concern at the amount of time, attention and reassurance Cassie demanded during the father's reintegration. Pincus et al. (2007) outline the clinginess that preschoolers often display, including concerns about the parent departing again. According to Pincus et al. (2007) parents can help alleviate this with an increase in physical demonstrations of affection and focused attention. During the interview, Wendy (Cassie's mother) was concerned at the draining effect this clinginess was having on the father and the whole family. She also expressed concerns that this demand was not abating. Individual reactions to transitions will differ, but this excessive clinginess may take longer to subside in Cassie's case due to a history of lengthy parental absences, the fact that the father had been the primary caregiver when she was younger and her individual personality traits. How the parents deal with this situation will affect the frequency and severity of the behaviour. It will also affect the behaviour of Cassie's younger brother as he watches and learns from the family interactions, reinforcing the powerful impact of the socio-ecological model.

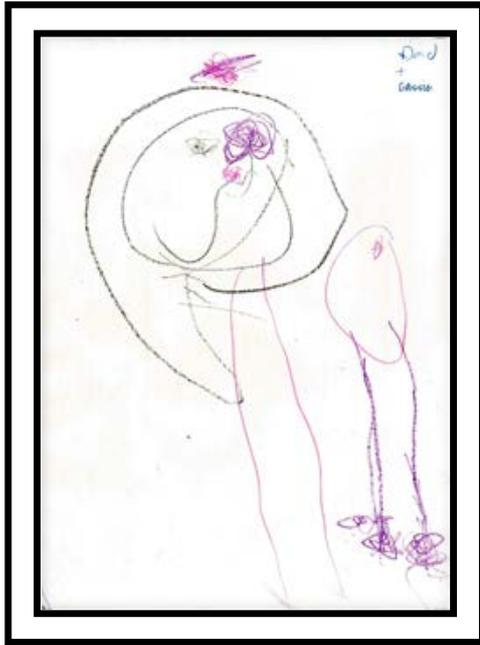


Figure 5-4: Cassie's drawing of herself and her father 'I like swimming with Daddy when he comes home'.

The Department of Defence (2014) state that the reintegration period, which takes one to six weeks after the return of service personnel, often features an initial adjustment period and relationship renegotiation. In a study involving fifty-seven US military families, two-thirds reported that child attachment behaviours lasted for less than three weeks (Drummet et al., 2003). Over 30% found that certain behaviours lasted longer, with one or two persistent attachment behaviours. These behaviours included sleeping problems, rejection and loss of authority for the returned parent, being very upset if the returned parent leaves the house and preferential interactions with the non-deployed parent. The latter was the opposite in Cassie's case. For her parents, this renegotiation had involved setting boundaries around Cassie's behaviour.

It is important to note the cognitively advanced processes involved in Cassie's drawing in Figure 5.4. My direction as researcher was to invite Cassie to draw a picture depicting what happens in her family when her parent goes away for training or deployment, or when they come back home. The activity had started with a storybook about deployment. Cassie (3) was able to make connections within her drawn picture to the preceding story and made links in her verbal description. For another child, Natalie (3.5), her picture of a mermaid indicated that she was perhaps unable to make the same level of connection for this activity (see Figure

5.5). It is important to note, however, that Natalie's experiences with parental deployment occurred one year earlier to the data collection, probably making it harder for her to remember the experiences from such a young age.

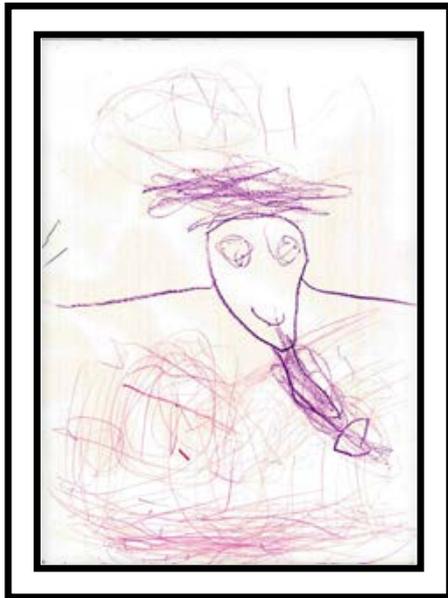


Figure 5-5: Natalie's drawing of 'A mermaid'

In Jack's family, his mother Leanne talked about the first month of reintegration as a highly emotional time for the whole family. There was a sudden change in the household back to the non-deployment routine to which she and Jack had to adapt, as per the internal adaption process described by Pittman et al. (2004). At the same time, Paul adjusted to civilian life and being back in the family. Mogil et al. (2010) explains that marital conflict may be higher at this time as co-parenting relationships are renegotiated, but this comes at a time when children are vulnerable. Jack typically remained in their bed for about a month after the reunion, then the parents relocated him back to his room after returning home from a holiday.

In addition to managing the various stages of the deployment cycle, family mobility also posed transitional challenges that are explored in the next section.

5.2.4. Managing family mobility

Howe (1999) explains that Australia has become a more changeable society with high rates of separation, divorce, blended families and family mobility. As the family sits within this changeable society, ‘a pervasive sense of impermanence suffuses the society in practically all sectors: economic, organisational, social, technological, political and racial’ (Howe, 1999, p. 144). Within the Australian defence community, even higher rates of family relocations cause added stressors for military families during deployment (McFarlane, 2009) and beforehand to complete the prerequisite training (Siebler, 2009). Adult children often list geographic mobility as the worst aspect of life within a military family (Lincoln et al., 2008). Family relocation and subsequent school transitions can increase risky behaviour among military children and youth (Wickman, Greenberg, & Boren, 2010). Family mobility may also create complications with spousal employment and the ability for parents to access their preferred type of educational settings for their children (Doherty, Shield, Patton, & Mu, 2015).

While none of the case study families were experiencing relocation during data collection, they had previously relocated numerous times. Previous data revealed conversations between Bethany, a case study child, and her peer Andrew, as they discussed their own family’s multiple relocations (see Chapter 4). Lincoln et al. (2008) report that children who experience frequent deployments often have difficulty adapting to the need to make new friends, adjust emotionally and behaviourally and achieve academically. Kelley et al. (2003) researched the link between geographic mobility and maternal variables related to the psychosocial adjustment of military children. From the research they were able to conclude that the less moving the children had experienced, the less they experienced loneliness and the stronger their peer relationships. Additionally, this study revealed that the length of time in the current residence was also linked to positive mother-child relationships and mother’s perception of family cohesion and children’s reports of self-esteem (Kelley et al., 2003).

For Jack’s family, the data reveals the cumulative effect of frequent relocations by friends within the military and the effect this had on the family’s microsystem. Jack’s mother Leanne was anxious about losing family friends, as many of them were relocating at the same time, and also concerned about the effect it might have on her due to her support network being severely diminished. Leanne’s ability to adapt to the realities of this demanding military

workplace to which her family belonged is what Pittman et al. (2004) calls external adaptation. Pittman et al. (2004) explains that external adaptation is the 'family's response to perceived work demand and reward that is relevant to its ability or willingness to accommodate the demands of the workplace' (p. 249). The decreased ability of Leanne's family to rely on others limited their ability for external adaptation to the demands on a military family, which could impact on their internal adaptation as well. In summary, the impact of relocations is added stress for the family to manage, and I now discuss the management of stress by families.

5.2.5. Managing stress

When interviewing the non-deployed case study parents, the overarching foundation of their responses was exhaustion and stress. Dealing with the demands of young children, their spouses in the military, their own career, navigating a long-distance relationship and managing a household were extremely time-consuming and very stressful. According to Poole (2005), family life has become increasingly crowded and stressful as families are torn between dual careers and family responsibilities. Poole (2005) discusses the negative impacts on our personal relationships within families and our sense of belonging within our communities.

(Gray & Sims, 2007) point out the challenges of parenting and the lack of societal recognition for such a difficult task. Saggars and Sims (2005) and Connell (2013) explain that while women make up over half of the workforce in Australia, the division of childcare and household duties remains higher for women. One negative side of this is the tendency to blame mothers when anything is amiss in children's behaviour, learning, health and happiness (Connell, 2013). One reason for this is the influence of traditional roles within the family, and the (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016) confirms that for many Australian families, men are still working up to twice as long as women in paid employment and work related activities, whereas women are working up to twice as long on unpaid caring, volunteer and domestic duties. This pressure is exacerbated during the deployment cycle when one parent is not available or when extra work duties, training, deployment and stress place extra demands on both parents and children. Stress can also affect the spousal relationship, which in turn is likely to affect the parent-child relationship, according to

Pearce-Morris and King (2012). When families are stretched, they are often working at their peak emotional and physical capacity, meaning that even small changes or disruptions can cause major upsets (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2008).

Care is undervalued in our society, and motherhood is taken as part of the economic framework necessary for our market economy (Pocock, 2005). This stress is compounded by the lag in support for working mothers within our institutions and work culture, and embedded historic practices within families. Pocock (2005) discusses the difficulty of being an ideal mother in such environments where demanding workplaces retain power and flexibility is not enforced by governments. Further to this, Segal (1986) and De Angelis and Segal (2015) describes a military family as one at the intersection of two 'greedy' institutions, that is the family and the military (p. 22). The demands both place on families include devotion, obligation, loyalty, drive and time (Segal, 1986). Fathers are now expected to be more involved with parental duties and have close connections to their children, along with sharing household duties (De Angelis & Segal, 2015; Singleton, 2005). While this may be the new ideal, it does not necessarily reflect the complexity of fathers' lives as they balance and adapt to their roles (Singleton, 2005) with very demanding workplaces, such as Defence. Additionally, internal adaption to stress in families is also dependent upon the risk and protective factors. The next section explores the risk factors found in the data.

5.3. Risk factors

Risk factors inhibit a family's ability to deal with stressful situations and affect their thoughts about the stressor (Hollingsworth, 2011). These risk factors include military culture that encourages emotional suppression (Hollingsworth, 2011), the number of redeployments (Mogil et al., 2010), the length of the deployment (MacManus et al., 2012; Siebler, 2009) and the type of deployment (Hollingsworth, 2011).

5.3.1. Multiple deployments and deployment length

Mansfield et al. (2010) studied the use of Mental Health Services amongst US Army spouses and found that prolonged deployment length was linked with more mental health diagnosis in a large sample of over 250,000. White et al. (2011) also note that the potential of

redeployments inhibits family's ability to reconnect, whereas Atuel, Esqueda, and Jacobson (2011) observe that the military child does not experience in full the relief of having the parent back home because of the underlying fear of redeployment. In a mixed-methods study, Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2011) found that non-deployed spouses who experienced longer deployments 'reported significantly poorer emotional well-being, and more household and relationship hassles' (p. 374).

Conversely, the Timor-Leste Family Study found that multiple deployments did not significantly impact the wellbeing of the spouses (McGuire et al., 2012) although it did have a negative effect on their attitudes. Regardless of this, the more time a family member spends on deployment the greater exposure to stressful situations, increasing the risk of injuries and trauma. The risk then would increase for secondary transference of PTSD to the spouse (O'Brien, 2004) and the 'potential for intergenerational transmission to children' (Mogil et al., 2010, p. 11). RAND Health and RAND National Security Research Division (2011) strongly recommend targeted support for families who experience greater collective periods of parental deployment. In this study, Jack's family experienced four deployments in four years, which was very taxing on the family unit. Leanne's honest account of the emotional, physical and cognitive struggles during four months of each deployment cycle demonstrated that their family had survived this time, but at a cost. Within four years, Jack's father had also been in a combat zone more than he had been at home. His increased risk of developing a Combat Stress Response and related mental health conditions were high.

Overall, families experience deployment differently and certain studies report that children's and family's symptoms are relatively minor (McGuire et al., 2012). Negative changes within a child's mood and behaviour are a foreseeable response to the stress of a deployed parent, according to Pincus et al. (2007). Other variables occur, and Pittman et al. (2004) states that families do not operate in isolation. How well a family fares in the deployment cycle also depends upon the effectiveness of protective factors within the family's ecological system. The protective factors within the case study families are outlined in the next section.

5.4. Protective factors (microsystem, congruence within the mesosystem, exosystem)

As Hollingsworth (2011) outlines, the relationships and social support that family members have with others outside the family act as ‘protective factors’ and ‘positive coping activities’ during parental military absences (p. 221). These can include relationships with peers, siblings, early childhood educators, extended family and friends and community members.

Protective factors in families can be described as ‘those forces both within and outside the individual that ameliorate risk and enhance the attainment of developmentally appropriate outcomes’ (Lynch, Geller, & Schmidt, 2004, p. 336). Also, Lincoln et al. (2008) state that less is known about protective factors that promote resilience within military families. Using Bronfenbrenner’s (1978) socio-ecological model, the case study families here had many protective factors within the microsystem and exosystem, shielding them against the worst effects of the stresses of deployment and training. These protective factors included character strengths, and positive relations with peers, siblings, early childhood educators, extended family and family friends. Also important was the level of congruence within the mesosystem.

5.4.1. Character strengths (individual and microsystem)

From the data analysis, all families displayed their abilities to draw on strengths to overcome adversity. In the interests of brevity, this section (5.4.1) draws on examples from only Bethany and Cassie’s case study families to illustrate their use of family strengths; however, the examples used are reflected in the narratives of all the children and families.

After a group reading of a story outlining various positive coping strategies to help defence children manage difficult emotions, Cassie demonstrated one strategy of drawing a picture for her father. It was identified as a coping strategy that she employs, or could utilise when she was missing her father. She then went on to draw a bright coloured rainbow for her father in Figure 5.6, saying that the picture was for him. Cassie was accustomed to seeing her mother message her father with a photo of her drawing and receiving positive feedback from him.

Similarly, in the same research activity, Bethany was able to say that you could watch a video of your father reading you a bedtime story if you were missing a deployed parent. She then went on to draw what this might look like in Figure 5.7. In an interview, Bethany's mother explained that they did not create a video due to lack of preparation time as only a two-week notice was given for a six-month deployment. Queenie said they would have liked to have prepared a video as it seemed an effective strategy, although not one she had heard of previously. The lack of notice created high levels of stress in their family and seemed particularly difficult considering it was a peace-keeping operation rather than a sudden response to an emergency. This incongruence between Defence policy and family life created a disjunct within the mesosystem due to the conflicting demands of Bethany's father's work and the children's need for a stable family life. It is encouraging, however to observe both the children's and the families' use of strengths to help overcome adversity. These strengths included problem-solving, communication, empathy, positive interactions, resourcefulness, seizing opportunities, adapting to fit new challenges and active initiative (see Figure 5.8). Walsh (2003) believes exercising such strengths are part of the key processes in family resilience. Silberberg (2001) also lists communication, support, affection and commitment in their Australian Family Strengths Template. Figure 5.8 reveals examples that the families in this study displayed. Tapping into these strengths and exercising them as a family could help them overcome times of stress (Walsh, 2003) such as family separations.



Figure 5-6: Cassie's drawing 'When I miss Dad, I draw a picture for him'

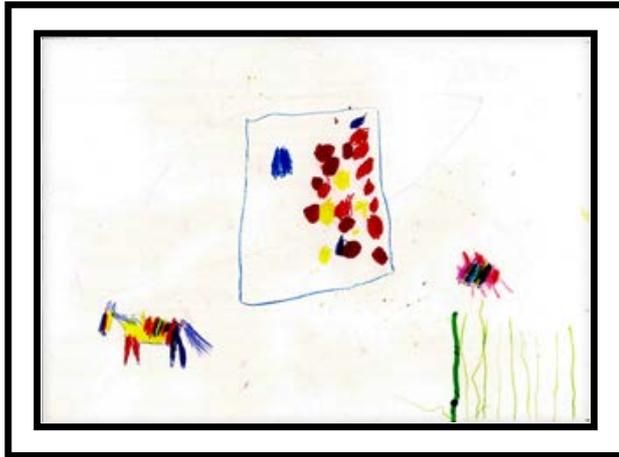


Figure 5-7: Bethany's drawing depicting what she could do when she is missing her Dad.

Bethany's description: 'We are watching television when Dad is away. We are eating blueberries, cherries and lemons. The curtains are closed because we are watching the video of Dad when he is reading us a bedtime story.'

Problem solving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using narratives (Cassie's family) • Anchoring dates of father's deployment to celebrated family days (Bethany's family)
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using Facetime and Skype to stay in touch with the separated parent (Cassie's and Bethany's family respectively)
Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing patience and empathy shown by family members with emotional outbursts and small acts of defiance (both families)
Positive interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emailing and MSM instant messaging children's artworks to separated parent (Bethany and Cassie's family respectively)
Resourcefulness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calling on extended family and family friends to help in times of need (Cassie's and Bethany's family respectively)
Seizing opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing children to be part of the four week research activities (both families)
Adapting to fit new challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing Bethany to sleep in her parent's bed
Active initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding a relevant digital application (Cassie's family)

Figure 5-8: Family strengths identified by Walsh (2003) with examples from Bethany's and Cassie's family

5.4.2. Positive sibling and parent relationships (microsystem)

Inside the microsystem, the family's internal relationships are paramount to supporting each other and the child emotionally through the deployment cycle. Connell (2013) emphasises this support by saying, 'relationships within families are generally the most important element of children's emotional worlds' (p. 25). For Blake and his sister Bella, emotional support was given to each other during the father's absence. Blake also displayed strong protective behaviours toward Bella that were encouraged by his father, Quentin. The clay picture demonstrates the prominence of Blake's relationship with Bella when creating a family scene with modelling clay (see Figure 5.9).



Figure 5-9: Blake's clay model of his family 'Bella's in the garden, Dad's gone away, I'm inside with Mum'

Within sibling relationships, love and friendship are often hand-in-hand with fights and competition (Burton, Westen, & Kowalski, 2012). Fern reported Bella and Blake's relationship as being quite typical in this regard. Bella often became excited when she observed her brother Blake (5) in the playground or during an activity. Blake's data (see Appendix 2) revealed that he was protective of Bella, partly due to his caring nature, but also due to his father's instructions to look after Bella at the centre. Blake would quickly tell the educator if Bella was experiencing any problems with other children or needed help. Children experiencing deployments often learn new skills and take pride in their contribution to the family (Stafford, 2003). Blake's drawings and clay models often depicted Bella. Her clay

models and drawings did not reciprocate, although at 2.5 years, the detail of the drawing or modelling was limited. Additionally, being the younger child may have affected her experience of these sibling relationships. The order of siblings may be significant, as revealed in one study where parents reported different challenges faced by first born and younger siblings (Rosen, 1993). This was an area identified for much needed additional research because the mental health of siblings is a major contributor to the way a child responds to deployment (Rosen, 1993).

Bethany had been loved and supported by her siblings and mother during the father's deployment. This closeness had been reflected in the way the siblings helped Bethany during emotionally difficult times. Additionally, the data revealed the way her mother acknowledged Bethany's longing for her father. This can be seen in the video transcription of the family reading of 'Rose's Story: When is Daddy coming home?' when Bethany says that she wants a cuddle from her father, like the character in the book does. Queenie's simple acknowledgement, 'Yes, I know you do', helps Bethany view her emotional needs as typical and justified, despite being physically impossible during the six-month deployment. Saltzman et al. (2011) believes this type of communication is the sign of a healthy family as it is 'direct, clear, consistent, and honest' (p. 221). This emotional support is portrayed in the clay model family below (see Figure 5.10). Bethany's initial depiction of her emotions with clay model could be analysed in various ways. Bethany initially made a smiley face to depict how she felt when her father was away and a sad face to portray how she felt when he was home. It may reflect Bethany's experiences within an understanding and supportive family, early childhood centre and community. It may also be a realisation that she is not really sad all of the time her father is away, nor happy all of the time he is home. It may be confusion with the set task, and explain why she swapped it around by the time the photo was taken (see Figure 5.11) after she viewed peers' responses.

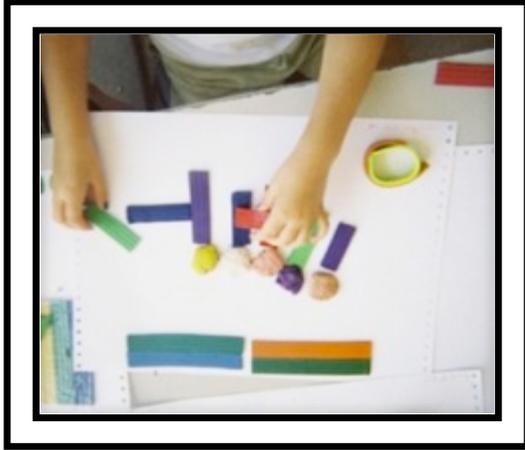


Figure 5-10: Bethany's clay model of her family portraying the close connections with the physical holding of hands between family members.



Figure 5-11: Bethany's clay model faces after she switched them around

5.4.3. The importance of positive peer relations (microsystem)

Peer relationships can provide military children with important social and emotional support to help deal with parental absence and stress (Hollingsworth, 2011). Emily and Blake spent five days a week at the centre. This meant that their relationship with peers was significant and could act as a buffer for the children during testing times. Emily had a strong friendship with Bella, but also played well with most peers. When deployment first occurred, the educators at the centre reported Emily's frequent emotional outbursts over very small incidences involving other children. Importantly, the educators reported this to Emily's mother and they shared information about the behaviour and strategies to help. This

collaborative reforming approach to parental knowledge helps the educator and parent assist each other (Blaise & Nuttall, 2011), so that Emily and her friendships with peers were supported at this time.

The data demonstrated the strong friendship ties between Blake and his preschool peer, Dorothy. This positive relationship strengthened Blake's ability to cope with his father's absence. Croker and Ebbeck (2010) explain that preschoolers often choose to play with the same friends over time. The data revealed Blake would rather wait for Dorothy and delay the gratification of going off to play, rather than take an earlier opportunity to play with other peers. This high level of inhibitory control was displayed in his ability to play positively with other peers and interact well with a range of children at the centre. Overall, these significant peer relationships provided security and comfort for the children at the centre while separated from their non-deployed parent on weekdays.

Bella and Jack attended the centre at the military base full-time, meaning that a large portion of their life was spent with peers, deepening the importance of positive peer relationships for support during the deployment cycle. Gilligan (2000) reports on the importance of a secure base for children from which to explore the world in a safe way. These explorations will widen from the family home to encompass the microsystem, including peers from a young age. The quality and importance of peer relationships was highlighted in the research of Kelley et al. (2003) where frequent moves were cited as affecting military children's ability to sustain important peer relationships and avoid feelings of loneliness. Bella (2.5) and Jack (4) had close friends at the centre and preferred to spend time with Emily (2.5) and Caleb (5) respectively. Jack displayed his increasing skills in delaying gratification when he stayed with Caleb as he was finishing up an activity, rather than joining the other children to play. This suggests a strong friendship that would provide Jack with another avenue of emotional support when he was away from both of his parents at the centre. Bella spent most of her day with Emily by choice, and while they included others in their play, they were not often apart (see Figure 5.12). Having peers who are experiencing similar family occurrences that they can talk about and role-play as Emily and Bella did also demonstrated a high level of congruence within the mesosystem.



Figure 5-12: Bella and Emily making clay families

5.4.4. Supportive relationships with educators

Newman and Pollnitz (2005) advise that early childhood educators need to be respectful in their relationships with parents to build support for the child. In the data, Emily's mother communicated her belief that the educators at the centre were a wonderful source of emotional support for both themselves as parents and for Emily because the educators comprehended the needs of ADF families. The centre educators were obviously achieving this quality of relationship through respect and emotional support.

Jennings (2014) explains that early childhood educators are vital in the creation of learning environments that are 'socially and emotionally supportive for young children' (p. 1). The data revealed the strong emphasis Cassie's parents had placed on such emotional support from within the early childhood centre. This was demonstrated when her parents resisted the urge to move Cassie to a more conveniently located centre when they moved house. They attributed this decision to the professionalism of the staff at the centre, who they strongly believed were emotionally supportive and understanding of military children's needs. This sensitivity is an indicator of quality care as explained by Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, and Farmer (2015), who underline the importance of sensitivity to the diversity of family structures, challenges and experiences of families. Further, Ahnert (2005) believes parents of toddlers and infants emphasise concerns about health and wellbeing and seek care environments likely to encourage warm childcare provider relationships (p. 239).

The attitude of Cassie's parents to their decision-making may also indicate their acknowledgement of what Otto and Keller (2014) describe as the importance of matching fundamental beliefs on care between families and institutions. Ahnert (2005) argues that humans have created social structures to assist with the care of children through multiple attachments called alloparenting, where other adults take on the varied care roles. While we do not know a lot about the long-term effects of alloparenting through childcare institutions and the way the care is socially embedded, we do understand that it has an important effect on the development of the child, although less so than the family (Otto & Keller, 2014).

The Early Years Learning Framework (DEEWR, 2009) outlines principles that have particular importance for early childhood educators in their interactions with families. Two of these principles are 'secure, respectful and reciprocal relationships' and developing 'partnerships with families' (p. 10). Atuel et al. (2011) report on the protective properties of supportive school environments for children and youth from military families. De Pedro and Astor (2011) state that 'decades of research have suggested that protective school climates are comprised of students who feel safe and connected to a school community and have caring relationships with peers and teachers' (p. 609). Inhibiting these protective factors are frequent relocations (De Pedro & Astor, 2011) that mean forging new relationships with staff and peers, along with adjustments to changes in settings, practices and expectations. For Bella's mother Fern, educators at the centre were a source of information in accessing age-appropriate books to help Bella learn about strong emotions. The educators also supported the children when they were experiencing their father's lengthy training episodes. To do this, the educators utilised effective communication and worked together with Fern, displaying observable and genuine interest in Jack and Bella. Gilligan (2000) explains that social workers, educators and parents need to be mindful that the elements of what they do with children is important because they require time and nurturance from committed adults.

Jack's mother, Leanne, had found the educators at the centre were supportive beyond their role. One staff member offered to mind Jack before the centre opened as a private arrangement when Leanne was given short notice for night shifts and arrived at the centre distraught. Opposite to Leanne's experiences in her own workplace, Carreiras (2015) found that work provided an additional level of support for non-deployed parents in a Portuguese study. There seems to be an inherent assumption by the ADF that all non-deployed spouses

are totally available to solo parent outside of the standard hours of care offered on a Monday to Friday at the base. Smith (2015) takes this further by stating:

The hypermasculine military institution reproduces socially defined gender roles and behaviour in itself and its families. These gender roles create boundaries between work and family, so that conflicts are resolved in favor of work (p. 60).

The data highlights the relief felt by these parents knowing there was available support and help when they were experiencing difficulty and at a loss with how to solve problems such as behaviour and out-of-hours occasional child care, both exacerbated by parental deployment or training. Relief was also experienced when grandparents were available to help out with childminding. I now explore the importance of grandparent relationships as extended family relationships.

5.4.5. Positive extended family relationships

Grandparents can be an enormous asset to children and their families, providing practical, emotional and financial support (Wellard, 2012). Ebbeck and Waniganayake (2010) underline the importance of children playing with significant adults, such as grandparents and other relatives, as a way to enhance learning development through play. Grandparents can often provide buffers to families in times of need, such as divorce and separation, and can help build resilience in children (Henderson, Hayslip, Sanders, & Loudon, 2009). When a parent is absent from the household long-term, positive grandparent support can potentially be a huge benefit to the child and the at-home parent. The data offers insights into the way extended families may work within the microsystem and highlight the influence nearby grandparents can have on their grandchildren, which Barbour, Barbour, and Scully (2011) believe to be significant.

Emily, Blake and Bella all had grandparents living within the same city. Blake's camera pack included a photo he had taken of Bella and their grandfather. This inclusion highlights the significance of these relationships during parental training (see Figure 5.13) for Blake and Bella. Emily's mother, Lara, believed there were benefits for both Emily and the grandfather in their regular visits. Wellard (2012) also outlines the benefits for grandparents in helping with wellbeing and as a preventative to loneliness.



Figure 5.13: Blake's photo of Bella being pushed on the swing by her grandfather

McMahon and Camberis (2016) explain that when parenting is compromised due to stress, grandparents often provide ‘an alternate predictable, responsive caregiving relationship’ (p. 132). In this study, Jack’s paternal grandmother increased her role during the fourth deployment that he experienced. Leanne did not know the reason for the increase, but welcomed the domestic and childminding support. The grandmother’s ability to care for Jack was tempered by her age and preference for long periods of advance notice. This could be somewhat problematic for Leanne, whose workplace requirements were often changeable and demanding. It also may have been difficult for Leanne to appreciate her mother-in-law’s needs for a schedule when she herself did not like to live by a timetable. Jack’s time with his grandfather who lived locally was also special. The grandparents are divorced, so Jack spent time with them separately, although the grandfather did not provide childminding. The involvement of grandparents in Jack’s life was important because it afforded an extra layer of support for the whole family within the microsystem.

The data further revealed the positive effect of the relationship between Cassie and her maternal aunt and uncle. Cassie was sometimes dropped off or collected at the centre by her Aunt. Wendy (Cassie’s mother) was also supported emotionally by having family nearby. Having close, positive relationships helps service personnel in their roles, while difficulties at home are a cause of worry and disruption to duties (Park, 2011). The extra layer of support of family living nearby is of benefit to the parents and the ADF, as according to Park (2011) families who function well improve the military personnel’s morale, performance and rate of

retention. Even Bowlby (1988), who has long argued the importance of a traditional mother-child attachment relationship, states that looking after babies and young children is no job for a single person and that female relatives like Cassie's aunt often shared the load within traditional societies. Alloparenting through kinship ties is an important part of the cooperative breeding model employed by humans as described by Hrdy (2005). The easy access to others to mind children, regardless of their experience, allows the mother to provide for her family (Hrdy, 2005). While this may seem tribal in its description, a few communities within Australia go even further with alloparenting. In certain close-knit communities, such as migrant and Aboriginal communities, cross-feeding or breast sharing is common, building stronger ties between the child and the alloparent (Long, 2003). Indeed, it is seen as a practical way of supporting the parents and attending to the child's needs. Besides extended family relationships, another protective factor for these families was family friends, which is examined in the next section.

5.4.6. Family friends

From an ecological viewpoint, the chronosystem also affects military families. Lester and Flake (2013) explain, 'how deployment affects military children and families may also be related to historical, social, and cultural contexts, including the national response to returning service members and veterans' (p. 125). Within the study, Emily's mother had support from friends within the defence community whom she talked to on Facebook and at her workplace. Other friends within the general community, including Troy's work friends and parents of Emily's classmates, also provided assistance. She reported being particularly touched when a 'community family' (a non-ADF family) brought her a card and a homemade meal when Troy first deployed. The card outlined their respect for her bravery and sacrifice in being able to let Troy depart to serve his country. In Bella and Blake's family, the mother received support from other ADF families and community families. Fern found that both children gravitated towards other fathers or older males when they were in social situations much more when the father was away, demonstrating they missed their father.

Unlike Wendy, who had family close by, Queenie (Bethany's mother) was very isolated from her family, who lived three geographic states away, a distance of over 1700 km. During the strains of deployment, Queenie sought practical support from other ADF family friends who

allowed her time by herself occasionally. The Defence Community Organisation (2013) strongly advocates for ADF families to support each other when their spouses are deployed, acting out their motto 'strong families, strong communities, strong defence' (p. 1). They recommend ADF families give support to each other, allowing the non-deployed parents time off from their regular family duties. In this way, family friends provided the family with opportunities for care when the mother and father were not available. Ahnert (2005) describes the way humans have evolved to facilitate care for our young, who have such a long period of dependence upon parents compared to other animal species. Hrdy (2005) believes the cooperative breeding model employed by humans helped children flourish and improves the survival rates of both children, their parents and communities. Indeed, a mother's enhanced social support assists with the attentiveness of care, the reduction of stress, an increase in health and fitness and maternal survival (Hrdy, 2005).

Resilience can be defined as an adaptive set of behaviours that create positive health and social outcomes from the interrelationship between risk and protective factors (Lynch et al., 2004). Protective factors such as 'bonds to prosocial adults outside the family' are recognised as a vital characteristic in resilient children and teenagers (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). In the data, both Fern and Leanne recognised the importance of their family friends as sources of support both socially and emotionally. They also reported the enjoyment their children had in attending social gatherings with other military families. Leanne emphasised the importance of having sleepovers with Jack at friends' houses when Paul was deployed to help them emotionally and enjoy their time and freedom during deployment.

Within the defence community, families are generally supportive and encouraging. This is reinforced culturally through social gatherings within units to encourage those friendships and through family education sessions. Additionally, educational booklets and web-based resources encourage the emotional and physical support of other defence families (Defence Community Organisation, 2013).

Friendships with ADF and non-ADF friends are also shaped by community attitudes. Historically, Vietnam veterans from Australia found it extremely difficult to reintegrate into society once they returned home due to community attitudes to the war, often influenced by

the media despite the large number of conscripted personnel. Barklay (2013) reports there were also difficulties in the exosystem, generated by the media around the time of data collection, in 2013. Troops began to return home from Afghanistan in large numbers early in 2013. By then 26,000 Australian troops had rotated through deployments over twelve years (Barklay, 2013). While over 200 schools had been built and 200 km of roads laid within Afghanistan by the ADF, media focus had been on the conflict (Barklay, 2013), indicating the influence of the exosystem. There is a mismatch between the breadth of ADF personnel's duties and what is reported in the media. This narrow approach to reporting has influenced the often negative perceptions of the general population as to the role of the ADF within Afghanistan, and other conflicts and peace-keeping missions. For defence families, these community perceptions affect the response within the local community and their friendships within the general community, hence their surprise when non-ADF families demonstrated understanding. In addition to community and media attitudes, organisations and communities may provide support to defence families.

5.4.7. Other organisations or communities

Within the exosystem, organisations and communities have an important role in supporting ADF families, and in turn their children. The online community, including Facebook, was identified by Emily's mother as being a vital source of emotional support. When she was feeling down, typically around three to four weeks into deployment, she let all her Facebook friends know how she was feeling (that included defence families, her extended family, community families and other friends). Emily's mother found that this strategy assisted her, as members of the community cheered her up and checked up on her once she had disclosed her emotional state. Lester and Flake (2013) and Hollingsworth (2011) cite community support as an intervening factor in the way a family copes during deployment. The relationships involved in community support organisations are referred to as 'social capital' (Sims, 2002) and are able to build the capacity of a community to support its citizens (p. 20). Sims (2002) argues that social capital within communities 'impacts on economic and physical well-being' (p.20) and is linked to higher levels of care for children. Although these organisations and communities are supportive, the level of congruence within the microsystem, or what is referred to as the mesosystem will also affect the children's experiences and the family's ability to cope with the added stresses deployment brings.

5.4.8. Level of congruence (mesosystem)

From the data, it was evident the culture of the ADF was supported within the centre. This support was evident in numerous ways, including the observance of Remembrance Day, discussions about the importance of deployment, support for the non-deployed members of the family, reading and displaying defence force publications to children, the provision of defence force uniforms for dress ups, the purchase of toys with tanks and guns and the displays featuring military equipment and ADF Care Bears. Arthur et al. (2015) promote the inclusion of resources and customs that are familiar for children to increase their sense of belonging. This close fit generally means better outcomes for the children and families and Bowes, Grace, and Hayes (2012) believe it can mean a better transition into school. Despite this, Jack's parents were deliberately looking to send him to a school away from the military culture so he could experience friendships outside of the defence force. This would mean he would be one of the only children in the school with a parent in the defence force. Compared to the centre, the school would have a very diverse population in line with the organisational diversity found in Australian families as identified by Saggars and Sims (2005). The school would find it harder to include resources or support the culture from all the various occupations of the parents. This will mean the level of congruence will alter as Jack moves into this new setting, thus demonstrating with the family system changes through the passage of time (chronosystem).

5.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored a few of the risk factors, including multiple repeat deployments and training episodes that the non-parents found extremely difficult for both themselves and the children. This is in opposition to the findings of Barker and Berry (2009) who identified no significant effect on children's behaviour when they experienced multiple deployments. The study has also revealed support for the children and their families within the complex layers of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological model and demonstrated how these support systems helped the child and family during parental military absence. Protective factors were also prevalent in families, including positive relations with peers, siblings, early childhood educators, grandparents, defence and community family friends and other online communities. These protective factors increased the family's ability to be resilient in spite of ongoing exposure to high stress through repeat deployments and training.

A number of factors affect resilience of families experiencing deployment (Hollingsworth, 2011). ‘What we do know is that relationships and connections matter, inside the family and out’ (Hollingsworth, 2011, p. 225) can be demonstrated through Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) socio-ecological framework. To help build their resilience, a joint effort needs to develop effective resources and strategies based on research. The first phase is to listen to and learn from children’s experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family using a child-centred approach (Siebler & Goddard, 2014). These themes of ADF and community support for families is discussed in the next results chapter, along with acculturation and ritual and the employment of narrative.

Chapter 6. Themes from the findings: ADF support, communication, acculturation, ritual and narrative

6.1. Introduction

This third results chapter presents themes concentrating on support from the ADF, communication, acculturation and ritual and narrative. Again, the data focuses on the case study children and their families, while data from other sample children confirm and contrast the emergent themes to give a more detailed picture of the children's experiences and understandings of parental deployment.

6.2. Information, resources and support from the ADF (exosystem)

In this study, families identified pre-deployment resources and welfare support when discussing ADF assistance as part of the exosystem. Pittman et al. (2004) recognise that a family's wellbeing 'is affected positively by the military's responsiveness to the needs of families for support and involvement' (p. 250). Jack's mother Leanne discussed the benefits of Jack's childcare centre being on the base. The centre offered reserved spaces to families from the defence force. Leanne believed the proximity to the base was a great benefit for them as parents and also for Jack because he could observe what happened at the base from the playground. She thought this gave him an insight into his father's workplace and culture. This seemed incongruent with the decision to enrol Jack in a school where few, if any, other military families were enrolled. Leanne thought that the ADF should provide out-of-hours childcare during deployment to cater for families like hers who were dealing with workplace demands and shift work. Bella's mother Fern expressed her relief that the centre staff were skilled at dealing with children experiencing lengthy parental absences due to deployment and training. The provision of childcare during standard work hours demonstrated the ADF's ability to support part of the changing needs of families and spouses' work commitments and societal change over time (chronosystem). If an organisation is aware and concerned about the welfare of their workers and able to respond with appropriate support for their family, the worker's level of commitment and desire to stay with the organisation increases (Pittman et al., 2004).

6.2.1. Cultural artefacts

Medals and Care Bears are two significant cultural artefacts in this study. ADF family deployment medals are given to the child and non-deployed parent. Emily and her mother wore the medals with pride for the weeks after deployment commenced, Emily had insisted they both wear them every day. Children do often respond with pride when they receive extrinsic reinforcement (McInerney & McInerney, 2002).

The ADF Care Bears were utilised by both Blake's and Emily's families. A pair of teddy bears were given by the ADF to families before they deployed. The deploying parent gives one to the child and the child gives one to the parent. The children are told that they can cuddle the bear anytime they are missing the parent and that the absent parent will be able to do the same. The child is told that the bears will be able to feel loved when they are cuddled and that the deployed parent will know when they are cuddling it via the twin bear they take away. The two pictures here are photographs that Lara took as part of Emily's camera pack. Figure 6.1 displays Emily learning about the bear during the pre-deployment stage. Figure 6.2 depicts Emily using the bear during deployment as a self-soothing device. Fern also reported that Blake cuddled his army bear when he was feeling sad.



Figure 6.2: Troy explaining the concepts of the care bear to Emily



Figure 6.1: Emily cuddling the care bear during deployment

The defence Care Bears were identified by Wendy, (Cassie's mother) as being a useful tool. Cassie cuddled and played with the bear when she was missing her father. Davin (Cassie's father) took the bear away on training sessions and they explained to her that he could feel her cuddles through his bear. They also knew he would cuddle the bear when he was missing her and her brother. In this way, when Cassie was playing with the bear and cuddling it to send a message to her father, the bear, dressed in army uniform, was a representation of her father. The bear was also a pretend medium employed to communicate emotions. Arthur et al. (2015) describe this type of creative play as pretend play. It involves props being utilised as representational objects, role play, expression of characters, problem-solving and expression of individual traits. Vygotsky believed this type of pretence play begins at around the age of three years when children are capable of creating and using cognitive representations (Arthur et al., 2015).

Another form of cultural artefact within the centre was the employment of narrative by the children and educators, as described by Erikson Odegaard and Pramling (2013). Children's participation in narrative talk about deployment, usually based on the narrative passed on by their parents, was often scaffolded and reinforced by peers, siblings, educators and parents. This moulding and shaping of interactions is described by Deaux and Martin (2003) in their discussion about the formation of identity and culture within social groups. These narratives are tools for learning, assisting children to make sense of their lives (Erikson Odegaard & Pramling, 2013) and what is happening in their family. Further discussion about the employment of narrative can be found in section 6.5 in this chapter.

6.2.2. Other resources from the ADF and beyond

Blake and Bella's mother Fern communicated that nothing had been received from Defence to support her and the children with parental absences due to training. Most of the resources Fern had seen were for older primary-aged students. Fern believed the general opinion amongst the defence community was that parents with children under five were not supported or resourced properly by the ADF. Fern found this frustrating, because she was keen to help her children at home. She felt the information should be made available in a family-friendly way and in a manner that they could digest and implement over time. This indicated a willingness by the ADF to change over time that is admirable. Unfortunately, there is a lag in

the ADF's ability to effectively implement or resource the change. Siebler (2009) and Cromptvoets (2012) identified the ADF's delivery of resources for parents and families as ad hoc and inefficient.

Despite having experienced spousal deployment four times since Jack's birth, Leanne had not received any family deployment information packs from the ADF. She was not aware families could request resources from the Defence Community Organisation. Additionally, Fern identified a number of gaps in early childhood resources. By providing easy access to age-appropriate resources, the ADF could potentially improve their families' wellbeing and their employees perceived level of support. Supporting defence families has organisation-wide ramifications. Pittman et al. (2004) explain the impact of well supported personnel on their work ethic, including an increase in creativity and dedication, a decrease of absenteeism and a flow-on effect to families who develop similar attitudes.

Cassie's mother, Wendy, identified a need for Australian picture books for families to help communicate with their children about the challenges of parental military separation. She also would like access to Australian digital applications, similar to the US Sesame Street™ application featuring the puppet character Elmo™ whose father had to go on deployment. Cassie requested the book 'Rose's Story: When is Daddy coming home?' and wanted to utilise the digital application repetitively. Such repeated readings of a text invite a unique experience with the story each time (Fellowes & Oakley, 2014) because children draw on both new and previous knowledge. Wendy reported that the characters in the research storybooks and the digital application communicated to Cassie on a different level, which as parents they seemed unable to reach. The ability of characters to communicate to children is an important way to help reinforce the messages of the parents. Fellowes and Oakley (2014) believe this is the way children are attracted to the text and respond through their imaginings, emotions and senses. The digital application is discussed in more detail in a later section of this chapter dealing with communication and technology.

Apart from the Care Bears, both Cassie and Bethany's families reported having received no resources from the ADF to prepare and assist them with their children during deployment or training. Queenie (Bethany's mother) did receive a pack the previous time her husband

deployed, when Nancy was a baby. The pack arrived a few months into the deployment and most of the resources were designed and written for primary-aged children, along with information for her about managing when a spouse is deployed. The ADF seemed to have shifted from hardcopy to online, web-based dissemination of information to families. Families were also able to order primary school and teenage resources online, free of charge for their children, rather than the resources being systematically being posted to families experiencing deployment. None of the families in this study had ordered any of the resources because they did not know they existed, or that they were entitled to them. Despite this obvious change in policy, the implementation of it seems to be less than effective in supporting families in need. The Defence Community Organisation (2013), funded by the Department of Defence, highly recommends that families prepare emotionally for the impacts of each stage of deployment, stating that this is the key to effective management of feelings and positive responses. Conversely, current practices do not seem to effectively support this type of approach.

6.2.3. Support from ADF social workers

Siebler (2009) described mixed reactions to support from ADF welfare systems. Within Emily's family, Lara was pleased to report that the Defence welfare officer had rung once since deployment and she had also received one follow-up email. Previously, when living in another state, she had calls about every six weeks or so during deployment. The family obviously valued this support as Troy was going to check that the support they were promised was provided. Lara reported that Defence instructed Troy and all their deploying personnel prepare a family welfare plan in case of emergency. Lara viewed this as a positive preparation procedure that gave her peace of mind.

Wendy (Cassie's mother) would not receive a routine phone call from ADF social workers because Cassie's father was away on training rather than deployment. The data revealed the difficulties Queenie experienced with the social workers' phone calls. These include mismatched perceptions, a perceived lack of understanding, interest and care from the social workers and a feeling that the call was routine, fulfilling the social worker's job, rather than a genuine attempt at assistance. For effective family support to occur, professionals need to have a deep understanding of the effects of parental and spousal separation as a feature of

military life, the culture and hierarchical nature of the defence force and the way this affects the whole family (Siebler & Goddard, 2014). The challenges related to the role of social workers within the Department of Defence, ranging from policy to practice are highlighted by Siebler (2009) when he states:

The Australian knowledge base for social work practice is very limited in this setting with respect to deployment. Social workers in the Department of Defence setting need to take a lead role in developing knowledge and understanding of the issues associated with deployment and its effects on military families. The significant increase in overseas deployments of military personnel since 1999 has impacted significantly on international and Australian military families at a number of levels, which requires suitable policy and practice responses (p.4).

One area the ADF seemed to provide well was communication, outlined in the subsequent section.

6.3. Communication, aids and technology (exosystem)

Despite the difficulties of parental deployment and training, families identified communication strategies and tools that they found useful and at other times frustrating. The Defence Community Organisation (2013) cite internet video calls, social networking sites and emailing as other platforms for families to connect and share aspects of their lives.

6.3.1. Skype™ and Facetime™

At the early stages of deployment, video conferencing software Skype™ facilitated communication every day in Emily's house. It seemed to engage Emily sometimes whereas at other times she would not speak. International time differences created communication difficulties for the whole family because Lara was dealing with an overtired toddler, while trying to be positive in her communication. Lara persisted with the conversations with Troy because he was utilising his lunch break and enjoyed the family contact. On the nights Emily chose to talk via Skype™, Lara reported the outcomes as positive. Fern reported that Skype was sometimes employed when Quentin was away, but was not always available for a number of reasons.

The Defence Community Organisation (2013) recommend video calls as another way for family members to connect and communicate their experiences. In Bethany's house, Skype™ was employed once a week as they communicated with Peter (Bethany's father).

Technological difficulties were experienced with the internet, resulting in audio transmission only being available. Facetime™ was utilised more frequently when Davin (Cassie's father) was away on lengthy training episodes. This was often a daily event, but the service was not always available during intensive training or from remote locations.

Jack's mother Leanne believed Jack had coped as well as he had due to the availability of video conferencing software. Although Paul was not always able to access Skype™ due to location and security concerns, it had been a large part of Jack's experiences during his father's deployment. Jack was able to quickly reconnect with Paul during their Singapore family holiday, which Leanne attributed to Skype™ and the ongoing contact. The Department of Defence (2014) do encourage high levels of contact between family members during separation due to deployment and training, stressing the importance of staying connected emotionally through sharing details about each other's lives regularly.

6.3.2. Instant messaging with video and photos

Families reported varied usage of messaging with videos and photos. Blake's family utilised messaging with photos via the internet. Blake's and Bella's mother Fern stated that she believed modern communication had made parental separation much easier for all concerned. Occasionally, when Cassie's father (Davin) knew he was not going to be able to utilise this technology for a few days, he prepared video messages in advance. He then sent these to his spouse via an instant messaging service and she utilised them once a day during the time he was out of range to support consistency for Cassie. Although this is an innovative way to problem solve, Cassie was accustomed to real-time video on Facetime™, so responded to these videos as though they were live, answering Davin's questions and asking why he was not responding. Photos of Cassie's drawings, impromptu performances of Cassie dancing and videos of the children are also sent to him regularly. Cassie enjoyed creating dances for her father on the videos, as it provided opportunities to connect with him and gain positive attention from him.

Both Bella and Jack's family utilised instant messaging and videos with photos. This was not always available for Jack's father due to location and security difficulties.

6.3.3. Email

Bethany's family regularly emailed Peter (Bethany's father) and the mother emailed back and attached the children's scanned artwork. This communication aimed to help Peter feel connected to his family, to encourage further communication and keep him up to date with family events. On their website, the Department of Defence (2014) remind families that 'Neglecting to contact your partner without warning can cause feelings of being forgotten and uncared for' (p. 6). While regular contact is encouraged for separated families, Andres, Bowen, Manigart, and Moelker (2015b) report that it is the quality of the interactions that is important.

Leanne found emails an effective way for her and Paul to communicate during deployment. She liked being able to vent her feelings when circumstances were difficult, but typically waited a few days to calm down when something troubling had happened. She would generally only let him know about difficulty when there was hope of resolution. She did try to avoid worrying Paul with situations she could manage at home, while being able to connect with him to let him know selected events in their life. Ultimately she believed that despite communication during deployment, they were really missing most of each other's lives when they were apart which could never be caught up. Leanne's sensitivity to Paul's need for her to cope at home revealed experience and understanding of the military lifestyle. It also indicates an understanding that communication can be easily distorted or misconstrued when no face-to-face contact is available (Department of Defence, 2014).

6.3.4. Postcards and letters

Despite the attractions of videos, messaging and Skype™, traditional methods of communication were still employed to a degree by families as a way to keep in touch. For example, Emily's family received postcards her father had sent in the first few weeks of deployment. However, Fern said that traditional mail did not really work for their family during training sessions. The nature of training was that the personnel move to various locations, meaning at times there was no address to send the mail to. She explained that more modern communication methods were most appropriate.

Cassie's family did not use traditional mail due to the remote and changing locations frequented during training episodes. Bethany's family had received two letters within the first three months of Peter's deployment. The Department of Defence (2014) recommends variety and creativity in family communications and interactions and state that regular contact can help maintain relationships and avoid negative emotions stemming from a feeling of being isolated or neglected.

6.3.5. Digital applications

Digital applications have been created as part of the FOCUS (Families Over Coming Under Stress) program for military families, and these were developed by the University of California, and the US Defence Department (University of California, 2014). Cassie's employment of a digital application was both beneficial and annoying for her parents. They grew tired her asking for the application so often, displaying her generation's propensity to engage with new technologies like a digital native as described by Fellowes and Oakley (2014). Cassie's parents were also wary of the cultural differences and accents in the application, but they knew that Cassie was responding positively to the story of Elmo™ saying goodbye to his deploying father. During 2014, the Australian Department of Defence also added children's videos to their website that explored a number of the challenges around deployment in a similar format to the US version. One of these videos utilised puppets and was targeted toward young children. While it lacked the sophistication of the Sesame Street application, it demonstrated the Department of Defence's attempts to change over time (chronosystem) to meet the needs of its families (exosystem).

6.4. Acculturation and ritual

Lawrence, Brooker, and Dodds (2016) explain individuals and groups undergoing acculturation will retain certain aspects of their own culture. The level of acculturation will depend upon a number of variables, including contexts, conditions, age, cultural pressure and the dominance or attractiveness of the new culture.

6.4.1. Acculturation within the ADF (exosystem)

The defence families in Australia are part of a tight community (Baber, Fussell, & Porter, 2015) where certain behaviours are expected and encouraged, including adhering to the description by Siebler (2009) of the stoic military family. In many ways, the ADF culture is supportive, where families experiencing deployment and training rely on each other for emotional and physical support during times of family stress.

When families are particularly vulnerable, such as when they are experiencing multiple deployments, they may be unable to live up to the stoic image or feel separate from this culture. This may result in social isolation, which can also include geographic isolation when families are moved from their support base, as well as social segregation, where families are faced with initiating and nurturing new relationships (Arthur et al., 2015). Within the ADF, this can be as a result of family mobility, or it can be when other ADF families move on, as reported by Jack's mother. Arthur et al. (2015) reiterate that such families are often left without assistance because they are not lower socio-economic families who are typically targeted for support. The congruence of the mesosystem has a large influence on the ability of the family to cope. In addition to this, the exosystem can be a source of support.

6.4.2. Rituals within the ADF and wider community (exosystem)

During their time at the centre, the children were exposed to ritual cultural observances such as Remembrance Day and Anzac Day. At home, and in defence social gatherings, they heard similar messages and observed similar practices. Within the community, monuments keep these memories alive, along with ‘rituals, acts of remembrance, commemorative ceremonies and creation of heroes’ (p. 16). Cultural memory often starts with eyewitness accounts or narrative swapping. Over time, selected parts of the narrative are highlighted and important places become revered throughout generations to elicit cultural memories (Allan, 2014). Cultural memory works at the levels of family, community, nationally and globally. Allan (2014) describes the process of keeping alive cultural memory that may involve bodily performance (such as marching or clapping, lighting or blowing out candles, singing songs, dancing) or ritualised acts (being silent and remembering the fallen at an Anzac service).

Thus, acculturation and ritual were observed within the exosystem of the participant families. To achieve this level of acculturation, strong narratives were woven within all levels of the socio-ecological family system, and these are explored in the subsequent sections.

6.5. The powerful use of narrative

Narratives are employed within the microsystem, macrosystem and exosystem to perpetuate the ADF culture and support the child in their understandings and experiences within a defence family. This section discusses the different ways narrative was utilised by families and, importantly, explores the significant impact of the absence of family narrative. The lack of narrative was due to an unexpected, hasty parental separation that are a feature of military life (Drummet et al., 2003). This section also examines narrative within the various systems.

6.5.1. Family narratives created by the parents before deployment and training (microsystem)

A strong narrative had been initiated by Emily’s father, three weeks before deployment. Parenting strengths were displayed in the narratives parents created for their children within defence families to help them cope with deployment (Baber, 2016). Troy told the narrative

each night before Emily's bedtime story. This narrative was repeated often by Emily during the research activities. Conversations or storybooks about parental work, deployment, hearing a plane fly overhead and reading a book with a father character in it were all provocations for Emily to repeat sections of the narrative. A typical narrative section might include, 'I miss my daddy. He in Afghanistan', or 'I not go Afghanistan. Only army men go Afghanistan.' Her mother reported that she reaffirmed this narrative often with Emily at home.



Figure 6-3: Blake's drawing 'Dad is driving away to Ayers Rock'

Blake's drawings portrayed a strong narrative about his father's departure (see Figure 6.3). It is important to note that his father always looked happy when he was leaving. This could be the way the father was at the time, that is, remaining positive and emphasising the importance of his training as only a temporary arrangement. Malchoiodi (1998) expresses a belief that children's drawings are 'uniquely personal statements' creating meaning out of conscious and subconscious ideas (p.1). This multi-layered view of children's drawings helps maintain an open mind when interpreting them. There may be many meanings in the child's mind when they create their art, and there may be many explanations of what the artwork depicts or means (Malchoiodi, 1998).

These narratives are convincing perpetuations of the defence culture. They can serve a dual purpose of both helping the child to understand what is happening and giving the child an early sense of belonging to the wider defence community beyond their family. Lester and

Flake (2013) believe that this sense of identity carries with it ‘strength, service, and sacrifice, which is a basic component of military culture not only for service members but also for family members’ (p.123).

Cassie had a narrative that she readily and confidently shared about her father being on a ‘course’. Her parents were careful to prepare this narrative and utilised the word ‘course’ rather than ‘work’ to differentiate between him going away for extended training, or just going to the military base and returning home on a daily basis. Cassie also had a strong, rich and detailed narrative about her time in the USA, how she travelled back to Australia and how she was going back there on a holiday with other ADF families. Her memory for such detail and her ability to form paragraphs, rather than simple sentences, was very useful for her parents as they scaffolded her ability to learn narratives about parental separation. Having the confidence to tell others her narrative helped Cassie to make sense of these situations and promoted embedded meanings through co-construction. Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) believe we continually repeat our narratives as we ‘tell and retell our stories to other people and ourselves’ (p. 38). In this way we insert meanings into our narratives and make sense of our experiences (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006).

Both Jack and Bella had a very brief narrative about their father’s deployment or training episode. Jack’s comprised one or two sentences: ‘My Daddy’s in ’ghanistan’ and ‘I went to the airport’. When questioned, Leanne thought Paul may have assisted their son Jack with this narrative because she did not teach him to say this. Bella often imitated other children, but also made independent comments such as ‘My dad went away too’, and ‘My dad’s in Ayers Rock’. Bella’s brother Blake (5) was quick to correct any mistakes in Bella’s narrative (see Appendix 1), which may have indicated the narrative has been practised at home. By explicitly teaching children to tell stories about what happens in their lives and families, children are learning to embed meanings into their lives and sift through their experiences. Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) observe that humans continually narrate their lives, telling and retelling stories as their interpretations and reflections alter. The next section considers barriers to these family narratives.

Barriers to family narratives (macrosystem, exosystem and microsystem)

At the macrosystem level, the Australian government makes defence decisions based on the real and perceived requirements of the ADF to defend Australia, maintain national interests and respond to natural disasters. These decisions affect the ADF response to natural disasters, peacekeeping and planned exercises (Department of Defence, 2014) at the exosystem level involving the parents' workplace. At the microsystem level, this means that parental deployment, often at short notice in response according to ADF requirements, causes high levels of stress within the family. Drummet et al. (2003) discuss the way sudden and unexpected parental separations within military families leave the family unprepared emotionally. For parents, the lack of time impinges on their ability to create a meaningful narrative for the family as they struggle to organise household, legal and financial arrangements.

Bethany's family had two weeks to prepare for a lengthy separation and this was evident in Bethany's lack of confidence and an unwillingness to engage in discussions about her father's deployment. A transformation occurred once Bethany had spent four weeks engaged in the research activities; she ultimately displayed confidence and pleasure in relaying her narrative to me on the final day of data collection. This involved storybooks about deployment that were also read to her at home frequently, listening to other children relay their narratives, discussions, artworks and craft and musical activities about parental deployment and training absences. Rather than casting her gaze down and away when asked about her father's deployment, on the last day of data collection, Bethany engaged me with a happy open expression a number of times on a voluntary basis about her father's anticipated return date and mode of arrival. Giving children a voice to express their experiences and understandings about difficult matters can be very liberating, and empowering for those involved (Mudaly & Goddard, 2009). This process also instils confidence in children to speak about matters that affect them and assists them to express themselves to those who make decisions about their lives.

6.5.2. Children are co-constructors of the narrative (microsystem)

Bethany's ability to co-construct the narrative to create humour, as illustrated below, indicates higher order thinking skills. Queenie (Bethany's mother) linked their family's narrative to the narrative of the character 'Rose' in the book 'Rose's Story: When is Daddy coming home?' that I wrote for data collection. A read-aloud session in the family home was captured on a video recording, filmed by the family. On the page where the character Rose is opening a letter and a parcel from her deployed father, Queenie asked her children, 'How many letters have we had?' Instead of giving the expected reply, Bethany smiled, pre-empting her humour and said, 'sixty-eight'. This was rewarded with the desired laughter from both her siblings and mother. In this way, Bethany was embellishing the family narrative with humour and playfulness. Bonanno (2004) lists laughter and engaging with positive emotions as tools that resilient people display to relieve stress levels. By engaging in reading a book about deployment, and laughing about experiences, the family was exhibiting resilience in dealing with difficulties through positive communication (Silberberg, 2001).

Examples of children's co-construction of both the narrative and of their reality were evident within the raw data. The following examples, which were discussed earlier in this chapter, illustrate the children's utilisation of embellishments, play episodes and make-believe.

The pencil play activity in which Emily and Bella engaged was an example of socio-dramatic play. Wood and Attfield (2005) state that this type of socio-dramatic play has elements of 'imitation, make believe, imagination and involves symbolic activity' that places a high degree of 'cognitive and socio-affective' demand on the child (p. 41). In practising these skills, Emily and Bella are employing make-believe play episodes to re-enact and co-construct personalised narratives around parental training and deployment that affect their families.

Embellishments within the narrative are also seen in the drawings of Blake who added a storm scene into a few of his depictions of his father's departure (refer to Figure 6.4 and 6.5). These rain scenes were drawn during a storm coinciding with the data collection activities, indicating the immediacy of children's thinking and the way in which Blake was able to weave this into his narrative. Blake explains, 'Dark clouds and they're storm clouds. I'm

about to draw me out in the rain with my umbrella. That's rain. It's actually night-time at my place. No, it's dark because it's really night-time and it's raining. I'm drawing a baby tree cause that's the daddy tree.See that, it's big blops of rain that's gunna fall on my Dad's car'. During the drawing of Figure 6.5 Blake narrated, 'The car is wet and it is raining on my Mum and Dad. Bella and I are inside'. Matthews (1999) describes how the broader environmental context in which the drawing activity is undertaken, including storms, sounds and movements, can affect children's drawings.



Figure 6-4: Blake's drawing: 'My Dad is getting in the car to go to Ayers Rock'



Figure 6-5 Blake's person, house, tree drawing

6.5.3. Narratives reinforced by early childhood educators within centre (microsystem)

During observations, I heard Emily repeat her narrative in parts to other children and educators in the centre. It seemed to be reassuring to Emily to be able to recite this narrative. She also seemed to seek confirmation when she was with educators and myself and often expressed the narrative with an upward inflection like a question. She appeared very pleased when people responded with affirmation that the narrative was correct; for example, 'My Daddy in 'ghanistan.' Educator: 'Yes that's right Emily, your Dad is in Afghanistan'. The educator's employment of scaffolding facilitated Emily's developing competence with her narrative (Wood & Attfield, 2005). The *Belonging, Being, Becoming: Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)* (DEEWR, 2009) emphasises the importance for educators to foster children's sense of belonging within their service and community. By reinforcing the narrative, Emily's educators are perpetuating the culture of the ADF, and helping reinforce her sense of belonging within that community.

6.5.4. The powerful use of narrative perpetuated in Australia historically in war and social history (macrosystem and exosystem)

On a broader scale, the employment of meta-narratives by the international community and the Australian federal government within the macrosystem filters through to the exosystem

via the ADF and their families, affecting the individual child. An example of such a meta-narrative would be the way certain ADF leaders, political figure-heads and historians have tried to emphasise the battle at Gallipoli as an important moment in the psyche of our Australian identity (Lake, 2010a; McKenna, 2010). While this narrative galvanises certain sectors of the community, it also alienates others who have a different cultural heritage, such as Indigenous Australians (Johnson, 2007). To perpetuate culture and justify our involvement in wars, such narratives are created and kept alive. This has been emphasised through both private donations and in the budget (far in excess of \$325 million dollars) for the commemoration of the centenary of Gallipoli that occurred in 2015 (Brown, 2014). Also, Brissenden (2014) highlights the way politicians have utilised the growing popularity of Anzac Day as a tool when he writes, ‘Politicians saw in it an opportunity to hitch their political narrative to the bravery and sacrifice displayed at Anzac Cove’ (p. 2).

Currently, our society, writers, historians and leaders are more comfortable commemorating, discussing and narrating our World War I (1914–1918) efforts due to the safe distance of an event from long ago. They appear less able to discuss our involvement in modern conflicts and peacekeeping missions. This is highlighted in the fact that an official history of World War I was published within three years of the end of the war, while fifteen years after our involvement in East Timor, no official record exists (Brissenden, 2014). This is the same for Iraq and Afghanistan, the latter being the longest conflict Australian troops have ever engaged in at the time of writing. Manganas (2007) states that many grand narratives were employed in the post 9/11 era to justify the declaration of war and respond to terrorism. The mass media has rallied to develop and perpetuate such narratives (Manganas, 2007). Importantly, these meta-narratives and tactics are not exclusive to the defence of Australia. They can be found within many levels of society and government nationally and internationally. This meta-narrative also sustains the extreme level of loyalty, service and sacrifice required by military personnel and their family that is described by Juvan and Vuga (2015).

At the study centre I observed educators reading the children primary school picture books distributed by the ADF to explain certain concepts of deployment. Freebody (2013) hypothesises that almost all aspects of modern Australian life are laced with the production of a wide variety of multimodal texts creating a typical literacy-reliant and literacy-packed

society. Also, one of the many responsibilities of education is the keeping and nurturing of the cultural heritage (Freebody, 2013). Within text-based societies, written texts can be seen as a monument in words and images to provide a fixed reference for cultural memories (Allan, 2014). Cultural memory is reliant on a constructed memory including events, people and places deemed important to a group of people or a nation (Allan, 2014).

The ADF narrative is about service, sacrifice, mateship and honour, to enlist personnel, family and community into extraordinary acts of sacrifice and service. To facilitate this narrative for repeated generations, high levels of ritualised engagement are employed with the aid of community, media and government. The community and government sponsor and host marches, ceremonies, battle anniversaries and services throughout the country and overseas attracting significant media coverage. Apart from speeches, the ceremonies mostly comprise ritualised acts, symbols, silences and displays, many of which the community spectators do not fully understand. The marches are made attractive with the utilisation of colour, music, uniforms, flag-waving, military vehicles and displays. Returned veterans and their relatives proudly wear medals in the march and for wreath-laying services. The involvement of other community services, community groups, politicians and schools reinforce this narrative; a narrative that is advertised and reported widely by the media. Most school children and a number of workplaces will also attend their own smaller local service. Children are therefore learning ‘the values and expectations of ... community through ADF rituals, commemorations, celebrations and narratives’ (Baber et al., 2015, p. 41). In this way, the ADF narrative becomes a widely-accepted part of the broader meta-narrative. This meta-narrative and my inadvertent role as a co-constructor of the narrative is explored in the following section.

6.5.5. The researcher as a co-constructor of the narrative (microsystem)

As a researcher, I have employed data to create children’s storybooks to explore an array of experiences, understandings and concepts employed by children in defence force families. These books were utilised and adapted during the research as a way to elicit conversations and prompt further activities with children. These storybooks are being prepared for publication at the time of writing. The purpose in writing the books was to give parents,

educators and children a starting point to discuss a selection of the experiences and difficult concepts young children in defence families were struggling with. Parents had approached a colleague to write books to help fill the gap in culturally and age appropriate books for these children.

Philosophically, I align myself with Johnston (2007), who believes children's books are made for our most prized possessions, the children and future adults of our society. Through family readings, books become part of the visuals we reason with and ontological viewpoints (Johnston, 2007). Also, Alexander (2014) reflects on the significance of reading to her child, by saying 'they are helping him negotiate his world and through their narratives he unearths words that give his own feelings and experiences gravity' (p. 28). Most of the families found the storybooks useful to help them talk about their experiences with parental deployment and training, and they empathise with the characters in the books. Australian authors such as Jackie French reinforce using storybooks to help children learn new concepts. She explains that new neural pathways are forged each time a child reads a book, so to increase the intelligence of children you expose them to more books. Further, French (2015b) argues that books can be a powerful medium to open new universes for the reader, allowing immersion of our senses and imagination that many other media do not permit.

It could then be argued that my role as a researcher has also moved to one of an educator because I was working with the children to build their skills and understandings about the concepts, language and experiences of other defence families. Prior to working with these children at the centre, my data collection with the three additional defence families (whose data is offered in Appendix 7), may have coloured my interactions with the case study children. In turn, this may have influenced my writing and possibly introduced narrative bias, which is the ability of the writer to influence the reader's opinions (Simpson, 2013).

The utilisation of these narratives is powerful because often the narrator has the ability to teach, persuade, perpetuate and proliferate an ideology within their sphere of influence, and beyond. Saltzman et al. (2011) recommends the development of shared family narrative to provide 'a safe forum for individual family members to share their experiences, reactions, fears, and ongoing concerns' to enhance the family's 'adaptation and resilience' (p. 220). My role as an author of these children's storybooks could also be viewed as perpetuating a military culture and aiding children and family's acculturation. The books may also be a

platform for parents, families and educators to assist families in what Saltzman et al. (2011) believes is possible through the employment of family narratives; that is, enhancing open, effective communication and empathy, nurturing hope and confidence, improving family resilience skills and parental efficacy. Either way, expanding our knowledge of children's experiences and understandings of defence families is vitally important so we have the knowledge base to effectively assist these children who deal with numerous serious situations during parental deployment and may not access appropriate support (Siebler & Goddard, 2014).

6.6. Conclusion

Families demonstrated strengths in their engagement with various forms of communication, in particular, digital communication technology. Strong communication assisted the non-deployed parents to connect with families back home, keeping the relationships relevant and fresh. Such communication also eased fears for safety and created smoother reunion and reintegration because family members were in frequent contact, keeping up-to-date with what was happening at home in both the children and their spouse's lives.

Ritual and acculturation featured heavily within the children's lives within the family, the centre, within the microsystem and within the ADF in the exosystem. More broadly, the acculturation continued within the community and media, most especially during Remembrance Day and Anzac Day and the Centenary of Anzac commemorations.

Continuing with the theme narrative, ritual and acculturation, the next chapter introduces the three additional ADF families and also reports on protective factors within the families.

Chapter 7. Building on the themes: Findings from three additional families

7.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the data from the three additional families who were from various geographic states and military bases. Before reading this chapter, Appendix 7 should be read because it contains the data written in narrative form. As mentioned previously, interview data was collected using narrative form from the parents only. I met all of the children, but unlike the children at the centre, I did not collect data with them using the Mosaic approach. As mentioned in Chapter 3, some families shared photographs about deployment and examples of these can be viewed in Appendix 7 and elsewhere in the thesis. Due to ethical considerations, individual photographers cannot be named, although acknowledgement is given at the beginning of the thesis. Any data about the children from these families is therefore secondary data and this affects the interpretation, as previously mentioned in the methodology chapter. I have interpreted what the parents have communicated to me, adding a secondary layer of interpretation, rather than directly listening to the child's voice.

7.1.1. Methodology

Narrative methodology was employed for data collection, analysis and the presentation of the data in the appendices. The research sites were varied for these parental interviews depending upon the family, including a home visit, a restaurant and a park. Follow-up emails and phone conversations helped me keep up-to-date with family events and the development of the children.

7.1.2. Summary of the three additional families

Family 1 had experienced two deployments and numerous lengthy training sessions. Fiona was first interviewed when Caleb had ten days left of his deployment to Afghanistan. The oldest child, Sam had experienced a previous parental deployment when his father went to East Timor. Jess was born in between these two deployments. Caleb eventually asked to be discharged from the defence forces for family reasons during data collection, meaning he could be interviewed for this study. In Family 2, Michael was born during his father Nathan's

deployment. Nathan returned when Michael was still in hospital with his mother, Wendy, after being born. Nathan then returned to Afghanistan but died in active combat soon afterwards. In Family 3, both children had experienced their father, Seb’s deployment, and at the time of data collection he was being trained for another deployment, causing stress for the mother, Brenda. The family’s information can be viewed in Table 1 and the themes from the data from these families are summarised in the next section.

Table 7-1: Participant information for additional three families

Sourced from (Baber, 2016)

Family number	Children	Parents	Experience of deployment	Experiences of lengthy training sessions since having children
Family 1	Sam (4), Jess (19 months)	Father (Caleb) Mother (Fiona)	Father initially deployed for eight months. His second deployment was six months. Sam experienced both deployments; Jess was born after the first deployment.	Many
Family 2	Michael (5), only child	Father (Nathan) deceased Mother (Wendy)	Father deployed before Michael's birth. One previous deployment when Nathan was single.	Not applicable
Family 3	Brian (3) and Davina (18 months)	Father (Seb) Mother (Brenda)	Father had deployed for nine months previously, which was experienced by both children.	Many

7.2. Emerging themes from the data

The themes emerging from the data were unchanged from previous chapters, as seen in Figure 7.1. However, unlike Chapters 3–6, the themes from these families are explored in two journal articles that can be found in the appendices. The first journal article, ‘Narrative, acculturation and ritual: Themes from a socio-ecological study of ADF families experiencing parental deployment’ (Baber, 2016) can be found in Appendix 8 and was published in the *Children Australia* journal. As the title suggests, it explores the themes of narrative, ritual and acculturation the data revealed. The journal article titled, ‘Protective factors in families: Themes from a socio-ecological study of Australian Defence Force families experiencing parental deployment’ (Rogers-Baber, 2017) is located in Appendix 9 and was published with

SAGE Open Access journal. It explores the protective factors identified within the three families' socio-ecological areas. While the themes of managing transitions and risk factors are not prominent in the discussion within the two journal articles, they are still present within the general data and exploration. Further, these two themes are discussed in more detail within the Summary of the findings Chapter 8.

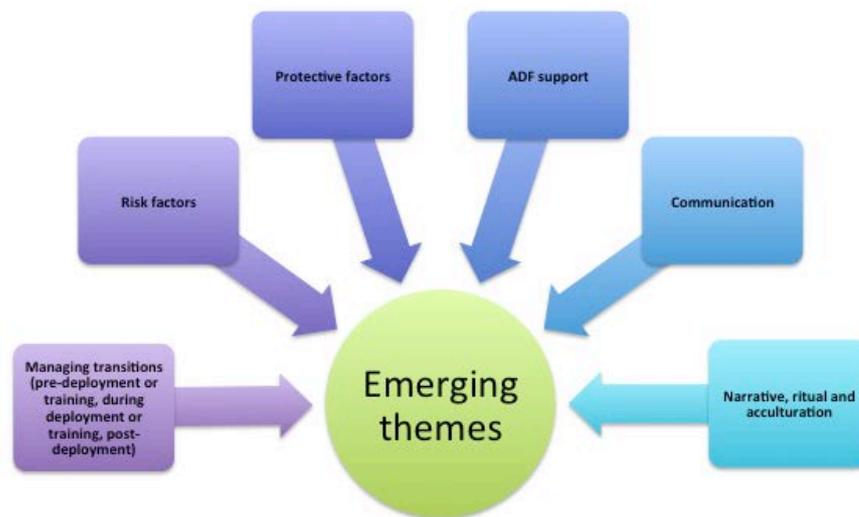


Figure 7-1: The themes from the three families

7.3. Conclusion

This chapter examined the data from the three additional families, adding weight to the research themes. The two journal articles focused on the themes of narrative, ritual and acculturation and protective factors, respectively. The data was collected using narrative methods, and although each family had a very different story to tell, similarities were apparent. The families offered unique data, including narratives from: a war widow and a family who had left the ADF. This gives insight into families whose experiences have often been missed in other studies and therefore increases our knowledge of how these families

experienced military family life. This information highlights the protective factors within various levels of the socio-ecological family system. Family and social support are vital for military families to endure the inherent stress of family separations due to deployment (Carreiras, 2015). As highlighted in the data, family support can sometimes be a burden, especially keeping up with daily contact, however in a Portuguese military study, the benefits were said to far outweigh the disadvantages (Carreiras, 2015). The data from these families revealed there are areas of support that need strengthening by building ADF and community capacity to assist them more effectively. Similar to other military organisations, the ADF has struggled to keep up with the changing needs of families due to ‘social and cultural transformations’ (Frederic & Masson, 2015, p. 82). Drawing together the results from these three additional families with the participants from the centre, the following chapter is a findings summary chapter.

Chapter 8. Summary of the findings

In this chapter, significant themes and examples from a range of participants are analysed using a socio-ecological framework. The first half of the chapter summarises the experiences of children, while the second half summarises the understandings of children.

8.1. Introduction to children's experiences

The first section of this chapter brings together data from the original case study children, the other participant children and the additional three families. I discuss the emergent themes and how these relate to the research question in relation to children's understandings of parental deployment. The outline of the first half of the chapter is depicted in Figure 8.1 and for ease of reference for the reader, I have included a list of participant families in Table 8.1.

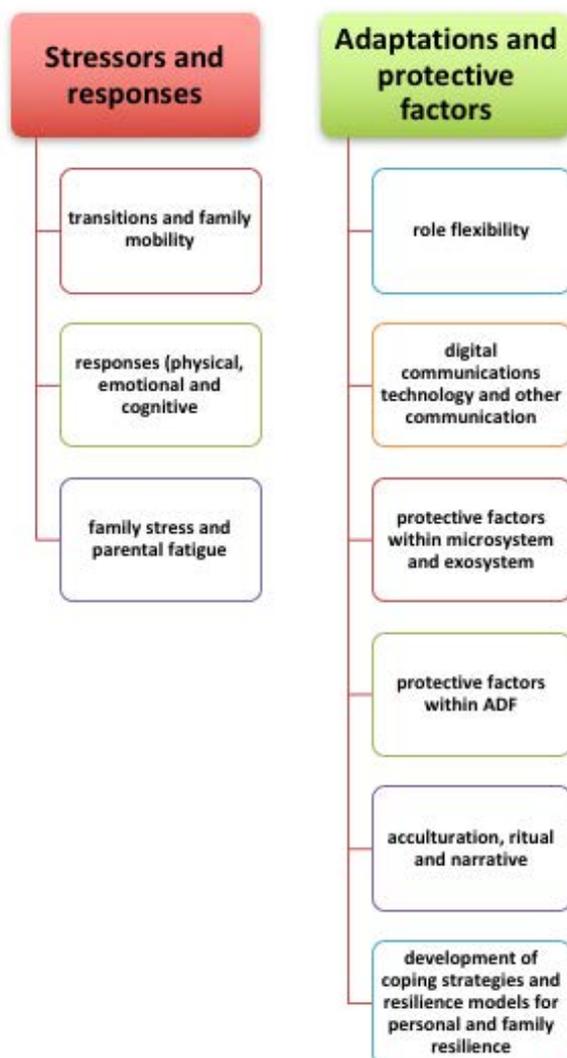


Figure 8-1: Outline of the experiences of children

Table 8-1: Details of all participants

Family number	Child, age and position in family	Family make-up	Experience of deployment / which parent deployed	Lengthy training sessions	Notes
Family 1	Sam (4), Jess (19 months)	Mother (Fiona) Father (Caleb)	Father deployed for 8 months initially and then redeployed for six months. Sam experienced both deployments and Jess only the second	Numerous	The father has since left the defence force
Family 2	Michael (5), only child	Mother (Wendy) Father (Nathan) deceased	One deployment at time of birth (Father had deployed once previously before he and Wendy met)	Yes, before Michael's birth	The father came home on leave after his birth, then returned and was killed in action soon afterwards
Family 3	Brian (3) and Davina 18-months-old	Mother (Brenda) Father (Seb)	Father deployed for nine months	Numerous	The father is being trained for more deployments involving significant time away
Family 4	Emily (2.5) - case study child	Father (Troy) Mother (Lara)	Currently experiencing first deployment – Father deployed during the data collection period for 4-5 months	Yes	The father has deployed multiple times in the last 27 years. The family has experienced 2 other deployments before Emily was born.
Family 5	Blake (5) and Bella (2.5) – both case study children	Father (Simon) Mother (Fern)	Nil	Yes	The father was being prepared for deployment in 2014
Family 6	Jack (4) years – case study child	Mother (Leanne) Father (Paul)	4 th deployment in 4 years.	Numerous	The father has been deployed for combined total of over 2 years since Jack's birth
Family 7	Bethany (4) – case study child	Father (Peter) Mother (Queenie) Nancy (9) and Ule (6)	Currently experiencing first deployment – Father deployed during the data collection period for 4-5 months	Yes	The father deployed for 6 months when Nancy was 6 months old.
Family 8	Cassie (3) – case study child	Father (Davin) Mother (Wendy) Oscar (8 months)	Nil	Yes	The father was the major caregiver from when Cassie was 6 months to 2.5 years when they moved to the USA for Wendy's work. Both parents were engaged in lengthy training sessions in 2014.

Family number	Child, age and position in family	Family make-up	Experience of deployment / which parent deployed	Lengthy training sessions	Notes
Family 9	Andrew (4) and Toby (2)	Mother (Veronica) Father (Lewis) Justin (1)	Once (father) 12 months prior to data collection	Yes	The father's deployment was remembered by Andrew, whereas Toby remembers events that happened during that time and can link the two.
Family 10	Ivan (3)	Mother (Tahlia) Father (Alex)	Once (father)	Yes	The father deployed when Ivan was a toddler
Family 11	Natalie (3.5)	Mother (Lisa) Father (Owen)	Once (father) who returned 12 months prior to data collection	Yes	The father's deployment was something Natalie found difficult to remember

8.2. Summary of the findings

The original research question of ‘What are young children’s understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family?’ has been examined throughout the previous chapters. The data has revealed several themes in each area of the experiences of the children.

Within the results chapters, I examined either two children at a time or a few families at a time, whereas in this chapter I draw together the overarching findings for comparison and thematic analysis. While children’s experiences varied depending upon circumstances, family and age, common themes emerged within the results. The findings about the children’s experiences are summarised in the [presentation](#) that can be accessed at:

http://prezi.com/xcmsy_4dr5p4/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy . These are also displayed as a summary in Table 8.2 at the end of the related sections.

8.3. Children's experiences of parental deployment and training

This section explores children's experiences of parental deployment and training within their families by drawing on the collated data from all families. The children and their families experienced stressors, responses, adaptations and protective factors that are explored in the following sections.

8.3.1. Stressors and responses

Traditionally, military families are expected to put their own needs behind the needs of the defence organisation (Dandeker, Eversden, Birtles, & Wessely, 2015). Families in society are changing and military spouses are tending to pursue careers of their own, while members of the wider family are building lives of their own. Where the family and military intersect is a cause of stress for both the family, the military parent and the organisation (De Angelis & Segal, 2015; Segal, 1986) and these stresses create responses from the children and parents.

Ongoing and frequent transitions and family mobility

Military families have to negotiate the ongoing and frequent transitions that create opportunities, disruption and stress (Lester & Flake, 2013). In this study, the changing dynamic of the family seemed omnipresent among the participant families. For those who were not still with the ADF, it was an unpleasant memory. Personnel are sent away on a number of training sessions that range from a few days to a few months to prepare for deployment or to upgrade their skills. For a number of families, training away prepared the family members for future time apart, as the father Caleb from Family 1 revealed. Conversely, the mother Fiona shared the frustrations of dealing with their children's reactions to these frequent training absences because their preschool age son Sam would react quite severely to Caleb's return home after a few days. Even during reintegration, anxiety may be felt by the child at the perceived threat of losing the parent again, decreasing the security of attachment, which may contribute to angry outbursts and other behavioural problems (Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013). Interestingly, the promise of promotion, which is typically highly sought, was the catalyst for this family to leave the ADF due to the high levels of training required. Prior to departure for training, other families struggled with the children

saying goodbye and understanding that the parent would return. For Bella (2.5) this resulted in verbal aggression towards her father before he left for training. This is far from unusual, Andres and Coulthard (2015) report on Canadian data that found 14% of parents reported aggressive behaviours in their child during deployment.

Within the research literature, families are often described as weary of the constant coming and going before deployment. Sometimes they even wanted the deployment to start so they could just have a stable, but reduced, household where they could count down the days until they were all together again. Dandeker et al. (2015) reported that a British study revealed many spouses complained about the lack of quality time together before deployment due to the required training.

The lead up to deployment created further transitions and strain on the family, with lead up times varying, creating different types of stress. Within Family 6, when Jack overheard conversations between his stressed parents about the newly announced imminent deployment, he reacted by sleeping with his parents every night before his father deployed two weeks later. Bethany (4), from Family 7, also experienced her father's abrupt departure and she was not prepared adequately to manage with the sudden loss because a family narrative had not been created. However, other families indicated longer notification did not ease the stress due to higher levels of time to become anxious. In summary, different families reacted differently to variations in time to prepare for deployment. If the time was too short, it was detrimental to the family's ability to adequately prepare the children and the household, and if the time was too long, it led to high anxieties. This demonstrates the need for moderate notice periods.

Responses to parental deployment

Within this study, the children displayed varied responses to deployment, depending upon their age, circumstance and temperament. In the socio-ecological family model, the mesosystem is the relationships within the microsystems (Sims, 2002). An illustrative example in this study is the way the emotional responses of the children were often intrinsically tied to sibling and non-deployed parental responses. Additionally, the children's emotional responses impacted the parent and siblings, adding to their stress and affecting the tone of the family. In Family 6, Leanne and Jack had a month following Paul's deployment

of working through intense feelings, responding to each other's reactions. Lara, from Family 4, reported a similar emotional interchange between herself and Emily during a pre-deployment training session. Andres and Coulthard (2015) noted that interrelation of emotions is both positive and negative during deployment. Preschool-aged children are more likely to display signs of stress during times of parental deployment than children from the general population, most especially if the non-deployed parent exhibits stress (Chartrand et al., 2008). In an Australian study, Siebler (2015) found 'a significant number of young children' experience distress 'before, during and after the deployment' (p.295). The ways in which individuals and families adapt and develop is dependent upon the interactions between each other and with others within the community (Masten, 2013).

Developmental regression is where children and even adults retreat 'to an earlier form of coping behaviour' that is a result of stress, often due to change (McInerney & McInerney, 2002, p. 425). Regression may also be described as a defence mechanism utilised during times of adversity (Burton et al., 2012). In this study, physical manifestations of stress included regressions in sleeping and toileting. Sometimes children would spend the entire deployment sleeping in their parents' bed and not depart until after the deployed parent returned. Regressions in toileting included day accidents and bedwetting, thus illustrating the physical ramifications. Andres and Coulthard (2015) report similar concerns for children under five years of age in a Canadian study.

Cognitively, the children appeared to have varying ways of making sense of parental absences. Narratives from parents were practised and playfully explored, significant events were re-enacted and discussed, numerous incidences of transference of affection to various other objects, including pets, were observed. Other objects provided comfort, such as videos with the deployed parent reading a bedtime story, picture books with the deployed parent's voice and photo albums featuring the child and the absent parent. The concept of time was a continuing challenge for the children and parents, which one parent summarised by saying her child only understood the concepts of 'yesterday, tomorrow and after a sleep'. Similarly, Friedman (2000) discusses the ability of preschoolers to learn about before, after and later, but their difficulty in being able to discuss events sequentially or using units of time.

Increased family stress and parental fatigue

De Angelis and Segal (2015) believe that military families are situated at the intersection of two 'greedy' institutions – the family and the military (p. 22). The military still assumes that the non-deployed parent is able, available and willing to take over all household and child rearing responsibilities during training and deployment. This expectation is despite the changes in roles within families where both parents are generally expected to contribute to income provision, child rearing and household responsibilities. There is increased societal pressure that a dual-income family is the only model acceptable, thus placing additional pressure on already challenged ADF families (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b; De Angelis & Segal, 2015). For both parents, this can lead to an overload of roles and conflict between work and home (Andres & Coulthard, 2015). Further, Dursun and Sudom (2015) state that the military has a 'pervasive influence on the lifestyle of its members and their families' whereby family members give into the demands of the military despite their own needs and desires (p.128). Similarly, Eran-Jona (2015) found that in Israel, despite the modernisation of families, military officers' spouses were still expected to fulfil a similar role to the one their mothers had within the home, while also having a career.

Children's physical manifestations of stress, such as sleeping and toileting regressions, increase the non-deployed parent's stress and fatigue levels. Overall, when speaking to the non-deployed spouses, their ongoing fatigue was evident, and they mentioned it often. Those whose spouse was currently away always described the exhaustion associated with caring for young children by themselves when they were all dealing with their own separation difficulties and career demands. Fear that their spouse is in danger, or will come back a changed person, also impacts negatively on non-deployed parent's stress levels (Kawano & Fukuura, 2015).

It is important to note that regressions are experienced by both children and adults (Andres & Coulthard, 2015). Examples of adult regressions may include a higher rate of delving into the world of fantasy through daydreaming, media consumption, addictions, gambling or anxiety-related behaviours such as chewing nails or pens. They may be less tolerant of their deployed spouse's fantasies when they return home. Non-deployed parents told of their spouse's exhaustion during reintegration and their own irritation at the spouse's expectation of catching up on sleep day and night with young children in the house. It evidently shocked the

returned spouse that the children would not keep quiet during the day, given they had just spent many months living in a defence base where people followed orders. Similar to previous research findings, expectations that the deployed spouse would return to share parenting and household responsibilities also led to tensions during reintegration (Andres, De Angelis, et al., 2015). The ability to take on these roles was hampered by fatigue, as well as the changes in the children's skill levels, meaning the returned parent was not up-to-date with routines and expectations.

8.3.2. Adaptations and protective factors

A number of individual and family adaptations to parental absences were observed and reported in the data. These adaptations included role flexibility, the use of digital communication technology and other forms of communication. Additionally, a number of protective factors were discovered within various levels of the family's socio-ecological ecosystems.

Ongoing role flexibility within families

Role flexibility is a feature of military life, due to parental deployment and training (Dursun & Sudom, 2015) that 'disrupt(s) the daily organization of family life and create temporary single-parent households' (Andres & Coulthard, 2015, p. 177). Resilient military families are often the ones who appear to cope with ongoing role flexibility. Families within this study reported high levels of role flexibility during training and deployment cycles. Children would assist younger siblings to get ready for preschool or provide comfort or assistance when they struggled with high emotions. Others were given jobs to protect younger siblings at the centre. Children's household chores were often increased to assist the non-deployed parent, and some older children provided comfort to their parent when they were very emotional by giving the non-deployed parent cuddles, tissues and toys to cheer them up. Older children seemed to take pride in these extra responsibilities and took them seriously. This is a significant finding that could have future implications for families experiencing deployment.

Later, reintegration involved high levels of negotiation with parenting. This period was deemed as more successful if the deployed parent let the non-deployed parent continue with

all discipline matters for the initial week or two after reunion. Other families managed by having the non-deployed parent almost completely withdraw and let the deployed parent take over all parenting and household management while they had a break. Parenting over Skype™ when on deployment created tensions for one family, highlighting a differing opinion on roles. In another family, parents found reintegration difficult when parenting decisions that had been made during deployment by the non-deployed spouse were criticised by the deployed parent upon return. This is another instance of the difficulty of power and parental decision-making about day-to-day situations during deployment and the ramifications for reintegration.

Digital communications technology and other communication

Access to reliable communication is important for all members of the family, because effective communication affects relationships during deployment and when the deployed parent returns (Andres, Bowen, Manigart, & Moelker, 2015a). The use of communication technology varied in both frequency and type, depending upon availability, the age of the children and parents, and the needs of family members. All families expressed that technologies they utilised assisted the family and eased reunions and reintegrations, although they also expressed frustrations about technical or relationship communication challenges they encountered. These benefits and challenges are summarised in Table 8.2.

Table 8-2: Benefits and challenges using digital communications technology during deployment and training

Benefits	Challenges
Keeping family members informed and involved	Parenting over Skype™ was resented and viewed as ineffectual by the non-deployed parent. Tensions existed with how much information to share with the deployed parent to avoid increasing their stress levels while deployed.
Free access to Skype™ for the deployed parent and free postage for care packages sent from home	Deployed parent having to line up to access selected technologies Time zone differences causing a range of difficulties for young children and non-deployed parents
Keeps the deployed parent fresh in the child's mind	Deployed parent wanting more contact than the non-deployed parent due to anxiety thus placed further demands on non-deployed parent's limited available time
Children were sometimes very keen to engage and a few utilised this form of communication in their pretend play about the family	Sometimes young children struggled to engage online when they were overtired or lacked sustained concentration
The ability to prerecord videos and send them from training locations meant the family could enjoy regular communications when the deployed parent was out of range	Confusion and frustration when the child did not understand the difference between prerecorded videos and real-time video calls e.g. Facetime™ and tried to communicate unsuccessfully with the recording
Availability and access during deployment and training	Limited access at times in certain locations and during strategic times on deployment. Non-deployed parent's frustrations and fears when there was no access, especially during a dangerous mission or a strategic time, such as the withdrawal of units to travel home.
Use of illicit, shared mobile devices, which were not allowed, to send messages home	Possible consequences for breaking rules and security dilemmas it may cause.

Overall, digital communications technology was always viewed as a helpful mediating tool during deployment and each family employed varying techniques to deal with situations as they arose throughout the cycle. Time zone differences caused particular difficulties for young children and parents who struggled to be able to communicate positively when the children were tired at the end of the day when the deployed parent was available during their lunch times. Tensions arose for parents during and after deployment when both sides had to soften the news, downplay difficulties both were facing, and know 'how much to tell'

(Bartone, 2015, p. 193). Both parents were often trying to minimise the inevitable stress that spills over between work and family (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b) and were often instructed by the ADF to do so. Interestingly, the use of shared illicit mobile devices to notify loved ones they were safe when communication was banned was viewed affectionately by one family at home due to the particular effort and risks involved.

Protective factors within the microsystem and exosystem

Sims (2002) believes protective factors can be found at the levels of individual, family, community and educational services. Protective factors can facilitate families' resilience during adversity, and enable them to exercise strengths. These strengths include problem-solving, effective communication, empathy, positive interactions, resourcefulness, the ability to seize opportunities, a willingness to adapt to fit new challenges and initiative-taking (Walsh, 2003). Children are more likely to adjust to parental deployment if their parents are 'emotionally available and supportive' (Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013, p. 62) and less likely to have behavioural difficulties or require mental health services (Barker & Berry, 2009). These strengths were evident in a myriad of ways when families were supported within the microsystem and exosystem.

Within the microsystem, peers and siblings provide support at the child's level. In the case of Blake from Family 5, this was displayed through a strong friendship with a female classmate within the centre at the base. Being from the same defence culture, she was empathetic towards Blake when he was struggling with his father's training episodes. In turn, Blake provided support to his sister Bella. Emily and Bella, both case study children of the same age, provided each other with friendship and opportunities to play with the family narratives they both shared. In Family 7, Bethany's older siblings comforted her and provided a patient approach in promoting compliance with family routines and tasks. Keeping such routines predictable and reliable supports young children's resilience during deployment (Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013). In Family 7, Queenie had experienced her spouse's deployment twice since being a parent and believed this was the key for her and the children to cope. It is the chief task of the family at home to continue with living each day (Bartone, 2015), and routine modelled coping strategies to children.

Extended family provided welcome relief within the families during the deployment cycle. In Family 6, a mother-in-law provided childcare and domestic support for Leanne, while the

separated father-in-law provided another place to visit with her son Jack. In Family 8, Cassie's aunt provided physical support with drop-offs and pick-ups from childcare as well as sleepovers to give Wanda a break. Three families took advantage of relocating to be with extended family during deployment. These extended family relationships can give young children additional secure and affirmative relationships with caring adults, increasing the likelihood of resilience (Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013). In Family 4, Lara mentioned the importance for Emily to have access to her maternal grandfather in spite of him being ill and residing permanently in hospital. She also welcomed the emotional support from him, especially during deployment. While all of the relationships mentioned above were ones that were ongoing, they were particularly mentioned as useful during deployment.

In the absence of family, family friends were a source of comfort, distraction and respite. Siebler (2015) reported that his Australian study revealed 'family, friends, church and the use of Internet' as supportive for a number of families. Sleepovers, when both she and Jack stayed overnight at various friends' houses were a highlight of the positives of deployment for Leanne. Fiona and Queenie found relief in childminding that family friends could reciprocally provide. In a study examining the effects of community capacity, Bowen et al. (2015) found that returned military personnel who viewed their community as supportive and felt able to make a difference to those connected to their community reported lower levels of depression. Lara found great comfort in the gift of a home-cooked meal and a card from non-military family friends when deployment began. Friends were from the ADF community, the local community or the social media community. Generally, those from the ADF and similar occupations, such as mining, were viewed as being more understanding of deployment. Andres, Bowen, et al. (2015b) explain the importance of the military community becoming the military family. Within this study, when a similar amount of understanding came from a friend from the general community, this was particularly noted in the interviews with surprise. This was possibly due to their perceptions that the community friends were less likely to understand their difficulties or not be supportive of their narrative of service and sacrifice.

Also within the microsystem, early childhood educators provided physical and emotional support for parents, as well as being a source of information and strategic suggestions. Cassie's parents thought so highly of the educators at the centre because of their

understanding of defence families that they were willing to travel extra distances each day to keep Cassie there. Fiona found the strategies given by an educator invaluable when they were struggling with Sam's behaviour around deployment, while Leanne found the willingness of an educator to mind Jack privately particularly supportive when she had an unplanned change of roster involving night shift. Observed communication between the families and the educators appeared strong and genuine. Other centre staff were informed when parents had left for deployment or training so educators were aware if they encountered the child in the playground or during activities involving merged groups. The important role of the early childhood educators and early childhood service is a significant finding, demonstrated by the varied, contextualised and nuanced support offered as depicted in Figure 8.2. In summary, all of the support mentioned above within the microsystem was evidence of a harmonious mesosystem, where there are high levels of congruence between the players within the microsystem. Similarly, MacDonald (2014) found that strengthening relationships between the educational setting and the family through the use of key ADF staff had beneficial outcomes for the children.

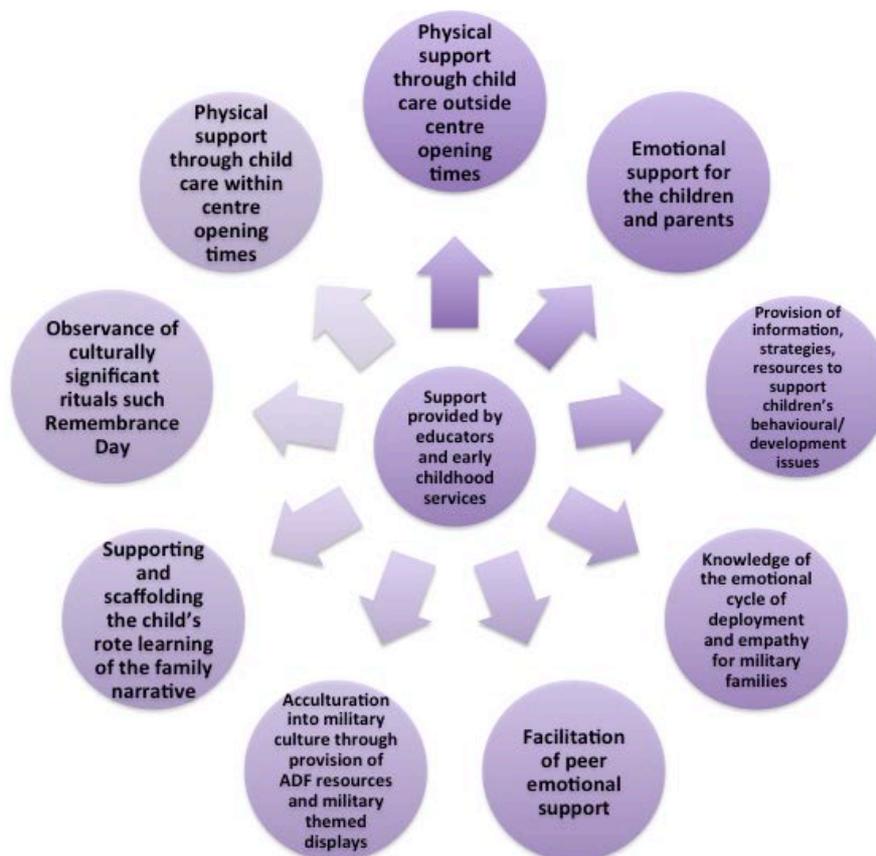


Figure 8-2: Support provided by educators and early childhood services

Within the exosystem, supports were evident through organisations such as Legacy, the RSL and relevant Australian government departments, including the Department of Veterans Affairs. While the latter largely provided financial support, the sub-branch of the RSL provided in-kind financial aid through the provision of a computer for the family. Legacy and the RSL were mainly reported as providing emotional support. Due to the death of her spouse, Wendy had the most contact with these organisations within the sample. Difficulties in accessing the right funding increased stress levels and resentment. Holmes, Rauch, and Cozza (2013) explains that difficulties traversing the bureaucracy can affect family member's attitudes to the military and even the death itself by becoming a source of further grief, loss and negative memories. Family 3 mentioned the charity Legacy because they had supplied a gift and card on Anzac Day during her spouse's deployment. Similarly, Siebler (2015) found that small acts of kindness from others, even if they were from people that military families barely knew, were viewed as highly supportive. This is perhaps because of the way these acts of kindness supported, rather than challenged, the family and cultural narratives. This support legitimised and gave meaning to their experiences and sacrifice, hence reinforcing the culture of sacrifice. Within the exosystem, various supports from the ADF were noted. These will be discussed in the next section.

Protective factors within the ADF

Identified support within the ADF included both direct and indirect assistance. Families vary in the amount of support they desire, depending upon their other sources of support (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b) and access. Family support for military families is typically seen as a way to improve 'morale, readiness and retention' and maintain a strong force who are focused on the mission (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015a, p. 322). In this study, direct assistance varied depending upon the families' needs and accessibility. Emotional support occurred through the provision of culturally mediating artefacts before deployment, such as Care Bears and deployment medals for the non-deployed parent and each child. This type of artefact gave due respect to the sacrifice of family members as well as being a powerful method of acculturation alongside the pre-deployment ceremonies.

Bowen et al. (2015) outlines the importance of a 'supportive system provided by some organisational agency' in achieving resilient children (p.443). Social assistance was evident in regular ADF unit days and information sessions prior to deployment. These supports were

mentioned by several parents as being a useful way to connect with other families who might later become good sources of assistance. The sessions were also a chance to meet and seek information from professional personnel such as ADF social workers and chaplains.

Practical and financial aid was often reported by families in the form of funded, reserved childcare places at the base. For the majority of families, this provided convenient access to centre-based care, and contributed overall to the support the military provided families and their readiness to deploy. The proximity to the base also meant the ADF parent was able to be involved in collecting and dropping off their child, thus building relationships with the educators when they were not deployed. The opportunity to be acquainted with the child's friends, educators, artworks and play spaces provided insights for the ADF parent, supplying familiar topics they could talk about with their child or children when they were away.

Indirect assistance had many facets and likewise had differing usage for each family. Emotional support was offered in the form of ADF social workers and chaplains free of charge. Generally, social workers would ring spouses during deployment to check how the family was managing and if they needed any assistance. The majority of families found the calls reassuring, although one family thought it was a waste of time and insincere. These calls were not made during lengthy training episodes that involved similar family stresses. Practical, emotional and financial support was identified through funded relocations to extended family. While three families had taken advantage of this, one of them had chosen not to relocate for the second deployment. Family 3 permanently relocated before the start of the first deployment near to the maternal grandparent's home. This meant sacrificing proximity to the base for ease of work and social interaction with families and colleagues. With two young children, they were happy they had chosen this option for security and support for the family despite ninety minute commutes to the base and overnight stays for the ADF parent when not deployed. From the limited data with this family, it was evident that the support of family was considered more important than the cultural narrative and other support provided at the base. Perhaps the extended family shared the same narrative, or just offered unconditional support for their daughter and grandchildren.

Other ADF support came in the form of free postage for care packages and free access to digital communication technology for the deployed parent so they had more access to emotionally support family members. In a study with spouses of Canadian Armed Force members, Dursun and Sudom (2015) reported almost all participants said regular contact with their deployed spouse assisted them to cope. Similarly, Bartone (2015) suggests the provision of internet access to the deployed parent during deployment was a key way to assist families to keep in contact with each other, thus alleviating stress. While free internet was not given to the non-deployed family members within this study, it was made freely available to the deployed parent.

Financial support was evident in the form of permanent income, deployment allowances and subsidised housing loans. Family 1, who had subsequently left the ADF, spoke of these advantages and how it had benefited their family financially. Interestingly, a British study reported spouses sometimes exerted pressure for the military spouse to stay with the career because of the pension due at the end of twenty-two years' service and viewed this as a pay-off for the unreasonable institutional demands on the family (Dandeker et al., 2015).

Acculturation, ritual and narrative

When people are part of a dominant culture, they are less likely to be aware of their own culture and the power it exerts (Burton et al., 2012) or the acculturation processes.

Acculturation was evident within all levels of the family's socio-ecological system, although none of the families commented on this process. The most surprising finding was the degree of acculturation and the ADF's success in enlisting the support of spouses, who were modern career women and their children. They were in effect enlisted, providing unpaid hours of work for Defence, and they were resigned to the demands of relocations, deployment, unplanned spousal absences and other difficulties associated with military life. Traditionally, the defence force is a male dominated occupation, giving the ADF immediate access to the male parent to acculturate. To then acculturate female, rather than male, spouses when they are not direct employees is perhaps easier. Despite not being employed by the ADF, due to the ongoing and pervasive social controls they have encountered within society, women are generally more likely to conform to cultural and social expectations. This social control of women relates to aspects of their 'physical appearance, behaviour, language, family status and general social participation' (Roach Anleu, 2006, p. 83). Additionally, families are

sometimes multi-generational ADF families, increasing the effectiveness and levels of acculturation.

Unsurprisingly, the culture of sacrifice through strong acculturation wavers during multiple deployments. Tellingly, Leanne from Family 6 spoke of her efforts to control her 'resentment and bitterness' in the last few weeks of her spouse's fourth deployment in the four years since Jack's birth. The bitterness was a combination of factors such as having to spend two years of Jack's life to date as the parent at home, coping by herself, and the loss of this extended time with her spouse. Parents and siblings supported the children with family narratives about deployment, service and sacrifice. Wendy spoke of the importance for Michael to learn about the sacrifice his father made, emphasising that he needed to attend all the culturally-significant, ritualised ceremonies to learn respect for those days. Educators reinforced these narratives and made special mention of those children with parents deployed on the ADF's culturally significant days. Sometimes the narratives spoke of the deployed parent needing to travel to assist other countries and people, as was the case with Family 3.

The context of the centre provided strong cultural ties because the playground overlooked the base. As mentioned previously, there were many resources within the preschool that reinforced the ADF culture. Predictably, the wall in the preschool room that featured each child's picture and what they would like to be when they grew up was heavily influenced by this acculturation. While it is often the case for children to gravitate to a career like their parents, I believe this was more the case within this group of children because of the strong levels of acculturation within centres on military bases like this one. The strong acculturation and sense of belonging assisted the children to cope with the long absences of their ADF parent. The exosystem appeared to infiltrate the children's lives far more than for children whose parents are in other occupations within the community.

The children in this study often repeated their family narrative, while others explored, embellished and played with it, as observed with Emily and Bella. Sometimes children even joked about details of deployment, as did Bethany from Family 7. Dursun and Sudom (2015) explain the way humour can assist people to cope with adversity by allowing them to view their difficulties in a light-hearted way, and it can even increase learning. Despite children's

creativity with the narratives, older siblings and peers were quick to correct any deviation in the narratives while educators praised the children when they correctly recited the accepted narrative.

Development of coping strategies and resilience and observing models for personal and family resilience

Most family members cope overall with military deployment (Pincus et al., 2007), as do most defence families. Coping strategies and resilience skills may be honed, but also may be stretched at times to breaking point. Parents and educators spoke of the children's skills in self-soothing through distracting themselves with friends and with significant reminders of their deployed parent. Examples of this included Bella and Blake sitting on their father's chair in Family 5 and Emily from Family 4 reading through postcards the father had sent while deployed.

Learning to care for peers, siblings and parents during deployment appeared to strengthen family ties, taking the emphasis off their own suffering and demonstrating empathy for others. The childcare centre provided opportunities for this through friendships between children whose families were in different stages of deployment. Queenie from Family 7 mentioned the difficulty her older children faced in their school with non-military families whose children teased them about the father's deployment, saying he would probably be shot. This indicates the difficulty that arises for the children in educational settings where their family narrative is quite different from others. Raising awareness of the service ADF families provide is recommended by MacDonald (2014) to counteract these differences.

Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) believe that 'finding innovative ways to help the child connect with the absent parent can help support young children's resilience during parental deployment' (p. 61). Many children took on new responsibilities during training and deployment within their household, developing new skills and taking pride in growing responsibilities. Deployment also meant regular use of digital communication technology, furthering their skills. Additionally, children from Family 1 and 3 regularly engaged in baking favourite foods and shopping for care packages for their deployed parent with their

non-deployed parent. The parents were modelling the family strength of caring for one another, as described by Sims (2002).

Children’s resilience skills are more likely to develop within a supportive family and community (Lester & Flake, 2013). Apart from honing their own skills, children also watched their own parents, siblings and peers struggle and learn to cope with difficulty during deployment and training. In Family 6, Leanne provided Jack with a unique model for dealing with the grief and loss when her spouse initially deployed. During this initial month, she was quite depressed and unable to deal with the situation. During this time, she and Jack watched a lot of television and had very little routine. Leanne subsequently recovered to make the most of the situation during lengthy deployments that included personal growth through study, special mother and son activities, time with friends and relaxation of the family timetable. The children from Family 3 learned that once their father returned from lengthy training and deployment, family holidays were important times to spend together to regroup and reconnect, demonstrating the family strength of sharing celebratory times. Despite her attempts to deviate, Bethany from Family 7 learned that the family timetable went on regardless because her mother Queenie viewed this as a way to keep the family focused and on track. The various coping strategies were effectively individualised and appeared to work for each family.

Table 8-3: Development of coping strategies and resilience models for personal and family resilience

		Explanation	Implications
Stressors and responses	Ongoing and frequent transitions	<p>At each departure families experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • adjustment • reunion • reintegration • adjustment <p>Departures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for training • for deployment • after annual leave <p>Reunions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after training • annual leave taken mid-deployment • post deployment <p>Followed by</p>	<p>The nature of modern warfare requires a highly-trained defence force. This means high levels of training occur before deployment begins, adding to family stress and affecting attrition from the ADF.</p>

		Explanation	Implications
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reintegration • a return to training 	
	Family mobility	Frequent relocations are a feature of defence force life and are based on a belief that families can relocate whenever the ADF requires.	This model clashes with most modern families' reality of dual income and educated, working mothers. It affects family stress levels, access to protective factors and attrition.
	Responses to parental deployment	Children's responses were physical, emotional and cognitive.	They also experience the responses of siblings and their non-deployed parent. Children experience responses of their deployed parent to varying degrees within the deployment cycle either firsthand or through various communication media.
	Increased family stress and parental fatigue	Families operate at the intersection of two changing, demanding institutions: the family and the ADF	Families are diverse and today expectations are that both parents share financial provision, child-rearing and household responsibilities. The ADF, like most other defence forces, expects a high degree of service and sacrifice from the whole family along with increased training requirements.
Adaptations and protective factors	Ongoing role flexibility within families	The children and the non-deployed parent take on new roles during training and deployment.	These roles are often readjusted as the deployed parent moves in and out of the household.
	Digital communications technology and other communication	Children stay connected with the deployed parent through varied use of digital communication technology.	This improves children's skills and facilitates a smoother reunion and reintegration. Communication assists families to stay connected but can increase stress if problems arise.
	Protective factors within the microsystem and exosystem	Supportive relationships within the microsystem and exosystem have a large impact on the families' ability to cope.	These relationships include family members, peers, extended family, family friends, educators and community organisations.
	Protective factors within the ADF	Support from the ADF directly and indirectly within the exosystem.	<p>Direct:</p> <p>Emotional – culturally mediating artefacts: Care Bears, family medals.</p> <p>Social – unit days</p> <p>Practical and financial – reserved and subsidised childcare places within or near the base.</p> <p>Indirect:</p> <p>Financial – stable income, subsidised housing loans, extra allowances during deployment.</p> <p>Practical/emotional/financial – funded relocation to extended family, access to funded communication and communication technology during deployment.</p>

		Explanation	Implications
			Emotional – social workers and padres.
	Family and meta-narratives	Narratives are employed to promote children’s understandings of the events and changes within the family. These simple family narratives are reinforced by parents, siblings, peers, extended family, educators, community and the ADF.	A system of justification and sacrifice is created and sustained through careful use of meta-narrative. This meta-narrative is employed by the ADF within the workplace (exosystem), the Australian government, the media (macrosystem) and the community at various levels.
	Ritual and acculturation	Acculturation from within all levels of the family socio-ecological system.	Acculturation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents and siblings • peers • extended family • friends • educators • early childhood centre • community • ADF • media • Australian government
	Development of coping strategies and resilience	Children develop a range of skills in various areas.	These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-soothing • Caring for other family members and peers who are experiencing similar challenges • Engaging in new tasks and taking on extra responsibilities • Communication and technology • Responsiveness and role flexibility • Memorising and playing with family narratives
	Models for personal and family resilience	Children witness parents, siblings and peers using various coping mechanisms during the deployment cycle.	These behaviours can be copied and become internalised.

8.3.3. Conclusion about children’s experiences

The results summarised in Table 8.2 revealed children’s experiences affected their understandings of parental deployment within defence families. Their understandings are explored in the remaining part of this results summary chapter.

8.4. Introduction to children’s understandings

The second part of this chapter continues the analysis of the important themes and examples from all participants using a socio-ecological framework in regards to the children’s understandings of deployment. Bringing together the data from the case study children and all other participants, the emergent themes and how these relate to the research question in regards to children’s understandings of parental deployment are explored and summarised in Figure 8.3.

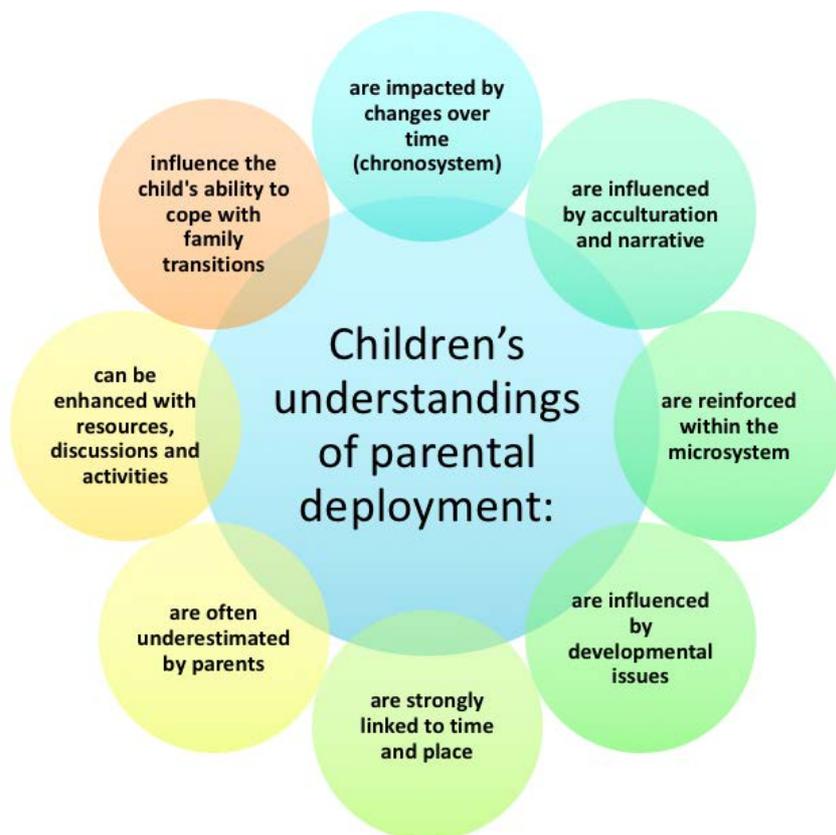


Figure 8-3: Outline of the children’s understandings

8.5. Summary of the findings

The second part of this chapter explores the second part of the original research question about children’s understandings of deployment. Several themes emerged from the data.

There was a large range in the understandings of parental deployment exhibited by the children, again dependent upon circumstances, family, individual characteristics and age.

Common themes emerged that have been summarised in an [animated presentation](#) which can be found at <https://www.powtoon.com/c/eBd3Eh2UVrl/1/m> The themes are explored in greater detail in subsequent sections.

8.6. Children's understandings of deployment

Children's understandings of parental deployment and training are explored in the following sections. In particular, I examine the influences of the chronosystem, acculturation, narrative, microsystem, developmental stages, time and place, digital communication technology, parental perceptions, resources, discussions and activities, and transitions.

8.6.1. Change over time (chronosystem)

Children's responses to deployment and training are individualised and dependent upon their age and development (Pincus et al., 2007); however, the results have demonstrated the children learned to adapt to changes in the family over time. Parents within the study spoke of improvements in understanding, behaviour, emotional states and coping strategies. For example, Sam eventually learned to better manage his high emotional states when his father departed and returned. This meant it was easier for his mother Fiona when Caleb was deployed or training, but also it was easier for Caleb to return and reintegrate into the family. Sam's sister Jess was able to observe the way he coped, making for a more harmonious household during times of stress. Similarly, Blake from Family 5 was able to employ self-soothing strategies such as sitting on Dad's couch, enjoying the comfort of the family dog in the house, looking through his photo album with pictures of himself and his father and listening to his father's voice on the prerecorded picture book. Blake's younger sister Bella, who struggled with high emotions during family transitions, at least had a model of an older sibling from whom to learn. These developments often aided the parents, as the older child acted as a role model for younger siblings.

8.6.2. Are influenced by acculturation and narrative

Andres, Bowen, et al. (2015b, p. 4) argue that humans are strongly influenced by narrative and as such, narratives are used globally as an effective teaching tool with children and

adults. 'Rose's Story: When is Daddy coming home?' that I wrote for defence families was very popular with the initial participants because it explored familiar experiences and struggles with parental deployment through the lens of three-year-old Rose. In particular, Cassie's mother Wanda identified a strong attachment to the story, which she had stored on her iPad. Cassie herself approached me in the playground and said she liked to read it at night with Mum. While Cassie struggled with many aspects of her father's absence for training, she generally slept very well in her own bed. During the course of the four-week data collection period, Cassie started occasionally coming into her mother's bed at night saying she was missing Daddy and just wanted a cuddle with her mother. Wanda pondered if such incidents were influenced by reading and re-reading the storybook. In another instance, children were asked to identify a useful coping strategy that assisted them feel better when their parent was away on deployment. Bethany suggested children watch a video of their father reading them a storybook, which is depicted in the book 'Rose's Story: When is Daddy coming home?' When I questioned her mother, Queenie, about their own family video she reported they had not recorded one due the sudden deployment of her spouse, but they wish they had done this.

8.6.3. Are reinforced and influenced within the microsystem

Children are most strongly influenced by those they have a close relationship with or admire, according to the social learning theory of Masten (2013, p. 204). Throughout the data collection period, I observed parents and educators modelling and scaffolding the children's narrative about deployment. The educators also prompted the children to talk about their parent's deployment to me when I was introduced to the preschool group. Additionally, children were prompted by educators to talk openly about their parent's deployment to peers during discussions, especially on culturally-specific days such as Remembrance Day. This typically involved a repetition of the family narrative that the educators scaffolded, then the children's efforts were praised. Peers embellished the narrative, added to the discussion and broadened the narrative by offering their own narratives. Younger children would often add parts of their friend's narrative to their own. Older siblings would quickly curb younger sibling's creativity with the narrative, apparently taking on the role of gatekeepers in the parent's absence. Thus, the roles of peers, siblings, parents and educators are all important in influencing children's understandings of deployment.

8.6.4. Are influenced by the development of language, memory and cognition

Children's rapid learning in the first three years of life is due to brain development (Pincus et al., 2007). This rapid pace is never repeated in the human life-span. The development of language, memory and cognition takes time, and this impacts children's ability to construct understandings of parental deployment. Young children's difficulty in expressing their frustrations verbally and their limited ability to understand the reasons behind changes to family arrangements and transitions often creates problems. Experiencing 'intense emotions when their attachment relationships are disrupted' and again during reunion and reintegration can occur for young children Osofsky and Chartrand (2013). This results in emotional outbursts and tantrums, adding to family stress and strain, causing problems for the whole family before and after deployment or training and for the non-deployed parent and educator during deployment. Difficulty understanding the difference between the words *deployment* and *work* caused major dilemmas for Sam from Family 1, whereas in Family 8, Cassie struggled with understanding the concept of time. Her emotional outbursts when her father went to the toilet demonstrated her inability to realise her father was not going away for a lengthy training episode when he closed the door to go to the toilet. Knaus (2010) explains that young children are absorbed in the present for most of the time and are grounded in being in the moment, reinforcing the belief of van Manen (1990) that the lived experiences of children are very different from adults. Family 7 managed to minimise this difficulty by clearly delineating the difference between work and deployment in the language used at home, and other families used homemade calendars to count down the 'sleeps' until the deployed parent returned. Development of skills improves with emotional and cognitive maturity and may be scaffolded through age-appropriate discussions, storybooks, resources and experiences.

8.6.5. Are strongly linked to time and place

Narratives emphasise time, events and place (Pincus et al., 2007) and within this study, parents and educators would remind the children of visits to the airport to farewell or reunite with a parent as a way to evoke children's memories of the deployed parent's departure. Within Family 3, the mother was insistent the trip to the airport was important, despite the father's discomfort at the resulting emotional farewell. Place can serve as a memory tag on

which parents can pull to prompt the child. Parents would also anchor the narrative with reference to cultural events they would remember. For example, in Family 7, Queenie anchored the date of her spouse's return to Easter, telling Bethany that her father would miss certain sibling's birthdays and Christmas to provide a sense of the length of time he would be away. Parents would also let their children know how many days until the deployed parent returned when reunion was a week or two away. The more abstract the narrative, the more difficult it was for children to grasp. The data indicated that parents utilise strong links to time and place to embed the family narrative.

8.6.6. Are influenced by digital communication technology

Digital communication technology has affected the way we communicate, consume information and teach, and a number of researchers believe it affects children's cognitive development (Santrock, 2011), although this is a relatively new area of research. Gottschall (2012) discuss young children's immersion in digital communication technology from birth, saying it affects the way they 'engage with others and impacts on what they can do, think and feel' (p.2). Digital communication allows users to stay in contact with family and friends from around the world (Gottschall, 2012), and children are active consumers, participators, experimenters and users of these technologies. Within the data, children's understandings of deployment were influenced by digital communication technology. In Family 6, Jack's ability to recognise his father during leave and connect easily with him in Singapore when Leanne and Jack had travelled to meet him was made much easier through the frequent use of Skype™. The father had been absent from the family home for two of four years since Jack was born. The mother believed Jack's lack of inhibition with his father was due to the family's access to real-time video conferencing. Keeping an image of the parent in their minds becomes easier as children develop (Bandura, 1977) and is likely to be enhanced by regular use of discussion facilitation systems, such as Skype™. Like the ADF, other defence forces have invested heavily in access to digital communication technology within their bases as a recognition of its ability to assist families.

8.6.7. Are underestimated by parents, especially for the very young

Despite authors such as O'Donovan and Melnychuk (2015) claiming babies are unlikely to be aware of parental separations, they do know when someone has left the family home and is no longer there to provide comfort and company. Infants readily respond changes in parental, sibling and family stress. In the absence of the deployed parent, very young children may take longer to settle, regress in toilet training, cry for that parent, and become clingy, attention seeking and fretful when the non-deployed parent leaves them (Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013, p. 63). Parents within this study demonstrated a tendency to dismiss the effect of deployment on their youngest children. This was despite the youngest children's limited ability to gain the support from peers that older children may receive due to their higher language skills. Ivan's mother, in Family 10, commented that because she was the primary caregiver, his life went on as normal and she just had to just deal with the challenges alone. In Family 1, Jess's sleep problems were attributed to her young age and Fiona commented that she was too young to understand. A similar comment was made by Davina's mother in Family 3, because Davina was still a baby when her father deployed. Fiona expressed surprise at Jess's strong emotional reaction when a storybook featuring both Jess and Sam was read to them eighteen months after Caleb had left the ADF. She thought perhaps Jess was simply copying her brother Sam, possibly because he was able to verbalise that he was sad because he 'remembered how much he missed his Dad when he went away a lot'. Overall, the data revealed many instances where very young children demonstrated high levels of understanding that were often downplayed or attributed to other causes by parents. Similarly, Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) reported on findings in British military families. Fellowes and Oakley (2014) noted that young children are likely to experience higher levels of stress than older children due to their need for predictable environments with reliable routines and their higher levels of dependence.

8.6.8. Can be enhanced with the use of age and culturally-appropriate resources, discussions and activities

Fellowes and Oakley (2014) describe the benefit of early childhood intervention programs that provide ‘developmental guidance and increased adaptive skills’ for military families (p.10). Exploring complex social and emotional situations supports children in understanding difficult challenges at a deeper level. Emily and Bella explored situations such as departures at airports in two play episodes I observed. Andrew especially connected with the puppet play roles acted out from ‘Anthony’s Story: Now that I am big’, asking for repeat opportunities to re-enact the roles, despite his father having returned from deployment over a year before. The storybooks particularly engaged certain children and families, opening up conversations with parents about the issues the books raised. Additionally, two families remarked how much the research activities assisted their young children to understand what was happening in their family and ways to cope with the upheavals. They recommended all defence children have access to a similar program. Discussions resulting from group readings of the books and other research activities normalised the children’s experiences. These research experiences invited children, such as Bethany, to verbalise challenges related to deployment and connect with other’s experiences. A number of parents remarked that there was a severe shortage of age-appropriate and culturally-appropriate books to deal with the challenge of deployment within Australian families. This is a problem because it is important to have appropriate resources available to families with young children prior to deployment (Yelland & Gilbert, 2013).

8.6.9. Influence the child’s ability to manage family transitions

Yelland and Gilbert (2013) state, ‘Military families must continually accommodate to the presence and absence of a deployed parent, reorganizing and readjusting to changing roles and routine’, with increased stress and reduced resources and connections caused by the absence of one parent (p.11). Children face many barriers to constructing understandings about what is happening during transitions within military families. There may be a lack of explanation and discussion brought on by a sudden unprepared departure that is a feature of ADF family life. Additionally, explanations may be considered unnecessary for younger children as the parents may think they are too young to notice the change or that the child is not old enough to need any different explanation than older siblings, as was displayed with

Bethany, from Family 7. Additionally, their memory, cognition and language development levels can create barriers to understandings and verbalising these understandings. Children are likely to deal more effectively with the added stress parental deployment brings if they have a good understanding of what is happening.

8.6.10. Conclusion for children's understandings

There is no doubt 'deployment weighs heavily on families' (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b, p. 5) and the non-deployed parent's ability to cope plays a major role in both the wellbeing of the children and the performance of the deployed parent (Andres & Coulthard, 2015). Despite these difficulties, many parents and children displayed remarkable resilience during these experiences, utilising protective factors to cope and adapt to stress, but not eradicate it. This chapter has examined a range of experiences, many of which align with previous Australian and overseas findings, although previous research has generally employed secondary sources of data with young children.

8.7. Conclusion

To date, little data are available on children themselves, except from secondary sources. As Masten (2013, p. 200) explains, 'without precise knowledge of military children's strengths and their opportunities for positive development, conjecture and overgeneralization will inappropriately frame decisions about meeting their needs and supporting their health' (p.7). To address this gap in part, this study has identified children's understandings of parental deployment within an ADF family. While a number of these experiences were common to other Australian and overseas research, the study has explored other experiences two- to five-year-old children have and factors impacting these experiences. The study also revealed a number of the understandings children have about their parent's deployment and the external influences on these understandings. Additionally, the findings revealed that experiences and understandings are unique to each child, even within the same family. With these understandings comes a responsibility to use the findings for further research and to provide recommendations to those who are able to enact change and give more effective support for these families.

The next chapter discusses the implications of these findings.

Chapter 9. Reflections on the findings

9.1. Revision of research purpose and question

The aim of this research was to gain firsthand knowledge of the experiences and understandings of young children within ADF families as they encounter parental deployment. This was achieved by privileging young children's voices that had previously been marginalised. In this chapter I draw together and discuss the implications from the research and the inferences for policy and practice in relation to military families in the Australian context. Additionally, methodological lessons and the requirements for further research are examined.

The primary research question was:

- What are young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family?

I believe this question has been partially answered through the application of Mosaic and narrative research approaches. A picture of the participant children's understandings and experiences has been revealed. However, it is impossible to comprehend the full extent of children's understandings or find out about all of their experiences. In the following sections I describe the evolution of the Mosaic conceptual framework for listening to children's voices, the themes from the research and revisit the research question. Figure 9.1 summarises the structure of this chapter.

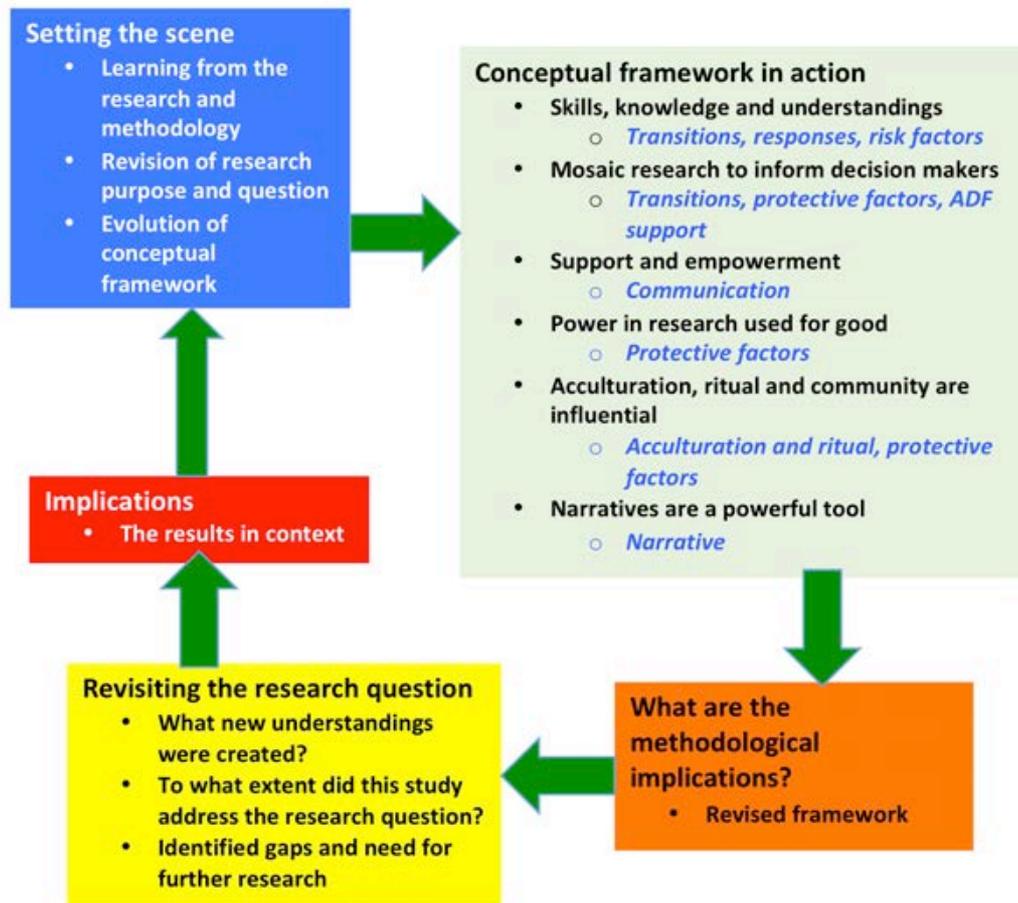


Figure 9-1: Structure of the reflections chapter

9.2. Evolution of the conceptual framework

This original Mosaic framework informed my research, specifically the data collection tools, data analysis, narrative presentation of data and also the recommendations that will be discussed in the next chapter. To further improve the way we listen to young children's voices, an enhanced framework is later presented.

My initial framework was based on the Mosaic approach for listening to children's voices, employed by Clark and Moss (2011) that is displayed in the orange section of Figure 9.2. I made additions informed from the readings about the roles of parents in children's lives that are depicted in green and I have recommended three overall changes. The addition of the

extra word ‘empowering’ was in relation to hearing children’s and adults’ voices. This modification is highlighted within Figure 9.3 in the mauve section. Two new additional points are displayed in the purple section. These additions address the influential elements of acculturation and ritual in children’s understandings of parental deployment. Also, narratives can be utilised to express these understandings and gain insight into the acculturation and ritual within their lives.

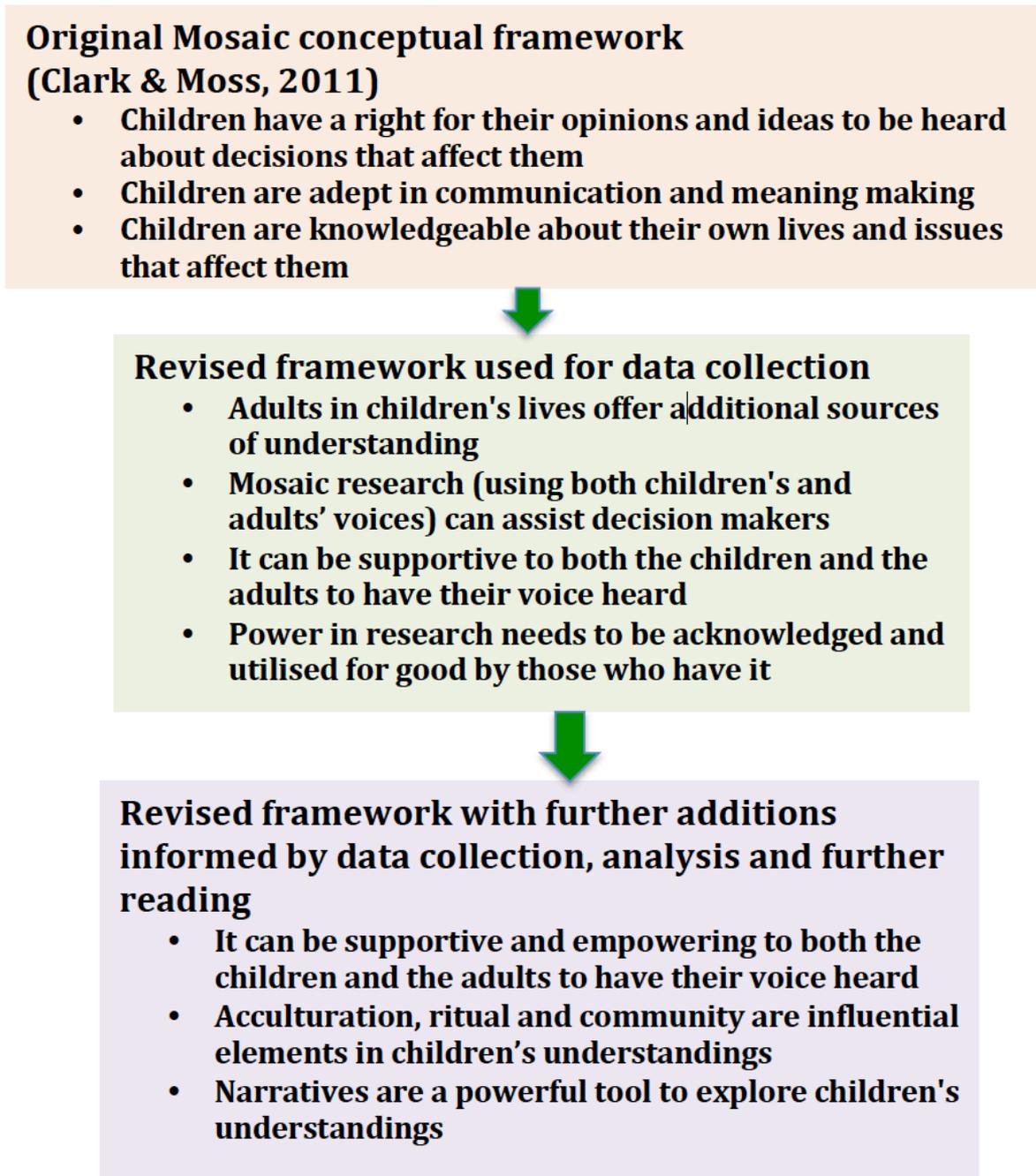


Figure 9-2: Modified conceptual framework for listening to children's voices

A diagrammatic representation of the new framework for listening to children’s voices can be viewed in Figure 9.3. Again, this is depicted in the orange sections to reveal the ideas from the original Clark and Moss (2011) conceptual framework. The additional concepts in green represent initial modification concerning data collection and analysis. The two new points are displayed in purple, while the wording modification is indicated in mauve because it was originally part of the initial modification, but has now been altered slightly after data collection and analysis. The two shades of mauve and purple are used to indicate the difference between new points (purple) and the partially changed point (mauve).

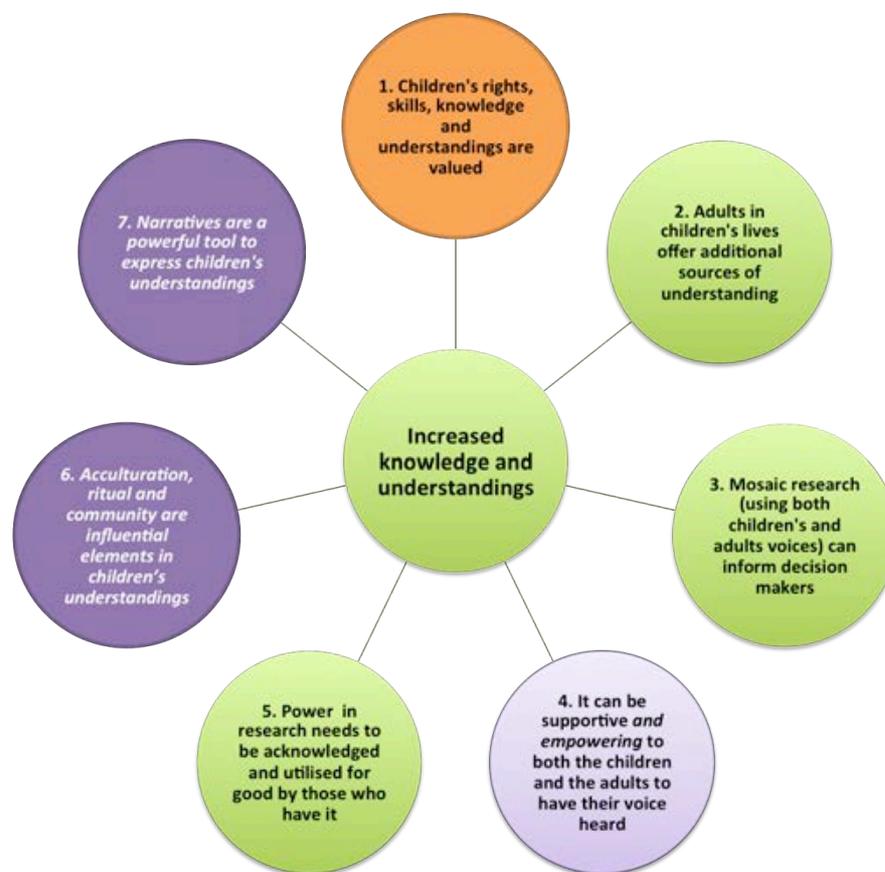


Figure 9-3: New framework for listening to children's voices

9.3. Learning from the research and methodology

By using the lens of the revised conceptual framework, in this section I discuss the implications of the findings. This section is organised and presented here according to the seven points in the Figure 9.3 framework, with points 1 and 2 being combined. From the

results, I had eight themes that are represented in Figure 9.4. These will be interlaced into the revised conceptual model through discussion.

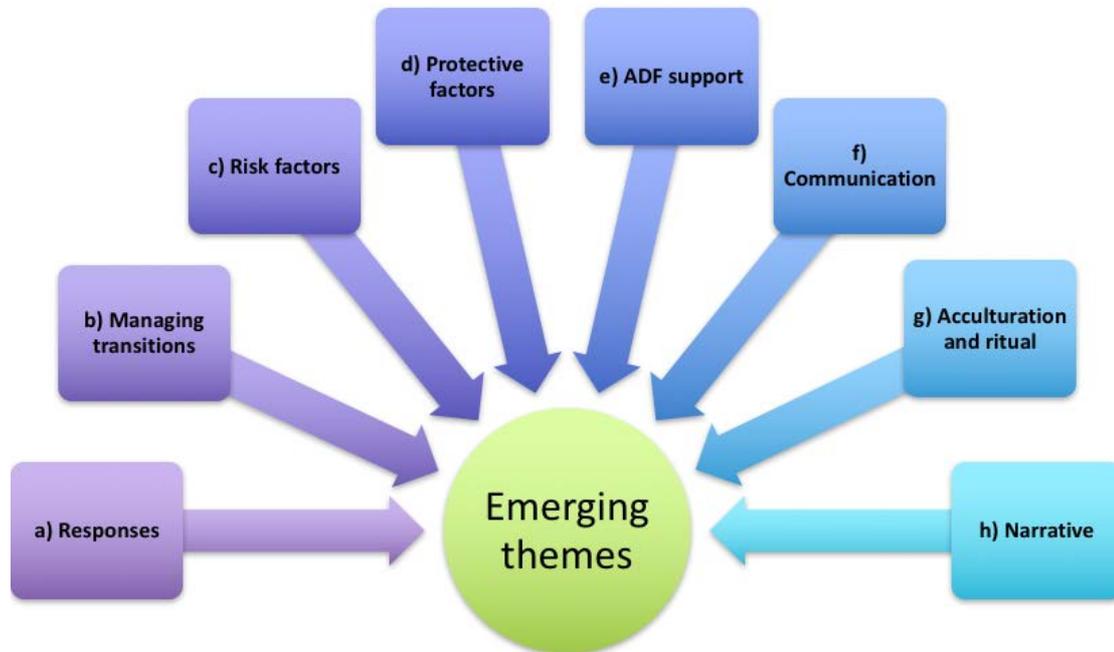


Figure 9-4: Themes from the data

9.4. Conceptual framework in action

Children’s experiences of parental deployment were sometimes communicated openly through chats, comments and conversations. At other times their experiences were conveyed through play, rhymes and raps, drawings, craft and other artworks. Their understandings were nuanced within these outputs and the comments related to them. The children and their peers often demonstrated sophisticated understandings and high levels of empathy for each other and characters in the storybooks who were experiencing parental deployment or training. At times they articulated their understandings of parental deployment related to other children’s experiences or a character’s experiences in the storybooks I had created about young children from military families. It is important to note that my work with the children was conducted over a period of four weeks, giving a snapshot of what the children were experiencing and understanding at that time. Interviews with parents capture the intensity of the experiences at

that time, rather than later, as in the case of the Timor-Leste study interviews (McGuire et al., 2012), which were conducted post-deployment. Most case study families provided updates via emails and phone calls a few times over the next year or two about family events and how the children and family were dealing with those changes. Thus, the access and frequency of contact affect the findings.

During data collection, parents often candidly expressed their experiences, struggles, frustrations, joys, failures, achievements, gratitude and tears. At times, listening to the compounding stresses reminded me of a pressure-cooker with the heat turned up at certain points within the deployment cycle. At times I was amazed the families were able to stay together and remain part of the ADF. Their ability to point out the positives, when discussing generally negative situations, also displayed significant resilience. Remarkably, they did not seem to question the system that put often unpredictable and enduring pressure on their family, apart from one parent. This type of military family stoicism was commented upon by Siebler (2009) and J. Brooks (2011), who noted, ‘that most families cope with the numerous stresses involved is testament to their strength, especially when other families around them are living lives without these stresses’ (p. 469). I also wondered, when listening to parents’ talk, what the long-term cost was to the lives of their children and their family, and if they would look back at a distant point in the future and still view their service and sacrifice to the ADF and the country as worthwhile.

Interestingly, all parents remarked on the requirement for more assistance from the ADF except for the only family who had left the defence force due to lifestyle reasons. While support in various forms is available, many families did not engage with these supports or know they were available. In light of the research conducted with families within Australia to date, a review of assistance offered may support the ADF to tailor aid to stoic families and engage with them through various platforms to ensure they have access to, and knowledge about, the supports on offer. Additionally, this research identifies the necessity for a relief of pressure that might be achieved through a different model of deployment for families, as advocated by Pincombe and Pincombe (2010) and explored in the final recommendations chapter.

The importance and limitations of narrative methodology

All data was reported using narrative methods to convey the story of each case study child and their family. Writing the narrative allowed me to dwell in the data, analyse and make sense of what the children, educators and families were telling me. It fitted well with the Mosaic methodology, by giving voice to participant's experiences and understandings.

Additionally, narrative methods were employed for research with the three additional families. By not using the Mosaic approach with the children from these families, I was very reliant on what the parents told me and limited in my ability to gain a holistic picture of the child. Also, I did not have access to these children's educators, to help verify the data as I had done with the participant children from the centre.

Tensions between the two methodologies

When using narrative methodology as a method of data collection with the three additional families, I felt some tension between the two methodologies I had employed within the one research project. The limitations of not working with the children from the three additional families using Mosaic methods was challenging because it meant the data was quite different and therefore hard to compare. Separating these two sets of data during analysis and narrative retelling reduced this tension and made it easier to work with the two methodologies.

9.4.1. Children's rights, skills, knowledge and understandings are valued



In this section, both children and their parents' skills, knowledge and understandings are combined to form a clearer picture of the findings. Children's opinions must be heard in matters that affect them. Their skills, knowledge and understandings are valued in the Mosaic

approach. In my revised conceptual framework, adults in children's lives are positioned to offer extra sources of understandings and therefore should be included. By combining these two elements, a number of new insights have been made. From these insights, a number of recommendations are briefly mentioned; however, these will be expanded in detail within the next chapter.

Managing transitions caused by family mobility, responses and risk factors



Frequent relocations are an intrinsic characteristic of life in military families (Masten, 2013) and a military family's private life does not exist separately from the military (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b). The data from this study aligned with previous studies, but this time the voice of children was heard as they articulated their experience. Children are affected by the relocation stress directly and also indirectly through the increased burden it places on parents (Masten, 2013). In this study, parents of the children listed the many homes on military bases at which they had lived, in a weary, resigned, matter-of-fact way. Despite the length of the list, they did not complain about the impact this had on their careers, or the unsettling effect on the children and family as a whole. Another family mentioned the loss of other families as sources of friendship and support when the friends were given notice to move to other bases while they remained behind. The spouses appeared resigned to the expectation of sacrifice and service – even seemingly onerous and cumbersome decisions such as being sent back to the same base twice. As Andres, Bowen, et al. (2015a) state, the military expect family decisions to be adapted to fit the military, rather than the reverse.

How this level of resignation and acceptance in modern families with dual careers is achieved is testament to a high level of acculturation. Conversely, it also explains the high levels of attrition of personnel from the military attributed to family factors. Under different circumstance, another family viewed the relocation of family items from ADF storage as a sign of rejection by the ADF; they felt they were being forced to move on with their life

when they were still mourning six months after the combat death of a family member. Holmes et al. (2013, p. 201) explain the loss of identity that occurs in such situations when there are a series of losses, such as not feeling part of the military family or no longer being a military spouse. Overall, Siebler (2015) found that relocations generally seemed to sever ties with the previous military community, creating a sense of disconnectedness often resulting in loneliness.

J. Brooks (2011) states that children in military families ‘experience added stresses of multiple moves, separations from loved ones on duty’ (p. 469). These frequent transitions are difficult for adults to process and manage, but for young children their ability to manage these are influenced by their understandings of what is happening. Educators can play a vital role by partnering with parents to share information about what is happening with children at home, providing opportunities for discussions and links to activities within the early childhood service. The ADF could support families by providing various strategies to assist parents to explain what is happening within the families in age-appropriate ways. While the USA program Families Overcoming Under Stress (FOCUS), previously mentioned, targets at-risk families, broader programs could be developed and made available to educators, family workers and families online through ADF websites. This type of access has the potential to reduce the incidence of at-risk families within the defence forces.

Considering the effects of stress on children and families, and the high levels of attrition attributed to family challenges, it is important for the ADF to consider other practices for family relocation. The traditional practice of moving ADF families every year or two was difficult for families before dual-career and shared roles in parenting and household duties became normalised. The changes in family structures and norms compound the difficulties associated with relocating. Such large stresses activate the body’s sympathetic nervous system. Typically, stresses such as relocation are short and infrequent, and the increased levels of adrenalin the body responds with allow us to function at a higher rate. However, this sympathetic nervous system is not designed to be activated for long periods of time, or frequently, due to the burden it places on the body, brain and immune system (Rose, Gilbert, & Richards, 2016). Young children are less able to understand and justify family mobility than adults, nor able to reassure themselves that they will feel settled in time in their new home. While parents may be able to channel their increased adrenalin to assist with the

physical requirements of the move, children are less able to focus on assisting with such tasks, causing unsettled behaviour, decreased ability to cope and a diminished capacity to understand what is happening.

Relocation is very stressful for adults, but for parents dealing with the added responsibilities of moving a family and caring for children who are stressed, it is extremely difficult. Parents' abilities to respond appropriately to their children's needs during this time are compromised due to the heightened stress. Children and families require stability to better enable them to access the support they require for periods of training and deployment. The strains of high family mobility should also be considered in conjunction with the high stresses of parental absences during training and deployment, further depleting the families' ability to adjust.

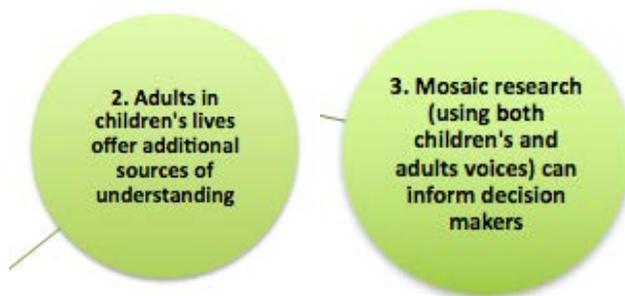
Managing transitions during training



Worldwide, military training requirements have increased due to the changing nature of warfare requiring a highly-skilled force (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b; De Angelis & Segal, 2015). In turn, this has decreased the ability of the parents to plan their time together, which Andres and Coulthard (2015) cite as a cause of stress. Interestingly, one family listed being able to plan family time as one of the major benefits of leaving the ADF. In summary, the family has become more demanding of its parents and despite this, the military 'have not adjusted to broader social changes regarding gender, work and family roles' (De Angelis & Segal, 2015, p. 35). While efforts to acknowledge the changing nature of families is evident in their provision of funded and reserved childcare and spousal study allowances, further action in regards to recognising and reducing the stress placed on families is also necessary. This may be in the form of revised models of deployment and additional support. It is acknowledged that systems are entrenched and difficult to change, but there are small

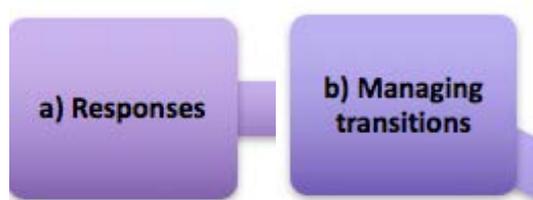
changes that could make a big difference to families. Suggested recommendations will be explored in the final recommendations chapter.

9.4.2. Mosaic research can inform decision makers



Mosaic research using childrens' and parents' voices can inform decision-makers. The experiences of children and families and the ideas parents put forward provided new knowledge upon which policy and decision-makers could draw. This knowledge is explored below and is also expanded upon in the following recommendations chapter.

Managing transitions during the deployment cycle and responses



It is common for personnel to be away from home for extended periods for pre-deployment training. This causes significant stress for families. To alleviate this stress, Pincombe and Pincombe (2010) propose an alternative deployment model for the ADF whereby personnel do their training during the months of deployment without returning home in between. In this model, time at the deployment site is reduced and training occurs on the way to deployment and also during deployment. In turn, this would reduce stress for families and assist personnel

to stay focused, reducing the stress incurred through long stints at the deployment site and through repeated departures and reunions (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010).

Additionally, reintegration into civilian life often poses difficulties for the military parent who has possibly experienced ‘life-threatening situations, sleep deprivation, feelings of powerlessness, and ambiguity about acceptable norms and behaviour in the foreign culture’ (Andres & Coulthard, 2015, p. 178). The ADF is the best placed to offer support for their own personnel during this reintegration because of their in-depth knowledge of the effects of deployment. Reducing barriers to access these services would perhaps increase the uptake of the support available. Barriers include stigma and fears of career suicide if personnel seek assistance (Brown, 2014). Potentially, offering funding for returned personnel and their family while they are still part of the defence forces to access community-based services may in part alleviate these problems.

Aligned with these findings, ongoing support for children and parents during deployment is vital, and support for the non-deployed parent is also important as they reintegrate back into their previous roles within the family post-deployment. Additional support for children and parents during this vulnerable time is required, with information and strategies to assist all family members to cope. ADF social workers could play an active role if additional funding was available and they were able to deliver targeted, effective family support.

Protective factors



Thomson, Hadfield, Kehily, and Sharpe (2012) argue that due to the protective factors of parents’ quality care, working to support both the parents and the children within families is essential. This is because the major source of stress comes from the home environment. Thompson (2012) explains how the biological consequences of stress weakens children’s

concentration, memory, and ability to provide ‘control and focus their own thinking’ (p. 44). The sympathetic nervous system reacts to reduce bodily functions that are considered superfluous to survival functions to conserve energy (Rose et al., 2016). These effects are not typically permanent, and if conditions improve or adequate support is given, full functioning may return. Therefore, supporting the whole family is just as important as supporting the child.

Other protective factors included some of the positive aspects of deployment. Siebler (2009) stated in his thesis findings about defence families that the varied experiences of deployment were complex and nuanced and could not be described in simplistic terms as positive or negative. One of the positives identified by parents in this study was the children’s increase in skills as they experienced new tasks and roles when a parent was deployed or away for training. Similarly, a number of non-deployed parents identified increased skills and resilience during deployment, because they were solely responsible for the children and household. Families also identified experiencing fatigue, isolation and loneliness that reflect previous findings, globally.

ADF support



Children from military families are more likely to be resilient and cope with deployment if they have support from both parents and the military community (Siebler, 2015) and feel a ‘sense of belonging to a military culture’ (Masten, 2013, p. 204). The overall results within this study revealed ADF assistance contributed to the parents’ and family’s wellbeing and a few of these supports created a sense of belonging to the defence culture and an increased understanding of parental deployment. Also identified was a requirement for improving the delivery, access and types of support offered to families. Slee, Campbell, and Spears (2012) argue that ‘formal military support systems still tend to rely upon the traditional family model’ (p. 325) whereas in all of the families within this study, the non-deployed spouse worked either part-time or full-time, with the exception of one. Knowledge and availability of

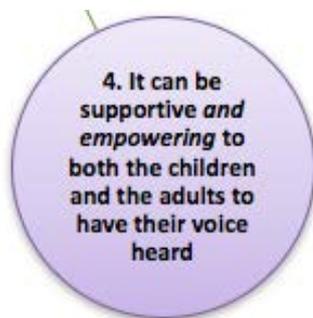
resources and services was identified as a major concern within this study, parallel to the findings of Siebler (2009) with defence families. Thus, a more systematic approach to resources for families with young children is required, where various platforms of delivery are offered and where parents are actively informed of the availability of resources and services.

The ADF supports families during deployment in various ways, many of which were identified by the participants. Current research being undertaken at James Cook University highlights school-based applications of support programs and the work of Defence School Transition Aids (DSTAs) (MacDonald, 2016a). In this study, targeted support programs and access to age-appropriate and culturally appropriate resources were identified as inadequate by parents of children under five years old. This had not been identified in any known studies before within Australia. Clearly, more work is necessary to effectively support young children and families during these critical early years to scaffold their understandings of parental deployment.

Information about strategies to assist children to cope were either available through various ADF sources or were discussed among defence parents, because common strategies were evident in the children's experiences (e.g., the use of recordable picture books). This illustrates an effective employment of information given to families pre-deployment and the strength of the ADF community. However, during parental interviews it was evident that not all strategies were known, and parents sought more strategies to implement with their families. It is important that information on effective and innovative coping strategies that build resilience are made available to all parents and children through relevant, age-appropriate resources in various forms. Such strategies should be given to both parents so that they are working together to assist the children and family to build resilience and coping mechanisms and assist the children to understand the family changes. Linke (2007) believes both parents require strategies as they parent from home and away in order to facilitate healthy and stable parenting relationships and create security in these relationships. Indeed, for very young children, 'feeling secure about their special relationships is one of the most important steps towards resilience' (Linke, 2007, p. 3).

Listening is an important component of the communication process (Fellowes & Oakley, 2014) because it is the starting point for all language development. Babies' and toddlers' receptive language is generally far more advanced than their expressive language. In other words, what babies and toddlers can comprehend from listening and understanding other non-verbal clues is generally far greater than what they can verbalise. This can lead to adults, including parents, interpreting what babies and toddlers comprehend from an adult perspective. While babies may not comprehend the full implications of a war in a far-off country, they can certainly comprehend that there is extra stress and activity in the household as a parent prepares to deploy. They can also perceive the grief and loss that the other members of the household experience. This increases their own stress of missing a parent who has suddenly disappeared. Often they express stress when they are missing the attention at a time at which they had previously routinely received it from this parent, for example, before bedtime (Linke, 2007). Educators, the ADF family and social workers could actively provide information to parents to assist them to best support their babies and toddlers and understand their additional needs for comfort, stability and security during vulnerable times.

9.4.3. Support and empowerment through being heard



In line with the revised conceptual framework, it is supportive and empowering for children and adults to have their voices heard in matters that affect them. This process seemed to embolden them to express their concerns to those that make decisions about their lives.

Communication



f)
Communication

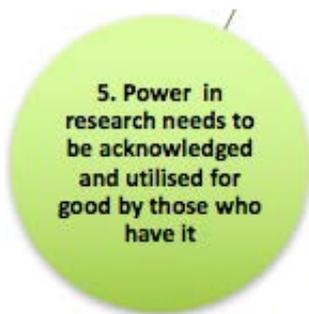
During the study, the families were able to share their joys and frustrations in utilising digital communication technologies and other communication within their lives during deployment. They were able to identify the overall impacts and areas that require attention.

Pincus et al. (2007) recommend family members think carefully about what is said to each other and provide opportunities to sift out unnecessary, emotive issues, thus acknowledging the limited capabilities of both spouses during deployment. Similarly, Andres and Coulthard (2015) discuss the difficulties for military personnel when stress from home affects their ability to focus, due to an empathetic reaction. The data from this study revealed that the availability of digital communications technology was positive for families, but it created unique challenges. The ADF provided these technologies where possible, displaying high levels of support for families that aligned with previous studies. The necessity for further information for families about the difficulties surrounding the employment of technologies was clearly identified. This information may reduce or eliminate the tensions around co-parenting from another country or the overuse of technology further straining the wellbeing of the non-deployed parent.

M. Allen and Staley (2007) recognise the importance of digital communication technology in keeping children and the deployed parent connected and actively interested in each other's lives within the education setting. This included sharing class activities with the parent via email and private websites and displaying photographs of sights where the parent is deployed. From this study, this was not evident within the centre; however, reunions and reintegrations were affected by the children's experiences with technologies at home. Parents reported a smoother transition when they had been able to keep the parent's image and voice familiar for the child; this familiarity had the effect of reducing awkwardness between the child and the returned parent. Research into this area is needed to fully explore the way young children make the connections between the voice and image on video conferencing

software programs and the parent's physical presence upon reunion. It is vital that parents have access to ongoing, meaningful and appropriate communication with the child and the deployed parent. Educators also require information and ideas on how best to support the child within the early childhood service.

9.4.4. Power in research acknowledged and utilised for good



Employing the revised framework, power in research needs to be utilised for good. Through increased knowledge, researchers have the power to inform decision-makers and policy to improve outcomes for those identified within their research. The following section outlines a number of areas that might be addressed to better support the research participants.

Protective factors



Protective factors that can support families during the deployment cycle include responsive relationships between family members and 'social support and other community resources available' (Masten, 2013, p. 204). Dutch and Canadian research has disclosed that military families from these countries preferred support offered informally, such as family and friends providing practical and emotional assistance (Andres & Coulthard, 2015). Friends and family

within the military culture are more likely to understand the cultural expectations, demands and narrative, therefore offering greater empathy. Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) describe the importance of the availability of extended family, especially when a parent is absent, because they offer extra physical and emotional support, providing a protective factor for the family. Such assistance indicates a high level of congruence between the people and groups within the mesosystem.

This study revealed the appreciation for support received from other defence families, but particularly, community families. Assistance from community families was particularly treasured because they were perceived as not fully understanding the unique difficulties defence families face and perhaps because they were supporting a narrative that gave the family a sense of meaning. In communities where defence families reside, a more targeted approach is needed to engage general community members and community organisations to support these families. Additionally, families require further education in the benefits of strengthening these protective factors and broadening their support base and opportunities for protective relationships to form. This may be enhanced through community organisations, schools and early childhood services, although the ADF should lead the necessary changes.

Acculturation, ritual and community are influential



Large influences on children's understandings of parental deployment are acculturation, ritual and the community. These are explored in the subsequent sections.

Acculturation and ritual

g) Acculturation and ritual

The children revealed rich information about the degree of acculturation and experiences of rituals within the military community. Children's understandings about deployment were greatly affected by both of these elements. Further research into these areas within military families is necessary to more fully understand their pervasive influences as well as the comfort they provide through building a sense of belonging within the military community.

Protective factors within the community

d) Protective factors

Mmari, Roche, Sudhinarase, and Blum (2009) found that United States military families in recent wars believed that they were misunderstood and not valued by the general population. Similarly, Bartone (2015) discussed their desire for community recognition of the sacrifice military personnel and their families experience. The families in this study experienced and valued the support offered by general community members and organisations such as Legacy and the RSL. When support came from general community members, they were genuinely surprised that their narrative was being accepted and supported by those outside the broader military family. This finding highlights the importance of these community-based organisations, which are largely run by volunteers who fundraise to support veteran families. Many of these volunteers have been involved with the defence forces or had family members involved in previous generations. Perhaps a more strategic method of support would involve a stronger partnership between these organisations and the ADF to effectively target those who need it most, along with direct resourcing and funding to organisations. Effective partnerships can often build the capacity of these organisations by raising the profile and

broadening funding sources. Potentially, such partnerships could increase the effectiveness of defence-funded programs, as well as reduce the personnel attrition rate, resulting in savings in training and recruitment of new staff.

Bowen, Mancini, Martin, Ware, and Nelson (2003) report that community support acts as a protective factor for military families under stress and promotes family adaptation. Further, they advocate a positive 'sense of community' as a forerunner for family adaptation (Bowen et al., 2003). Other researchers have proposed models and strategies to improve and develop community support (Drummet et al., 2003; Lincoln et al., 2008), while Hoshmand and Hoshmand (2007) recommend ways to increase community capacity through assessing community needs and tailoring programs accordingly. Any such programs would be hampered by the high family mobility experienced by defence families.

Despite the importance of this area, to date there has been a dearth of research; thus, an increase in research is necessary to improve our understandings within Australian and other contexts. Community and educator awareness is required to increase informal community support promoting a greater empathy and understanding of the stresses faced by military families within the deployment cycle. This could include culturally-relevant resources outlining ways early childhood services and schools can generally raise awareness with families about deployment, hence increasing the capacity for community support. Moreover, evidence-based programs targeting specific age-groups could be adapted to the Australian context and be made available to early childhood services, schools, family workers and counsellors online. Within the ADF, building the support for defence families living away from military bases or those who may be facing isolation or marginalisation is also necessary. This may include access to online services, social support and social media, where physical resources and services, are unavailable impractical or deemed irrelevant by family members.

Protective factors within early childhood services and schools

Emotional learning is believed to be at its peak in the first four years of life with the development of behavioural and inhibitory control, via the support of attached caregivers, through connected systems throughout the body and brain (Rose et al., 2016). Children's self-awareness and emotional intelligence grows in response to nurturing relationships and the increasing complexities of the child's socio-cultural environments. The nurturing experience of having a supportive older sibling was highlighted in this study and was also apparent in a few examples from the literature. This highlights the benefits of linking older children from ADF families with younger children in order to provide a role model; this is particularly important for children who have no older siblings. This may be possible in early childhood services by combining age-groups during discussions and activities relating to parental deployment or when a younger child is having difficulty adapting to parental absences. Additionally, partnering with nearby schools could also prove beneficial as older children in schools could be partnered with younger children in early childhood centres.

Looking beyond the availability of older siblings as role models, Grose (2003) explains the importance for educators to know the birth order of the children they teach, as well as the sibling dynamics, to increase the effectiveness of their practices. For example, Grose (2003) explains that older children often show higher leadership skills coupled with perfectionist tendencies. Second-born children tend to be more social, seek out justice and have higher skills in diplomacy (Grose, 2003). He explains that youngest children typically learn skills early in life on how to charm family members to increase the chances of competing for attention and influence. While birth order is typically shared at enrolment, the characteristic traits of the child within the family circle are often only shared when educators have a close and trusting relationship with a family. Birth order has a profound effect on the social and emotional development of children and the way they behave within the family (Grose, 2003). Examining each military child's family in a holistic manner within the microsystem is vitally important to tailor effective support strategies.

For educators, connecting with families and supporting children through emotionally difficult times is important, and the data revealed many positive experiences of support. To assist in this process, Hoshmand and Hoshmand (2007) argue a model of program implementation led by consultants training teachers in schools with large numbers of military children. Such

programs might assist with behaviour and emotional support for children. They may also facilitate stress management and support for different deployment cycle phases, although there needs to be specific early childhood programs that this research could potentially inform. Educators and formal education settings have an important role in assisting children during parental deployment. They are considered ‘resources through classroom interventions, communications with parents (at home and abroad), and schoolwide activities’, thus facilitating assistance and learning for the family (M. Allen & Staley, 2007, p. 7).

Using the Mosaic approach in this study meant that participant children were able to explore their experiences and understandings of deployment through a myriad of culturally-appropriate resources, discussions and practical activities. As a result, educators and parents reported an increase in children’s ability to verbalise their experiences and an increase in inhibitory control. Yet M. Allen and Staley (2007) explain ‘many teachers are educating emotionally distracted children and feel ill equipped to support the special needs of this growing population’ (p. 83). Additionally, Mogil et al. (2010) reported on the ability of an effective US early years’ program for at-risk military families that assisted young children to continue in their development despite parental deployment. Clearly, Australian early childhood programs and resources are required to empower parents and educators to effectively support children from ADF families.

MacDonald (2016a) reports on the effect of having the ADF visit schools situated near bases in northern Queensland, engaging the children with defence vehicles and tanks, then talking to all students about the way deployment affects their peers. Unfortunately, such a program was not experienced in the school where older siblings of a case study child from this project was enrolled so it is not possible to explore any impact of this intervention on families here. While the effectiveness of this type of program is still being researched (MacDonald, 2016a), it is evident programs need to be more readily available for schools and perhaps amended as explained in the recommendations chapter. Similar programs for early childhood services are also required, with careful consideration of age-appropriate communication, resources and artefacts. Barriers to such programs exist, and these will be further discussed also.

9.4.5. Narratives are a powerful tool



Within the revised framework, narratives are a powerful tool to express children's understandings. In line with this, the following section discusses the necessity for further training for parents and educators to utilise family narratives effectively. The data revealed children's experiences of narratives at a family level, within the ADF and as a cultural meta-narrative. Adults' roles in creating and scaffolding the narratives demonstrated strengths in parenting at home and effective educator support at the centre. These narratives are explored within this section.

Narrative



Our natural human tendency to empathise with characters in narratives results in a softening of our mental defences, unlike when we are given a lecture (Gottschall, 2012). As a result, narratives are a very effective tool for teaching and acculturation with both adults and children. By starting with children as the youngest members of defence force families, a system of justification and sacrifice is created and sustained through the careful employment of narratives and meta-narratives.

These meta-narratives are employed by the ADF, the Australian government, the media and the community at various levels to legitimise military involvement in conflicts far from home. Globally, the increased use of mass communication has expanded the audience that

listens to other international leaders sprout vague meta-narratives utilising terms such as ‘national interests’ and ‘war on terror’ (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015b, p. 4) in an effort to justify acts of war. Interestingly, meta-narratives may improve family resilience because of the awareness of, and empathy for, ADF families that is built within the wider community. Masten (2013) explains family resilience also depends upon factors such as broader community ‘appreciation for the value of military service’ (p. 204).

At the time of data collection, media hype was extensive in the lead up to the centenary of the Anzac landing at Gallipoli (Brissenden, 2014; Lake, 2010b), adding power to the acculturation narratives. Community organisations, publications, memorabilia and politicians repeated and reinforced the cultural message of service, sacrifice, honour, courage and mateship. Within this study, experiences with culturally-significant artefacts and attendance at ceremonies promoted defence acculturation at all levels within the family, including children, non-defence spouses, extended family and friends.

In line with this, Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) emphasise the importance of preparing young children for parental deployment by talking to them and reassuring them as an approach to promote higher levels of adjustment. Within participant families, most children experienced narratives that were created by parents and employed to support their understandings of the events and changes within their family. Such narratives facilitated the child’s verbalisation about what was happening, promoting a sense of security through knowledge. Giving parents, educators and children resources to facilitate the development of comprehensive family narratives will strengthen this process and ensure all children have a narrative before their parent is deployed, rather than the ad hoc approach that left children without adequate words to express what was happening in their lives.

Within this study, there were variations in each family’s narrative. For example, in one family, the narrative was about the altruistic nature of the mission, rather than that Australia was at war with the country of deployment. Conversely, another family openly expressed pride about fighting the enemy and that the sacrifice of the father’s life was not in vain. Building on the writings of Bruner (1990, 2004) on an individual’s utilisation of narratives to make meaning of their lives, Davies (2015) explains the idea of family narrative. A family’s

co-constructed and combined view of the world can be appreciated by analysing the narratives of each family member. Family narrative construction was also evidenced in the interactions between family members using digital communication technology (Nichols, Nixon, & Rowsell, 2009).

Ewing, Callow, and Rushton (2016) argue that children need to view their lives, families and themselves as individuals reflected in stories. When they are not able to do this, it is difficult for children to understand the relevance of literature for them (Ewing et al., 2016). Importantly, these children then miss opportunities to create connection and belonging, participate in discussion and develop emotional and social skills. Australian children's author Jackie French describes this connection children have with narrative through her description of children's interaction with a 'magic' book that fires their imagination and entices them to want to engage with more books (French, 2015a). To date there are few books written specifically for military families within the Australian context. It is therefore difficult for ADF children to find their lives or their families' lives validated and explored in children's books, limiting their ability to find that magic book or explore their emotional journey of deployment through the safety of a character's experiences within a storybook. This study demonstrated that normalising their experiences through use of a storybook assists children's understandings to flourish, and parents reported a maturing of their children's emotional and verbal responses. Additionally, children require a family narrative to facilitate their verbalisation of what is happening in their lives during deployment. Families may need support to establish this narrative and this should be given by the ADF and early childhood educators.

In this study, the uniformity of the narratives within the children's microsystem supported children's understandings about what was happening in their family and increased their sense of belonging. Bowes et al. (2012) discuss the profound effect of the social-ecological contextual settings of the microsystem for a child's development. These face-to-face settings 'influence the children, not only through their physical features and activities but also through the personality and belief systems of the people in those settings' (Bowes et al., 2012, p. 7). Parents, peers, siblings and educators were observed to have a persistent and pervasive influence on children's understandings of deployment within this study. The socio-cultural nature of these understandings could be viewed in my observations of the

interactions with the children as they scaffolded the narratives and discussed deployment. The setting of the early childhood service was also influential in supporting the narratives and defence force culture. Further research in this area comparing those children in a local community versus a military base service would perhaps yield further insights.

Educators, family workers and the ADF could assist children's understandings by providing information to parents about the need for clear language usage around deployment and work and guidance around children's development of time perception and memory. Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) note that deployment is particularly difficult for young children due to a high dependence on their parents. Children's ability to express their understandings of events caused problems for families in this study due to confusion over ambiguous language, such as the difference between deployment and work. Further confusion and frustrations were experienced due to children's developing memory and concepts of time. Clear information could be re-enforced in programs and age-appropriate resources, such as the storybooks I wrote for the study. These books employed clear language woven into narratives about military children, stressing the difference between work at the base and experiencing parental absences due to training and deployment. One book, 'Anthony's story: Now that I am big' demonstrates the difficulty the character 'Anthony' had when he confused the work at the base with deployment.

Derewianka and Jones (2012) discuss the way children's narratives generally unfold, starting with orientation, complication and resolution. With regards to orientation, the importance of context, 'such as the setting in time and place' (Derewianka & Jones, 2012, p. 64), is an essential element that young children recognise. The case study participants who employed family narratives all linked their narrative to time and place, scaffolding children's understandings and ability to remember events. A number of educators in this study also utilised and reinforced these memory tags. Modelling parental employment of narrative with their children could be supported through early childhood storybooks. These should be written especially for ADF families and feature these types of memory tags.

9.5. What has been learned from the methodology?

The Mosaic approach is very effective to privilege children's voices that have often been marginalised in military family research. The amount of data produced in this approach lends itself more to small groups of participants, as in this study for the analysis of rich, thick data. Surprisingly, there is a dearth of information on analysis of data for the Mosaic approach despite publications about this methodology. The presentation of the Mosaic approach data here effectively aligned with a narrative methodology and the assembled narratives allowed for presentation of rich, descriptive data in a format that was easy for the reader.

Additionally, the data was easily translatable to forms that would be of interest to a wider audience than traditional academic communities. Each case study child's narrative was examined in comparative analysis, providing ease of analysis when the case studies were analysed in binary form initially. From the binary analysis, themes could then be reported more easily. This method was especially useful when there was such a large amount of data. Additional secondary data was collected and analysed using a narrative approach, with three families compared and analysed, and the combination of these approaches was effective although tensions did exist. Thematic analysis was also effective for both methodologies employed, and verification of themes occurred with educators, parents and children. Overall, I believe that when analysing the data in these approaches, acculturation and narrative within children's lives needs to be explored to fully understand the effects of culture. I have also identified that applying a socio-ecological approach as a framework for this analysis was extremely valuable when working with families within a specific community.

9.5.1. Revised framework for listening to children's voices

The new revised framework in Figure 9.3 may be functional for researchers wanting to privilege children's voices and for those who work with children to employ when gathering children's opinions and experiences. Careful listening will assist with their observations, planning, resourcing and implementation of activities that address children's needs in various contexts. Listening to young children is time consuming and sometimes challenging because it requires a special kind of listening to the many types of outputs and styles of communication children employ (Malaguzzi, 1998). Those listening may include educators, education officers, family workers, social workers, counsellors and others. The framework needs testing and then potentially, further refinement by researchers. The modifications,

however, may assist researchers gather a rich variety of data from various sources in various ways by expanding the original Mosaic framework.

9.6. Revisiting the research question

The research question was: What are young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family?

I believe this question has been partially answered with this group of participants using the Mosaic and narrative research approaches. A picture of the participant children's understandings and experiences has been revealed throughout the results chapters. It is impossible to comprehend the full extent of children's understandings or find out about all of their experiences, but I have been able to gather a range of data, often verified by educators and parents.

9.6.1. What new understandings were created?

This study has revealed the profound effect of narrative and acculturation on young children within an ADF family. Narrative and acculturation influence children's experiences and understandings of deployment and are an intrinsic part of their identity and sense of belonging within an ADF family (Baber, 2016; Baber et al., 2015). The narratives and acculturation permeate the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem, and families gravitate to community organisations and community members who support this narrative. Defence families and early childhood educators have identified a lack of suitable resources and programs for young children that support this type of narrative.

Another narrative about babies' and toddlers' inability to feel the loss of a parent from the family unit seemed to permeate defence families, but may have been a reflection of the wider community. Linke (2007) and Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) dispel such myths with explanations of the way babies and toddlers communicate their grief and loss through often non-verbal responses. Within ADF families, there is a need for more effective education around the effects of deployment for infants and toddlers; hopefully, this will dispel the myth that they are too young to understand and therefore unaffected.

9.6.2. To what extent was the research question answered?

By actively listening to the children's voices through a number of mediums, I was able to interpret certain children's experiences. I was also able to cross-reference these to interviews with parents and educators. With the limitations of the study, I was unable to explore a few of their understandings. At times I had to rely on their initial comments or drawings, or to verify them through secondary sources. However, I was able to explore many examples of the children's understandings and what impacts these have to some degree. More comprehensive exploration and analysis of their understandings was not possible or appropriate given the ages of the children. Additionally, the findings were subject to my interpretations of the themes and data, which may be hampered, like that of other academics, by a limited understanding of the culture within the military (Chandra & London, 2013). While I endeavoured, wherever possible, to verify the themes with the children, educators and parents, there is still a possibility of misinterpretation, or perhaps participants providing data they thought I wanted to hear. Further, filtering of data I did not interpret as being important may have occurred. While there were vast differences in responses and circumstances, there was a surprising similarity in many of the families' experiences and narratives. The study was designed to increase knowledge of young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an ADF family by listening to young children, and I believe this was achieved.

9.6.3. Identified gaps that require further research

Worldwide there is difficulty accessing research data regarding children within military families (Chandra & London, 2013) and even more so regarding young children. Within the Australian context there is no research giving voice to young children themselves or exploring the role of acculturation and narrative with young children and the effect these have on children's understandings of parental deployment. The factors influencing children's experiences and understandings of parental deployment are also worthy of further research.

Internationally, recent research has touched on the role of digital communication technology during deployment, although it is an area that requires further exploration (Masten, 2013).

More research is necessary to explore the impact and usage of digital communication technology on young children's understandings of parental deployment. The way technology is utilised by families as a coping strategy and the effect on children's familiarity with deployed parents during reunions is another area for further exploration. Children's ability to express their experiences, emotions and understandings of parental deployment is also an area that warrants further research. There is also scarce research about the role and importance of early childhood educators in supporting children and families and the importance of peers and sibling relationships within families with young children. Importantly, no research was found working directly with young children to examine their experiences firsthand and to fathom what they understood about deployment.

I was unable to locate any other research conducted directly with young children within ADF families. Secondary data sources about defence children has typically been collected from the parents via surveys in studies by Siebler (2009) and McGuire et al. (2012), although this is still limited and often the research has been funded by the Australian Department of Defence. In the past, research with military families has been influenced by convenience sampling and was often based on researcher relationships with families or proximity to a base (Chandra & London, 2013) as was the case with this study. Access to data about military children is required, but often hampered by restricted access and very strict ethics controls (Chandra & London, 2013). Further exploration of children's understandings and experiences is necessary with a larger cohort. Further, a longitudinal study documenting changes over time in these areas would also expand our limited knowledge base. Each of the themes explored could be a study within itself for deeper understanding, investigating similarities and differences within the three areas of Defence, namely the army, navy and airforce. The role of educators and teachers in supporting these children and their families also necessitates further research. The next chapter discusses recommendations for those who work with defence families and their children.

9.7. Implications

The implications of the findings are discussed in this section, with reference to other literature and identified gaps in the research field.

9.7.1. The results in context

The literature is scarce in the area of very young children in military families (Osofsky & Chartrand, 2013); however, a few studies have identified children's physical, cognitive and emotional responses, and these were similar to the data collected in this study. Findings about ongoing relocations and transitions also reflected previous studies (see Kelley et al., 2003; Siebler, 2009). Other areas that were similar to the literature include role flexibility (Dursun & Sudom, 2015), parental fatigue (Siebler, 2009), family stress (Andres & Coulthard, 2015), protective factors within military (Bowen et al., 2015) and community organisations (Bowen et al., 2003; Bowen et al., 2015) and supportive relationships within the microsystem (Linke, 2007; Pincus et al., 2007). The importance of modelling and the development of coping strategies and resilience has also been examined in previous research and literature with military families (McCormack, S, Hagger, & Joseph, 2011; Palmer, 2008; Saltzman et al., 2011). Indeed, resilience-based approaches are important because they 'convey respect for human capabilities and optimism about the future, while they simultaneously recognise the suffering and devastation that can arise in situations of extreme adversity, including war' (Masten, 2013, p. 200).

Within the context of the literature, this study has made both similar and new findings. Based on these, the subsequent section explores the recommendations that I have made from the findings.

Chapter 10. Recommendations to support young children from ADF families

Recommendations to support young children from ADF families



A report for:

- *ADF policy makers,*
- *ADF family liaison officers (FLOs)*
- *social workers,*
- *regional education liaison officers (REDLOs),*
and
- *educators.*

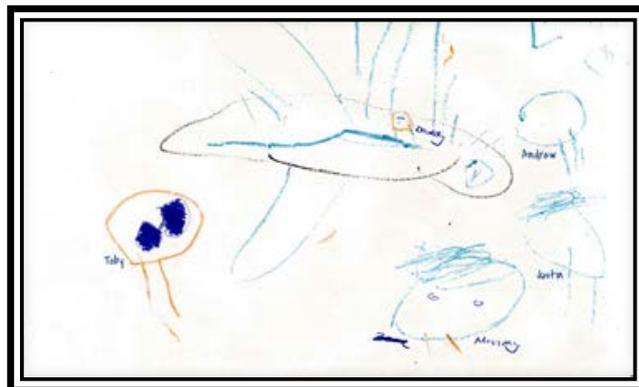


Figure 10-1: Andrew's (4) drawing of his Dad going on deployment with his family waving goodbye

10.1. Preface

The purpose of this chapter is to put forward recommendations to those who make decisions in the Australian Defence Force and those who act in supporting and educating roles for children and parents in defence families. Although this chapter also forms the final chapter of my PhD thesis entitled ‘Young children’s experiences and understanding of deployment within an ADF family’, it is also a standalone chapter, designed to be read by professionals in the above-mentioned roles. For this reason, there are summaries of sections normally found in a thesis literature review, methodology and results chapters to give these particular readers enough background information to justify the findings and subsequent recommendations.



Figure 10-2: Bethany's (4) drawing about what wants to do with her Dad when he returns from deployment

Cover page drawings (clockwise from top):

Blake's (5) drawing 'Dad leaving to go to Ayers Rock for training'

Bethany's (4) clay model of her family with some members holding hands

Bethany's (4) drawing 'Waiting for Daddy at the airport. It's raining at the airport'

In this chapter, recommendations are made for ADF policy makers, social workers, family liaison officers and regional education liaison officers (REDLOs) based on the results of this research study. The study has increased knowledge and understandings about young children's experiences of parental deployment in defence families within Australia.

10.2. Justification for a recommendations chapter

Power in research needs to be acknowledged and utilised for the greater good. It is my duty as a researcher to share the study participants' views, challenges and visions for improvements in the way families experience parental deployment within the ADF. Their participation in the research was in the hope of a better outcome for their own families and for future ADF children and families. It is also my responsibility to privilege the previously marginalised voices of children in this area of research. A summary of the literature review, methodology, ethics, data and my recommendations can be found in this presentation (http://prezi.com/yvyrix34lp30/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy) for those who have not read the previous chapters in this thesis. The presentation is designed for ADF policy makers and social workers, REDLOs, family liaison officers, and early childhood educators to read this chapter alone, thus gaining some understanding of the full study. Additionally, throughout the chapter I have also included examples of raw data to demonstrate the various data collection tools and as a reminder of the voices of children, parents and educators within the study as displayed in the coloured textboxes and Figures 10.1 to 10.4.

Natalie (3): I went on an aeroplane.

Emily (2.5): I went to the airport today. (She had gone two days previously)

Emily: My Dad went on the plane.

The reasons why children's voices have been marginalised include historical and cultural factors. Western culture generally looks to adults to find out about the experiences of young children, rather than seeking to find out directly from the children. Traditional approaches have been to ask parents what is the best practice for their child, without finding out the wishes and understandings of the child involved. It can also be difficult to research with children, especially young children. Traditionally young children have not been considered able to clearly express themselves or to have sufficient knowledge or understandings of their lives to be valid research participants (Clark & Moss, 2011). As revealed in the coloured text boxes and Figures 10.1-10.14 there are many ways children express their experiences,

understandings and emotions around parental deployment and life within a military family at 2.5 to 5 years old. Within this study, young children are considered experts in their own lives, able to competently express themselves in varied ways if we as adults are able to listen with perception and intelligence. It may create feelings of unease amongst some adults to listen to and take account of what children say even about matters that directly affect them. Arundhati Roy (2004) takes a stronger stance by stating, ‘We know of course there's really no such thing as the “voiceless”. There are only the deliberately silenced, or the preferably unheard’ (para. 4). Whatever the reason, the Australian government ratified the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990, meaning children’s opinions must be heard when making decisions that will affect them.

Cassie (3): My Daddy is away.

Blake (5): I like sleeping with my Mummy.

Cassie: Sometimes I sleep in my Mummy’s bed.

Cassie: I talk to my dad on the phone.

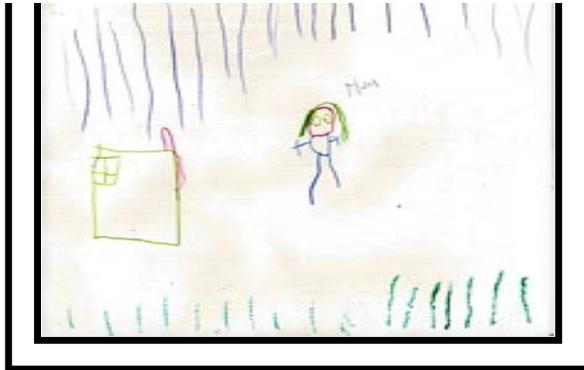
Blake: I talk to my Dad on the phone and on the computer.

Natalie (3.5): I talk on the computer too.

10.3. Identified gap

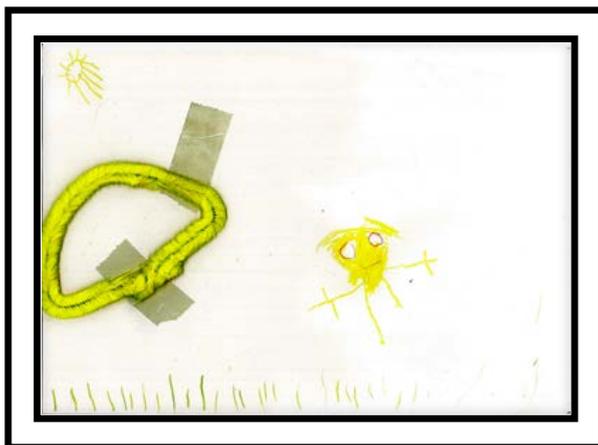
The literature about Australian military families is scarce (McFarlane, 2009; Siebler, 2009). There are examples of funded research, such as McGuire et al. (2012); however, independent studies are almost non-existent. Globally there is a dearth of data collected with young children from military families (Chandra & London, 2013). The literature review revealed that all identified Australian studies utilised only secondary data collected from the parents, rather than through any direct contact with the children or their educators. These included large-scale studies authored by Siebler (2009) and McGuire et al. (2012). Additionally, many interviews with parents were conducted after the deployment, relying on memory. This meant that the experiences that occurred during deployment were more likely to lose intensity when

relayed by the parent upon reflection. Within this study, many families were currently experiencing deployment, lengthy training episodes or very recent parental absences.



'Mum is waiting for Dad to come home. Ule, Nancy, and I are at home. Nancy is looking after us.'

Figure 10-3: Bethany's drawing after reading a storybook about deployment



'Mummy is waiting for Daddy who is on deployment.'

Figure 10-4: Bethany's drawing depicting what happens in her family when her Dad is on deployment

10.4. Methodology

To address this gap in knowledge and understandings of young children within defence families, the Mosaic research approach was utilised. Employing a framework developed by Clark and Moss (2011), this approach assumes children are adept at communication and meaning-making and are knowledgeable about their own lives. The central goal of the Mosaic approach 'is not to make children's knowledge unquestionable, but to raise it to such a level that children's knowledge about their lives is central to adult discussions' (Clark & Moss, 2005, p. 65). This approach invited children to participate as their strengths, interests

and preferences dictated. I gathered various insights into the ways children experienced phenomena from different perspectives, as described by Darbyshire et al. (2005) and displayed in the coloured textboxes and Figures 10.5-10.7. It also offered multiple entry points and exit points for the children, families and educators, depending upon their availability, focus and experiences throughout the study. This afforded cross-validation of themes from various data sources as recommended by Clark and Statham (2005). Narrative approach was also employed for a secondary set of data, discussed in the following section. Drawing on these two approaches, I constructed a shared knowledge of the children's understandings and experiences.



Figure 10-5: Andrew's (4) D is for Deployment picture

Andrew (4): 'I have practised my D's and coloured them in. There are many suns so all the boys can work outside on deployment. The lady is digging on deployment.'

10.4.1. Participants

This study consisted of two sets of data. Firstly, data was collected from eight families who amongst them had fourteen children attending an early childhood centre on a military base. I conducted research with ten of these children over a period of four weeks. Through the parents, I was also able to gather secondary data on the other four children who were siblings of these ten children. Parents and educators of the children were also rich sources of data.

Although all of the data was utilised, six of the children were chosen for case study analysis. Secondly, three additional families with five children from different geographic states and defence bases were also included in the study to promote diversity. While I observed and talked to all of their children from these additional families, the data was secondary, gathered from interviews with the parents rather than the children.



Figure 10-6: Natalie (3) role-playing

The children were acting out the character's interactions from the researcher's storybook 'Anthony's Story'. The story explores the experiences of a child during parental deployment.



Figure 10-7: Andrew (4) engaged in puppet role-play

10.4.2. Research tools

A variety of data collection tools were employed, because a 'hundred ways of listening' are needed by adults if we are to hear the 'hundred languages of children' (Clark & Statham, 2005, p. 54). Mosaic approach employs the tools of observation, interview and participation to create a picture or 'mosaic' of children's experiences and understandings (Clark, 2010). The

Mosaic approach hands a number of the research tools over to the child and supports the demonstration of children's strengths and preferences in expression (Mazzoni & Harcourt, 2013). As a researcher, I kept a detailed journal of my observations, conversations, assumptions, thoughts, wonderings, challenges, surprises and overall journey. With the children, I utilised semi-structured interviews, chats, observations, drawings, craft and other artwork, and photographs taken by the child or the parent (see Figures 10.8 and 10.9). Group work with children involved storybook elicitation, puppet play, role-play, action rhymes, movement, discussions and thematic verification. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews and thematic verification were conducted with parents and educators, as revealed in the coloured textboxes next to the figures below and in Tables 10.1 to 10.3. Some parents also engaged in email communication, phone conversations and in one instance, a home visit.



Figure 10-8: Bella's (2.5) photo of her dog

Fern's (mother of Blake and Bella) explanation: 'The dog is allowed inside when Dad goes away so he can protect us.'

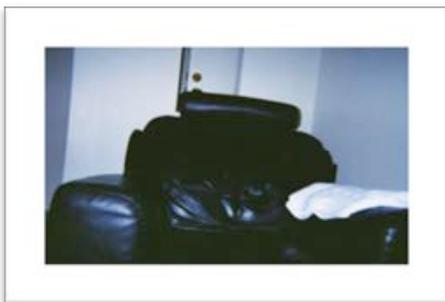


Figure 10-9: Blake's (5) picture of his father's couch.

Fern's explanation: 'The children are only allowed to sit on it when Dad is away, so it takes on special meaning when he is away.'

10.4.3. Analysis and emerging themes

Thematic, case study and narrative analysis were employed to reveal a number of themes within children's experiences and understandings. Themes were verified through cross analysis of data, child and group verification (Harcourt & Mazzoni, 2012) as well as parental

and educator verification. Most themes aligned with previous literature; namely, responses to deployment, managing transitions, risk factors, protective factors, ADF support and communication. Conversely, one major theme – ritual, acculturation and narrative in relation to children – had not previously been discussed.



Figure 10-10: Blake (5): 'Dad is hopping in his car going to Ayers Rock for work.'

10.5. Recommendations

This section explores the recommendations that have been formulated from the research findings, including the voices of children, parents and educators.

10.5.1. Why are recommendations needed?

Findings revealed that despite considerable efforts by the ADF, the structures and supports that were set up for deployment of family members are lagging behind the experiences and reality of contemporary Australian families. Attrition is a major concern for the ADF due to the loss of skilled personnel and the amount of time and expense it takes to replace them (Department of Defence, 2012). Summarising this, Andres, Bowen, et al. (2015a) note that the military has shifted away from the institutional model, where the military's needs had to override all other relationships and commitments, towards an occupational model,

considering the needs of family. While the balance has improved, during deployment, training and relocations, the institutional model still holds (Andres, Bowen, et al., 2015a).



Emily and Bella acting out the 'Daddy' going away by kissing the other pencil family members before he boards the plane at the airport to leave on deployment.

Figure 10-11: Emily (2.5) and Bella (2.5) engaging in pretend play



Figure 10-12: Emily and Bella acting out defence families

10.5.2. Finding a framework for the recommendations

In choosing a framework for the recommendations, I sought one that would invite examination of the organisations of family, the ADF and early childhood education services and how they intersect with defence families. Organisational critical theory promotes discerning exploration of the organisational structure, culture, ideology, communication and management (van Manen, 1990) of these organisations in relation to the impacts on the children's and family's experience of deployment. It is not to say that any of these organisations or cultural groups were inherently poorly organised, however this framework encourages critical thinking and the creation of ideas that may result in better outcomes for the defence families. In 1605, Frances Bacon described critical thinking as 'a desire to seek, patience to doubt, readiness to consider, carefulness to dispose and hatred for any kind of imposture' (Bacon, 1605 in Silver, 2015, p. 1). As Cooksey and McDonald (2011) explain, critical theory necessitates moving on from a neutral, sympathetic position. While there is

much to be said in favour of adopting critical thinking, promoters of critical thinking believe the alternative to thinking critically is in the long term financially expensive and detrimental to the richness of life (Scriven & Paul, 2016). Thus, by using organisational critical theory, I have endeavoured to utilise the findings from this thesis to provide a foundation when discussing potential changes. It is hoped that these organisation changes may be a starting place for discussion and implementation of changes that may impact positively on defence children and their families' lives. In using a theoretical framework for the conclusions I am moving forward from the theoretical framework that informed the data collection and analysis. Therefore I am seeking to not only use the lens I have used throughout the thesis but to add to that lens another dimension as depicted in Figure 10.13.

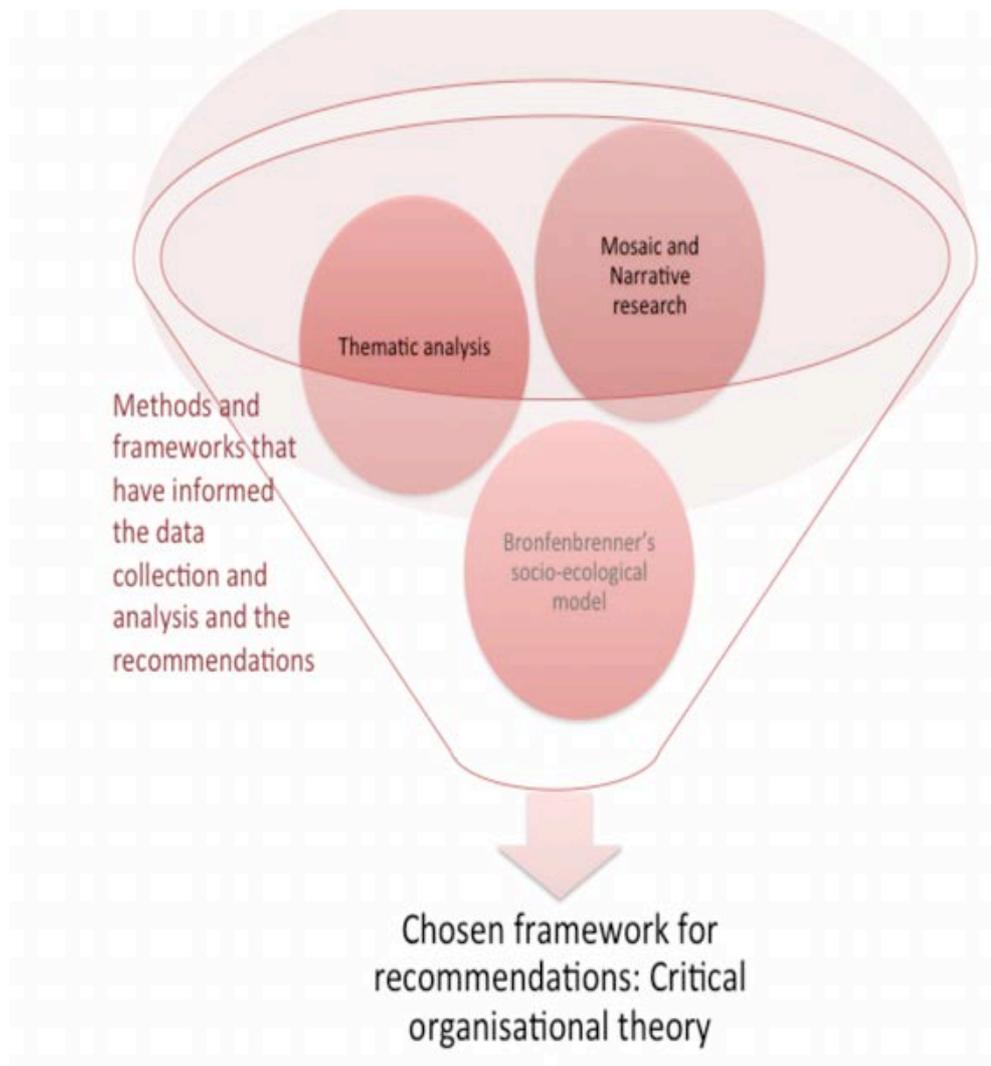


Figure 10-13: Influences on the chosen framework for the recommendations



Figure 10-14: Bethany's (4) clay family picture (two members are holding hands)



Figure 10-15: Ivan's (3) clay model of his family

10.5.3. Scope of the recommendations

It is not within the scope of this study to evaluate the cost-effectiveness, feasibility or affordability of the recommendations. The recommendations could, however, potentially reduce attrition of personnel with young children. Being apart from their families is generally cited as the major contributing factor for attrition amongst personnel (Siebler, 2009; Thomas & Bell, 2007). Additionally, the recommended changes may improve the job and lifestyle satisfaction for personnel and their families. In turn, this may benefit ADF personnel's ability to focus on work with less distraction and less worrying about the wellbeing of their families. Children who are in resilient, thriving defence families are more likely to look favourably on a military career, creating a generational flow-on effect. Three types of recommendations are outlined in the subsequent sections and these are grouped into organisational changes, family and educational support.

10.5.4. Proposed organisational changes

Due to the serious challenges raised in the study, I propose a trial of a new model of deployment and relocation for personnel with children and potentially other ADF members. Table 10.1 outlines the six proposed changes and the rationale behind the recommendations, including examples of data in coloured textboxes and Figures 10.16 to 10.18, findings and literature. Building on the work of Pincombe and Pincombe (2010), Figure 10.19 models the proposed changes to the deployment cycle.

Table 10-1: Proposed organisational changes and justifications

Change	Details and rationale
<p>1) Pre-deployment: adequate notice for family members of one month, barring emergency situations.</p>	<p>A month’s notice grants time for household and family arrangements and for parents to prepare a narrative for the children to understand the changes the family will undergo. Families need transparency around deployment dates to reduce uncertainty (Siebler, 2009).</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid orange; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p>Parent: We didn’t have time to prepare anything to help the kids before he left. He (spouse) was only given ten days’ notice to go to a six-month peacekeeping deployment.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid gray; padding: 10px; margin-bottom: 10px;">  </div> <p>Figure 10-16: Emily's father preparing the family narrative using a globe and marker pen</p>	

2) Deployment: a reduction in deployment lengths to a maximum of six months. Due to the reduced time, leave during deployment will not be given, unless it is for emergency family or personal situations.

The six-month deployment could include a rotation of units to increase force effectiveness and minimise accumulated stress as explained by Pincombe and Pincombe (2010). It would also help to reduce family fatigue and stress, and minimise time away from young children who change and grow quickly. Leave during deployment can be very difficult time for families to navigate. Additional reunions and departures are stressful for all concerned, adding to the disruptive nature of deployment that brings difficulty to families (Medway et al., 1995). A transparent end date for deployment is needed for families (Siebler, 2009)



Figure 10-17: Blake's clay model 'My face when my Dad goes away. The tears are blue'

Parent: I made him (spouse) come away on a family holiday soon after he came back. He didn't want to, but it made a big difference to reconnect. It is hard as the kids were up to different stages so he was often babying them and they didn't want to be babied. Nine months is a long time in a young child's life and they changed a lot. He was also really upset by some of the parenting decisions I had made in his absence. It was hard having those very honest conversations where he was saying he thought those decisions were wrong. I made them to cope during that tough time. Issues like the kids coming and sleeping in our bed. We were all having trouble sleeping and Brianna was having nightmares. It just saved the fights at the time and was much easier on everyone. I think I just had to get through it at the time by doing things my way.

<p>3) Deployment: training for deployment needs to be conducted on the way to deployment, without returning home. Further training may be conducted during deployment through the rotation of units.</p>	<p>Training could occur during deployment via a rotation of units to ensure personnel have a break from stressful combat and environmental experiences (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010). This reduces the likelihood of rapid re-entry problems upon return to civilian life (Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994), maximising the capacity of the personnel to return to work, family and community life effectively. This training mode should also minimise chances of secondary transference of depression and PTSD to spouses and children by reducing time in combat zones. These factors are a drain on the family, the ADF and the wider community with the additional finance and support needed. These changes also minimise the pre-deployment training that requires the personnel to leave the family home frequently for short periods of time, increasing stress for the whole family. Epigenetics also reveal that stressful events in childhood can also have generational effects (Grace et al., 2016; Sims, 2014).</p>
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Father: We had never planned as a family that I would be there (with the ADF) forever. In the end it came down to more time away for promotion and I was away all of 2012, came home in February for six weeks, then home for two weeks then away for three to four months again.... The main reason I left was just lifestyle.... It was the right decision for our family to leave.

Mother: All the time away was the big issue for us. Caleb had missed the first soccer games and other big events in the children's lives. ... We still see another family whose husband was in Afghanistan with Caleb. He has just discharged too for family reasons. Since leaving things are much easier for us all. We can plan events and know we will all be there, including the holidays. The uncertainty is gone. The children are more settled. It's great knowing the time you have will be yours as a family.

4) Deployment: further training could also be conducted on the way home from deployment.

This may alleviate the stress of sudden entry into civilian life (Pincombe and Pincombe, 2010). The levels of stress involved with each particular deployment or situation should be employed to calculate the frequency of the unit rotation.

Parent: He (spouse) was really tired and tried sleeping during the day to catch up. The kids just made really loud noises suddenly and he would be angry at being woken up. I kept saying: 'They are just young kids, Seb'. He said it is hard because when you are on base you are with adults for nine months; adults who are good at following orders. When he came home, he was dealing with a toddler and a pre-schooler. He also said it was really hard to fit back in as a civilian. When he was deployed, people just got out of their way because they were heavily armed and often riding in armoured vehicles. Back here he found it really difficult to be just someone ordinary again. When people cut in front of him in traffic he would be so angry. He needed help with anger management at first.

5) Redeployment: should only occur after one year at home for personnel with young children.

Families need time together to nurture intimate relationships and grow together. Children need time with parents for bonding, building secure attachments and strengthening relationships. Time is needed for families to move out of stressful periods to ensure the health and wellbeing of all members is restored. This timeframe could be shortened in cases of national emergencies. Redeployment brings higher risks for personnel and their families on return from deployment (MacManus et al., 2012) and poorer outcomes for families (Siebler, 2009).

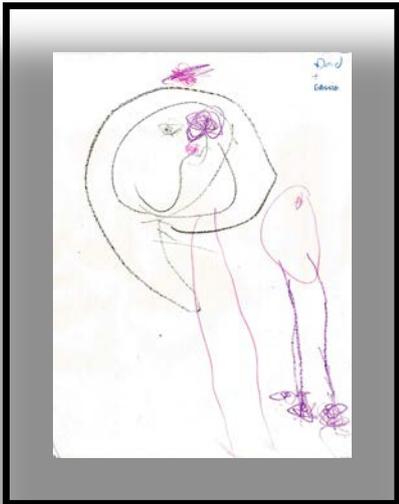


Figure 10-18: Cassie: I like swimming with Daddy when he is home

Parent: (After she was informed another parent's spouse was back from deployment)
So now you two have to catch up with each other on all that has happened.

Other parent: (thoughtfully): Yes... and that's nice, but there are things they just miss. I mean how do you ever really catch up eight months' worth of things that happen, events in Jack's life, the extended family, what is happening with my life, our emotions? And on top of that is all the time away for training. I don't know he keeps things from me and I overhear him talking about something that happened on deployment with his mates over a beer. Things he doesn't share with me, probably 'cause he doesn't want to scare me. There are things you just don't share I suppose.

6) Pre and post deployment: training outside of deployment needs to be limited, streamlined, coordinated and aligned with adequate notice of three weeks given to families.

Training needs to be either conducted at the personnel's base or a limited once-per-year stint of up to eight weeks within Australia (one session away, not several short sessions that require returning to the family home in between). Data revealed families were unable to plan family events and the extra support needed during a parent's absence. This contributed to family stress and a desire to leave the ADF.

Parent: The kids would be all over Caleb at first when he got home from training or deployment. Sam developed this extreme reaction where he would be really angry and awful to Caleb after three to five days and not want anything to do with him. This would last for quite a while. He was not speaking well and I think it was just his way of showing his anger. He was also frightened Dad was going away again. He was always in and out for training. It was particularly hard on Caleb. After Afghanistan Caleb decided to take a step back for the reintegration period. This meant I took care of them and all discipline was handled by me for the first couple of weeks.

6) General: Reduce the relocation of families to once every six years.

Research has demonstrated levels of children’s loneliness, their strength relationships with peers and the psychosocial adjustment of their non-deployed parent were all affected by frequency of family mobility (Kelley et al., 2003). The proposed reduction would ensure children develop stability, a sense of place, a sense of belonging in their care, education and community by reducing relocations to only two to three within their eighteen-year childhood. It is vital for young children to build strong relationships within these areas to foster resilience. The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) (DEEWR, 2009) states ‘In early childhood, and throughout life, relationships are crucial to a sense of belonging. Belonging is central to being and becoming in that it shapes who children are and who they can become’ (p.7). This stability will also assist parents to build the relationships needed for adequate support during training and deployment episodes. It also promotes the career development of the non-ADF spouse.

Parent: So we are from (names another state), but we have been stationed in bases in Sydney, Townsville, Brisbane, Townsville for a second time, Victoria and some other places in between.

Bethany (4) pointed on the map puzzle to the Sydney dot.

Bethany: Ule (brother) and I were born there.

Educator: That's in New South Wales. We live here now (pointing to another capital city). Have you lived here long?

Bethany (looking thoughtful): I miss my old house (in a sad tone). But someone is looking after our old house in Sydney when we are not living there. It's another army man. A friend of Dad's.

Educator: Oh, that is good. How long until your Dad comes home?'

Bethany (looking down and guarded): I don't know. (pauses) A long time.

Andrew (4) (who has been listening in on the conversation): I live here (pointing to a capital city dot).

Educator: That's right, Andrew.

Bethany: We live in a different house now, we moved.

Andrew: We are going to move house soon.

Educator: Here, or in another city?

Andrew: Oh, no. It is near our house. I have been there, and seen it.

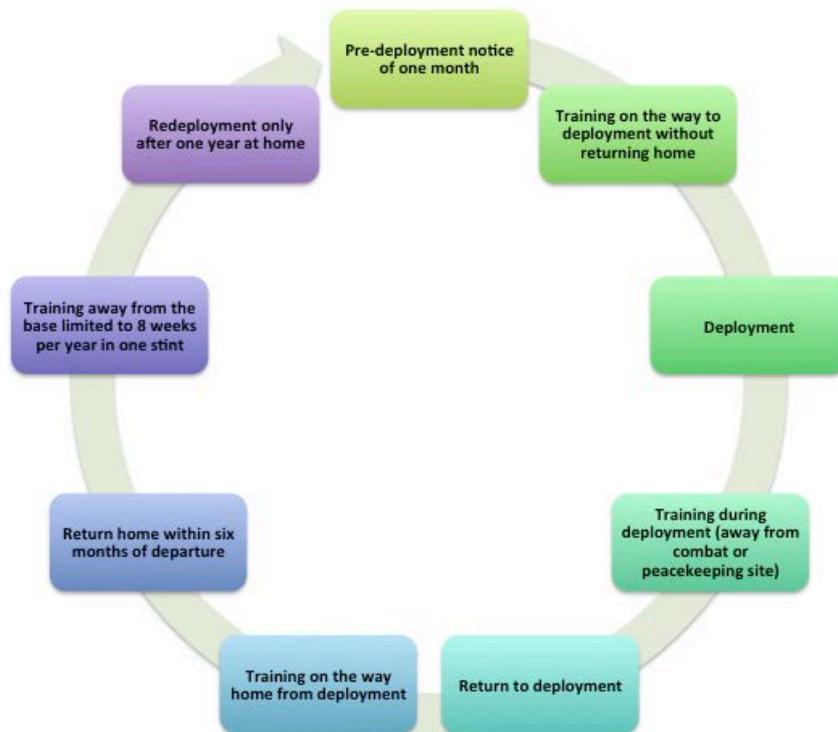


Figure 10-19: Proposed new model of deployment for personnel with dependent children
 Adapted from (Picombe & Pincombe, 2010)

While these changes may seem quite radical, the alternative is children who struggle to form quality relationships with their absent parents and parents who are in a continual state of stress. Prolonged stress creates long-term developmental and epigenetic intergenerational problems in children (Grace et al., 2016) and increased health risks for all family members (Rose et al., 2016). The importance of providing a stable foundation for health and wellbeing outcomes in the early years and throughout their life is explained by Sims (2014). The future of military children’s wellbeing is vital and needs to be addressed by those that have the capacity to do so. I. Lowe (1998) states that the future is not a vague destination, but rather something we create through our daily decisions, directions and actions. Therefore, it is vital we engage in critical thinking to address the underlying causes of our problems and create effective solutions because the outcome of what we do reflects the standard of our thinking (Scriven & Paul, 2016).

10.5.5. Support for families

Siebler (2009) identified the need for a total review of the policies and practices in supporting defence families. Since then, some progress has been made (Siebler & Goddard, 2014), and it is evident the ADF is engaging in a number of initiatives that effectively support many families. This study revealed a need for more support in certain areas and a need to address problems of knowledge and access for other services. These recommendations also came from parental suggestions. They are outlined in Table 10.2 below with a rationale for the recommendations in a similar style to Table 10.1, including data displayed in Figure 10.20.

Table 10-2: Recommendations to support families

Change	Details and rationale
1) Increase support and education for personnel in relationship, parenting and co-parenting education programs specifically dealing with the effects of the deployment and training cycle. This needs to include strategies to build coping strategies for children and families.	These programs could be delivered through a variety of methods and should occur for all personnel with spouses or families, regardless of whether they are about to deploy or go away for training, so they are ready when this occurs. Siebler (2009) found that the effects of deployment on children, adolescents and a number of non-deployed spouses was alarming.

Parent: He thinks he is helping me when he tries to parent over Skype™. How do you effectively parent from another continent?

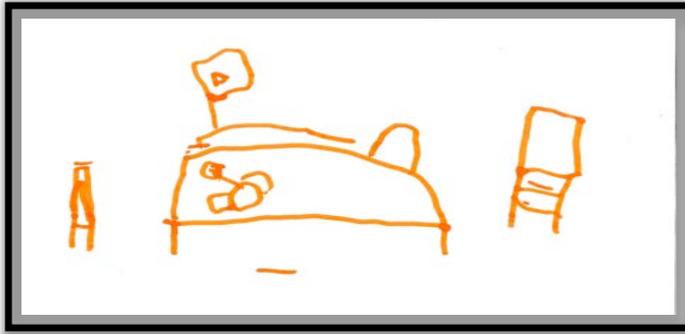


Figure 10-20: Blake's (5) drawing of what he does when he is missing his Dad

Blake: 'My book is on the ground. My recordable picture book is on my desk. I like listening to my Dad's voice when he is away. Sometimes when I am missing him I wake up and look at my album. The lump on the end of the bed is my pet dog Kuta. I like to cuddle him in bed when Dad is away.'

Parent: He (spouse) was able to use Skype™ most days. He said he found that really helpful being able to see us every day and know we were OK. I found it very draining. Phone calls are better as Caleb can be on speaker-phone and I can keep attending to the children and do housework while we chat. Skype™ sessions every night meant you had to be totally available for an hour at a really bad time of night. The kids and I were both tired, the kids were whingy and sometimes it was the last thing you felt like doing. I did it anyway and of course would never tell him how much I hated it.

<p>2) Provide online and face-to-face access to free parental counselling and support groups with childminding utilising effective practitioners. Ensure families know about the counselling.</p>	<p>Social workers and family liaison officers could provide this if they are adequately skilled in understanding the particular challenges and needs of military families. Siebler (2009) called for an increase in mental health, family and relationship team of counsellors provided by Regional Mental Health Teams. Reintegration is the most difficult stage within the deployment cycle (Bowling & Sherman, 2008).</p>
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Director: Does he (Jack, aged 4) normally sleep with you?

Parent (yawning): Yep, since the day he overheard my husband say he was going to deploy.

Director: Oh! When was that?

Parent: Four weeks before he left.

Director: How are you when Paul goes?

Parent (looking teary): A real mess emotionally a month before he goes and the first month he has gone. I work hard not to be resentful and bitter, but this is his fourth deployment in four years, so he has been away about half of Jack's life. I don't cope at all. Jack and I just muddle through. I can't seem to cope with all the extra jobs, and we have no routine at all. We just eat when we want, sleep when we want. If Jack wants to eat on the floor in front of the TV, that's fine. The TV is on nearly all the time, and Jack can choose what we watch. It's the same for the last month before he gets home.

<p>3) Educate both parents to understand the profound effects of a family narrative on young children and the way narratives can support children to make meaning of family life and develop a sense of self as they mature (Bohanek, Marin, Fivush, & Duke, 2006).</p>	<p>Parents can be educated on how to utilise their family strengths through preparing and employing these narratives with their child during pre-deployment, deployment, reunion and reintegration stages of the cycle. Creating, editing and improving family stories that discuss positive experiences as well as resilience during difficult times improves family cohesion and happiness (Feiler, 2013). This training could be made available through a variety of forms, including sessions at Unit Days and printed materials that can be distributed by the unit and online resources. It should be the unit's responsibility to make each family aware of the resources, because the data and literature revealed an overall lack of knowledge about what was available to families.</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="border: 1px solid blue; padding: 10px; width: 45%;"> <p>Jack (4): I went to the airport.</p> <p>Emily (2.5): I went to the airport.</p> <p>Andrew (4): When daddy went to Afghan...</p> <p>Natalie (3): I went on an aeroplane.</p> <p>Andrew: Went too far.</p> <p>Jack (4): My Daddy went to 'ghanistan.</p> <p>Emily: Only army men can go there. Not me. Not mummy.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid green; padding: 10px; width: 45%;"> <p>Parent: Troy did the same routine with Emily for about three weeks before he left every night at bedtime. He would draw on the globe to show where he was going by plane and told her only Army people could go there, not Mummy, not Emily. He also showed her the Care Bear every night the Army had given him so she knew she could cuddle it when she missed him and he would feel the cuddles through his matching Care Bear in the Middle East.</p> </div> </div>	
<p>4) Increase parental support for the non-deployed parent in various forms so that they understand the many effective strategies to assist</p>	<p>By partnering with the Defence Community Organisation, utilise experienced defence parents who have adult children to offer support and strategies in online forums. This study revealed parents were more comfortable engaging online support. Assist these volunteer parents with training in counselling and family</p>

<p>their children and build resilience.</p>	<p>support. Siebler (2009) identified military families were unlikely to ask for help through traditional counselling channels.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; background-color: #fff9c4;"> <p>Spouse: I am a mess for the last two weeks. I fear something might happen to him. It's when the shit happens, at the end.</p> </div>	
<p>5) Offer similar support for war widows, linking them with overseas war widows for additional support from others in similar circumstances.</p>	<p>War widows need specialist support because their circumstances are unique and rare within Australia. They need more than the current support the ADF, Legacy and the Department of Veteran Affairs supply. Create policies to sensitively deal with these families to demonstrate they still belong to the defence community at time other than Anzac Day and Remembrance Day. Support these specialist support workers with training in counselling, grief and loss, resilience and family strengths based approaches of family support.</p>
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;"> <p>War widows comment: I find it hard to connect with other defence families at Army unit days. It is hard to hear the other wives whining about how tough they have it when their husbands are on night duty. I am close to other war widows in our Facebook group. They have been a great support and know what it is like.</p> </div>	
<p>6) Increase support during the difficult reintegration period, especially with parenting, co-parenting and relationship expectations.</p>	<p>Bowling and Sherman (2008) recommend high levels of support for the whole family during this vulnerable and crucial stage. This support may come in the form of Unit Army Days where FLOs, REDLOs, chaplains and social workers might provide additional support at the events and offer opportunities to make appointments.</p>

Parent: I go to pieces in the last month again. We have to sort of prepare for him coming home. Well, Paul is like a military man. You know, routines. There are mealtimes, he says what we are watching when the TV is on. It's his sport programs we watch. There are bedtimes. So I say to Jack, 'You know what we do now is just our thing. When Daddy gets home we have to do it his way'.

7) Provide culturally and age-appropriate resources for families in the form of storybooks and apps, ensure families know of their existence and ways they can access them.

The data exposed a lack of age and culturally appropriate resources, inadequate knowledge and access to available resources within the study.

Parent: We need Australian early childhood storybooks and apps about deployment to use at home. There are American ones; they are OK, but not really suitable.

<p>8) Provide out-of-hours care or specific funding for out-of-hours care for those who work shift work during their partner's deployment or training episodes.</p>	<p>Non-deployed parents are trying to juggle careers and some employers are placing last minute demands on them. They are often removed from family and friends to supply this level of care.</p>
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Parent: I was told 'You are on your own until the kids go to school. There is no support, no resources. That was depressing, but true.

Educator: The parents do it really tough during deployment and training.

<p>9) To gain further insight into ADF families, encourage further independent research by streamlining ethics application procedures to ensure ADF families are easier to access.</p>	<p>This will create an increased knowledge and understanding of defence families and children and the best ways to target and deliver effective support. We need accurate knowledge to appropriately make decisions about meeting the needs of military children (Masten, 2013).</p>
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Another Australian researcher: Oh, you will be a grandmother before you get Defence Force ethics through. Another researcher I know has changed topics. It's just too hard.

10.5.6. Support for educators

Educators play an important role in young children’s lives due to increased workplace participation by both parents in Australian families. Early childhood settings are often the initial phase in children’s journeys into the wider community and provide important relationships with other adults and peers (Murray & Harrison, 2017). Educators can also provide additional sources of support and information for parents and a link to other services (Wilson, 2016). Table 10.3 provides recommendations to support educators in these complex roles with military families. As with previous tables within this chapter, the rationale includes data in coloured textboxes and Figures 10.21 to 10.22.

Table 10-3: Recommendations for supporting educators

Change	Details and rationale
1) Work with early childhood educators to support the child’s family narrative.	REDLOs need to be trained in this area, then to assist educators to work with families to help reinforce the family narrative by partnering with parents. This can be achieved through information sent to services near bases and online resources.



Figure 10-21: Father and Emily (2.5) with the Care Bear

Educator: Who's got a Dad or Mum overseas on deployment at the moment?

Jack: My Dad's in 'ghanistan.

Andrew: Mine is.

Educator (sighing): No, he went a long time ago, Andrew.

Blake: My dad's going away.

Educator: Your dad's away, isn't he Bethany?

(Bethany (4) puts her head down and doesn't answer).

Educator (looking around): Who else is there?

2) Increase visits to schools by utilising regional education defence liaison officers (REDLOs) or other defence personnel.

This needs to be targeted for schools near bases to create awareness of some of the experiences children from defence families face. Addressing classes and assemblies with age-appropriate messages should help to diminish misinformation and teasing that defence children are subjected to. Talks should not involve large-scale military equipment being brought onto school grounds in respect to other parent's wishes not to have their children exposed to vehicles or weapons of war.

Parent: Defence personnel should go to all the schools in the area near bases and talk to the kids about deployment so they have some understanding about what their peers are going through. This might reduce the teasing that happened to my daughter.

3) Create effective programs that use appropriate narrative and acculturation for early childhood services for defence children.

These could contain activities similar to those within this research project that promote and empower young children to express their experiences and understanding, hence validating their lives. Research into effective programs for early childhood military families such as FOCUS from the USA (Beardslee et al., 2011). Adapting ideas from these could help to create an age and culturally appropriate program that could be available online to early childhood educators, family liaison officers, social workers and REDLOs with the children they are working with.



Figure 10-22: Bethany (4) 'Waiting for Daddy at the airport'

Parent: Programs like this one (research project activities) should be available in every centre near a base so kids can learn to express themselves verbally about what is happening. It has really helped my daughter. She couldn't say what it was that was upsetting her before. Now she can put it into words, it makes all the difference. They should put it in schools, too.

Parent: One of the educators even minded my son in her own time when I had an early morning work duty at the last minute. I couldn't believe work would do that to me. I was in tears when I turned up at the centre because I had no-one. Defence need to supply out-of-hours care.

4) Create similar, age-appropriate, effective programs within primary and high schools.

REDLOs need to ensure educators, personnel, parents and schools know about these programs and evaluate and update these programs regularly. MacDonald (2016b) found that school teachers did not fully comprehend the additional needs of children experiencing parental deployment.

All parents interviewed were asked if they had accessed or used some of the resources available through the DCO (Defence Community Organisation). All responded that they had no idea anything existed or were available.

10.6. Conclusion

It is anticipated that the shared knowledge created through the Mosaic approach has provided a bridge for adults and young children to consider together some of the understandings and experiences of children (Clark & Moss, 2005) living with deployment. Children's voices have been heard and these must be taken into consideration when making decisions about matters that affect them as part of defence families, as mandated by the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is now up to policy-makers, social workers, family liaison officers, REDLOs, educators and others to ensure this occurs.

For the families in this study, the difference between their current situation and how they would like to live seems an insurmountable distance. Therefore, critical thinking is needed by the responsible organisations and professionals to think 'openmindedly within alternative systems of thought, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences' (Scriven & Paul, 2016, p. para. 9). If implemented, these recommendations would involve a high level of change, careful planning and effective implementation over time. The culture within the ADF has been described as averse to risk and change (Australian Defence Force, 2015). Generally, organisational change is difficult and fraught with challenges, potential opposition, setbacks and inevitable hard work. As Martin Luther King (1963) said 'We must come to see that human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability. It comes through ... tireless efforts and persistent work' (para. 21). Siebler (2009) states that the contribution and sacrifice of defence families need to be accredited and recognised in policy. The children, families and service personnel who comprise the ADF community are well worth the effort.

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Introduction to the appendices

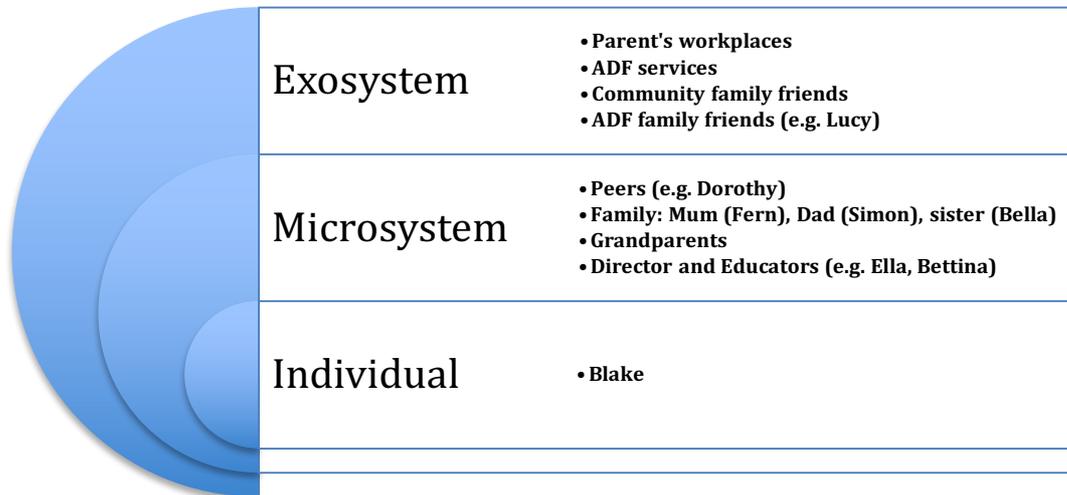
The first seven appendices present the data in narrative form utilising various styles, voices, perspectives and tenses. Narrative research is concerned with individual and social histories through time (Fox, 2006). As a researcher, I was faced with many decisions on how best to craft these narratives from the raw data. Cortazzi and Jin (2006) explains narrative research is concerned with participant's experience and the meaning they give this experience and the building of identity through narrative. Narrative researchers are also concerned with the best way to represent the participant's stories and how to voice them keeping (Cortazzi & Jin, 2006) appropriately, ethically and effectively. The assembled narratives are open to the researcher's interpretation, and therefore open to validity problems, according to Polkinghorne (2007). In this research, decisions were made on what the essence of the story was, what to include and omit, how to represent the story in an interesting way. I also attempted to retain the child's voice and giving a faithful reflection of their identity as well as the identity of their family and educators. Sometimes direct quotes were included, other times, conversations were included from a recount a parent or educator had given of a conversation. I returned many times to the drawings, photos, recordings and my journal to ensure I was able to do this successfully.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, due to the differing ages of the case study children, their families and the type of data they produced through Mosaic approach, the assembled narrative changed for each child. Some narratives are more reflective and storied, while others use a recount style of narrative. In Appendices 1-6, the data for the case study children is revealed, each one starting with an introduction containing a socio-ecological family model and a partially de-identified photograph of the child. While each introduction contains figure annotations, there are not annotations in the body of the narratives to assist with the style of a story. Parts of the ecological model are repeated for some sections of the narratives to familiarise the reader with the people in each child's microsystem and exosystem who are outside of their immediate family. It should be noted that Appendix 2 (Emily's narrative) uses a voice approach, where the italicised heading of each section indicates whose voice is narrating. Emily's narrative also contains three photographs of family medals supplied by an ADF family for this research project and subsequent outputs. The narrative in Appendix 7 employs a magazine style to fit with the nature of family communication and resilience, and the

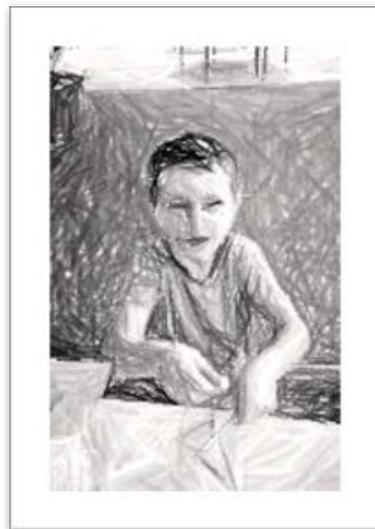
type and style of data. It contains the data from the three additional families and all photographs were supplied by various ADF families as described previously. This narrative does not give an introduction, photographs or socio-ecological models to fit with the magazine style employed. The final two appendices are journal articles that relate to Chapter 7.

Appendix 1

Introduction to Blake



Blake's socio-ecological model

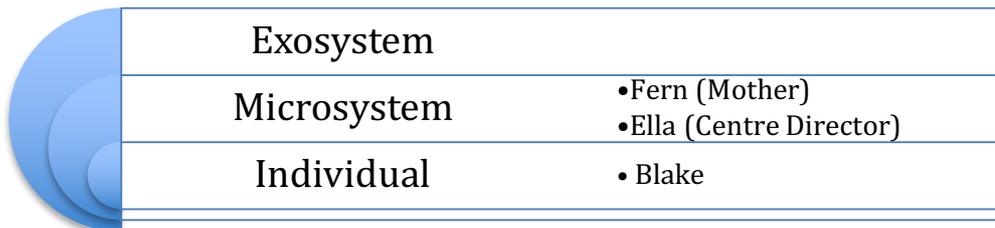


Blake (5 years)

Blake's narrative

11th November 2013, 5:10pm

Meeting between Ella (the centre director) and Fern (Blake's and Bella's mother) in Ella's office



Director (smiling): Hi Fern, come and have a seat. Good to see you.

Mother (puffing): Thanks for meeting up with me. I was rushing to get here.

Director: No need to rush. Sounds like you've been busy.

Mother: Oh, but I really wanted to see you.

Director: How can I help?

Mother (sighs): I just wanted to let you know that my husband, Quentin, is going away for a long training session tonight for six weeks. I just thought it would be good for Blake and Bella's teachers to know.

Director: Yes, that really helps us to support them both. We also want to support you all as a family, too. Has Quentin been away for that long before?

Mother: Yeh, a couple of times. And they have told us he will have more time away next year, up to 190 days long. It's hard on the kids.

Director: Yes! Hard on Mums too.

Mother: Very! (Fern is looking more emotional now, but forces a smile).

Director: Have you got some support?

Mother: Their grandparents are on the other side of the city. They are there if we have an emergency, but not available for day-to-day stuff.

Director: How about friends?

Mother (looking thoughtful): Other defence families and some community families usually help out. We meet up with them sometimes socially, when he's away. The kids seem to gravitate towards the other Dad's at the barbecues when Quentin is away. It is funny really, but sad too.

Director: Do the children support each other?

Mother: Yes, they do more than I would have thought actually. Blake is very protective of Bella. Quentin has told him he has to look after Bella and tell someone if anyone is being mean to her.

Director: We've noticed that. And how do they sleep when he is away?

Mother: Well last time they both had sleep issues. Bella will wake up more often and they both want to sleep with Mum, of course. They both take much longer to get to sleep when Dad's away. I get so tired, working full-time (sighing). Blake will have the occasional bed-wetting episode too, but only when Quentin is away.

Director: That's difficult, but quite common when there are changes at home. You need to take some time out for some rest, Fern.

Mother: Tell me about it! Well, actually, I am going to take a day off this week and just spend the day with the kids. I try to do that at least once when he is away. This time I can't take two days and do it separately. I just started a new job, so I don't have the leave yet. I also take them on special outings.

Director (enthusiastically): That's great, Fern! But you also need some time just to yourself.

Mother (resigned): Well that is a bit harder.

Director (sympathetically): Mmm. So, how do they cope with the goodbyes?

Mother (sounding worried and getting increasingly anxious as she speaks): Oh, well that is the other thing I wanted to see you about. Blake seems to be coping better now he's older, but Bella's not. Last week she has started being mean to her Dad and we were both really upset about it. He said, 'Can I have another cuddle 'cause I am going away?' She said, 'No! I don't like you. You're going away.' and stuff like that. It was just awful. She is very verbal and lets her feelings known, but it's hard to hear, especially for Quentin. He was devastated.

Director: Oh, dear. That is tough. Has she been responding to those books I suggested last time we spoke, the ones exploring emotions for toddlers and pre-schoolers?

Mother (less anxious now): Yeah, they have been really good thanks. We have borrowed 'Sad' and 'Angry' and she seems to relate to them. I will keep using those. I guess it is hard being two and all this is going on. I thought about seeing if that researcher will let Bella be involved with Blake in that study that starts today. I know Bella is not three, but she is really verbal anyway. It might help.

Director (smiling): It might. It's worth a try. I will introduce you to Marg this afternoon. In the meantime, I will let Blake and Bella's educators know.

Mother (smiling): Thanks, Ella.

Director (standing to leave): Have a good day and let us know if there is anything else we can do. Take care of yourself, Fern.

Mum (leaving): OK, will do.

12th November 2013, 4:20pm

Conversation between Ella (the centre director) and Bettina (Blake's educator) in the preschool classroom when the children are outside playing



Exosystem	
Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Ella (Director) and Bettina (educator)•Dorothy (Blake's friend)
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Blake

Director: How's Blake going today?

Educator: Oh, very teary. His friend Dorothy is keeping him busy though.

Director: Yes, they really are a pair.

Educator: Inseparable. It was so funny the other day we found him sitting cross-legged outside the toilets. I asked him if he wanted to go and play with his other friends and he said Dorothy said he needed to wait here until she was finished in the loo. We suggested he go and play with someone else while he waited, but he said he needed to wait for her. We had to try really hard not to laugh at him – he was so serious about it.

Director (laughing): That's precious! Let's hope she will be a big support to him now.

13th November 2013, 2:45pm

Conversation between Blake (5), Cassie (3) and Bella (2.5) during a reading of the book: 'Waiting for Daddy: Rose's Story'. The book is told from the perspective of a toddler whose father goes on deployment. It explores communication with the father when he is away, sleep issues and missing a deployed parent.

Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Cassie, Bella (Peers)
Individual	• Blake

Blake: My baby sister is only two.

Blake: My Dad is away for work.

Bella: My Mummy come back soon.

Blake: I like sleeping with my Mummy.

Blake: A kiss.

Blake: My friend Isabelle's house is what Bella is talking about.

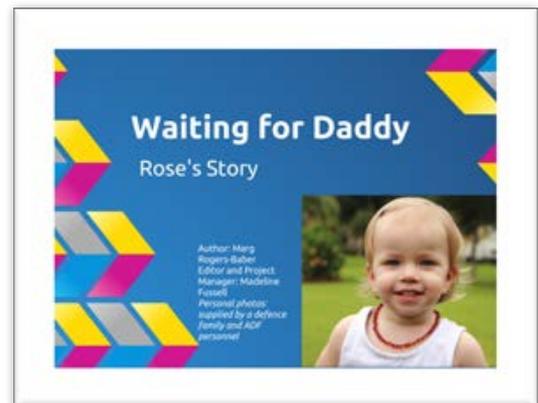
Bella: I talk to my dad (on the phone) too.

Blake: I talk to my Dad on the phone and on the computer.

Bella: My Dad gives me presents.

Blake: When it is my next birthday everyone can bring yummy plates of food.

Bella: My Dad is away.



14th November 2013, 10:45am

Conversation in the preschool room between Blake (5) Bella (2.5) and Emily (2.5) during a reading of ‘Now that I am big: Anthony’s Story.’ The story is told from the perspective of the elder brother of Rose (from ‘When is Daddy coming home: Rose’s Story’). It explores the way Anthony helps out his mother when his Dad is away on deployment.

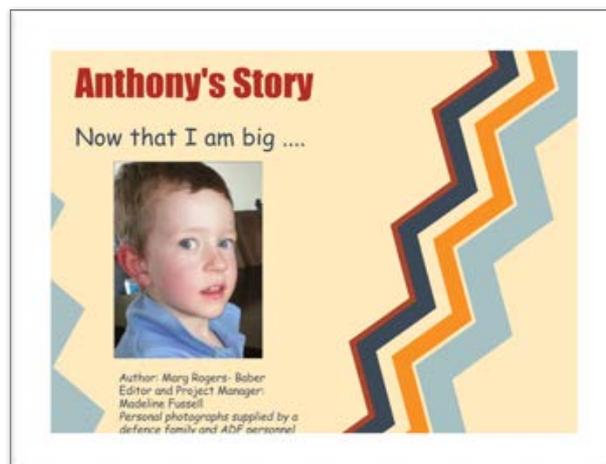
	Exosystem	
	Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Bella (sister)•Emily (peer and Bella's friend)
	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Blake

Emily: My dad went up in an aeroplane.

Bella: My dad went away too.

Blake: Did you know I put out the rubbish bins?

Emily: My dad is at the airport.



15th November 2013, 8:00am

Conversation in the preschool room between Blake (5), Jack (4), Toby (2) and Natalie (3.5) during the reading of a story called 'D is for deployment: Ann raps it up' which explores some of the experiences and emotions of a preschool girl experiencing her father's deployment. It explores events during the deployment cycle, such as; helping Dad pack his bags, her nightmares when he goes, Dad leaving and coming home again and the jobs ADF personnel do on deployment.

Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Jack, Toby, Natalie (peers)
Individual	• Blake

Natalie: I have D on my shirt.

Toby: Helicopter

Blake: Scary dreams are nightmares.

Jack: My Dad's in 'ghanistan.

Blake: I pack my bag.

Blake: I have a toy army bag. And a toy army helmet.

Blake: I've been on a plane.



17th November 2013, 9:15am

Conversation between Blake (5), Jack (4), Bella (2.5 Blake's sister) and Emily (2.5) during the reading of a story called 'Mary's Alphabet Slippery Dip' about deployment. The book reading occurred in the preschool outside play area

Exosystem	
Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jack (peer)• Bella (sister)
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blake

Emily: I've been on a slippery slide.

Bella: I've been on two slippery slide.

Emily: My Daddy's away in an aeroplane.

Bella: My Daddy's in an aeroplane too

Blake (brother): No, no, he's in Ayers Rock.

Bella: My Daddy's in an aeroplane.

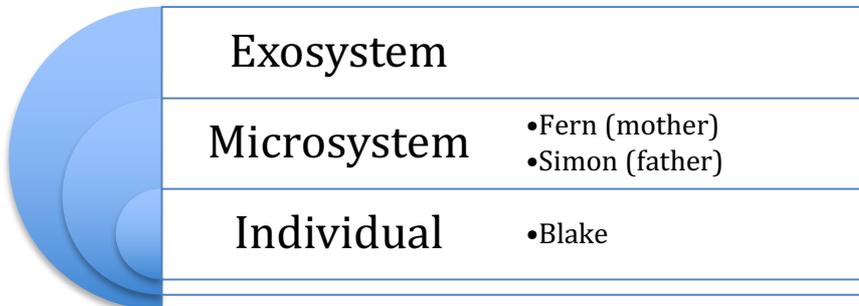
Blake: No, my Dad *droved* to Ayers Rock.

Jack: My Daddy's in 'ghanistan.



19th November 2013, 10:03pm

Fern (Blake's (5), and Bella's (2.5) Mother texts her spouse Quentin who is away on ADF training.



Hi

Fed up! Bella wouldn't settle for a couple of hours. She kept crying for you. Her stupid recordable story-book keeps playing up. So annoying. I thought it would help her to hear your voice when she was put to bed.

Luckily Blake's book worked so he could occupy himself with that while I was consoling Bella.

She likes the album we made of all the photos of you and her together, so we went through that a few times.

How many sleeps to go?

Are we there yet?

Fern

20th November 2013, 1:15pm

Quentin (Blake's (5), and Bella's (2.5) Father) texts his spouse, Fern from the training base, Central Australia

Hello Fern

Sorry – been out of range.

Sounds like you had a

rough night. I'm glad

Blake used

book and Bella

liked the album in the

end. This is hard on

you, I know. You are

doing a great job. Hope

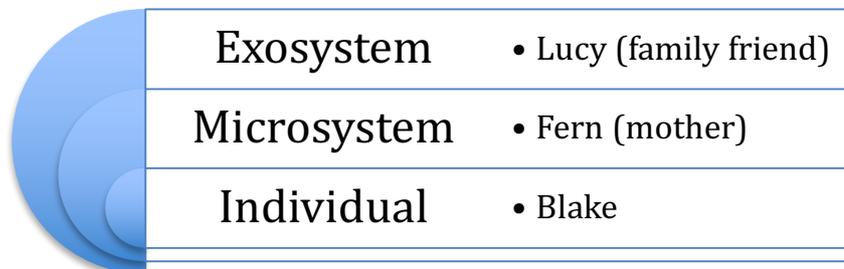
Bella settles easily

tonight. Missing you,

Quentin xxx 😊

3rd December 2013, 10:03pm

Fern (Blake's (5), and Bella's (2.5) Mother) chats to her friend Lucy who has a husband in the ADF at a friend's house during a BBQ with other ADF families



Lucy: How are you coping with Quentin away?

Fern: Oh, well, up and down. The kids are not sleeping well, and so I'm exhausted really.

Lucy: Yeh, it is tiring. Sing out if you want me to mind the kids so you can catch up.

Fern: Thanks, that would be great. The kids are just really struggling with why he is away for so long. I've looked at some of the books at the centre, but they are all for primary kids.

Lucy: Look, you are just on your own when the kids are young. There is nothing out there. Once they go to school, there is a good program they do at school if you send them to the one near the base. You just have to tough it out till then.

Fern: That's hard, though. I want some take-home books for children under five. The ADF should email families some information to help with deployment and training issues they go through.

Lucy: They do send out that pack when they deploy overseas. We didn't get ours till he got back and it was for primary aged kids anyway. One thing that did help though, we kept a basket for each kid on the kitchen bench and they could draw something they wanted to show Dad or do with Dad when he got back. When Matt came back they went through the basket with him. It worked well, so we are doing it again this time.

Fern: Thanks Lucy, that's a great idea. We'll try that too.

7th December 2013, 12:15pm

Fern (Blake's (5), and Bella's (2.5) Mother) MMS texts her husband Quentin who is away on ADF training

Hi Darling

Busy cleaning up this morning.

Kuta's muddy paws don't help.

I hope you like these photos

of what Blake has been doing

in the research activities.

I will send through

Bella's when I get them.

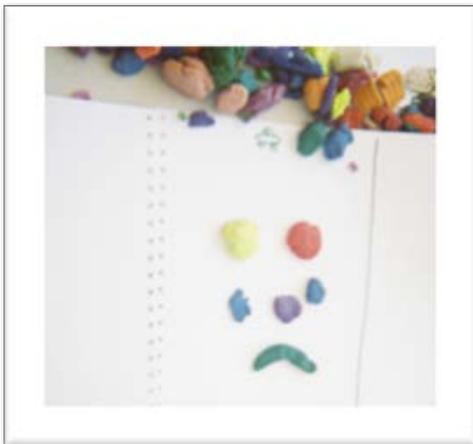
Fern xxx 😊



Blake and Bethany (foreground) using modelling clay



My Family: Bella's
in the garden playing.
Dad's gone away.
I'm inside with Mum.



My face when Dad
goes away: the
tears are blue.

9th December 2013, 8:45am

Blake with his preschool friends interacting with an educator in the playground.

Blake and his friends have been playing in the main playground for over an hour and see an activity being set up in the Pre-school playground. They quickly make their way over to the gate to line up before other children to get a turn.

Educator (suspiciously): Haven't you done that activity with Marg before?

Blake: Oh, Marg needs our help.

Dorothy: Yeh, we help Marg.

12th December 2013, 8:30pm

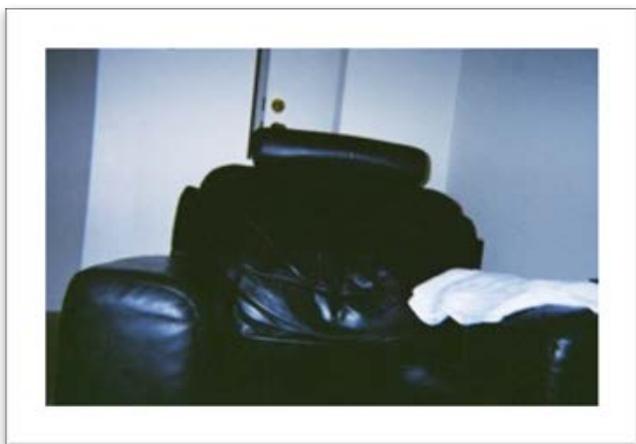
Fern (Blake's (5), and Bella's (2.5) Mother) leaves a note for Marg (researcher) at the centre office when she returns the research disposable camera packs that the children had used.

Hi Marg

Here are Blake and Bella's pictures. There is one of the dog that Blake took. When Dad is away, Kuta, the family dog is allowed to sleep inside to protect the family.



There is also one of Dad's chair which they get very attached to when he is away on training.



Thanks, Fern

13th December 2013, 5:10pm

Marg (researcher) leaves a few photocopied pages for Fern in Blake's pigeon hole outside the preschool room with this cover note attached.

Hi Fern

I just thought I would share these pictures Blake has drawn lately. I have scanned them and popped his descriptions underneath for you.

Cheers Marg



Blake's drawing: 'The car is wet and it is raining on my Mum and Dad. Bella and I are inside. My Dad has no tummy. My Dad is getting in the car to go to Ayers Rock. The teacher wrote Mum and Daddy for me'



Blake's drawing: 'Dad is driving away to Ayers Rock for work.'



Blake's drawing: 'D is for deployment' picture: 'Dad is hopping on his car going to Ayers Rock for work.'



Blake's drawing: What I do when I am missing my Dad

‘My book is on the ground. My recordable storybook is on my desk. I like listening to my Dad’s voice when he is away. Sometimes when I am missing him I wake up and look at my album. My sheet has Batman on it. On top of my bed is the album (flag shape). The TV from the toy-room is in my room, but I turned it off. I was watching a movie so we bought it into my room, but I turned it off. The lump on the end of the bed is my pet dog Kuta. I like to cuddle him in bed when Dad is away.’



Blake's person, house, tree drawing

'I have to draw the house small, cause Dad's car is far away from it. He is driving far away from it. Tree first, then car, then Dad in car. Dark clouds and they're storm clouds. I'm about to draw me out in the rain with my umbrella. That's rain. It's actually night-time at my place. No, it's dark because it's really night-time and it's raining. I'm drawing a baby tree cause that's the daddy tree. See that, it's big blops of rain that's gunna fall on my Dad's car. That's the baby tree under the Daddy tree so it won't get wet. The coloured things are just decorations. I'm inside.'

13th December 2013, 5:15pm

Conversation with Ella (the centre director) and Fern (Blake's (5), and Bella's (2.5) Mother) in the corridor at the centre

Director: Oh, hi Fern!

Mother: Hi!

Director: Quentin must be due home soon.

Mother: Next week. I can't wait.

Director: How have you been?

Mother: OK, lately thanks. I just get really bad in the last week, just really teary and emotional.

Director: Oh, dear.

Fern (a bit teary): I am just so tired by then and I know he's coming home. I'm worried something might happen, 'cause that's when shit happens, at the end.

Director (cuddling her): Oh, you do sound tired, Fern. I think you will pull though. Blake and Bella have settled down. Let us know if you need anything.

Fern (wiping away her tears): Sorry, it's just hard. I'll be fine (sniffing).

Director (patting her on the back): You are brave. I don't know how you all do it.

Fern (smiling weakly and continuing down hall to collect the children): Thanks,

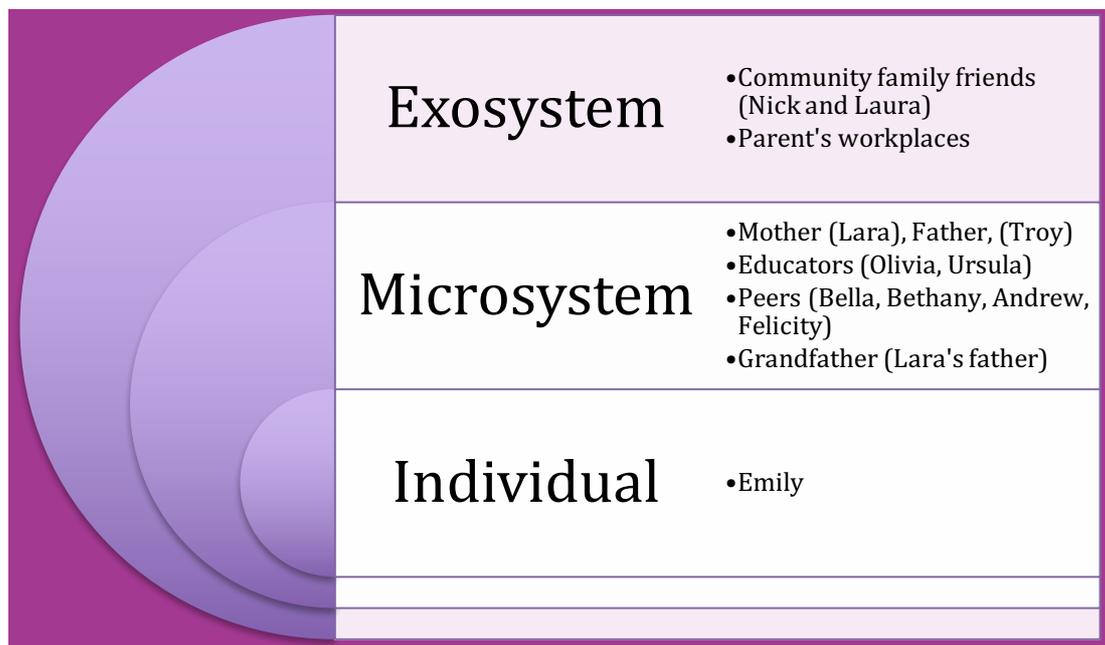
Ella: We just do.

Appendix 2

Introduction to Emily



Emily (2.5 years)

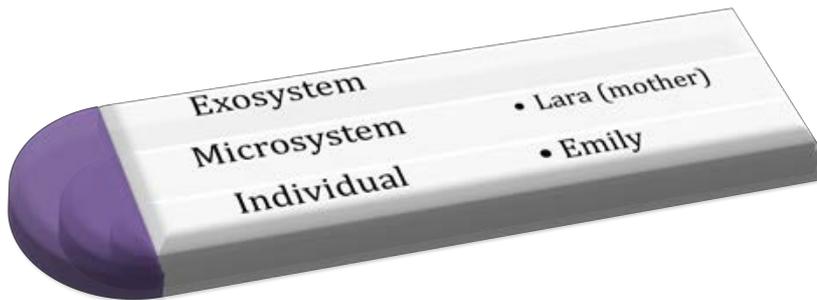


Emily's socio-ecological model

Emily's narrative

The first week of deployment

Lara's Wednesday (Emily's mother)



Lara: I am awake early and it is strange getting used to being alone in the bed again. I am feeling emotional and tired, but being Wednesday, I still have three days left at work before the weekend. It has been a long and difficult night with Emily waking, which is unusual now that she is two and a half. As I lay there, I wonder how she will cope with such a long deployment of four to five months. The last training session Troy went on was six months ago, when she was just two. He was away for six weeks and Emily was stressed, teary and whining a lot of the time.

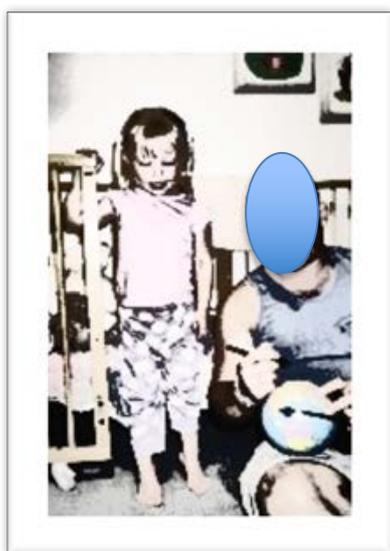
As it starts to get lighter, I smile as I hear Emily toddling up the stairs chatting to me as she enters the room. After a while, Emily pauses. 'But where's Dad?' 'Daddy's gone on the plane, darling. Remember, we took Dad to the airport yesterday.' Immediately, Emily starts crying and throws herself on the ground after she hears the word 'gone'. A little while later after a cuddle, I try again, 'Remember the planes at the airport?'

Emily's Wednesday

Emily: I think about the airport. There were other kids there. Mum and Dad talked to the other Mum's and Dad's. Dad was very cuddly and showed me all the planes out the big windows.



Mum cuddles me now. Look, she has tears in her eyes as well. That makes me cry again.



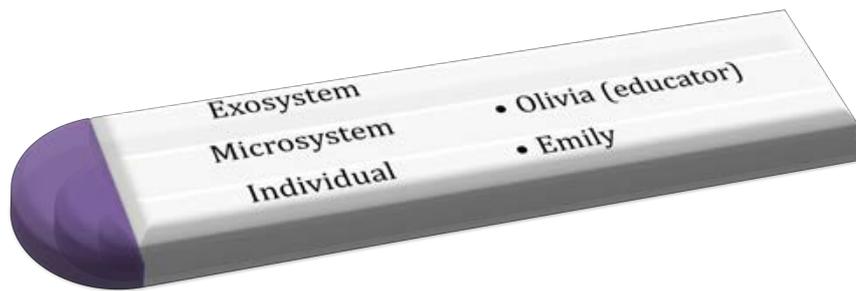
She says, 'Remember Daddy explained where he was going with the globe. He has gone to Afghanistan, and Mummy and you can't go there. Only Army men go there. Daddy will be gone a long time, but he will come back on the plane.' I remember Daddy drawing a line on the globe.

After some more cuddles with Mum, we get ready for pre-kindy. Mum works in the babies' room so I get to see her most days. She waves to me through the little windows as she walks past. Sometimes she comes into our room to work. I tell Mum we need to wear our shiny gold badges today.



Emily: I remember Dad giving me the badge. When he pinned it on me, he said that me and Mum got one because we were very brave letting him go to Afghanistan. He read out the writing on Mummy's, 'Providing strength and support at home'. He said Grandma and Grandpa got one too. Mine says: 'For perseverance on the home front during your parent's deployment'.

Olivia's Wednesday, Thursday and Friday (pre-kindergarten educator)



Olivia: At arrival at pre-Kindergarten, Emily has a cuddle with me and has obviously been crying. Lara also looks tired and emotional and at times has tears in her eyes. Emily takes longer to separate from her mother than normal and then finds Bella, who is the same age and in the same class. They start playing in the cubby house outside and are quickly engrossed in a pretend play episode.



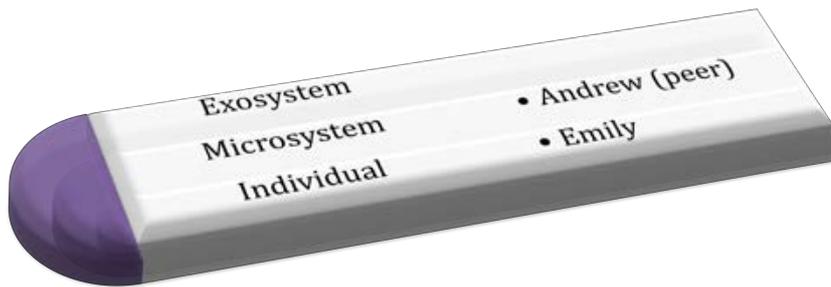
Lara and I discuss Emily's emotional state and Lara asks me to keep an eye on Emily and let the other educators know. She reminds me of how it was last time Troy was away. 'I found it so hard to comfort her when she was so upset. I think she was very aware of my stress, and we fed off each other. In the end I resorted to 'time out' strategies. The behaviour was so tiring and went on and on. It was really hard to deal with' Lara said.

'What does time out involve?' I asked.

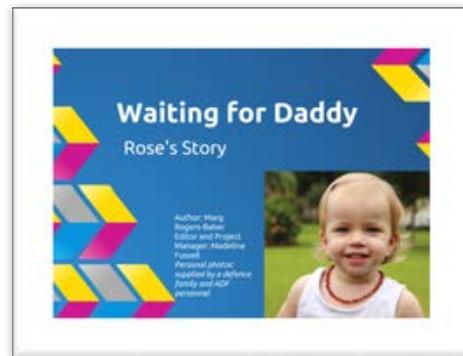
'Emily was sent to another area to calm down. She could come and talk to me and be cuddled when she was calmer' she explained.

Olivia: The day starts well, but Emily appears to have little tolerance for small frustrations or slight disagreements with other children. Over the next three days, tears are common, generally accompanied by throwing herself on the ground. Other educators have reported toileting accidents and that is very unusual for Emily. She has been looking for lots of cuddles from educators, too.

Andrew's Wednesday (4-year-old peer from Preschool room next door)



Andrew: This morning, me, Emily, Jack, Natalie, my brother Toby and some other preschoolers were allowed to go with Marg to hear a story. It was about a girl called 'Rose' whose dad goes away on deployment. Her dad went away on a plane like mine did. Rose missed her Dad, but at the end of the story he came back on the plane like my Dad did.



During the story the children said:

Jack: I went to the airport.

Emily: I went to the airport.

Me (Andrew): When Daddy went to Afghan...

Natalie: I went on an aeroplane.

Jack: My Daddy went to 'ghanistan.

Emily: I went to the airport today.

Emily: My Dad went on the plane.

Emily: My Dad is home now.

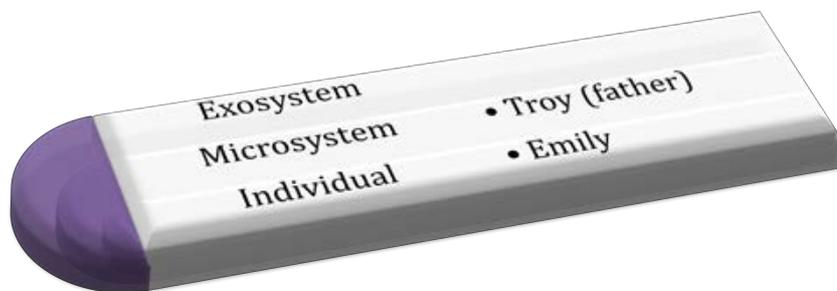
Emily: My Dad is waiting for me.



Andrew: After the story, Marg asked us to draw a picture of our parents going away to work. 'Cause I'm 4, I drew Dad leaving on a plane. We are all waving goodbye in my picture.

Emily chose her favourite colour, pink, to draw this picture (shown above). She is only two and scribbles, but she tried hard. My brother Toby scribbled too, and he cut his picture up into little pieces. He's two, like Emily. They're in pre-kindy.

Troy's Thursday (Emily's Dad)



Troy: It was tougher saying goodbye this time. You would think it would get easier. After 27 years in the ADF, I have been to Iraq twice, the Solomon Islands and Timor. We arrived at the base today, in another country, then will go in-country to Afghanistan off and on for 4-5 months. That's the worst amount of time for deployment because you don't get the bonus for 6 months or more away. Anyway, having to leave Lara last time was hard enough. Having to leave Emily and Lara is even worse. I gave Emily an ADF care bear before I left and she gave me one too. I explained to her how they work. So I said she can cuddle it when she is feeling sad, then my bear will know and I can send my cuddle back through my bear. Yeah, big concepts for a 2-year-old, I know.



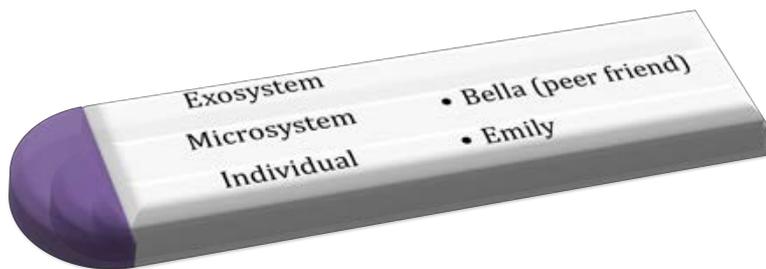
We bought her a new pup before I left to help her have something else to cuddle. Taffy is a big hit with Emily. My mate said, 'That's the ugliest mut I have ever seen. What on earth were you thinking?' Luckily he didn't ask about the price. I couldn't believe how much Lara paid for an oversized rat.



Troy: I have done up a Welfare Plan for Lara which the Army gets us to do, but still feel like I can't do enough to help. I will make sure the ADF Welfare Officer rings her. Sometimes they need reminding. A few army mates will check up on her and their wives will look after her until I get back. We have some good community friends now as well. She has done it all before, so she should cope. It's just different with a kid, that's all. I told Lara to make sure she

gets Emily into that study at the centre to help her understand about deployment. Anything might help.

Bella's Thursday (2.5-year-old friend at pre-kindy)



Bella: Today Marg read us a story called 'Anthony's Story: Now that I am big'. Anthony's Dad goes away on deployment and Anthony gets grumpy with him after he comes back home. During the story, me and Emily talked:

Emily: My dad went up in an aeroplane.

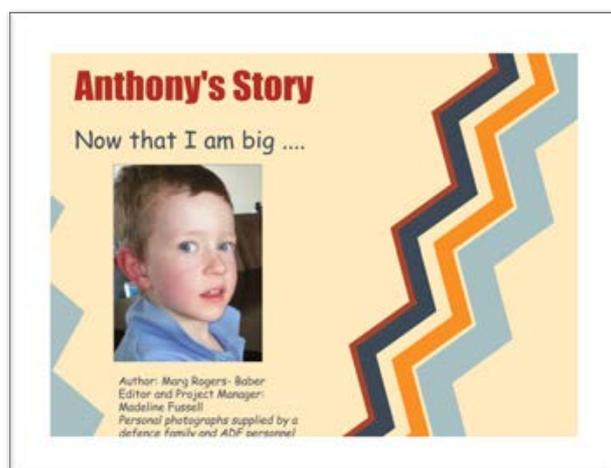
Me (Bella): My dad went away too.

Me: And my Dad w.. go away.

Emily: Aeroplane.

Emily: My Dad is at the airport.

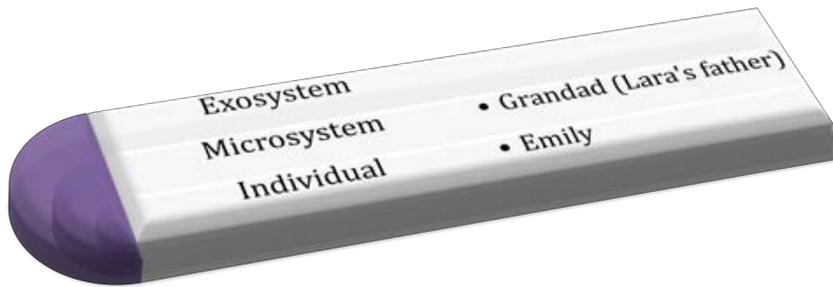
Me: My Dad's going in a car.





Bella: After the story, Andrew, Emily and I got a turn to use the puppets to act out Anthony being grumpy with his Dad. Marg said the words for us and we did the actions. Emily and I love the puppets.

Grandad's Sunday (Lara's father)



Grandad: Lara and Emily visited me today. Lara looks so tired. I asked her how she is coping. She was teary when she said it was a really hard week. I found it hard to be strong when she looked so sad. She quickly put on a brave face and asked how I was going.

‘Not much to report.’ I said.

Life in hospital with cancer as my companion is hardly eventful. I try to keep up with the news so I can at least have something else to talk about when people

visit. But, not with Lara and Emily. I feel useless being in hospital when I want to be helping Lara out. Instead, I turned my attention to Emily. She had brought her Care Bear with her to show me.

Lara said ‘Emily’s been cuddling it a lot at home. Dad can feel all your cuddles through his bear in Afghanistan, can’t he darling?.’ I chuckled to myself thinking of Troy cuddling his bear and getting ribbed about it by his mates. It was good of them to come. It takes Lara over an hour and a half to drive each way, so I am really grateful. Seeing Emily most weeks gives me something to look forward to.

The second week of deployment

Bella's Monday morning: (Emily's pre-kindergarten friend)

Bella: Me, Emily and Toby got to go to the preschool verandah. Some other preschool kids were there, even my big brother Blake. Marg read us a book called 'Mary's Alphabet Slippery Dip'.

The girl in the book was on a slippery dip.
Her name is Mary and she has a big sister.

Emily said: I've been on a slippery slide.

I (Bella) said: I've been on two slippery slide.

Emily said: My Daddy's away in an aeroplane.

I said: My Daddy's in an aeroplane too.

Then we got three cards with letters on. I can draw letters, you know. Then we held each letter up when it was our turn when Marg read the book again.



We got to play with the animals and act out what Annabel felt when she missed her Dad when he was away. I got the zebra and Emily got the seal. Zebras have stripes, but seals don't. Toby was rough with his panda. He was hurting my zebra. My brother told Marg. Then Toby stopped.

Troy's postcards (Emily's Dad)

Dear Emily

I arrived at the camp and unpacked my bag last night. It is really hot here. I thought you would like the donkey on this card, Emily. They use donkey's like cars here. I am missing you and Mum. I am cuddling my care bear, so I hope you are cuddling yours too.

Love and kisses to you and Mum.

Dear Lara

I am really missing you, Babe. Tonight some of the boys were watching our favourite show and it made me think of home. I should be able to start Skyping soon at lunch times (so 6:30pm at home). At least we can see each other. I'm really glad the teachers are helping Emily cope. We are lucky to have her in that centre because they understand how to help defence kids.



Lara's Monday evening (Emily's Mum)

Lara: Emily was very excited to get the two postcards today from Troy. She spent time with them while I cooked dinner after I read them out to her.

The Skype session with Troy was a nightmare tonight. First of all Emily was so whiny. I was trying to comfort her with a cuddle. Because she was tired I just wanted to finish the session early, but I know Troy really needs that contact so kept the conversation going. Then Troy was trying to discipline her over Skype with time out. It's just so unhelpful, but well meaning. I know he thinks it is supporting me. You can't discipline kids from another continent. It just doesn't work. It's not all bad, though. Skype is used every day at the moment, but later we won't be able to use it as much. The Skype sessions seem to help Emily sometimes and other times she will not speak at all. Timing is an issue, 'cause it's bath and tea-time for Emily and she is so tired from day-care. Sometimes she will tell her Dad about something she has done. She gives him a kiss on the screen every night to say goodbye. That's nice.

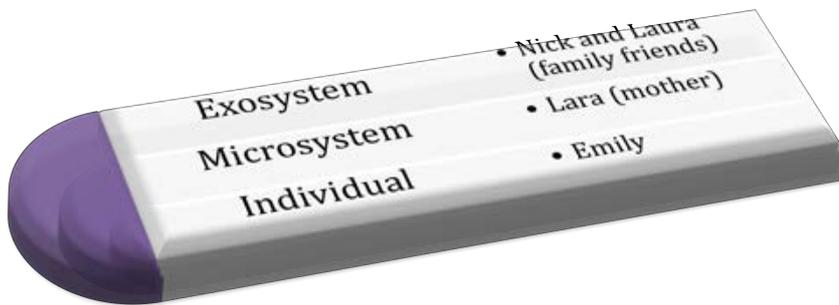
I worry about Troy being away, but I'm lucky really. Troy is very grounded and knows how to recognise any issues and get support if he needs it.

Olivia's Thursday (Emily's pre-kindergarten educator)

Olivia: I spoke with Lara this morning about the recent improvement in Emily's behaviour that we have noticed over the last few days. She said since starting the research activities, Emily has started being able to express her feelings about what is upsetting her, especially in the last 2 days. She has started saying she is sad because she misses her Dad. Before that, emotional outbursts were common and she could not say what was wrong. She has started attributing her emotions in other situations at home as well. The mother said she cried when some friends all left to go back home. Emily then said she was sad because they had gone. Lara thinks the research activities are really helping Emily. She has been reading the books to Emily a lot at home since Marg gave them to her on a memory stick. She said all military-based centres should have a program in place to help children like Emily who are dealing with deployment. If they still live locally by the time Emily goes to school, Lara is keen to enrol Emily in the local primary school with a high defence family enrolment because of their programs to support defence children.

The third week of deployment

Nick and Laura's weekend (family friends from the general community)



Laura: Lara let everyone know she was having a tough time today through Facebook. We have sent her messages of support and delivered her a meal of nachos and a nice card. We wrote: 'Thanks for being brave enough to let Troy go to serve his country – you are amazing'. She looked very surprised by this and there were lots of hugs and tears. We know it must be really rough for them right now.

The fourth week of deployment

Emily's Monday

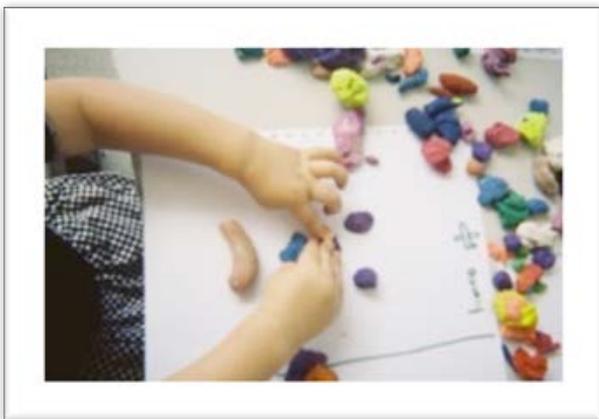
Emily: Today we got to play with modelling clay. I like the colours. It's very hard. Playdough is soft. Marg asked us to make a picture of our family. This is what I made:



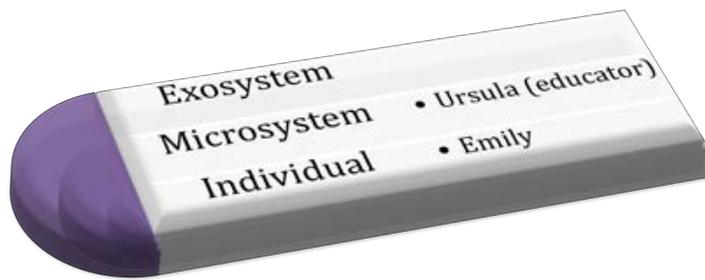


Emily's Tuesday

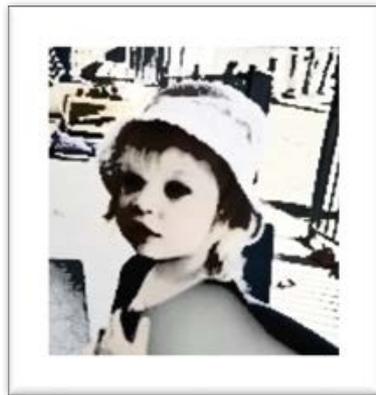
Emily: Today we made faces with the modelling clay. Marg asked us to make a face to show how we felt when Daddy goes away on deployment. The clay is hard so Marg helped me make the mouth, but I put it on all by myself and made it look sad.



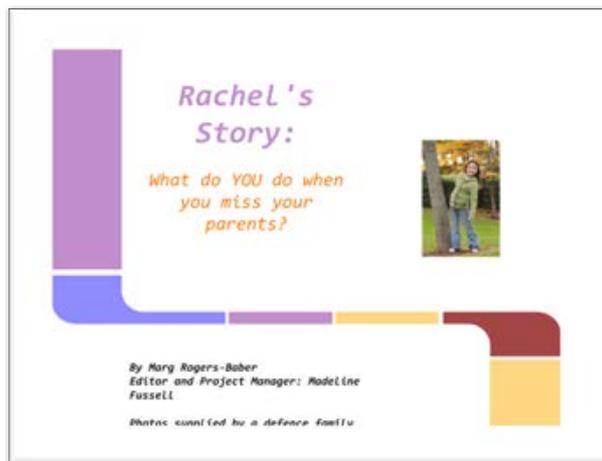
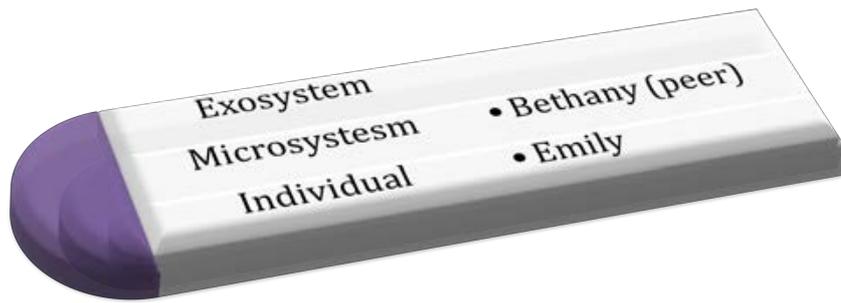
Ursula's Wednesday (educator from another room within the centre)



Ursula: Emily seems very clingy this morning and was cuddling me when she arrived, then sat on my knee for a long time. She is also rather lost today without Bella, but will hopefully be better when she returns tomorrow. Emily did not want to do the activity with Marg today, but just wanted to stay with me. I encouraged her to go, but Marg said she could do it another day.



Bethany's Thursday (4-year-old peer from the preschool room next door)



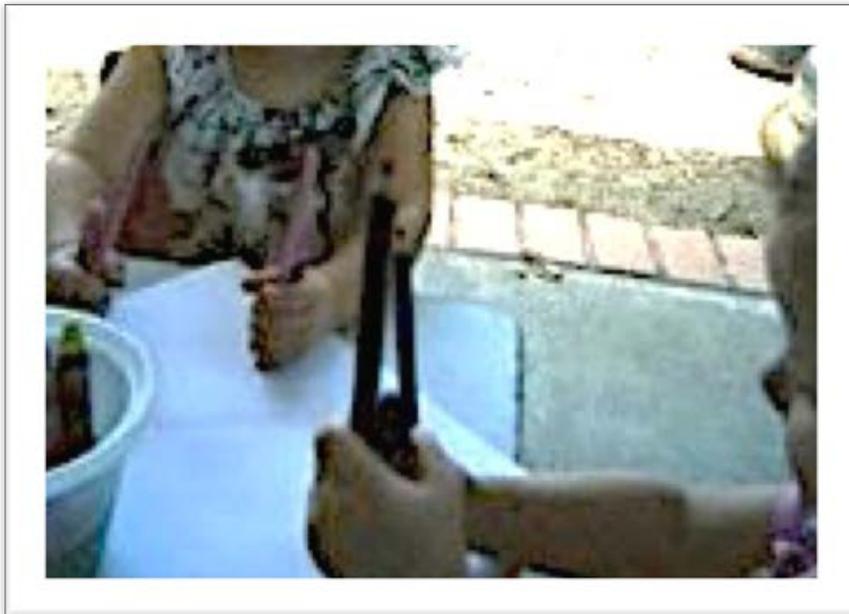
Bethany: Me and Bella and Emily got to go for a story and do a drawing with Marg. She read us 'Rachel's Story: What do you do when you miss your parents?' There are lots of different kids in the story who have a Mum or Dad who works away.

The book showed a boy who talked on the computer to his Dad who was away. I do that when Dad Skypes, but sometimes we can only hear his voice because it's not working properly. Emily and Bella talked about Skyping too.

Emily: 'Mum talks to Dad on the 'puter.'

Bella: 'I talk to my dad on the 'puter too.'

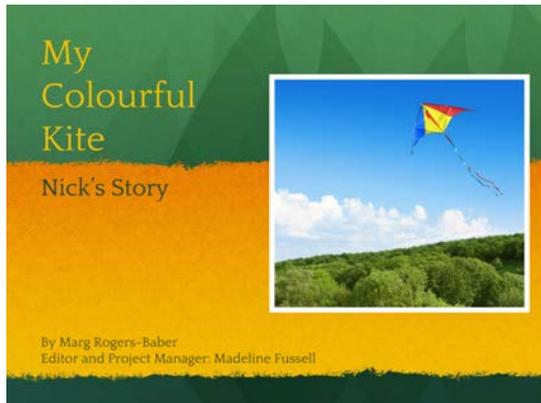
Bethany: Marg asked us to draw something they like to do when they are missing their families. Bella and Emily only drew for a little while. Then they picked up bunches of pencils in each hand and started playing. They were playing 'Families' and Emily is acting out the 'Daddy' going away, showing kisses before he left between the pencil people. I drew a proper picture, cause I'm big. They're only in pre-kindy.



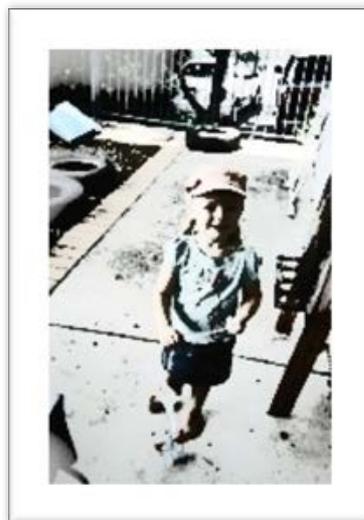
The fifth week of deployment

Emily's Tuesday

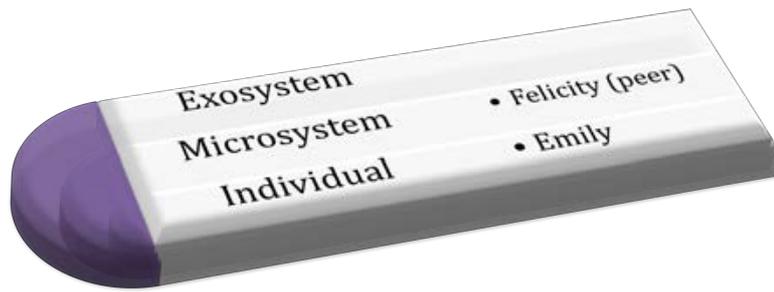
Emily: Today Marg read Bella and I a story called 'Nick's Story: My Colourful Kite'. It is about a boy whose Mum goes away on training.



Then we got to make a kite. I stuck on stickers and made the bows on the tail. I chose my favourite colour pink for the bows. I showed it to Mum when she picked me up. She said 'We need a windy day'.



Felicity's Wednesday (5-year-old from the preschool room next door)



Felicity: I was hanging over the gate today telling Marg I wanted to join in. The other kids were jumping, bending, reaching, clapping and drawing. Marg said I had to wait for my turn. She asked me to go and play and then she would come and get me. Not fair. Don't like waiting and anyway there is nothing fun to play with. I started whining and whining, louder and louder. I thought that might help. Emily joined in and copied me and pretended to cry too. Don't know why 'cause she'd already had a go. Not fair. I'm bigger, so I shouldda gone first.

Emily's Thursday

Emily: Today Bella and Me and Bethany did a drawing after some exercises with Marg. It was hot and there was thunder and rain. I don't like scary noises, so I told Marg. 'Storm! I need green. I made pink.' I drew this picture and told Marg 'It's rain'. Bella joined in to help when she finished hers and drew the two pink circles on my picture.



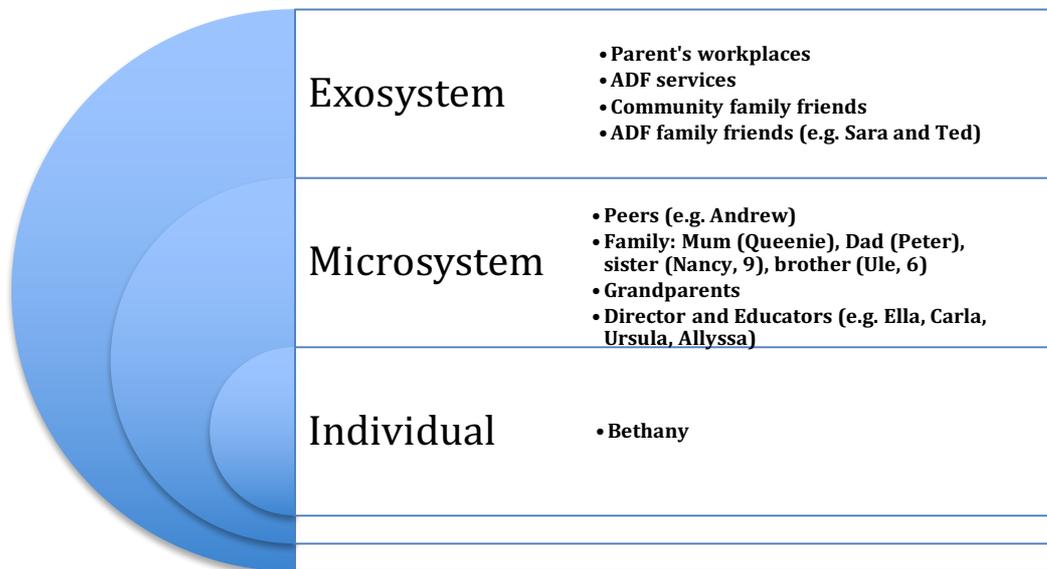
Lara's Friday (Emily's Mum)

Lara: I am awake early again. Sleeping has been difficult. Emily is back to sleeping through again. It's been over 5 weeks now. I miss him so much, but I am getting there. I think I am coping better now. Everyone at work and my friends have been wonderful and give me hugs. My Facebook friends are great. That helps me. Troy has been in-country for a while so communication has been less frequent, but he will be back online everyday again soon.

Emily is doing better at pre-kindy and at home. I can hear her coming up the stairs and smile as she chats away to her care bear she is cuddling. 'It's OK. Don't cry. Daddy's in Afghanistan.' She pauses on the landing, then says, 'You can't go there, only army men go there. He's in a aeroplane'.

Appendix 3

Introduction to Bethany



Bethany's socio-ecological model

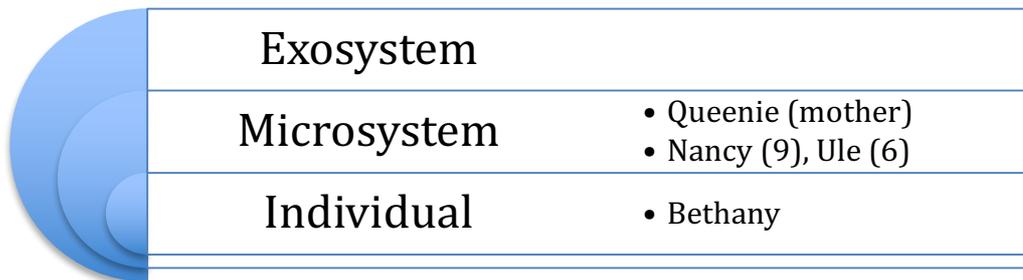


Bethany aged 4 years

Bethany's narrative

11th November 2013, 7:30am

Conversation between Nancy (sister, 9), Ule (brother, 6) and their Mother (Queenie) at home



Mother (to Ule who is seated at kitchen bench): We could look at it during Nancy's piano lesson at 4:30. OK then, off and pack your bag please.

Ule (leaving): But, I wanted to look at it now.

Mother (sighing): We haven't got time, Ule. I have to be at work at 9. Hurry up!

Mother (to Nancy who has just entered kitchen): Where's Bethany?

Nancy: (shrugging her shoulders as she takes a seat at the table): I dunno. She was in her room playing before.

Mother (moving to corridor and calling): Bethany! Your breakfast is ready.

(silence)

Mother (calling down hall): Ule, tell Bethany to hurry up and come out here please.

Ule (groans, then calls): Bethaaaneey! (A long silence follows)

Ule (mimicking in a high 'motherly' tone): Bethany, hurry up and come out here.

Bethany (quiet giggles, then says defiantly): No! I'm not!

Ule (irritated): Oh, come on Beth! Hurry up!

Bethany: No, I won't! Can't make me!

Ule (dramatically): Look out! Here comes Nancy-noodle to the rescue.

Bethany (giggles again, this time louder)

Nancy (impatiently): Bethany! Mum's getting cranky. Come on, I'll help you get dressed.

Bethany (softening her tone): But, I don't want to go!

Nancy (cajoling): But, it will be fun, and this afternoon when we pick you up, you can show me what you've been doing.

Bethany: But, will you come on the slippery-dip with me?

Nancy (holding out two of Bethany's T-shirts to wear): Yes, I will. OK, which one?

11th November 2013, 10:50am (Remembrance Day)

Bettina (educator) talking to the class about Remembrance Day before reading a book about the ADF and observing a minute silence in the preschool room



Macrosystem	•Australian National Day (Remembrance Day)
Exosystem	•ADF (father's workplace)
Microsystem	•Bettina (educator) •Andrew, Jack, Blake (peers)
Individual	•Bethany

Bettina: Who's got a Dad or Mum overseas on deployment at the moment?

Jack: My Dad's in 'ghanistan.

Andrew: Mine is.

Bettina (sighing): No, he came back a long time ago, Andrew.

Blake: My Dad's going away.

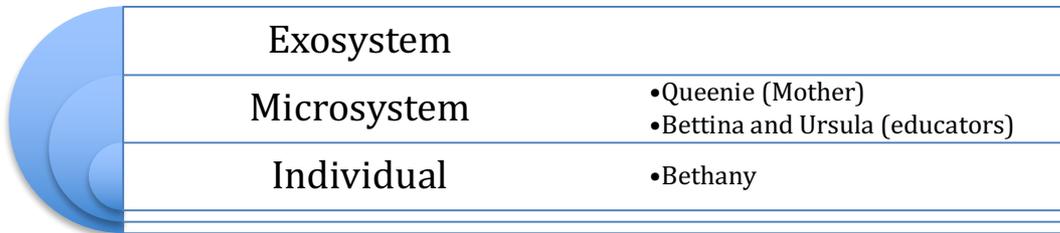
Bettina: Your Dad's away, isn't he Bethany?

(Bethany puts her head down and doesn't answer).

Bettina (looking around): Who else is there?

12th November 2013, 4:30pm

Bettina (educator) and Ursula (educator) observing Queenie (Mother) and Bethany at pick-up time in the playground



Exosystem	
Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Queenie (Mother)•Bettina and Ursula (educators)
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Bethany

Ursula: Mum's here, Bethany.

Bethany (engaged in pretend play, observes her mother, frowns, jumps down under the play equipment and 'hides' staring at her mother)

Mother (has Bethany's bag in hand, a determined look on her face and arms folded looks at Bethany and waits silently)

Ursula (observing the stand-off): Oh, no! Should I go and get Bethany?

Bettina: Not yet. Queenie handles this well. Bethany will come out in a minute if we let it go.

Ursula: I can't watch!

Bettina (sighing): Queenie does it tough; three children, full time job and her husband in Africa. Bethany is very close to her Dad. She just doesn't cope and this is the way she shows it.

Ursula (starting to move off to chat to another parent): How long does this normally last?

Bettina (chuckling): Oh, a few minutes yet.

After another two minutes, Bethany starts to emerge, still frowning, but looking down and walking towards mother.

Queenie: Okay! Let's go home. How was your day?

Bethany (quietly, still looking down): Okay.

12th November 2013, 3:20pm

Phone conversation between Queenie (mother) and Kate (ADF Social Worker from her husband's unit) in Queenie's car, she has pulled off the road to take the call on her way to collect the children from school



Exosystem	• Kate (ADF welfare officer)
Microsystem	• Queenie (mother)
Individual	• Bethany

Social Worker (cheerily): Hi Queenie, Kate here from Peter's unit. I'm the Social Worker assigned to his unit. This is just a courtesy call to see how you are going during deployment.

Mother (sounding relieved): Oh, okay ...thanks.

Social Worker: So, Peter has been away 3 months now. How are you coping so far?

Mother (hesitating): Okay, so far (slightly defensive and a bit louder) I have done all this before (pausing, then continues softly). But, last time I only had one child though.

Social Worker (Queenie hears shuffling paper): Yes, it says here you have two children, (pause, more shuffling) no *three* now.

Mother (sarcastically): Yes, I noticed.

Social Worker (missing the sarcasm): Have you got access to childcare to get a break?

Mother (sounding puzzled): Well it's not really a break because I'm at work. Our youngest is at the centre at the base and the older two are at the public primary school nearby.

Social Worker: Are the children coping okay?

Mother: Well.....sort of. The older two have managed to stay in routine and get on with it, they are more matter-of-fact. The youngest one struggles with routine. She finds it hard to understand and has trouble sleeping.

Social Worker: That's normal. It sounds like you're coping.

Mother: No, it's not that bad. She just sleeps in my bed. I don't get a lot of sleep, and I have to stay with her for ages while she falls asleep every night.

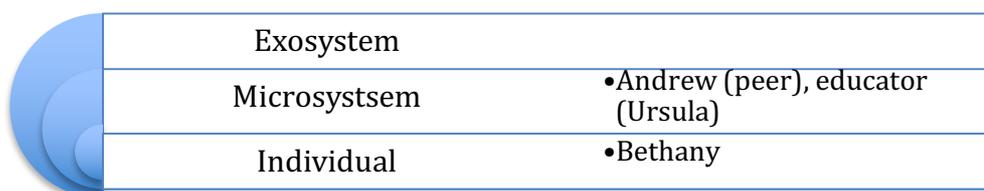
Social Worker: mmm... That's normal though. (brightly) OK, well you seem to be coping well. I will ring again in another couple of months ...in February or March.... (paper shuffling). Oh... but it might not be me, I'll be on leave by then, so I will get someone else to chase it up. I'll email you about that, though. OK, great. Well, good to talk to you..... (paper shuffling again) ..Queenie.

Mother (hesitating): Thanks, bye.

Social Worker: Goodbye.

13th November 2013, 9:40am

Conversation with Bethany (4), Andrew (4) and Ursula (educator) in the preschool room on the mat during free play



Exosystem	
Microsystem	•Andrew (peer), educator (Ursula)
Individual	•Bethany

Bethany pointed on the map puzzle to the Sydney dot.

Bethany: Ule and I were born there.

Ursula: That's in New South Wales. We live here now (pointing to another capital city). Have you lived here long?

Bethany (looking thoughtful): I miss my old house (in a sad tone). But, someone is looking after our old house in Sydney when we are not living there. It's another army man, a friend of Dad's.

Ursula: Oh, that is good. How long until your Dad comes home?'

Bethany (looking down and guarded, pauses): I don't know. (pauses) A long time.

Andrew (who has been listening in on the conversation): I live here (pointing to the correct capital city dot).

Ursula: That's right, Andrew.

Bethany: We live in a different house now, we moved.

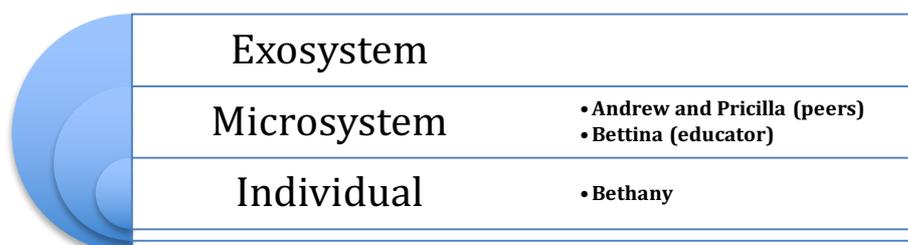
Andrew : We are going to move house soon.

Ursula: Here, or in another city?

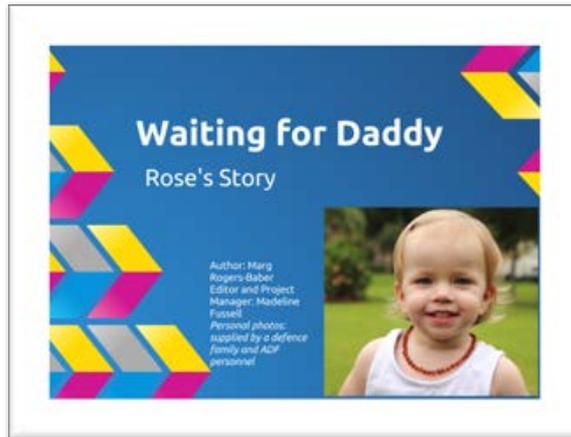
Andrew: Oh, no. It is near our house. I have been there and seen it'.

13th November 2013, 9:40am

Comments from Bethany (4), Andrew (4), Pricilla (peer) and Bettina (educator) in the preschool room reading of 'Waiting for Daddy: Rose's story'. The story outlines Rose's experiences helping Mum when dad is deployed.



Bethany (engaged and attentive calls out in response to pictures in the story): That's a scribble (picture of a toddler's drawing).



Bethany: Lips (pointing to a picture of a lipstick stain on an envelope).

Bethany: Vacuuming (picture of activities Isabelle helps with around the house).

Andrew (referring to a picture of wheelbarrow): Gardening. I pull weeds.

Pricilla: I help mum at work and at home.

Andrew: I do!

Others: I help!



Bethany's drawing in response to the story: 'Mum is waiting for Dad to come home. Ule, Nancy, and I are at home. Nancy is looking after us' (the educator has labelled the figure 'Mum' on Bethany's instructions)

Conversation between Andrew and myself after the activity when I was collecting the drawings

Andrew: No, I want to take mine home.

Marg: Yes, you can Andrew, but I will photocopy it and give it back to you because I need a copy.

Andrew: No, I want it. It's mine!

Marg: I will give it back to you, Andrew.

Bethany: But, I want to show Mum.

Bettina: Here I will take a picture of it and we can print it out later.

Bethany: OK (leaving to go and play)

Andrew: Let me take the photo.

Bettina: No, I will.

Andrew: No, let me.

14th November 2013, 10:45am

A conversation in the preschool room between Bethany (4) and myself during a reading of 'Now that I am big: Anthony's Story.' The story is about the elder brother of Rose (from the previous storybook). It explores the way he helps out his mother when his Dad is away on deployment.

Exosystem	
Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Pricilla, Arron, Andrew (peers)•Amelia, Daisy (peers)
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Bethany

(As children arrive and sit on the carpet ready for the story, Bethany sits, but turns herself on the side so she is not facing the me as the researcher at the front. She still looks to the front at times).

Researcher: Do you want to turn so you can see the pictures?

Bethany (quietly, but not rudely):
No.



Researcher: (to everyone while modelling rubbing my ears): OK, who has their listening ears turned on?

(Other children copy and quieten).

Bethany (quietly, but not rudely): Not me.

During the reading, others call out in response to the story, pictures and questions from Marg.

Pricilla: My pink scooter.

Bella: I got my pink bike.

Daisy: I got my pink...

Arron: Did you know I put out the rubbish bins.

Andrew: Yum, yum, yum,

Andrew: Where is the Dad?

Andrew: Now he is back.

Bella: My Dad's going in a car.

Pricilla: My Dad tickles. No, my Mum tickles.

Marg (after reading): We are going to take turns to use the puppets to act out Anthony, Rose, Mum and Dad. Which puppet should we use for Anthony?

Bethany (turning around, enthusiastic and attentive): The kookaburra!

(Bethany then eagerly acts out the parts from the book easily, from memory).

15th November 2013, 8:00am

A conversation in the preschool room between Bethany (4) and Andrew (4) and peers during the reading of a story called 'D is for deployment: Ann raps it up' that explores some of the experiences and emotions of a preschool girl during her father's deployment along with various roles within deployment.

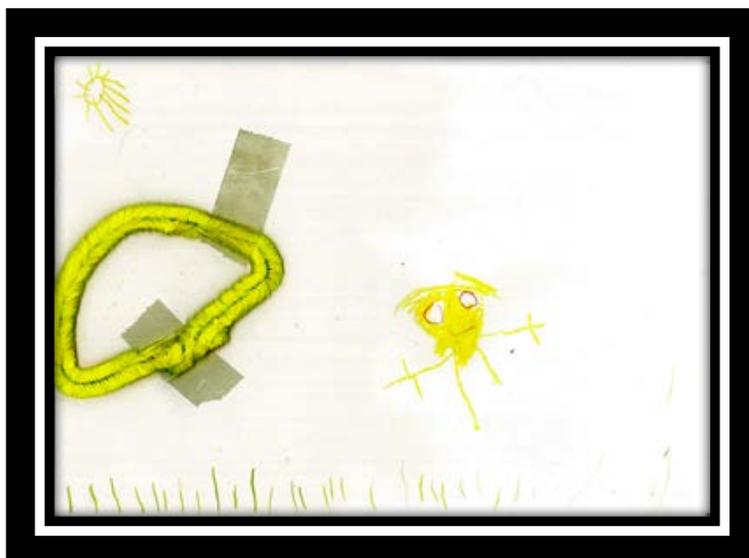
Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Andrew (peer)
Individual	• Bethany

Marg (showing a page where the defence dentists are treating patients): I wonder what these people are doing on deployment?



Andrew: I know, helping the man to get better.

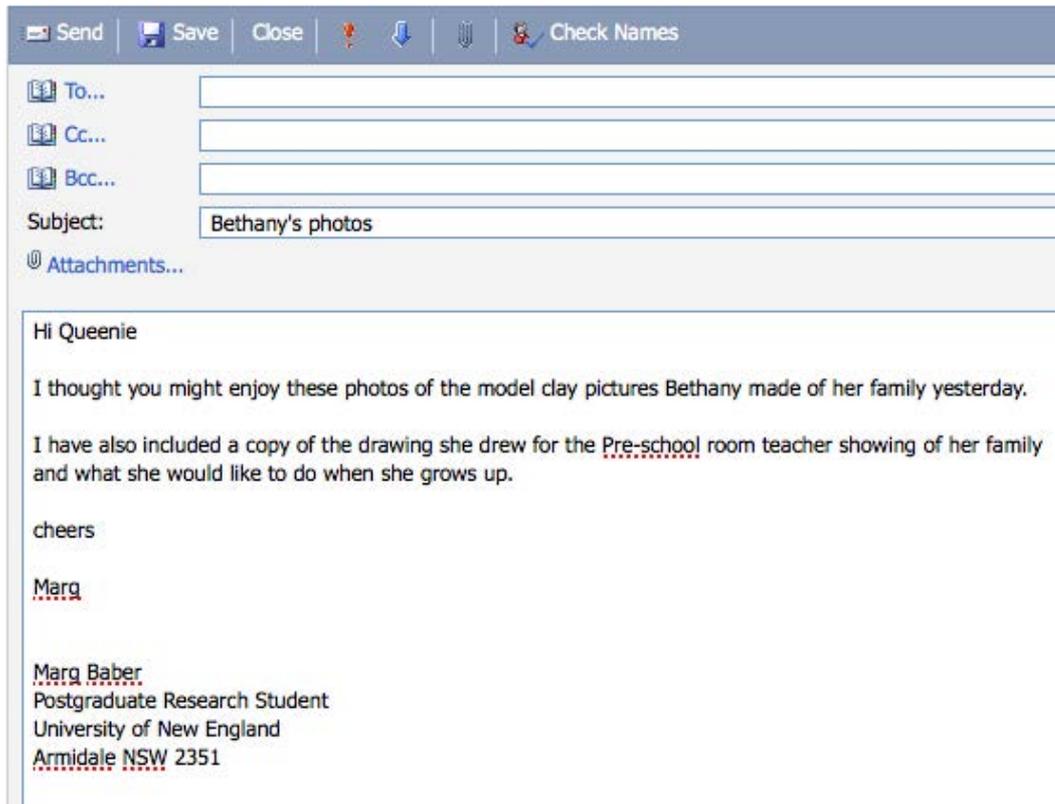
Bethany (enthusiastically): His teeth.



Bethany's drawing depicting what happens in her family when her Dad is on deployment: 'Mummy is waiting for Daddy who is on deployment'

2nd December 2013, 5:10pm

Email communication with Queenie (Bethany's mother) with attached photos



Bethany's drawing of her family: 'When I grow up I want to be someone who helps people find jobs'

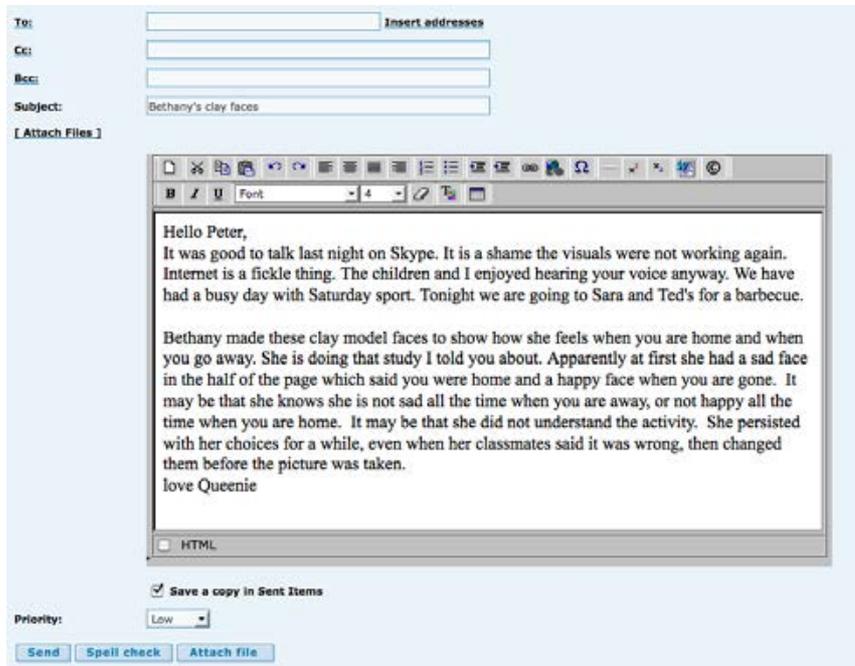


Observations: Early in the construction of her picture, Bethany sat sideways as pictured. She sometimes does this during story time, perhaps to pretend she is not involved or not listening, or a perhaps as a coping strategy when she is struggling emotionally with the subject material about families and deployment. Some members of the family are holding hands in the clay model depiction.



3rd December 2013, 6:05am

Queenie (Bethany's mother) emails Peter (Bethany's father) with attached photos



4th December 2013, 5:12pm

Email from Peter (Bethany's father) in central Africa to Queenie (Bethany's mother)

Find Someone Address Book 

 Send |  Save | Close |  |  |  |  Check Names

 To...

 Cc...

 Bcc...

Subject:

 Attachments...

From: Xxxx, Peter CAPT - ARMY [peter.xxxx@defence.gov.au]
Sent: Wednesday, December 04, 2013 5:12 PM
To: Queenie Xxxx
Subject: thanks for the email and pictures [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Queenie

Thanks for the pictures of Bethany's work. It was great to see the photos of her cheeky face after a few trying days here.

Thanks for filling me in on all the family news over the phone. I can hear how tired you are, Queenie. Having Bethany refuse to go to sleep until you lie next to her in our bed every night must drive you mad.

Hang in there. I will make it up to you when I get home. Maybe we'll go on a holiday together, just you and I. The kids can stay with friends for a week. What do you think?

Have a great night at Sara and Ted's.

Peter

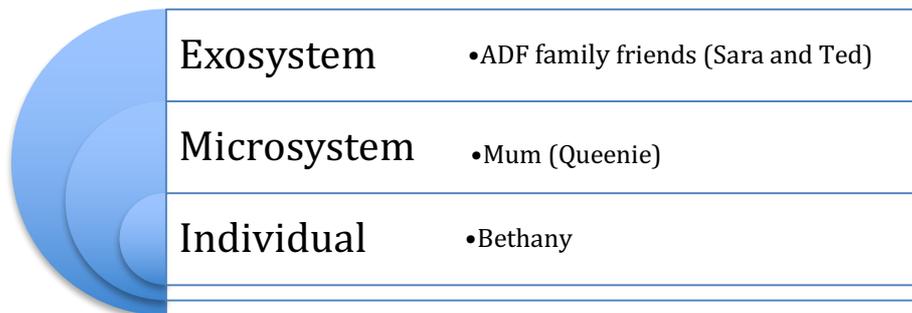
Peter Xxxx
CAPT
BK
A BTY
1 REGT, RAA

Email: peter.xxxx@defence.gov.au

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4th December, 2013: 6:05pm

Conversation between Queenie (Bethany's mother), Sara (family friend) and Lydia (newly arrived to this ADF community) at Sara and Ted's house (family friends from the ADF)



Sara (as Queenie re-joins the group after tending to the children): Come and have a seat, Queenie. You look so tired. I was just telling Lydia about your daughter's trouble at school, being teased and that.

Queenie: Oh, yes. That was pretty awful for Nancy, even though she is nine. It did affect her.

Lydia: Oh, the poor thing. What did they say?

Queenie: 'He'll get shot' and things like that.

Lydia: That's terrible! How do the other two cope?

Queenie: Generally, with Nancy and Ule I can keep them in routine. That is important. Bethany was terrible for the first two weeks. She is a bit defiant sometimes anyway, but during the first part, she refused to do most things. It was awful. We tried to explain that he would be away for Christmas and Nancy's birthday, but back at Easter. She just kept asking 'When is Dad coming back?' She still asks a lot of questions and she seems to struggle with it all.

Sara: That's so hard. It's just that she can't say what is wrong.

Queenie: She goes off by herself to her room and cries sometimes when she just can't cope. She always did that, but just more often now.

Lydia: I don't know how you do it with three by yourself. I have Michael and I don't know how I will cope when Jack goes away for deployment in three weeks. I don't know how to get Michael ready for his Dad going away.

Queenie: You'll cope, you just have to really. There is no way to get them ready because each child is so different. Just keep him in his routine and then he will settle eventually. The worst time for me is 3-4 weeks in. I don't know why.

Sara (laughing and moving off to attend to the dinner): That's funny. Same here.

Queenie: It's been great having Sara though, she minds the kids sometimes so I can go shopping by myself, just for a bit of sanity.

Lydia: That sounds great.

Queenie: Just let me know. I am sure the kids would love to have Michael over for a play.

Lydia (looking hopeful): Really? You are sweet.

Queenie: You'll need it. Sleep is an issue. Bethany has had trouble sleeping. She has slept in our bed every night except 2, when Ule came in. It is really tiring. She was fine before deployment.

Lydia: Oh, it sounds terrible. Jack being away for the last six-week training was bad enough.

Queenie: It will be fine, Lydia. Peter hasn't been away since 2006, when he was in the Middle East, so we have been lucky really. Nancy was only a baby then. We had good families around to support us then. You will get support here, too.

Lydia: Thanks. I'll need it!

12th December 2013, 4:40pm

A copy of a note and some photocopied drawings for Queenie (Bethany's mother) that I left in Bethany's pigeon-hole outside the preschool room

Hi Queenie

Here are some photocopies of the fabulous drawings Bethany has been working on as we explore her experiences during deployment. There is also a lovely photo of her making a kite and drawing.

Cheers Marg



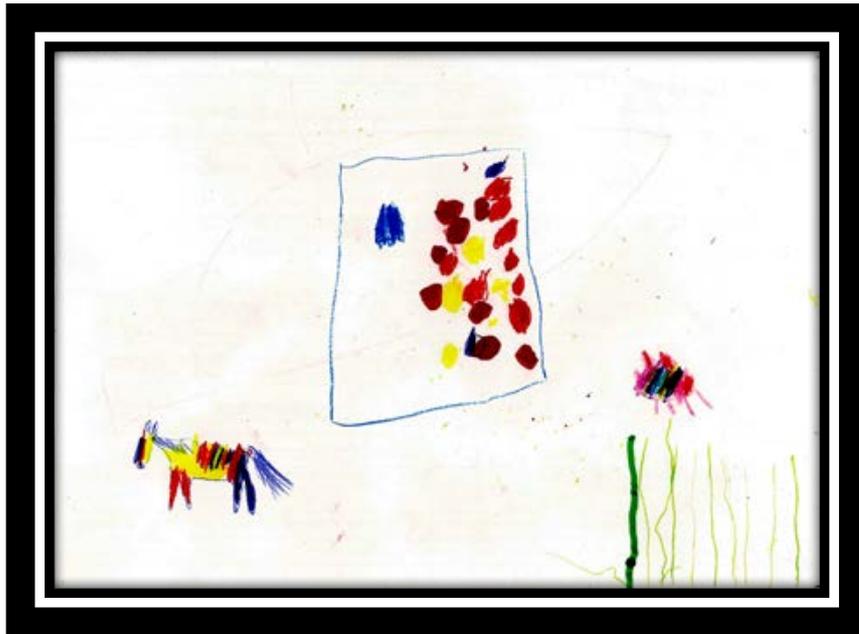
Bethany's drawing: 'Me and Mum and Ule and Nancy and Dad are all inside watching television so we are out of the storm. I have a toy boat so we can sail in it when the rain makes a river. The scarecrow is in the garden getting wet'



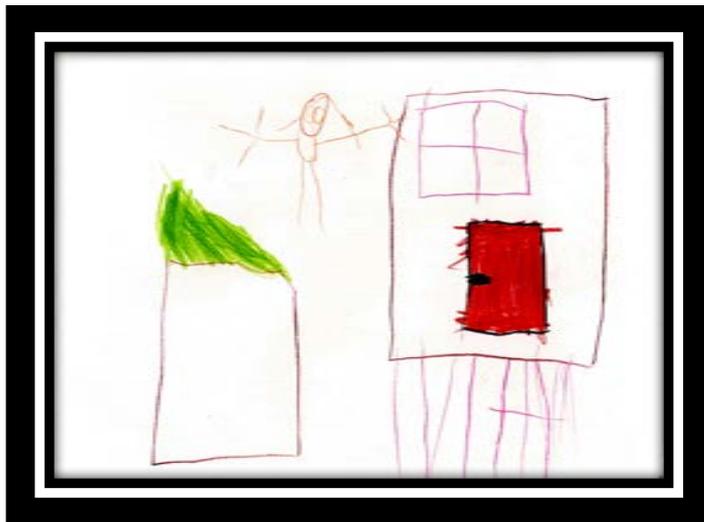
Bethany's drawing 'waiting for Daddy at the airport. It is raining at the airport'



Learning web: Participant's ideas about what you could do when you are missing a parent who is away for training or deployment. Bethany suggested watching a DVD of her Dad reading a story



Bethany's drawing: 'We are watching television when Dad is away. We are eating blueberries, cherries and lemons. The curtains are closed because we are watching the video of Dad when he is reading us a bedtime story'

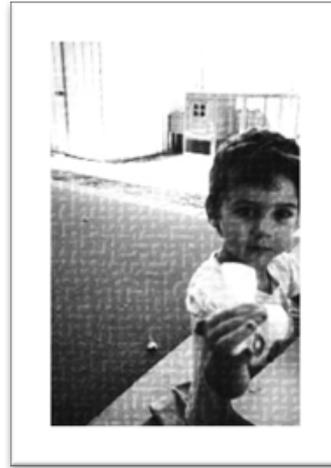


Bethany's person, house, tree drawing'

Bethany's commentary: 'Can I fold mine? Boo-boo start up again (turning sheet over). I can't do eyes. That's me. That's the biggest house. What does that say? (pointing to researcher's notes as she writes). It's our window. Black window. I'm drawing the door now. 'Pink and purple isn't just for girls, it's for boys too you know. Green and blue isn't just for boys it's for girls too. I'm going to colour in the door. That's a path. Another pathway (drawing vertical lines under the house).'



Bethany talking and drawing circles



Bethany making a kite tail with crepe paper

10th December, 2013: 8:30am

Camera pack log from Queenie (Bethany's mother) left at front office at centre

Hi Marg

Here are the photos our family took about our experiences with deployment.
There's also the video of me reading 'Waiting for Daddy' to the children.

Thanks Queenie

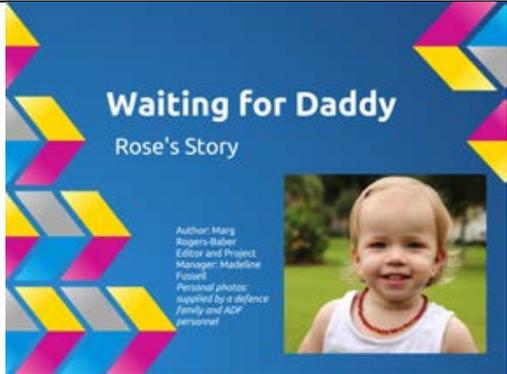


Bethany's photo: 'Mum makes extra effort to listen to Nancy's piano practice while Dad is away'



Nancy's photo: 'Mum giving Bethany a cuddle; Bethany gets quite upset when she thinks of Dad and needs an extra hug'.

Video file from Queenie (Bethany's mother) reading 'When is Daddy Coming Home: Rose's story' to Nancy (9), Ule (6) and Bethany (4). Conversation between the Queenie and children about the story as Queenie is interrupted or during the pauses between the story lines. They had read this story before as a family.

Story book page	Queenie and the children's comments
 <p>Waiting for Daddy Rose's Story</p> <p>Author: Marg Rogers Barber Editor and Project Manager: Madeline Fussell Personal photos: supplied by a defence family and ADP personnel</p>	
 <p>When Daddy goes on deployment</p> <p>we take him to the airport to say goodbye.</p> <p><i>I don't like the airport!</i></p>	
 <p>On the way home it is very quiet in the car.</p> <p>I think about asking Mum: 'When is Daddy coming home?'</p> <p><i>But she is looking a bit sad.</i></p>	

<p>When Daddy goes on deployment</p> <p>I draw pictures for him.</p> 	<p>Bethany: That's scribble, but she tried hard.</p> <p>Queenie: Yes. We've sent some of your pictures, haven't we?</p> <p>Bethany: Yes.</p>
 <p>We put them in an envelope to post.</p>	
<p>On the way to the post box, I whisper to Mum:</p> <p><i>'When is Daddy coming home?'</i></p> 	<p>Bethany (whispering): 'When is Daddy coming home?'</p> <p>Queenie (smiles)</p>
 <p>When Daddy goes on deployment ...</p>	<p>Bethany: Is that the Dad?</p> <p>Queenie: Yes.</p>

 <p>I help Mum</p>  <p>around the house</p>  <p>and outside.</p>	<p>Queenie: What are they doing here (pointing to the pictures)?</p> <p>Nancy: Washing up.</p> <p>Bethany: Washing up.</p> <p>Ule: Vacuuming.</p> <p>Bethany: Vacuuming.</p> <p>Bethany: Gardening.</p> <p>Ule: Gardening.</p> <p>Bethany: She's very busy.</p> <p>Queenie: Yes.</p>
<p>After our jobs, when Mum is looking tired, I whinge:</p>  <p>'But when is Daddy coming home?'</p> <p><i>I am sure that helps her sleep.</i></p>	<p>Queenie (smiling): What does she say?</p> <p>Bethany and Ule together (in a whiny voice): 'When is Daddy coming home?'</p> <p>home?'</p> <p>Queenie: Do you think that helps her sleep?</p> <p>Bethany: No it doesn't.</p>

 <p>When Daddy is on deployment he is often far, far away in another country.</p>	<p>Bethany (pointing and sounding worried): Look! That's</p> <p>Queenie: I think that it's just two sticks.</p> <p>Bethany: Are they about to fall over?</p> <p>Queenie: I don't think so. I think they are just markers. And there's a boat. Does it look like where we live?</p> <p>Bethany (watching mother's face): No, it doesn't.</p> <p>Queenie: No.</p>
 <p>At other times he is a long way away in Australia.</p>  <p>Sometimes I get scared and sleep in Mummy's bed. <i>Just in case she gets scared too.</i></p>	<p>Bethany: Do you get scared?</p> <p>Queenie: No.</p>
<p>When Daddy is on deployment, I love talking to him on the phone.</p>  <p>When Grandma visits she helps me share the phone with Anthony. She says I am really good at talking,</p> <p>and talking</p> <p>and talking.</p> 	<p>Bethany: And talking and talking.</p>

<p>When Daddy is on deployment, we go to the park with Grandma and Mum.</p> 	
<p>When Daddy is on deployment he sends me a letter and a present.</p> 	<p>Queenie: How many letters have we had?</p> <p>Bethany (smiling): sixty-eight (laughing)</p> <p>Nancy (laughing): sixty-eight.</p> <p>Ule (laughs)</p> <p>Queenie (smiling): Two. Not sixty-eight.</p> <p>(children continue laughing)</p>
<p>When Daddy is on deployment</p> 	
<p>When Daddy is on deployment and my brother and I have a fight, I always cry,</p> 	<p>Queenie: What does she say when she cries?</p> <p>Ule (in a crying voice): When is Daddy coming home?</p> <p>Queenie: That's right Ule.</p>

	<p>Bethany (in a crying voice): When is Daddy coming home?</p> <p>Queenie: Is that what you say? Because you and Ule never fight.</p> <p>Nancy (quickly): Yes, they do.</p> <p>Ule: I fight at school.</p> <p>Queenie: I'm not talking about at school.</p>
	<p>Ule (laughing): Lumpy!</p> <p>Bethany (laughs)</p> <p>Bethany (whining): I just want a cuddle from <i>my</i> Dad.</p> <p>Queenie (softly): Yes, I know you do.</p>
	<p>Ule and Bethany (getting louder): 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1.</p> <p>Queenie: Will we pick Dad up on our bikes?</p> <p>Bethany: No.</p> <p>Queenie: Why not?</p> <p>Bethany: Yeh.</p>

 <p>Then the big day finally arrives and I can hardly believe it. Mum hasn't stopped smiling all day and Anthony is jumping around everywhere. Mum calls him 'Anthony the 'roo.'</p>  <p>10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, YEAH!</p>	<p>Ule (laughs)</p>
 <p>When Daddy is on deployment, we go back to the airport in the car to pick him up.</p> <p>At the airport we wait with other families. We wait and wait and wait.</p> 	<p>Ule: And wait and wait and wait.</p>
<p>The plane lands and we wait again. I close my eyes and wait and wait.</p>   <p>All of a sudden, someone calls out. I open my eyes and I can see other Dads, Mums and adults arrive.</p>	
<p>Finally, after many months, there he is.</p>  <p>He has lots of cuddles for Anthony and me.</p>	

<p>We even let him cuddle Mummy.</p>  <p>Although they take for ever.</p>	<p>Bethany: Is they married?</p> <p>Queenie: I reckon so..</p> <p>Ule (interrupting): Yep.</p> <p>Queenie: ... or close enough.</p>
 <p>I tell him how old I am, just in case he forgot.</p>	<p>Queenie: How old do you think Isabelle is?</p> <p>Bethany: One.</p> <p>Queenie (questioning): Mmmm.</p> <p>Nancy: Three.</p> <p>Bethany: Or two</p> <p>Queenie: Or three.</p> <p>Bethany: Three.</p> <p>Ule (laughing): One hundred and six (laughing)</p>
 <p>I love my Dad and he loves me.</p>	<p>Queenie: That's the end of the story. Okay.</p>

13th December 2013, 10:20am

Conversation between Jack (4), Bethany (4) and myself as researcher in the Preschool room



Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Jack (peer)
Individual	• Bethany

Researcher: So was it exciting going to get Dad at the airport yesterday?

Jack: Yes. We had a cake at home.

Bethany (with confidence): My Dad's coming back at Easter.

Researcher (looking surprised): Yes, that's right. It will be so exciting, Bethany. You will be able to go to the airport to pick him up like Jack did.

13th December 2013, 11:10am

Conversation between Blake (5), Jack (4), Bethany (4) and myself as researcher in the Preschool room.



Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Jack (peer), Blake (peer)
Individual	• Bethany

Blake: Bye Marg.

Researcher: Bye Blake, thanks for all your hard work.

Jack (hugging): Bye Marg.

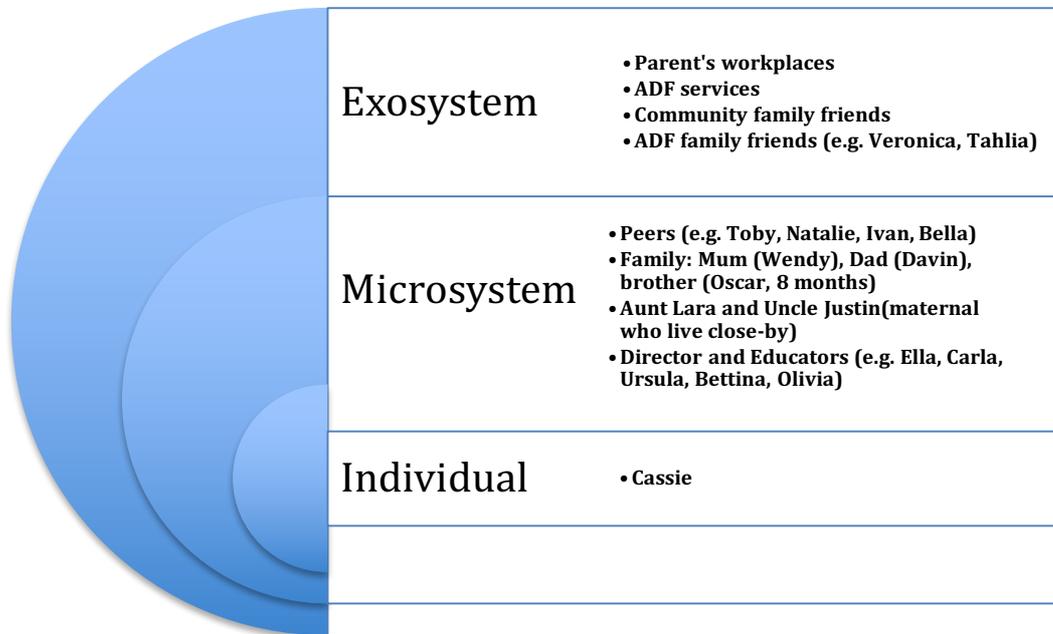
Researcher: You'll have fun with Dad home.

Researcher (holding out her hand to shake): Bye, Bethany. Thanks for all your wonderful drawings.

Bethany (shaking hand, looking directly at me with a big, open smile and confidence):
'And my Dad's coming home on a plane'.

Appendix 4

Introduction to Cassie



Cassie's socio-ecological model

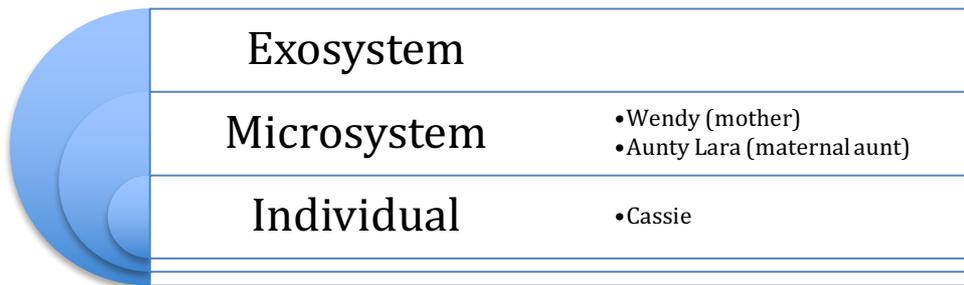


Cassie aged 3 years

Cassie's narrative

10th November 2013, 8:50am

Phone conversation between Wendy (Cassie's mother) and Lara (Cassie's maternal Aunt)



Wendy (in an emotional voice): Hello

Lara: Wendy, what's wrong?

Wendy (sniffing): Oh, everything. I don't know. I'm just so bloody tired. (starting to cry in earnest). If I could just get some sleep, I know I would be okay.

Lara: I'll come over.

Wendy (still crying): No! I'll be okay. I had another bad night with Oscar.

Lara (sounding unsure): Well.... we'd like to help. What can we do?

Wendy: If you and Ted could take Cassie with you up the mountain today, I could maybe catch up on sleep when Oscar has his naps.

Lara: We would love to take her.

Wendy (sighing as she tries to calm down): Oh, thanks (still sounding very emotional) That would be so good. I'm really lucky to have you and Ted so close by.

Lara (in an affected voice): Yes, well you know I am going for Aunty of the year award. Just remember to nominate me (returning to her normal voice).

Wendy (laughing and then returning to crying): I don't know what's wrong with me. I am always hopeless when he has been away a month. I'll be OK in a couple of days. It's just sleep deprivation....'

Lara (interrupting): And trying to hold down a full time job, and having young children and being superwoman and

Wendy (laughing now): Thanks Lara. I owe you.

Lara: We could have had her yesterday. You know we love having her.

Wendy: I know, I know. But, I was okay yesterday.

Lara: OK. Why don't you go and have a cup of tea and we will pick her up at about ten?

Wendy (laughing wryly): Yes, mother.

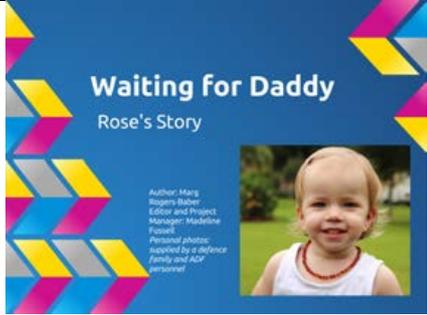
Lara (sounding slightly defensive): Well someone has to look after you. You won't.

Wendy (sniffing and matching Lara's tone): Yes, yes..... don't start me (softening her tone). OK, thanks see you soon (hangs up phone).

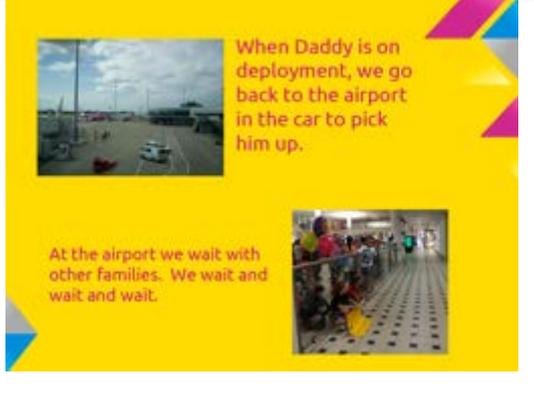
15th November 2013, 8:10am

Conversation with Cassie (3), Natalie (3), Blake (5) and myself as researcher in the Preschool room during a reading of ‘Waiting for Daddy: Rose’s story’. The story outlines Rose’s experiences and emotional struggles when her father goes away on deployment and returns again. Only some of the pages are shown here.

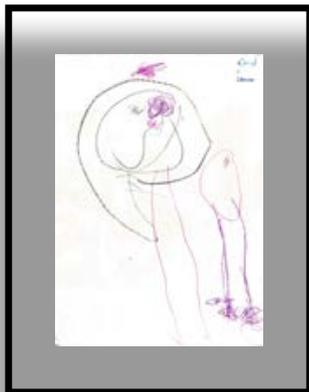
Exosystem	
Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blake, Bella, Pricilla(peers)
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassie

Storybook page	Researcher and children’s comments
 <p>Waiting for Daddy Rose's Story</p> <p>Author: Mary Rogers-Baker Editor and Project Manager: Melvina Farrant Personal photos supplied by a defence family and ADF approval</p>	
 <p>When Daddy goes on deployment</p> <p>we take him to the airport to say goodbye.</p> <p><i>I don't like the airport</i></p>	<p>Cassie: My Daddy is away.</p>

	<p>Cassie: I wash up too.</p>
	<p>Blake: I like sleeping with my Mummy.</p> <p>Cassie: Sometimes I sleep in my Mummy's bed.</p>
	<p>Cassie: I talk to my dad on the phone.</p> <p>Blake: I talk to my Dad on the phone and on the computer.</p> <p>Natalie: I talk on the computer too.</p> <p>Marg: Who do you talk to?</p> <p>Natalie: My Nan and Pop.</p>
	<p>Bella: My Dad gives me presents.</p> <p>Cassie: When it is my birthday I get presents.</p>

	<p>Bella: My Dad is away.</p> <p>Cassie: My Daddy is on a course.</p>
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Researcher (at the end of the story): Can you draw a picture about what happens in your family when Mum or Dad goes away for training or deployment, or when they come home again?



Cassie's drawing of herself (right) and her father (left) going for a swim:

'I like swimming with Daddy when he comes home'



Natalie's drawing: 'A mermaid'

18th November 2013, 7:50am

Conversation between Cassie (3), Ivan (3) and myself as researcher in the playground

Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Ivan (peer)
Individual	• Cassie

Cassie: My Mum read me your book on the computer.

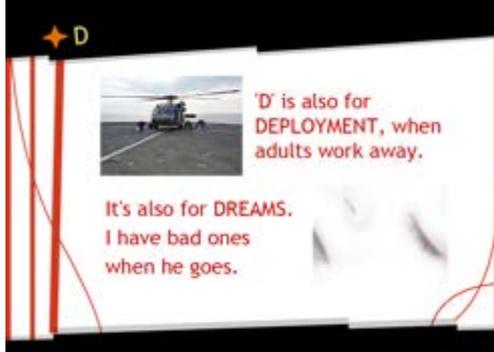
Researcher: Oh, that's great, Cassie.

Ivan (to Cassie): Not me.

Comments from Cassie (3) and Natalie (3) and myself as researcher in the preschool playground during a reading of ‘D is for Deployment: Ann Raps it Up’. The story explores some of the activities of ADF personnel on deployment and Charlotte’s experiences during her father’s deployment cycle. Only some pages are shown here.

	Exosystem	
	Microsystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natalie (peer)
	Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassie

	<p>Cassie: My Dad’s gone away on training.</p>
	<p>Natalie: My Daddy’s wearing army pants.</p> <p>Cassie: And my Daddy’s wearing army pants and army boots.</p>

	<p>Natalie: My Dad goes to work.</p> <p>Natalie: Aeroplane.</p>
	<p>Cassie: Walking in water.</p>
	<p>Cassie: And Mummy is going to read me the story about Isabelle at bedtime.</p> <p>Natalie: Polar bear.</p> <p>Natalie: She's having a sleep.</p>

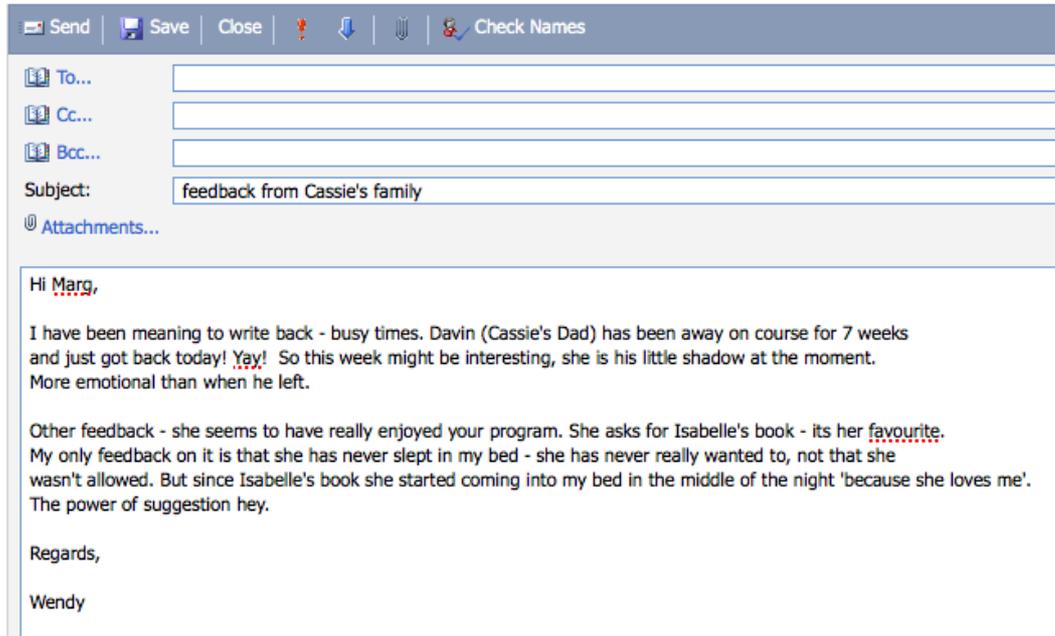
Researcher (at the end of the story): Can you draw a picture of what your Mum or Dad does when they are away for training or deployment?



Cassie's 'D is for Deployment' picture showing Dad (top), Mum (bottom) and a calendar (middle): 'Daddy is driving an army truck to work. Mum's in the kitchen and she looks after me at home' An educator has written words showing items on the picture.

1st December 2013, 5:50pm

Wendy (Cassie's mother) email to me



2nd December 2013, 10:05am

My email to Wendy (Cassie's mother)

Hi Wendy

Thanks for your email. Sorry about the bed issue. I hope I have not created a monster. Children sleeping their parent's bed during deployment and training is an issue many parents have spoken to me about, hence why it is in the book.

Let's catch up tomorrow (Tuesday) at pick-up. What time do

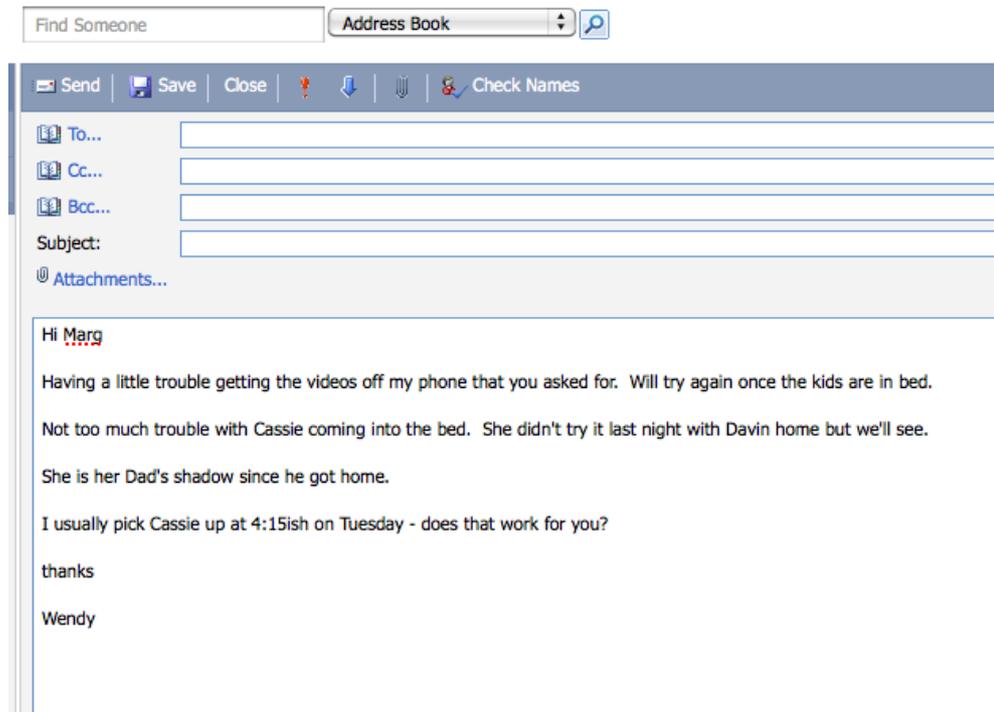
you normally arrive. I will arrange to be in the Pre-kindy room then.

Cheers

Marg

2nd December 2013, 5:15pm

Wendy's (Cassie's mother) reply email to me



3rd December 2013, 8:10am

Conversation between Cassie (3), Toby (2) and myself as researcher in the Preschool playground

Toby: Clay again!

Toby (remembering yesterday's activity): I made my family with Natalie.



Researcher: That's right. Natalie's away today. This time we are going to make some faces with the clay.

Cassie: Oh. I was at home. I come here two days.

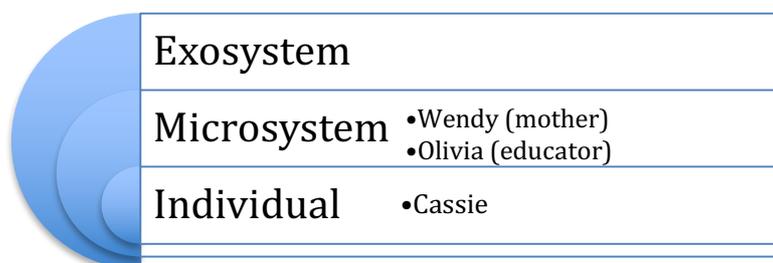
Researcher: Yes, Tuesdays and Thursdays. Today we are going to make a face on each side of the page showing how you feel when your parent is away on training or deployment. (demonstrating on paper) I will draw a plane or car on one side, showing that is when they are away, and on the other side I will draw a house, showing that is when they are at home.



Cassie's clay model face: 'My face when Daddy is away for work'

4th December 2013, 6:35am

Conversation in the Pre-kindy room between Wendy (Cassie's mother), Olivia (educator) and Cassie (3)



Wendy (unpacking Cassie's gear, notices Olivia and smiles): Morning!

Olivia (smiling): Oh, hello Wendy. (bending down) Hi, Cassie. How are you today?

Cassie (finding her hat to put on): Good thank you. My Daddy's home now!

Olivia: Wow, that's wonderful! He was away a long time! Have you and baby Oscar been having lots of cuddles with him? (standing up)

Cassie (nods and smiles): Bye Mum.

Wendy (kissing her goodbye): Bye darling. I will pick you up this afternoon.

Cassie: No, Daddy will pick me up.

Wendy (firmly): No, Cassie. It is my turn today, remember we talked about that before.

Cassie (frowns, looks to Olivia, then down): Bye.

Wendy: Bye. (waits)

Wendy: Sorry, we have had issues there.

Olivia: You're right, no need to apologise.

Wendy (sighing): She is really pushing the boundaries since he got home. She won't let me or the au pair we employ do anything for her. It is hard to know how much is genuine and how much is put on. I know she has really missed Davin, but it is full on for him if he has to do everything for her and we cannot help with anything. We have had to start getting tougher.

Olivia: That's fair enough. How was she when he was away?

Wendy (sounding puzzled): That's the weird thing. She was way better this time. Last time he was away for 9 days training in July, she was asking for him constantly. This time she was a lot better, but now he is back she is his little shadow. She even threw a tantrum outside the toilet door when he closed it behind himself.

Olivia (laughing): Sorry! That is precious! It must be so hard though. She is obviously struggling emotionally with the changes though.

Wendy: We just don't know if we are being too soft, or too hard. Managing the clinginess and transitions is really tricky. We are trying to cope with knowing she can't be too reliant on him. It is hard because he was the major caregiver when I took a job in the US for two years.

Olivia: How old was she then?

Wendy: Just a baby. So, from six months to two and a half years. He stopped working to look after her.

Olivia: That explains the strong attachment. Did she stay in contact with him when he was away?

Wendy: Yes. We did Facetime most days and we used messaging. She loved dancing around on the videos and talking to him on the phone. Sometimes she would just pretend to talk to him when she was playing at home. Davin makes little videos when he knows he can't use Facetime for a few days. She is hilarious as she thinks it is live and answers back. We send him pictures she has drawn. Our baby Oscar loves hearing his voice and moves toward the screen and smiles. He is OK with Davin and doesn't show any 'stranger danger' signs which I think is helped by Facetime.

Olivia: That's great.

Wendy: The Sesame Street app. worked well with her too. The voices drove us mad. I wish they could make one for Australian defence kids.

Olivia: Oh, I haven't heard of that.

Wendy: Oh, well it's Elmo. Elmo's Dad goes on deployment and Elmo speaks to her on a whole new level. You can see her really relating to it. It doesn't matter if it is the same stuff Davin and I say to her. It's Elmo, so it must be right.

Olivia (smiling): That's the power of media and books.

Wendy: I'll say! We had a calendar too. We would forget to put the stickers on sometimes, then she would remind us and we had to put heaps on.

Olivia (laughs, then pauses): So are you getting some rest now that he is back home?

Wendy: Starting to, I am a lot better than I was. I find it really hard about the 4-week mark. It doesn't help when you are sleep deprived!

Olivia: No, that's right. I will keep an eye on her and let the other educators know where she is up to.

Wendy: Thanks, I appreciate that, Olivia. We are both due to go away for work again soon and both of us for longer this time.

Olivia: Ok, that's good to know in advance. You are lucky you've got your sister and brother-in law-here though.

Wendy: Yes, we're really blessed. They just love Cassie and Oscar as they haven't had any of their own yet (glancing at her watch and looking worried). Oh no! I've got to get to work. (rushing out the door) Sorry! Bye.

Olivia (smiling): Have a great day.

5th December 2013, 8:15am

Conversation in the Preschool playground between Cassie (3), peers and myself as researcher after reading the book 'What do you do when you miss your parents: Rachel's story'.



Researcher: Some other children have suggested some of these things that they do when they miss their parents (reads from the partially completed learning web). What do you do when you miss your parents, or what could you do when you miss your parents when they are away for training or deployment?

Cassie: Draw a picture for them

Ivan: Read a story.

Andrew: Visit the farm.

Researcher: Does someone you know have a farm that you visit?

Andrew: My grandparents.

Researcher (finishing writing down ideas on the learning web): That sounds fun.
(moving to table) Okay. Let's see if you can draw me a picture of what you like to do when you miss your parents when they are away for work.



Cassie's drawing: When I miss Dad I draw a picture for him. This is a rainbow for Dad'

18th December 2013, 10:30am

Cassie (3) talking to myself as researcher in the Preschool playground while she does her person, house, tree drawing that she takes a lot of time to do



Cassie's person, house, tree drawing

Cassie's explanation as she draws: 'I'm gonna draw a house. Person. I'm having green. I've got to finish the big eyes. I don't know how to write, but I can just draw 'O'. I'm not finished my person yet. There's no hurry. (looking around) There's no clocks. (Pointing to face) I've got whiskers and this (nose). (Banging on stool with crayon). This makes a sound. I can see a building (pointing far away). I have lots of toys at my house. The other day I went back to the fishy island. Hey, and at my home.'

(She had drawn a very detailed face that she spent most of the time on the eyes).

Researcher: Did you want to draw the house or the tree?

Cassie: 'I will do a house on the back. (after some long hesitations). I'm going to finish mine later.'

14th December, 2013: 6:35pm

Conversation between Wendy (Cassie's mother), Tahlia (Ivan's mother) and Veronica (Andrew and Toby's mother) at Christmas drinks at Wendy's house

Exosystem	•Tahlia and Veronica (Wendy's ADF friends)
Microsystem	•Wendy (mother)
Individual	•Cassie



Veronica (showing pictures from her phone): How cute is that?

Tahlia: He is adorable. Yeah, Ivan bought home a kite but there was no wind that day. He flew it around the house by running from room to room. Drove me mad!

Veronica (showing more to Wendy): Andrew loved the music and they got to do a rap on the computer. Marg sent me through all these pictures. We didn't mind them doing all the stuff at the centre, but the boys couldn't do the camera packs at home properly so we ditched those. It's been a fair while since Jason's been back from deployment, but they still remember a lot.

Wendy: Really?

Veronica: Yes, Andrew remembers a lot about that time and will often say, that was when Dad was away. Toby was really little, like a toddler, but he remembers the dog dying when Jason was away then and says that. Jason is amazed at what they say.

Wendy: That is amazing!

Tahlia: Here's the photo Marg sent me of Ivan drawing. We didn't do the camera packs either, because Ivan doesn't remember anything and I don't have that sort of time. I didn't cope during deployment and either did he and I really don't want to go back there. Being a working Mum makes it hard to do anything extra. I was his primary caregiver anyway then and I am now, so really, things just went on for him.



Wendy: That does sound hard. Cassie really reacted with this last lot of training when he got home, rather than when he was away. It took us both by surprise. We are so lucky, though. The educators at this centre really support them emotionally, I think. We thought of moving Cassie when we moved house, but both agreed, their understanding and support of defence kids is worth the extra drive.

Veronica: True. Is she settling now?

Wendy: Finally, yes! (pauses) Just in time for the next lot of training! (laughing wryly)

Veronica (joins in the laughing): Ummm, and why do we do this?

Tahlia (raising her hand and laughing): Oooh! I know, I know! The great lifestyle!

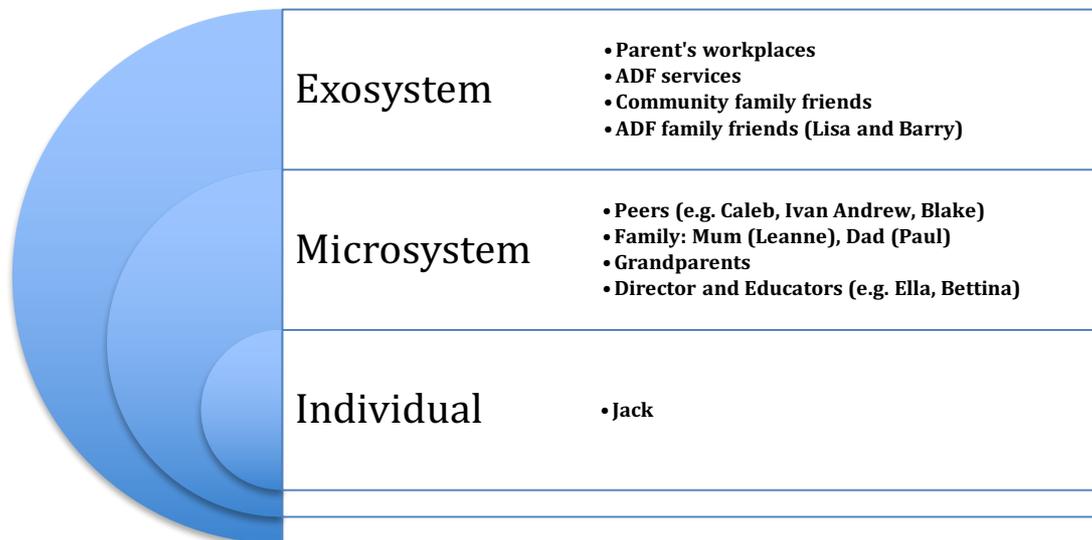
Veronica (laughing whilst talking): And getting to live in 17 wonderful locations over a 12-year-period!

(All three laugh).



Appendix 5

Introduction to Jack



Jack's socio-ecological family model



Jack (4 years)

Jack's narrative

8th November 2013, 5:45am

Email from Leanne (Jack's mother) to Paul (Jack's father)

Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Leanne (mother) and Paul (father)
Individual	• Jack

Find Someone Address Book

Send Save Close Check Names

To... paul.smith14@defence.gov.au [remove]

Cc...

Bcc...

Subject: night shift

Attachments...

Dear Paul

I am completely pissed off with work. How the frig do they expect me to do a week of night duty again when they know you are deployed? I can't believe they have done this again! If they want to put me on extra instead of you-know-who then they can bloody well supply some childcare. Scuse the French but it has been an awful week. Anyway, I burst into tears at the centre when I was picking up Jack (lucky he didn't see), and the teacher took pity on me and said she would mind Jack before my shift then drive him to the centre. She is so lovely, we are lucky and they don't have to do that. I felt like a fool blubbering like that, but I just couldn't believe they would pull a trick like that again at such short notice. Your Mum has been great this time, but she needs like three week's notice, so I knew that wouldn't work. All our friends work, and now all our army freinds are moving away. Heaps of them are moving before Christmas so it is going to get worse. Lucky you are coming home soon.

Sorry for the big whinge. I am just at the end of my tether cause I thought you would be back by now. Don't worry - we will muddle through until you get back - just hurry up!

Love Lee

9th November 2013, 12:15pm

Email from Paul (Jack's father) and Leanne (Jack's mother) sent from an Army base in Afghanistan

	Exosystem	
	Microsystem	• Leanne (mother) and Paul (father)
	Individual	• Jack

Send | Save | Close |  |  |  |  Check Names

To... leesmith2024@hotmail.com [remove]

Cc...

Bcc...

Subject: RE: night shift [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]

Attachments...

UNCLASSIFIED

Hi Lee

I wish I could help out darling, but a bit tied up here quite frankly. Seriously, though it sounds awful, but glad the staff were able to help out at the centre.

It's great Mum can mind him overnight for tomorrow night's shift. She has been a bigger help this deployment, cleaning the house sometimes for you. I will buy her a present. I know giving her three weeks notice is a lot, but she is getting old and they like to plan.

Keep up the good work, Lee!
Paul

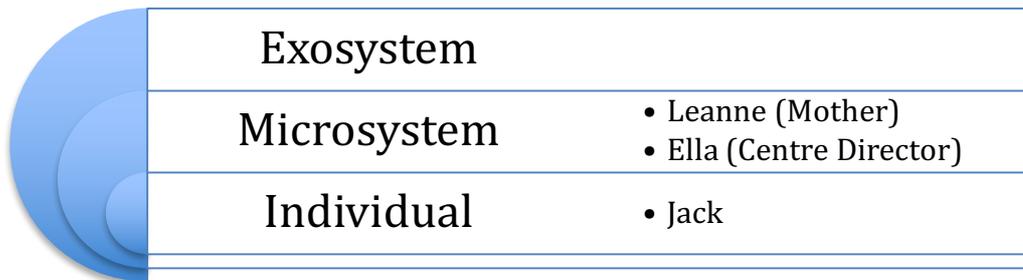
Lance Corporal Paul Smith
Central Barracks - xxxxx

Please consider the environment before printing This e-mail remains the property of the Australian Defence Organisation and is subject to the jurisdiction of Section 70 of the Crimes Act 1914. If you have received this e-mail in error, you are to contact the sender and delete the e-mail immediately.

-----Original Message-----

11th November 2013, 7:15am

A conversation in the corridor at the centre with Ella (the centre director) and Leanne (Jack's mother) and Jack (4)



Ella (smiling): Hello Jack! Hi Leanne. How are you all this morning?

Jack (smiling): Hello.

Leanne (smiling): Good thanks, tired though thanks to Mr Wiggles here shuffling around in my bed all night.

Jack (giggles, then cuddles mother): Bye Mum. (pointing to himself, then his chest then his mum) I love you. (walks through the preschool room, then outside to play)

Leanne (repeating the actions): I love you. I'll see you this afternoon.

Ella: What a lovely routine you have!

Leanne: It seems to help.

Jack (reappearing at door): I love you (with actions).

Leanne (with actions): I love you. Bye! (blows kiss)

Jack: Bye! (blows kiss and moves away)

Leanne (sighs): He's tired.

Ella: Does he normally sleep with you?

Leanne: Yep, since the day he overheard my husband say he was going to deploy.

Ella: Oh! When was that?

Leanne: Four weeks before he left.

Ella: It's amazing how sensitive they are. So it was hard for a whole month before he left then.

Leanne: Well that last month before they leave is awful anyway, because you start to distance yourself from each other. Paul will start saying 'Oh, well I'm not going to be here anyway', and I will say, 'Well you don't care, 'cause you won't be here' and stuff like that. It's horrible really, but just what happens. In the lead up month I am a mess emotionally, and Jack feels that. Jack and Paul spend a lot of time together though, which is lovely.

Ella: How are you when Paul goes?

Leanne (looking teary): A real mess emotionally. I work hard not to be resentful and bitter, but this is his fourth deployment in four years, so he has been away about half of Jack's life. I don't cope at all. Jack and I just muddle through. I can't seem to cope with all the extra jobs, and we have no routine at all. We just eat when we want, sleep when we want. If Jack wants to eat on the floor in front of the TV, that's fine. The TV is on nearly all the time, and Jack can choose what we watch.

Ella: I guess we all cope in different ways. So how are you now?

Leanne (a bit more emotional and teary): Well after that first month, we get into the groove and try to make the most of it. We start doing our own thing and going to friends for sleepovers and making our own fun.

Ella: That's great, Leanne. A very positive turn-a-round.

Leanne: The good thing is that I've had that time with him and we've gotten really close. Before it was just Paul and him, but now we are close too.

Ella: That is really important.

Leanne: This next month will be tricky. I go to pieces in the last month again. We have to sort of prepare for him coming home.

Ella (curiously): In what way?

Leanne (resigned): Well, Paul is like a military man. You know, routines. There are mealtimes, he says what we are watching when the TV is on. It's his sport programs we watch. There are bedtimes. So I say to Jack, 'You know what we do now is just our thing. When Daddy gets home we have to do it his way'.

Ella: How does Jack cope with that change?

Leanne: Well he and Paul just spend heaps of time together, which they need and I am more than happy to step back. That is just what they have to do, and I need a break. He has been away 8 months this time. He was supposed to be away 6, but it got extended. But, pretty much we are all a bit of a mess that first month.

Ella (sympathetically): Oh, dear. That is hard. How long until he is home?

Leanne (sighing): About 5 weeks.

Ella (smiling): That's wonderful. Is Jack always a restless sleeper?

Leanne: No, if he has his 'Clowny' toy he is OK. My Mum gave it to him just before she passed away when he was a baby, so I love that he is so attached to it.

Ella: That is sweet, Leanne. Well I hope you get a rest before Paul gets back.

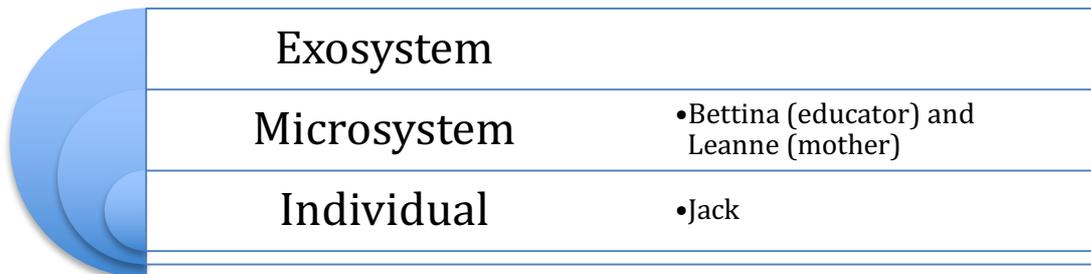
Leanne (smiling, checking the time on phone): Thanks, Ella.

Ella (starting to leave): Well, you take care of yourself Leanne.

Leanne (leaving): OK, thanks.

11th November 2013, 4:30pm

Conversation between Bettina (Jack's educator) and Leanne (Jack's mother) in the Preschool classroom when the children are outside playing.



Leanne: Hi Bettina. Did you all have a good day?

Bettina: Yes, we did thanks. Jack seemed a bit tired, but got through OK. He slept a bit longer during rest time.

Leanne: Okay, thanks.

Bettina: Now, the researcher, Marg, is outside and is happy to meet you.

Leanne (looking outside): That's good. I just want to know how much time this is going to take as I am struggling with everything else at the moment. It sounds good though, especially for Jack. The activities at the centre will be fine, just the home stuff is tricky. I've got night duty coming up, that's all.

Bettina: Well let her know anyway.

Leanne: Will do.

Bettina: Jack said he can't Skype™ Dad at the moment.

Leanne (looking teary): That's right. Nothing now 'till he is back, not even emails after last night. We had a few texts for a while (smiling wryly), but he said not to ask any questions. Skype™ was a regular event for Jack though. He loved it. You know it has made all the difference for him. (more emotionally) Once we met up in Singapore a

few months ago when Paul had leave for a few days, he saw Dad at the airport and just ran straight towards him, calling ‘Daddy, Daddy’ (Mother is crying now). It was like the man on the TV come to life. There was no stand-off-ishness at all. It was fabulous. I think that was the turning point for Jack. He seemed to cope with it so much better. It was like he knew he could see Paul on the TV and then he would come back home.

Bettina (patting Leanne on the back): The joys of modern technology. That is wonderful.

Leanne (sighing): I always cry when I tell that story. We will just have to be patient now. That is so hard. He keeps asking ‘How long?’ and you know everything for Jack is ‘tomorrow’ or ‘yesterday’ or ‘after a sleep’. He has absolutely no idea about time.

Bettina (smiling): That’s typical, Leanne. It is a really big concept for a four-year-old. (Waving to some other parents).

Leanne: Oh, good. It drives me mad though. Luckily I work nearby and we get lots of time together. I’ll go and see Marg. Thanks.

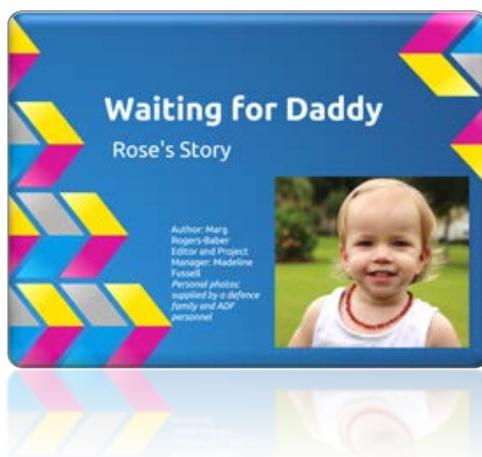
Bettina: See you tomorrow, Leanne.

Leanne (opening internal gate to the playground): See you.

13th November, 2013 2:45pm

Conversation with Jack (4), Andrew (4), Natalie (3.5) and Emily (2.5) during a reading of the book in the Preschool room: 'Waiting for Daddy: Rose's Story'. The book is about a toddler whose father goes on deployment. It explores communication with the father when he is away, sleep issues and missing Dad.

Exosystem	
Microsystem	•Andrew, Natalie, Emily (peers)
Individual	•Jack



Jack: I went to the airport.

Emily: I went to the airport.

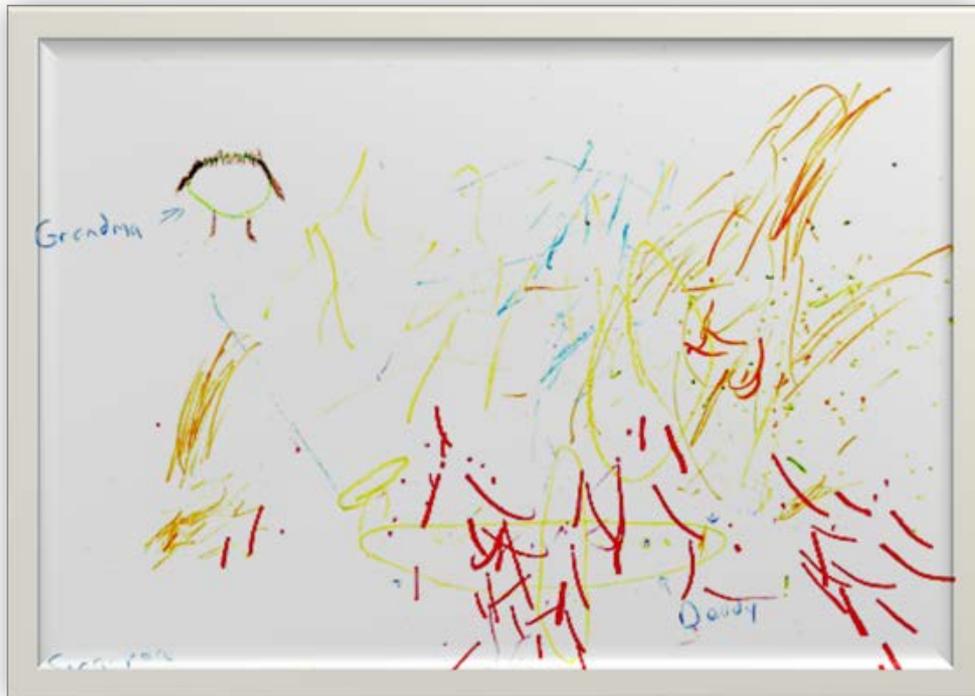
Andrew: When daddy went to Afghan...

Natalie: I went on an aeroplane.

Andrew: Went too far.

Jack: My Daddy went to Afghanistan.

After the story the group were asked to draw a picture about their parents going on deployment or away on training. Jack looked a bit emotional before he started his artwork. He asked the educator to draw an aeroplane and his Nana (see Figure 2).



Jack's picture of him meeting his father at Singapore at the airport (with educator's scribed labels)

15th November 2013, 8:00am

Conversation between Jack (4) and myself as researcher in the Preschool room

Jack (looking up from train-set): Marg! Marg! Come and look.

Researcher: Ooh! What have you and Ivan made?

Ivan (looks up, smiles and then keeps playing)

Jack: We made this track.

Researcher: That's amazing. Are you racing?

Jack (moving two matchbook cars on the track): Dad is driving the red one. (making racing noises).

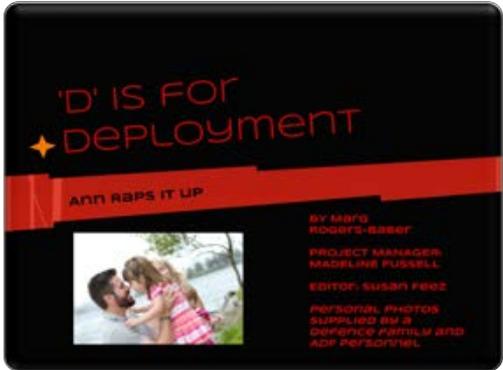
Researcher: Is Mum driving the green one?

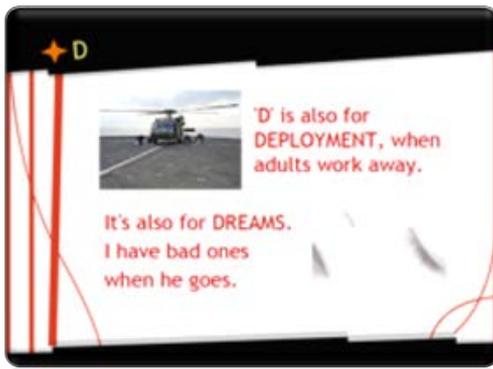
Jack (looking surprised): No, it's me.

15th November 2013, 8:00am

Comments from Blake (5), Jack (4), Toby (2) and Natalie (3.5) in the Preschool room during the reading of a story called 'D is for deployment: Ann raps it up' which explores some of the experiences and emotions of a preschool girl experiencing her father's deployment. It explores her experiences during the deployment cycle, such as; helping Dad pack his bags, her nightmares when he goes, Dad leaving and coming home again and jobs ADF personnel undertake on deployment.

Exosystem	
Microsystem	•Blake, Toby, Natalie (peers)
Individual	•Jack

	<p>Natalie: I have D on my shirt.</p>
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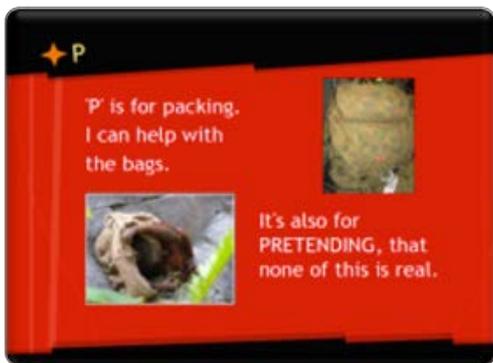


Toby: Helicopter

Blake: Scary dreams are nightmares.



Jack: My Dad's in 'ghanistan.



Blake: I pack my bag.



Jack's D is for Deployment picture: 'Daddy is at the bush looking for something on deployment'

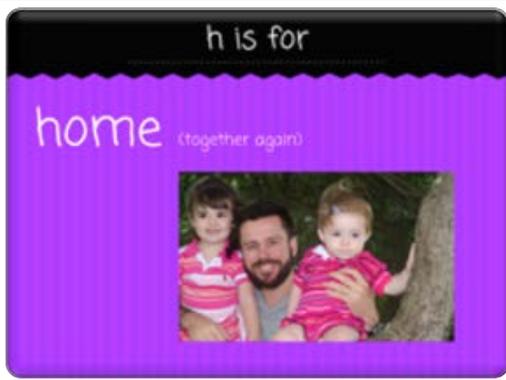
17th November 2013, 9:15am

Comments from Jack (4), Blake (5), Emily (2.5) and Andrew (4) in the Preschool outside playground during the reading of a story called ‘Mary’s Alphabet Slippery Dip’ about deployment.

Exosystem	
Microsystem	• Andrew, Emily, Blake (peers)
Individual	• Jack



 <p>a is for</p> <p>airport</p> <p>army</p> <p>airforce</p>	<p>Jack: My Daddy's in 'ghanistan.</p> <p>Another child: My Dad's in 'ghanistan.</p>
 <p>e is for</p> <p>emails</p> <p>(from Dad - Mum reads them out to us)</p>	<p>Andrew: Email</p>
 <p>g is for</p> <p>going on adventures</p> <p>(Mum takes us on some special adventures when Dad is away)</p>	<p>Marg: 'G' is for going on adventures Mum takes us on some special adventures when Dad is away.</p> <p>Jack: No, with my Daddy.</p>



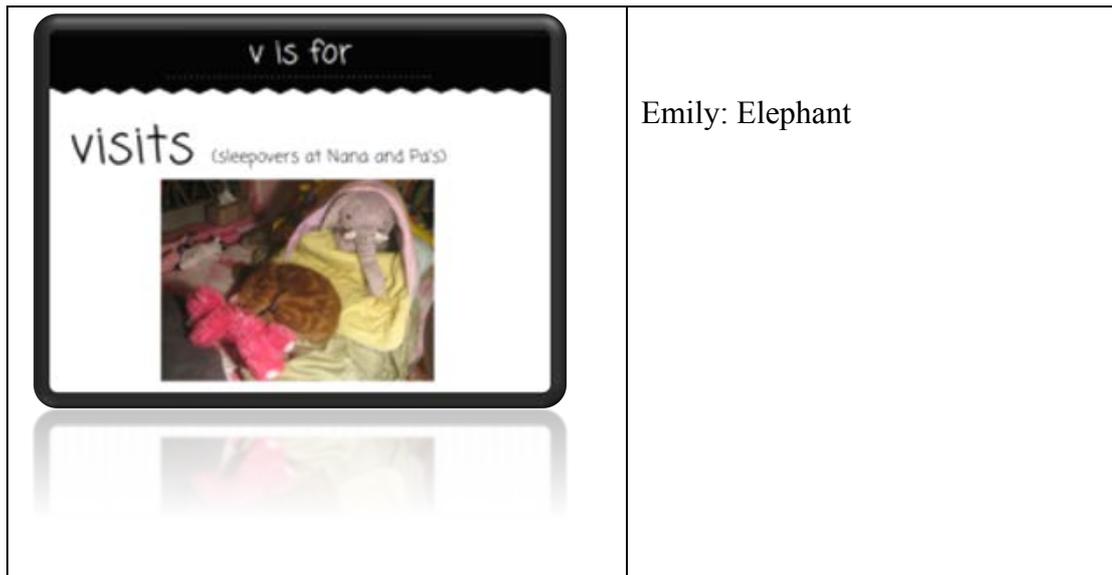
Andrew: No, when Daddy comes home.



Blake: Tiger



Andrew: I...I went on the unit army days and I went on the jumping castle.



Jack engaging in animal play with peers acting out emotions showed in 'Mary's Alphabet slippery dip'

8th December 2013, 10:05am

Jack (4) and myself as researcher in the centre playground

Researcher (holding up a book and kite): Jack, did you want to come and listen to this story and make a kite like this today?

Jack (shaking head): No. (continues playing)

9th December 2013, 10:40am

Jack (4), Leanne (Jack's mother), peers and myself as researcher in the Preschool playground during a research activity

Researcher: Oh, hello. Jack, look who is here.

Jack (smiling and jumping into mother's arms): Mum!

Leanne: Sorry for interrupting. I am on a break so I thought I would come for a visit. He has been with Nana for two nights and we have had lots of tears in the night. I have been beside myself with worry.

Jack (cuddling mother tighter): I missed you.

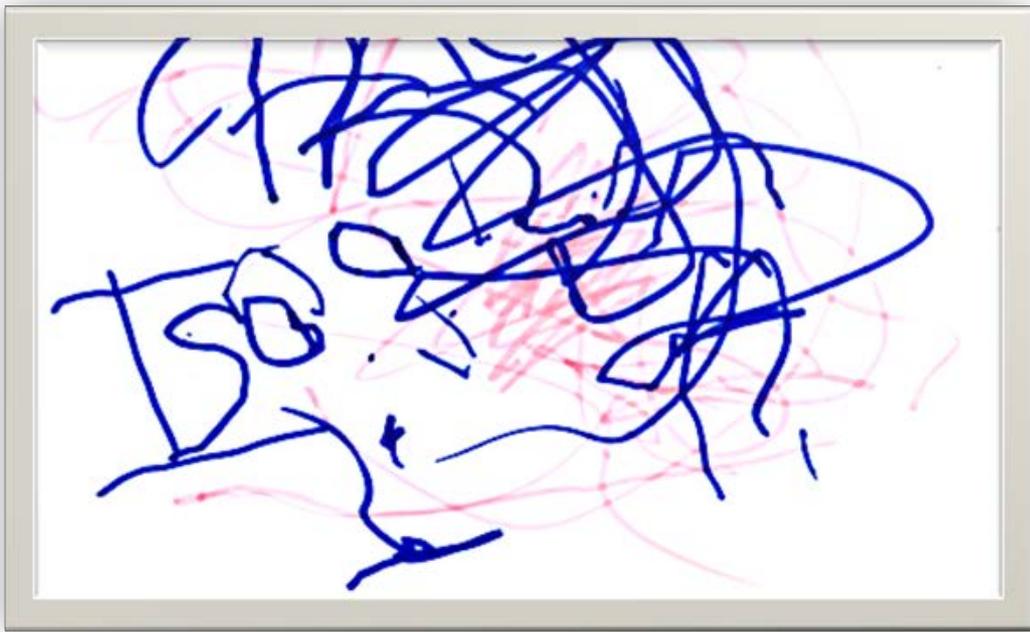
Leanne (teary): I've missed you too (cuddling him back).

Leanne: What are we supposed to be drawing?

Jack (distracted, says to his mother): You draw.

Jack struggles to focus on the activity. He jumps up and down repeatedly during the drawing, runs around then returns to the drawing to scribble, then repeats this a number of times. When his mother draws or writes, Jack moves the top of the pen.

Jack: 'Dad's on 'aployment. He's coming home soon'.



Jack's drawing after his mother's surprise visit, the mother's writing is also visible.

11th December 2013, 5:15am

Paul (Jack's father) MMS texts his spouse Leanne on the way home from Afghanistan

Leanne

All packed up and on the move.

Nice to be able to text

again. Can't wait to hold

you again. I dreamt I was

back home last night. Tell

Jack to get ready for some

fun.

Paul

11th December 2013, 5:20am

Paul (Jack's father) MMS texts his spouse Leanne from home

Paul

Thank heavens you are out of

there at last. I dreamt you

were home last night too.

Such a relief to hear from you

after so many weeks. Hope trip

goes quickly for you.

X Leanne

12th December 2013, 8:30am

I leave note for Leanne with some drawings and photos in Jack's locker outside preschool room

Dear Leanne

Here are some of Jack's pictures from the research activities.

Jack was adamant about the placement of the sad and happy faces. At first he made two happy faces, and said he was not sad when his father was away, which probably shows he is able to work out that although he misses his Dad he is not sad all the time.

I hope you both enjoy all the celebrations with Paul and Jack.

Cheers

Marg



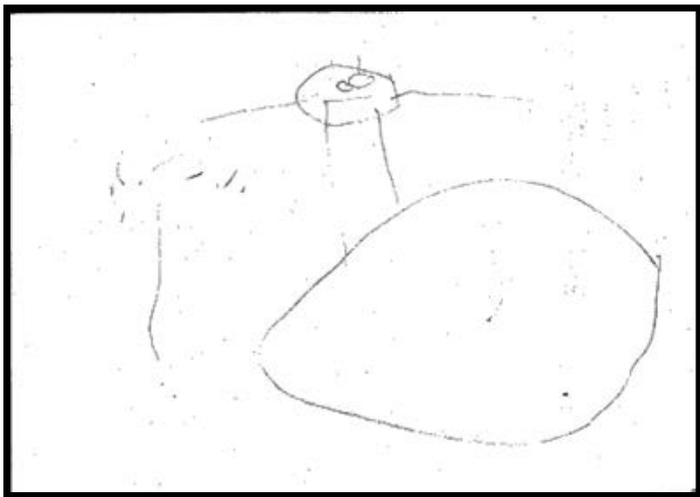
Jack's clay face of when his father is away



Jack's clay model faces for when his father is away (left) and home (right)



Jack making clay model faces



Jack's person, house tree drawing

Jack's comments when drawing: 'Look at my man. I did a person. This is a big house. Yes, yes, yes. I did a person and a house. Leaf, leaf, leaf (as he draws tree). I want to do (looking unsure) I need to show Caleb. I need to watch Caleb'.

12th December 2013, 1:15pm

Conversation with Ella (the centre director) and Leanne (Jack's mother) at the front reception area of centre

Ella: (sounding surprised) Oh, hi! (wolf whistles) Whoohoo! Who do we have here? Make room on the catwalk!

Leanne (looking uncomfortable, blushing, laughing, then flicking her straightened hair dramatically): Hi! Well Paul is home today.

Ella: You are a stunner. I have only ever seen you in uniform and your hair up.

Leanne: Well I got my hair done, a facial and legs waxed. Frig that hurt! Why do we do this to ourselves?

Ella (laughing): Ouch! Because we care and I'm sure he will appreciate the effort.

Leanne (laughing): He probably won't have washed or shaved for three days.

Ella (emotionally): I am just overwhelmed by the effort you all make. You are all so beautiful anyway, then you go and do all this when you are just tired and had it.

Leanne (a bit teary): Oh, don't start me crying.

Ella (patting her on the back and adding brightly): So, what are the plans for today?

Leanne (wiping away her tears): Well I am picking up Jack now as he will have had a nap. We go to the airport and Nana is doing the cake. Grandad will join us at her place for afternoon tea.

Ella: Sounds marvellous, and not too overwhelming for Jack.

Leanne (with a wobbly smile, straightens herself up with some effort): Yes, ta. I'll be fine (continues down the hall to pick up Jack).

13th December 2013, 7:55am

Jack (4) and myself as researcher in the Preschool room where there is a very small combined class of mixed ages as many of the children are on holidays. There is a casual educator on duty as the normal educators are on leave.

Researcher: Hi Jack! How was the trip to the airport to pick up Dad?

Jack (smiling): Good. My Dad's home now.

Researcher: That's wonderful news, Jack. How exciting! Did you have a cake?

Jack (nodding): Yes. (Following the researcher around the room). I want to come with you.

Researcher: I'm just tidying up because this is my last day.

Jack: I'll help (anxiously) I want to come with you.

Researcher (patting his back): Oh, that's great Jack. But I haven't really got a job for you and I can't take you to the office. I'll tell you what, when I finish packing up I will come and say goodbye.

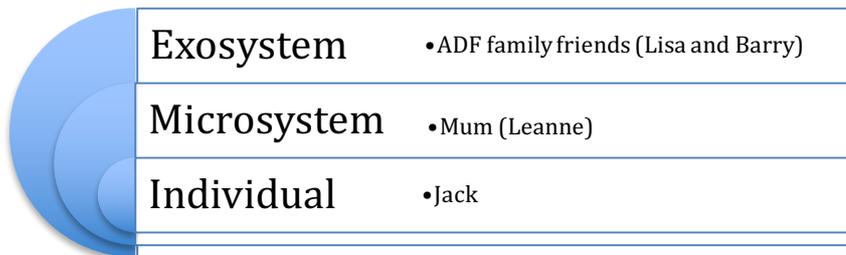
Jack (cuddling me): But I want to come.

Researcher: Back in a moment, Jack (going to get out a puzzle) Did you want to do a puzzle with Caleb?

Researcher sits with Caleb and Jack to start the puzzle.

13th December 2013, 3:55pm

Conversation between Leanne (Jack's mother) and Lisa (ADF family friend) in the centre playground at pick-up time



Leanne: Oh, hi Lisa!

Lisa: Hello! How did it go yesterday?

Leanne: Well. He's home...sleeping!

Lisa: Yeh, they do that a lot.

Leanne: Are you all packed up?

Lisa: Getting there, driving me mad though. So now you two have to catch up with each other on all that has happened.

Leanne (thoughtfully): Yes... and that's nice, but there are things they just miss. I mean how do you ever really catch up 8 months-worth of things that happen, events in Jack's life, the extended family, what is happening with my life, our emotions? I don't know sometimes he keeps things from me and I overhear him talking about something that happened on deployment with his mates over a beer. Things he doesn't share with me, probably 'cause he doesn't want to scare me. There are things you just don't share I suppose. How about you and Barry?

Lisa (frowning and looking puzzled): The same really, I guess. I think you try to catch up, but it is a weird thing to try to do. You try to shelter them when they are away by glossing over things, but then they might need to know the full extent when they get back, so that is hard delivering the news too.

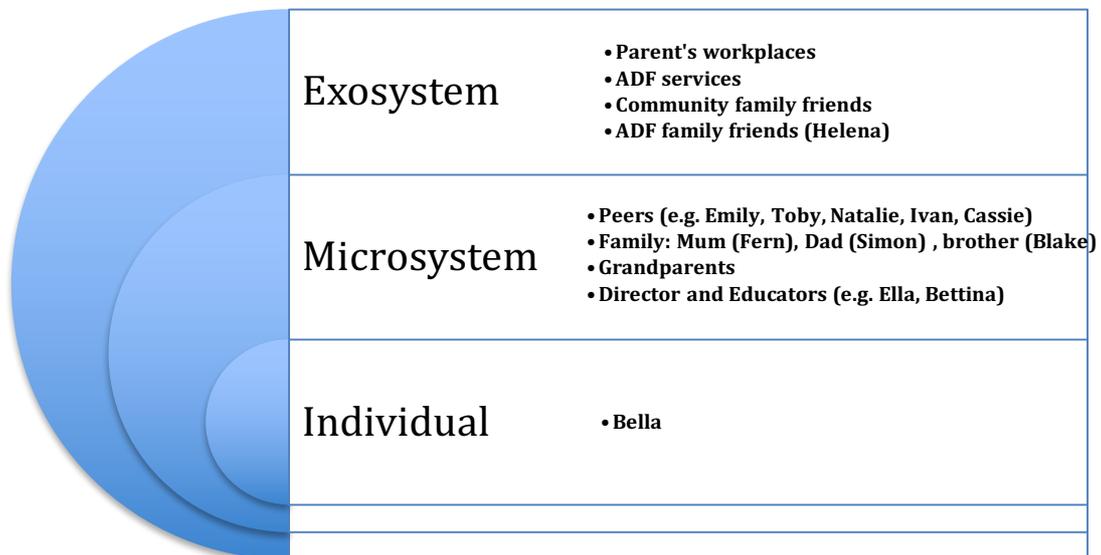
Leanne (smiling wryly): Mmmmm.... It is a strange life we lead.

Lisa (thoughtfully): I'll say. Well two lives really. (brightening) All the best anyway (hugging and kissing goodbye). Merry Christmas if I don't catch up before then. (feigned excitement with sarcasm) Darwin will be lovely and warm!

Leanne: (laughing and rolling her eyes) Bye, Lisa. You too. All the best with the move. We will really miss you all.

Appendix 6

Introduction to Bella



Bella's socio-ecological family model

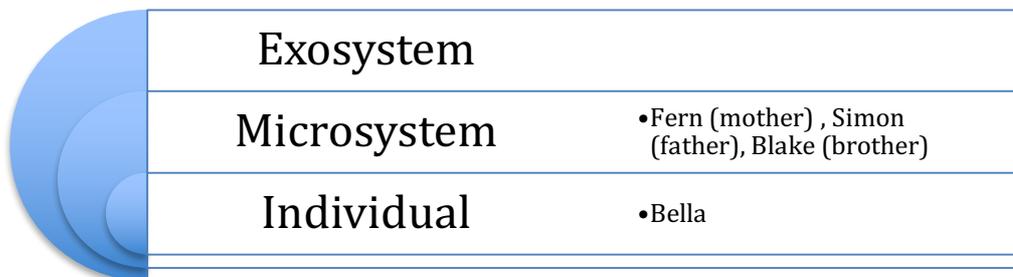


Bella (2.5 years)

Bella's narrative

10th November 2013, 6:45pm

Conversation between Simon (father), Fern (mother), Blake (5) and Bella (2.5) at home



Blake: How long will you be gone for, Dad?

Simon: Six weeks. (giving him hug and a kiss on the head) I'll miss you. Can you help Mum and Bella when I am gone?

Blake (quietly, looking sad): Yes.

Simon (turning to Bella): Come and give Daddy a cuddle. I have to go away tomorrow for work.

Bella (angrily): No! (backing away) I don't like you! You're going away.

Simon (looking and sounding surprised and hurt): Hey, Bella. (sternly, but softly) That's not nice.

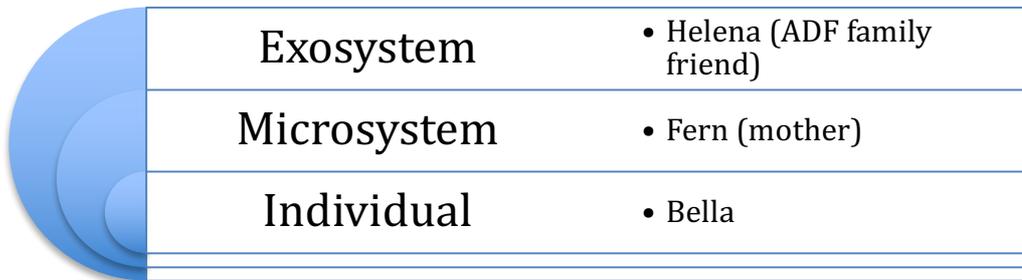
Fern (very upset): Bella! Don't be mean to Daddy. He has to go, but he is coming back. Now you say, 'Sorry, Dad'. And give him a cuddle.

Bella (forcefully): NO! (runs out of room bursting into tears on the way)

(Blake moves over to his father again for another cuddle and Fern follows Bella out of the room with tears in her eyes).

11th November 2013, 7:15am

Conversation between Fern (Bella and Blake's mother) and Helena (ADF family friend) in the front foyer of the centre as Fern is leaving for work after dropping off the children



Fern (trying to smile, sounding flat): Oh, hi.

Helena: Hi Fern. You don't sound too good. What's happened?

Fern: Simon leaves tonight for six week's training, and Bella has been just awful to him in the lead up to him going.

Helena: Oh, dear. In what way?

Fern: Just yelling at him, refusing to cuddle him and saying she doesn't like him 'cause he's going and stuff like that. It's awful. I am so upset and Simon is devastated.

Helena: That's a hard one. (pausing, looking thoughtful) Have you spoken to Ella? She might have some tips that other families have used when this happens.

Fern (looking hopeful): Oh, do you think so? Do you think other kids react this way? I just can't believe she is doing it.

Helena (reassuringly): I'm sure others have. Ella would know.

Fern (nodding): Thanks, Helena. I'll do that. You have a good day.

Helena (opening front door): Will do

13th November 2013, 5:35am

Simon (Blake and Bella's father) MMS texts his spouse Fern from an Army base in central Australia

Hi Fern

Glad you got the day off to have

some special time with the kids.

It's harder now you've started the

new job. Where are you going to

go with them today? Have fun!

Very hot here, the flies are

unbelievable - swallowed 5

yesterday. Are they sleeping any

better? Love you Simon

11th November 2013, 11:20am

Fern (Blake and Bella's mother) MMS texts her spouse Simon from home

Dear Simon

Off for a ferry ride and

then to that lovely park with

all the wooden equipment

through the trees. We will

get an early lunch in a café

somewhere, then home.

Hopefully Bella sleeps on

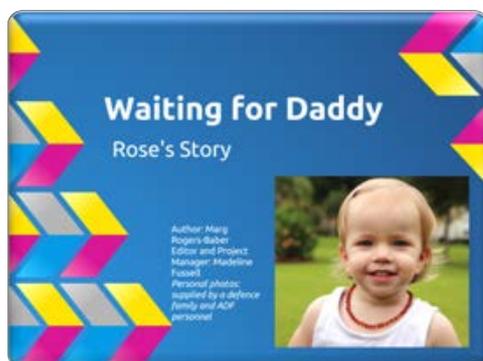
the way home so Blake

and I get some time
 together. No, no better in
 the sleep department.
 Hope you don't eat too
 many flies as they
 might be an endangered
 species!! X Fern ☺

14th November 2013, 9:45am

Artwork responses from Bella (2.5), Andrew (4) and Toby (2) in the Preschool room during a reading of the book: 'Waiting for Daddy: Rose's Story'. The book is about a toddler whose father goes on deployment. It explores communication with the father when he is away, sleep issues and missing Dad.

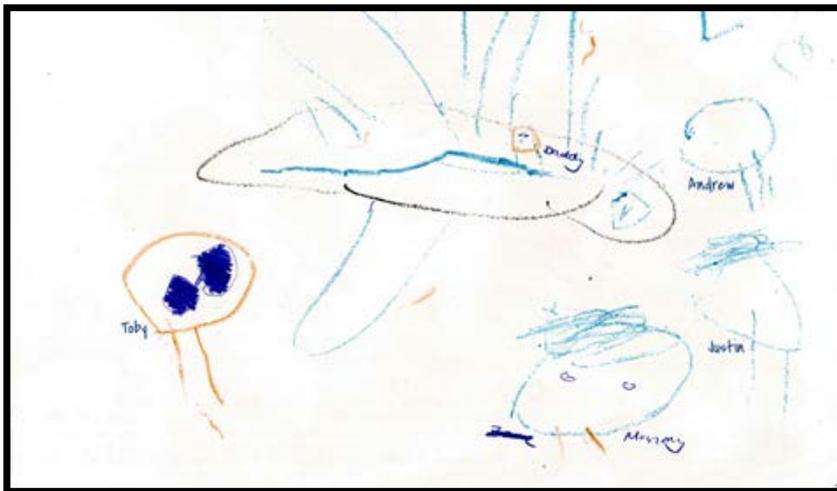
Exosystem	
Microsystem	•Andrew, Natalie, Emily (peers)
Individual	•Bella



Researcher: Can you draw me a picture of your Mum or Dad going away for training or deployment?



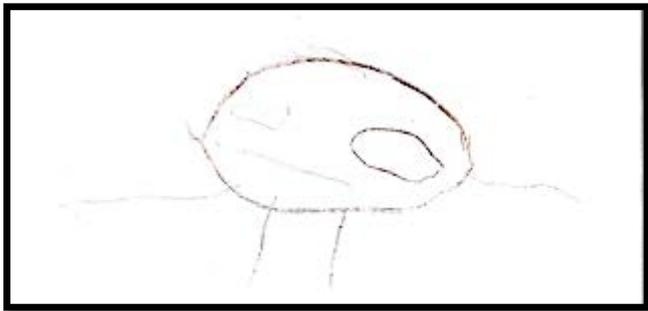
Bella's drawing



Andrew's picture 'Daddy is going to Afghanistan' (the educator drew the plane on his instruction)



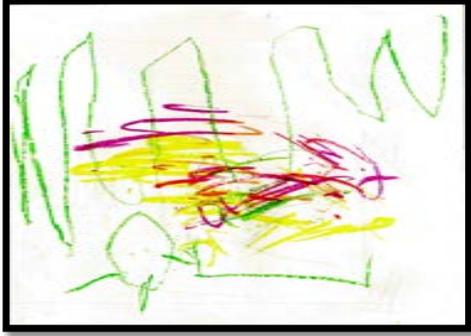
Toby's picture



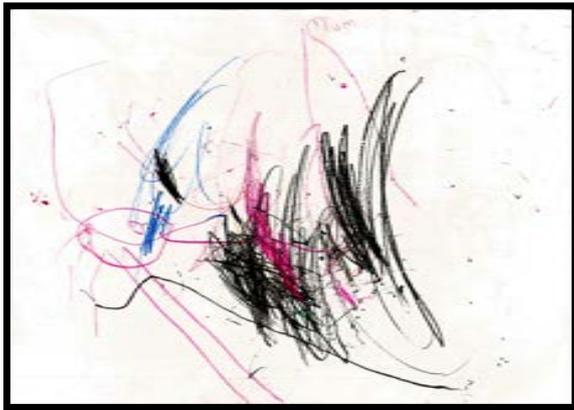
Ivan's drawing during a repeat of this activity: 'My Mummy goes in to work'



Andrew's drawing



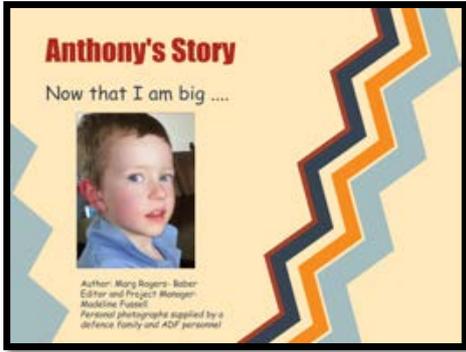
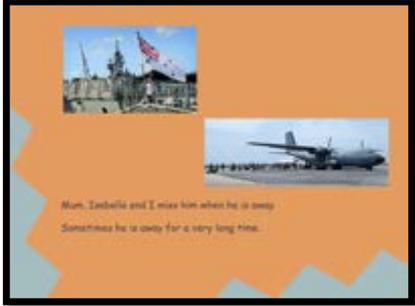
Andrew's drawing of colourful rain (drawn during a storm)



Bella's drawing of her Mum (educator has scribed 'Mum')

14th November, 2013 10:45am

Comments from Andrew (4), Bella (2.5) and Emily (2.5) in the Preschool room during a reading of the book: ‘Now that I am big: Anthony’s Story’. The book is about Rose’s brother, Anthony who struggles with feelings of anger towards his father after his return from deployment and the difference between working at the base and going on deployment.

Book text	Book graphic	Children’s comments
	 <p>Anthony's Story Now that I am big</p> <p>Author: Mary Rogers - Baber Editor and Project Manager: Madeline Fussell Personal photographs supplied by a defence family and ADF personnel</p>	<p>Emily: My dad went up in an aeroplane.</p> <p>Bella: My dad went away too.</p>
<p>Book text: Mum, Rose and I miss him when he is away. Sometimes he is away for a very long time.</p>	 <p>Mum, Isabelle and I miss him when he is away. Sometimes he is away for a very long time.</p>	<p>Emily: My dad went up in an aeroplane.</p> <p>Bella: My dad went away too.</p> <p>Bella: And my Dad w.. go away.</p> <p>Emily: Aeroplane.</p>
<p>When I was little, I used to get grumpy waiting to talk to Dad on the phone.</p> <p>Now that I am big, I know how to wait</p>	 <p>When I was little, I used to get grumpy waiting to talk to Dad on the phone.</p> <p>Now that I am big, I know how to wait my turn. And wait... and wait... and wait...</p>	<p>Bella: I got my pink bike.</p> <p>Emily: I got my pink...</p>

<p>my turn. And wait, and wait and wait.</p>		
<p>When I was little, I used to help lick the bowl and taste biscuits we made to post to Dad.</p>		<p>Andrew: Yum, yum, yum.</p>
<p>Now that I am big, I also know that Dad loves me and thinks about me ...</p>		<p>Andrew: Where is the Dad?</p>
<p>... whether he is far, far away on deployment or training</p>		<p>Andrew: Now he is back. Bella: My Dad's going in a car.</p>

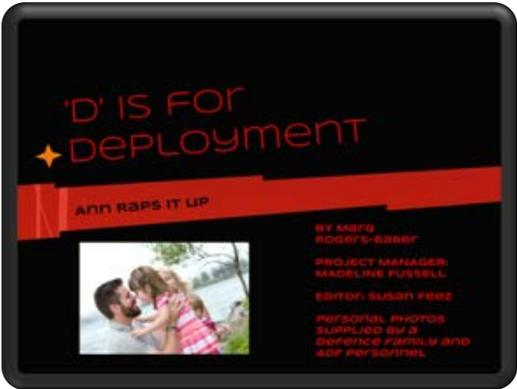


Natalie acting out the character's interactions from 'Anthony's Story' through puppet play

15th November 2013, 8:00am

Comments from Blake (5), Jack (4), Toby (2) and Natalie (3.5) in the Preschool room during the reading of a story called 'D is for deployment: Ann raps it up' which explores some of the experiences and emotions of a preschool girl during her father's deployment. It explores experiences during the deployment cycle, such as; helping Dad pack his bags, her nightmares when he goes, Dad leaving and coming home again and jobs ADF personnel do on deployment.

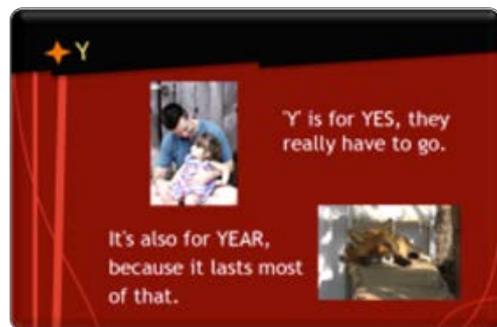
Exosystem	
Microsystem	•Emily, Andrew, Natalie (peers)
Individual	•Bella

Storybook page	Children's comments
 <p>'D' IS FOR DEPLOYMENT</p> <p>ADD RAPS IT UP</p> <p>BY MARG ROBERTS-ROBERTS</p> <p>PROJECT MANAGER: MADELINE FUSSELL</p> <p>EDITOR: SIOBHAN FREE</p> <p>PERSONAL PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY A DEFENCE FAMILY AND ADF PERSONNEL</p>	
 <p>L</p> <p>L' is for leaving, on a bus, a ship or plane.</p>	<p>Bella: There's a storm.</p>
 <p>O</p> <p>O' is for OVERSEAS, where they often have to go.</p> <p>It's also for OH no! Here we go again.</p>	<p>Natalie: I'm overseas.</p>

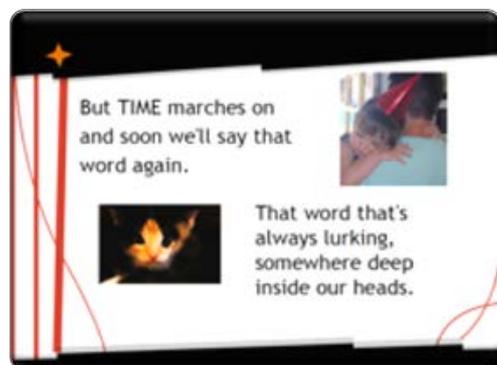


Bella: I like cake.

Emily: I cake.



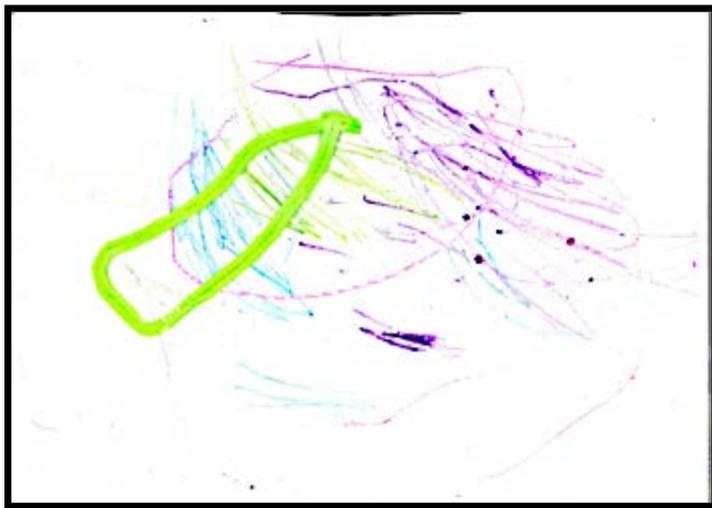
Andrew: What is that? That's her fox.



Bella: Her sad.

	<p>Bella: My Dad's gone to Ayers Rock.</p>
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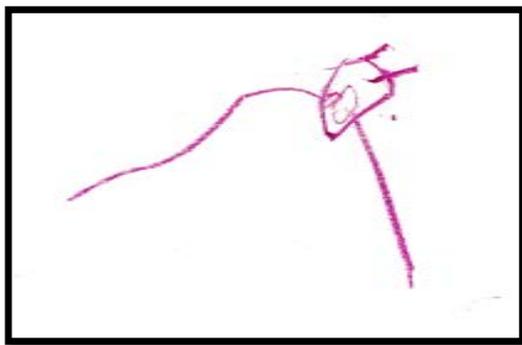
After the story, the children were asked to draw a picture of their parent going away on deployment or training.



Bella's first D is for deployment picture



Bella's second D is for Deployment picture – 'Daddy with hair'



Another drawing by Bella



Andrew's D is for Deployment picture: 'I have practiced my D's and coloured them in. There are many suns so all the boys can work outside on deployment. The lady is digging on deployment'



Natalie's 'D is for Deployment' drawing: 'Daddy at work playing music'

18th November 2013, 9:10am

Art responses from Toby (2), Bella (2.5) Emily (2.5) and myself as researcher in the
Preschool playground





Bella's drawing of what she can do when she is missing a parent: 'Daddy with hair'

5th December 2013, 9:35am

Conversation between Toby (2), Bella (2.5) Emily (2.5) and myself as researcher in the Pre-kindy room

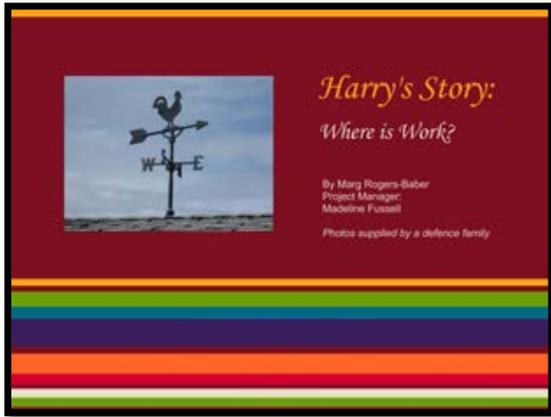
Researcher (holding up a book): Would you like to come and listen to this story and do a drawing for me today?

Toby (shaking head):

Emily (jumping up and down): Yes!

Bella (already moving to the door, excited and questioning tone): Yes. And me too?

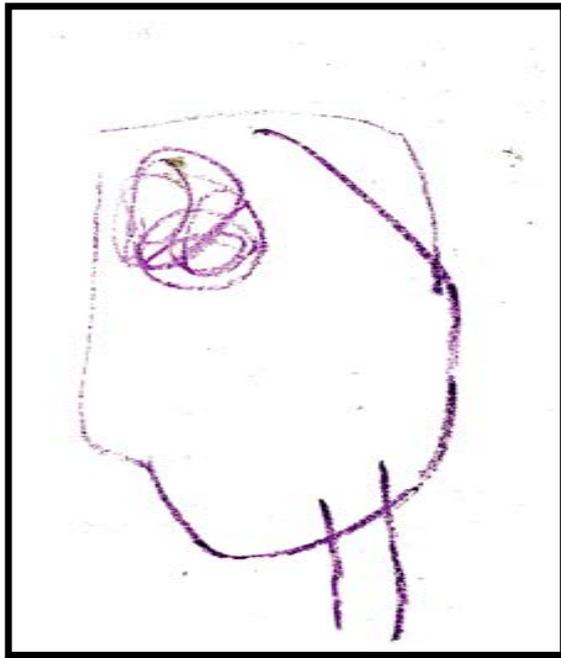
Toby (watches them go but stays behind):



Bella's drawing of what she could do when she misses her parent's when they are away for work



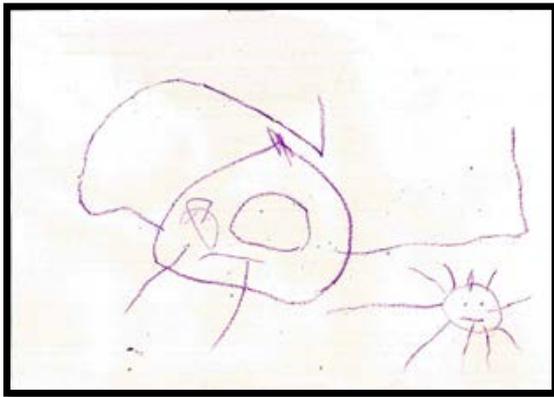
Bella's second drawing of what she could do when she misses her parent's when they are away for work



Bella's drawing of her Mum



Natalie's drawing of what she could do when she misses her parent's when they are away for work



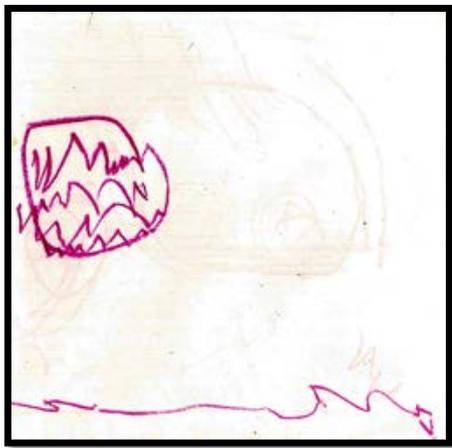
Ivan's drawing: 'I made a spider. I play with Dad when I am missing my Mum'



Andrew's drawing: Mum takes us to the farm when Dad is away



Bella's person, house tree drawing



Bella's drawing 'Writing my name'



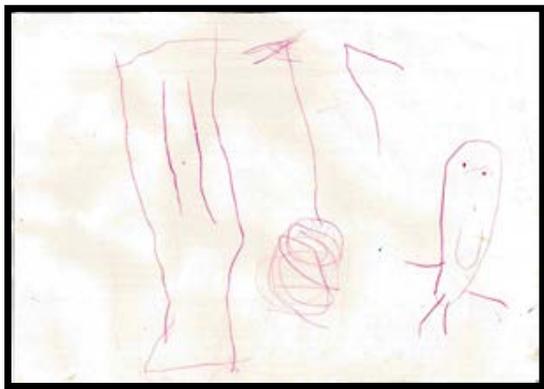
Natalie drawing a picture



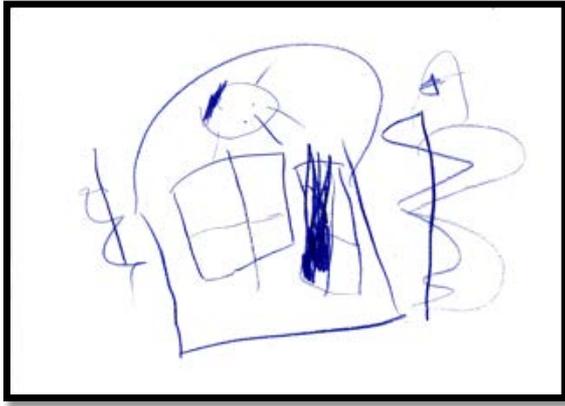
Natalie's first person, house tree drawing



Andrew's first person, house, tree drawing



Natalie's second person, house tree drawing



Andrew's second person, house tree drawing

2nd December 2013, 9:15am

Children's responses to being asked to make clay models of their family in the
Preschool playground



Bella and Emily making clay families



Bella making clay families with Natalie watching carefully



Ivan and Andrew making clay families



Ivan's clay model of his family



Natalie's clay model of her family



Natalie making clay families



Natalie making her clay family model



Natalie's clay model



Toby making his clay model family

3th December 2013, 7:55am

Children's clay model responses depicting their emotions when one of their parents is away for training and when they are home (page divided and labelled accordingly) in the Preschool room playground



Bella's clay face depiction when her father is away



Andrew working on the clay faces activity

11th December, 2013: 7:45am

Toby (2), Bella (2.5) Emily (2.5) and myself as researcher in the Pre-kindy room

Researcher (holding up a book and a kite): Who wants to come and listen to this story and make

Bella (interrupting): My Dad's in Ayers Rock. (looking at kite) Pick me!

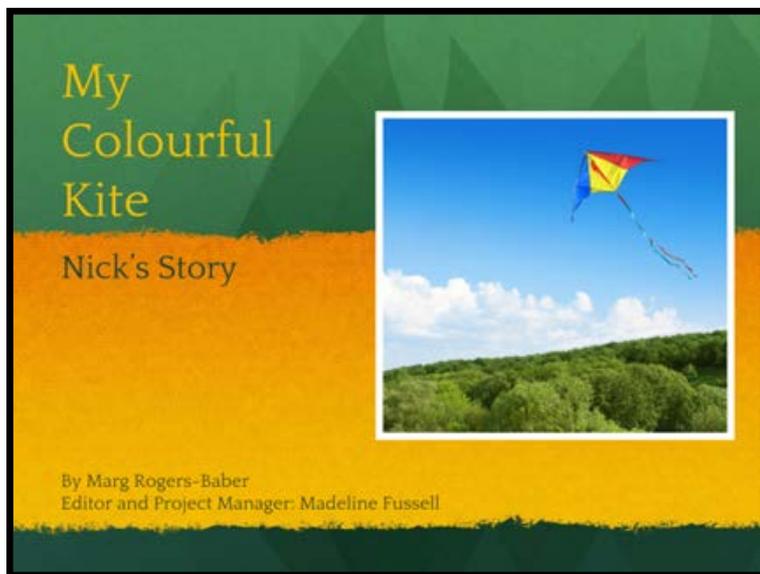
Researcher (finishing): and make a kite like this with me today?

Toby (looks up from playing, interested, but wary):

Pricilla (jumping up to leave): I do!

Emily (following): I do too.

Toby (joins group of peers to be involved):





Bella choosing coloured paper discs for her kite tail



Bella concentrating on scrunching coloured crepe paper for her kite tail



Toby scrunching crepe paper during kite-making

13th December 2013, 7:40am

Fern leaves note for me with a camera pack inside Jack's locker outside preschool room

Dear Marg

Here is Bella's camera pack from the research activities at home. I think it was one of the dog as they spend more time with him when Dad is away and get comfort from him inside at night.

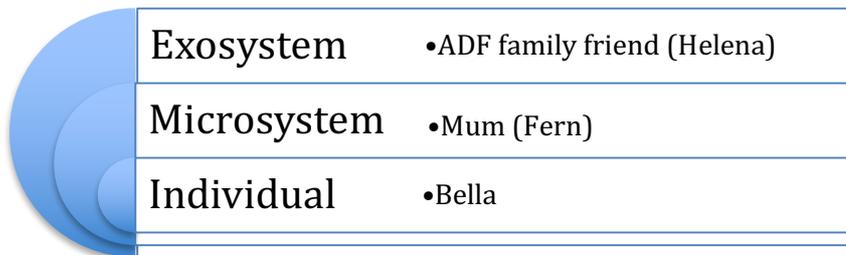
Thanks

Fern



13th December 2013, 4:55pm

Conversation between Fern (Bella's and Blake's mother) and Helena (ADF family friend) in the Preschool room at pick-up time



Exosystem	•ADF family friend (Helena)
Microsystem	•Mum (Fern)
Individual	•Bella

Fern (smiling): Oh! Hi, Helena!

Helena: Oh, it is good to see you looking chirpy. You seem better than last time I saw you.

Fern: Oh, yeah. That's right. Bella has settled much more, Simon has been away for a while now.

Helena: That's good. You would notice the difference between her and Blake, being different ages and being boy and girl too.

Fern: Blake seems to get comfort from things that don't help her. Bella doesn't seem to rely on the storybook as much as Blake, although hers is temperamental. She probably doesn't realise it is Dad's voice, but it only works sometimes so she gives up.

Helena (laughing): I think I would too!

Fern: She makes up for it with her own talking now. Wow she can verbalise! How are your three anyway?

Helena (rolling her eyes): Oh, exhaustingly healthy and into everything. Luke gets back on the weekend so that will be exciting for the kids.

Fern (looking surprised): Really? That went so quick! Oh, sorry. (looking guilty) I bet it wasn't quick for you (laughing).

Helena (laughing with her): No, that's for sure. And you?

Fern (yawning): Sorry! (sounding tired) Another week.

Helena (sympathetically): Take care of yourself. Catch you later, Fern.

Fern (exiting room to collect children in the playground): Bye.

13th December 2013, 5:00pm

I leave a note for Fern with copies of two drawings in Bella's locker inside pre-kindy room

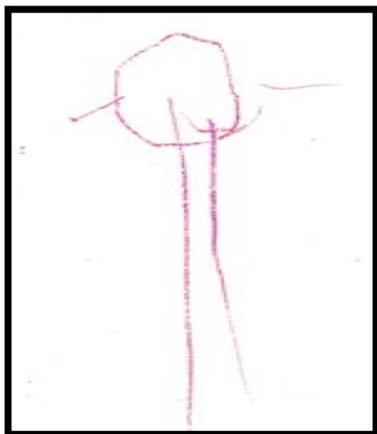
Dear Fern

I have made copies of these drawings I don't think I had shown you.

They were drawn after a reading of the book called 'Harry's Story: Where is Work?' which is on the memory stick I gave you.

Merry Christmas

Marg



Bella's drawing 'Mum goes in the car to work'



Bella's drawing 'My Dad drives to the train to go to work'.

Bella (whilst Mum is looking at the drawings shown above): Look, that's me (pointing to the picture in a frame on the cupboard).

Blake (pointing to another photo): Who's that?

Bella (looking, sounding unsure): Ummm, Lilly?

Blake: Oh.

Bella (pointing to another one): That's Toby.

Blake: Yeh. Hey, Mum! (turning around as he speaks when there is no answer)

Fern (who has been quietly crying as she views the pictures): Oh, um (with wobbly voice) Yes, coming. (wiping tears)

Blake (cuddling his mother): Mum.

Fern (sighing and trying to stop the tears): I was just looking at the lovely picture of Dad that Bella drew (holding out the picture that is slightly wet with tears).

Bella (looking concerned at her Mother's tears): That's Daddy (pointing to picture) and he went in a car to Ayers Rock.

Blake: That's right, Bella.

Fern (as evenly as she can): Yes, he will be home next week and we will have some cake and put up the Christmas tree.

Blake (looking brighter): Yeh!

Bella (copying Blake and jumping up and down): Yeh!

Fern (cuddling them both): Come on, you two. Let's go home.

Appendix 7

Appendix 7 eMagazine is on the next page.

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Resilient Families

Grief, multiple deployments and leaving the defence force.

We look at three families and their individual responses to being a military family.

Autumn, 2017



In this issue:

- p.2 Michael's family – when a parent does not come back, Wendy gives us a mother's perspective.
- p.4 Jess and Sam's family – when a parent leaves the ADF. We interview both parents, Fiona and Caleb.
- p.8 Brian and Davina's family - contemplating multiple deployments. We interview a mother before a second deployment of her husband. Brenda shares her experiences as a spouse and mother.

Defence families

In this issue we focus on three defence families who share their experiences about what it is like to have young children and cope with deployment. Each family has a unique experience and we found a range of personal and family strengths. Families accessed a range of supports. One family deals with the loss of a parent in a recent conflict, another chose to change to a more family-friendly career and the third family contemplates multiple deployments.

The ADF is one of the biggest employers in Australia. Many families experience deployment when their children are young adding to the pressures on the non-deployed spouse. Younger children also struggle with difficult concepts such as time and deal with their feelings of grief and loss of a parent who can be absent for a relatively long part of their lives. A returning parent can struggle to reintegrate into civilian life. Families can find it challenging to reintegrate a returning parent particularly as family roles have changed in the parent's absence. Compounding this is the likelihood of the returned parent having suffered trauma or an injury or just having been changed through the experience.

What is deployment?

Defence personnel are normally deployed for between 3-9 months at a time. It could be to a war zone, or a peacekeeping mission or to a remote location within Australia or for border protection. During that time they may be able to return home on leave once, dependent on the length of time and location. Defence families also experience regular separations and relocations for training sessions to prepare for deployment.



...At least he got to hold him and meet him...

Michael's family

What happens when they do not return?

Before you met your husband, did you have any connection to the defence forces?

Yes, my father and grandfather were both in the Navy, so I knew that culture growing up.

How did you meet Nathan?

I was working in a remote location in tourism and he was stationed nearby for a while. We started to travel to see each other and then I moved to be with him and found work there. We married soon after and Michael was born within a year. We were living in Army accommodation and then he found

out he was to be deployed. They offered me the option of relocating to be with my family as we were both away from family at the base. I took up the offer and most of our belongings were packed up and left in a Commonwealth Storage Facility until when Nathan returned.

Was he able to be there at the birth?

No, he came home when I was still in hospital though. Then he went back and was killed in action not long after. At least he got to hold him and meet him.

So he was buried back home?

Yes, basically there was a delay with the media release because of the time difference. The defence personnel just took over Mum's house for two weeks where I was staying. They controlled everything, the phone, internet use, media contact, emails, texts and everything. They would tell me to get off the phone because someone important was ringing. Even the Prime Minister rang. I only saw Michael morning and evening when he fed. It was exhausting having them around all of the time. There was no time to reflect and no time out; I felt I was public property. Defence acted like they owned us all.

Kevin Rudd rang and said: 'Hello, is this Wendy?'

Dealing with Michael's family who were making demands about the funeral also added to the stress.

Then what happened?

Six months after the funeral they moved our belongings down to my mother's house because they could no longer be in a Commonwealth

Storage Facility. I was no longer considered a defence family. That was a rude shock. You are not really in or out after they die.

I find it hard to connect with other defence families at Army unit days. It is hard to hear the other wives whining about how tough they have it when their husbands are on night duty. I am close to other war widows in our Facebook group. They have been a

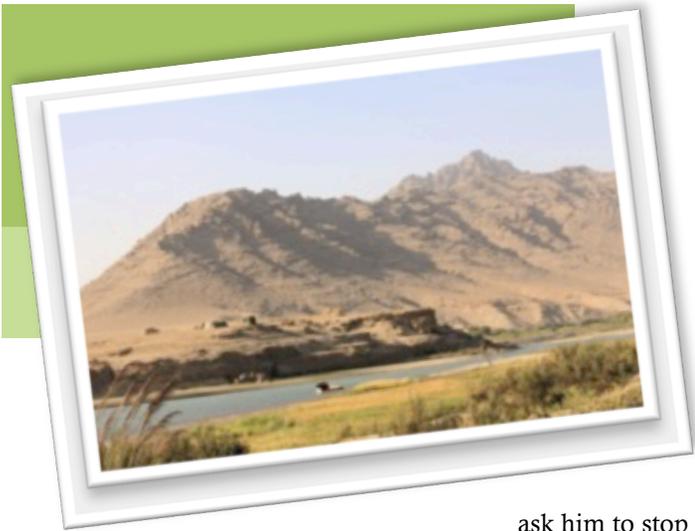
great support and know what it is like.

Did the ADF supply counseling?

Yes, I could access it but it would be a waste of time. How would a counselor know what I was going through? They have not experienced the death of a husband and the father of their child. I just talk to my Facebook group.

Dealing with death

I chose to tell Liam from a young age that his father was on the moon, rather than try to explain heaven when he was so young. He looks at the night sky and talks about Daddy. He has asked if Daddy can come back to earth. He has asked what dying means. I explained that it means he is no longer part of this earth



Have these explanations been helpful?

I don't know. On ANZAC Day last year he said 'My Daddy died in Afghanistan' That really shocked me. I was so upset. I think it was from what the journalists said to him. They said 'You must be so proud to have a Daddy so brave, to die in Afghanistan', and things like that. He has some level of understanding. He asks to look at photos of Daddy on the computer. On Nathan's birthday, or on the anniversary of his death, we go to the cemetery for the day. We go together, just the two of us and get a helium balloon and have some quiet time together. I have also said that Daddy was a soldier and that he was fighting, but now he is on the moon.

What happens in your family on ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day?

Because of my family background, I feel it is important to keep the traditions of remembering and respecting. He was given replica medals by the State RSL which he loves as they are 'his'. Sometimes at the service, even during the one minute silence he will be pushing the medals through the dirt and when I

ask him to stop he says 'But they're mine'. He loves showing them off around other men.

Where do you attend these services? It has varied. Sometimes just in the local area, then once we travelled down to the regional centre, then once down to the city (state capital).

What is the ANZAC Day like for Michael?

We get up when it is still dark and go to the dawn service. He is getting better at the services; sometimes he plays, sometimes he falls asleep. There are photos afterwards, and journalists ask questions. Then we go to the RSL for breakfast then head off to the march. We have lunch at the RSL, then we go home for some quiet time and he often falls asleep.

What are those days like for you?

Sometimes when the bugler plays at the dawn service I have to really hold back as it reminds me of the funeral. The anniversary of Nathan's death is a really rough time, especially when I talk to Michael about Daddy up on the moon.

How do you cope with Christmas?

Actually, we never spent a Christmas together as a family, so it is not really an issue.

What supports have you had and how did they help?

Legacy have been helpful, but mostly are older. They got me a new computer. The local RSL (Returned Services League) branch have been a great support. The Defence Trust is also there to help but I am not entitled to the Commando Trust because I was given the wrong paper work by the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA).

My family organized a reality TV show to re-do my backyard for Michael which was wonderful, except the journalists really tried to get me emotional. I am entitled to a Defence Mortgage and a Gold Card from the DVA and I chose a pension for life, rather than a payout. The money took over 6 months to come though. There has been someone from Nathan's unit who has been very supportive and like an uncle to Michael.

Because of my family background, I feel it is important to keep the traditions of remembering and respecting

Resilient families

I have Mum nearby and she picks me up to go shopping once a week because I don't have a license. I have a sister and some other extended family in the area.

Army days are hard with the hierarchy and feeling like I am not really part of the defence culture anymore. Michael enjoys them though and tends to gravitate toward the other Dads. He gets upset when he sees other Dads at school or at the park.

Neighbours have helped out. The early childhood teacher was great and helped me access funding for a specialist for Michael due to his learning issues. He had a difficult birth with the chord wrapped around his neck and shoulders, and I had a Caesar.

His school-teacher is not very helpful getting a letter organized to help with funding now that he has been diagnosed with other issues. The school counselor has had a chat to Michael too.

I am not really part of the defence group anymore. You are not really in or out after they die.

How do you find time for yourself?

Up until he went to school I felt like I was on call 24/7 because he does not have anyone to play with at home, but he is at school now and I am enjoying that first year. I hope to get a job next year. I am trying to look forward and can think about having another relationship now. I have donated a portrait of Nathan someone donated to the local RSL as I didn't want the house to become a shrine.

Has anything else helped?

Yes, I got a lot of closure when I was allowed with a small group of other families to Afghanistan. I got to see Nathan's room, and got some understanding of what his work was like over there at the base. We were away 5 days and had 8 flights. It was only for families of those of higher rank.

I want him to know that his father did not die in vain...

What do you hope for Michael to learn?

That his father did not die in vain, but in active battle. He enjoyed his work and enjoyed his job as a soldier, fighting the enemy.



Neighbours have helped out. The early childhood teacher was great...

A mothers perspective: Surviving two deployments, then moving on

Fiona, how much notice were you given for Caleb's two deployments?

Before East Timor we had a few months to prepare. For Afghanistan it was longer, perhaps even 6 months. I am not sure what is worse, dreading him going for months or a sudden announcement.

How did the children show their stress?

For East Timor, Sam was a toddler so sleep was an issue, but many children that age have sleep issues. For Afghanistan, Jess was having major sleep issues but she was probably too young to know what was happening. Maybe it was just sleep issues she would have had

anyway. Sam took a long time to want to go to bed and a long time to get to sleep when Caleb was away. He would also have bad dreams and wake up a lot in the night. Sam would get frustrated and show his frustrations with Dad being away through throwing more tantrums than normal and acting out. He was not really talking properly so this was his way of communicating his anger.

Jess would cry for Dad if she was fighting with Sam or just very upset.

Were they noticeably clingy during this time?

That is hard to say because I was just home with them and available all the time.

What would comfort them when Caleb was away?

I created albums for each of them with photos of themselves and Caleb and they really enjoyed those. I also had made DVD's of Caleb reading to them and they loved watching themselves and Dad on TV.

When was it hardest for you?

After the first 4 weeks and right at the end when you know they are coming home. You just want them back.

- Before 2009 Caleb's absences for training had usually only been a about a week long
- 2009 Caleb deployed to East Timor for 9 months when Sam was 15 months old
- During this deployment, Fiona relocated to her parent's house in a regional city. She also visited Caleb's parents in the same town
- 2010 Jess was born
- 2011 Caleb's training course meant he was away for 5 months starting in February, then Sydney for 3-4 months Caleb was home for about 2 weeks full-time for 2011
- 2012 The first half of the year training was a month long on and off so Caleb was not home very much, then he deployed mid year
- 2012-2013 Deployed to Afghanistan for 6 months
- Fiona and the two children moved house during that deployment by choice
- Early in 2013, Caleb returned from deployment and was home for 6 weeks, then he went straight back into training
- 2013 The family moved again, and Caleb had a 6-week course, then he was home for 1 month then away on a 4-month course. At the end of this course, Caleb gave his discharge notice. The Army wanted to promote Caleb, meaning a further 5 months of courses so as a family they decided to avoid this, by giving his discharge notice before this process started. He could then serve out his time based at home and the Army would not spend the money training him.

How did you communicate when he was away? He was able to use Skype™ most days. He said he found that really helpful being able to see us every day and know we were OK. I found it very draining. Phone calls were better as I could be on speaker-phone and I could keep attending to the children and do housework while we chat. Skype™ sessions every night meant you had to be totally available for an hour at a really bad time of night. The kids and I were both tired, the kids were whingy and sometimes it was the last thing you felt like doing. I did it anyway and of course would never tell him how much I hated it. He sent some parcels and we sent him a care package most weeks. We would cook his favourite biscuits and send drawings the kids did and other things.

What special supports did you give your children to understand and cope? I had some photo books made with photos of Caleb and the kids. We also video-recorded Caleb reading to the children that they loved to watch. We made up a special calendar so Sam could mark the days he was away with stickers. He didn't understand the difference between deployment and going to work, that created huge meltdowns when Caleb was home after deployment and then said he was going to 'work'.

Was there anything you could not talk about? Before he deployed there was a family information session defence put on where they said not to bother your partner with things that can be solved by yourself or with support at home. They also said to avoid telling them things that might play on their mind that might affect them on duty. That made it really hard. Jess was really sick and we were in and out of hospital and medical visits and testing a lot for many months and I couldn't mention it except to downplay the seriousness of it. Caleb's Aunt also got really ill and I couldn't mention that either. It was weird when he come back as we had lots of conversations where I had to explain to him what really happened. That was hard as he felt he was lied to.

What support did you have? My parents were great during both deployments, but especially the first because I moved in with them. There was another mother whose husband was a FIFO worker (Fly in Fly Out miner). I don't think I would have survived without her. Sam's preschool teacher was amazing and had child psychology training. She was very helpful with Sam's phases and behavior and encouraged us to have conversations with Sam when he was acting out before the deployment. She told us Sam may have been behaving like that because of the things he may have overheard about deployment. We took her advice and put a map of the world in Sam's room with a star where we lived and one where Caleb was going to Afghanistan. Once we explained it all, the behaviour stopped immediately. Sam was also helpful at home, he would bring me toys and give me cuddles, bring me the tissue box if I was crying and help with the bins, gardening and feeding the dogs. He would also help me to get Jess ready sometimes if we were going out.

What supports did the ADF give your family? The Padre was really good and the social worker was helpful. There was also a head person to email if anything was needed and he was really excellent. The welfare people called a few times and I totally panicked of course. Those calls were really reassuring though, after I calmed down. It was great to know that they were checking up that we were OK.

What else could the defence have done to help your family? From our personal experience, I really don't think there was much more they could have done for us. We were given a book on dealing with deployment that was very informative and helpful. They covered everything from the emotions of deployment to a check list of things we should organise before Caleb left. It also gave tips to deal with the home-coming. I had been given a list of all the numbers and email addresses of all people we could contact if I needed help or had any questions. There was a farewell parade before Caleb left which was turned into a family day where all families got to meet each other and meet people like the welfare officer. For us I think they prepared us very well and I never felt like they were not supportive of us. I'm not sure if it the same for everyone though as all units may be different and do different things.



Coming home and reintegration

How did your family cope with the changes when Caleb returned after such a long absence?

The kids would be all over Caleb at first. Sam developed this extreme reaction where he would be really angry and awful to Caleb after a 3-5 days and not want anything to do with him. This would last for quite a while. He was not speaking well and I think it was just his way of showing his anger. It was particularly hard on Caleb. After Afghanistan Caleb decided to take a step back for the re-integration period. This meant I took care of them and all discipline for the first couple of weeks.

Why we left the Army

We had never planned for it to be Caleb's career forever. In the end we chose to leave much earlier because of the promotion they offered him. This meant he was going to be away more often for training. When Jess turned 3 we realized Caleb had only been there 1 year of her life.

All the time away was the big issue for us. Caleb had missed the first soccer games and other big events in the children's lives. Employment was the big risk. We were losing security and leaving the Army family. We were excited but nervous. We still see another family whose husband was in Afghanistan with Caleb. He has just discharged too for family reasons.

Life after the Army

Getting used to Caleb being home full time took a while for the children. Sam acted out at him being home all the time and would avoid him. Jess did not want to speak to him in the mornings. She would completely ignore him at other times. I told Caleb the kids were punishing him for having been away for so long.

Since leaving, things are much easier for us all. We can plan events and know we will all be there, including the holidays. The uncertainty is gone. The children are more settled. It's great knowing the time you have will be yours as a family.



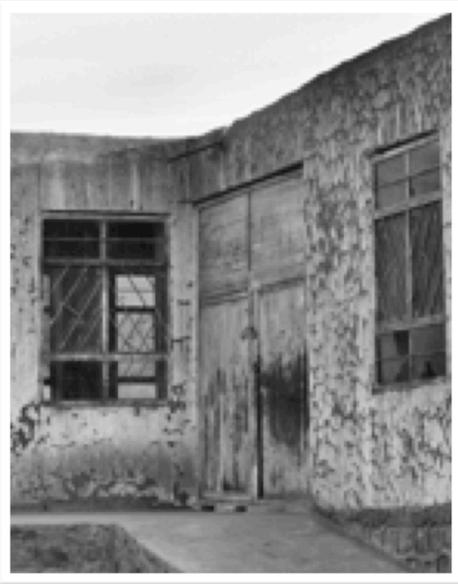
The story-books

Our two children featured in a research-based story book which explored some of the experiences and issues our children were having when Caleb was away. They loved the books and we used them on our iPad when Caleb was going away all the time.

Recently, I read them again to the children and they enjoyed them very much and loved seeing themselves in the photos. They also had a reaction I wasn't quite expecting. They both cried and cried. Sam got incredibly overwhelmed first as I read his book first and got very emotional then cried and cried. He said it made him remember how sad he was when Dad was away. Jess followed and cried as well and she was incredibly emotional all day. Seeing Sam cry I think set her off. I was surprised to see how upset Sam got since Caleb hasn't been away for a large stint since last year. It has shown me how much they have held onto the emotions they used to feel when he was away and how raw it obviously still is for them. It was a good chance for Caleb to have a chat to them about the whole thing. They did love reading through the books though and Sam couldn't wait to take it to school and read it to his class.

A father's perspective

I miss the camaraderie, the variety of work and I didn't think I would ever say it...workplace structure. My job in the army was specialised and each day was different. Now each day is the same. I am responsible for my own work now in the company I work for. Everyone else is responsible for themselves too. That means you see some people being really slack and it is hard, but nobody does anything about it. It was the right decision for our family to leave.



Can you tell me about the communication with your family and friends during deployment?

I was able to use Skype™ most days and that was great. It was really helpful to me to be able to see them and know they were safe and OK. I sent them a couple of parcels and they sent me a care package most weeks.

I tried to call my parents every other week, but that is all. Any other family or friends missed out.

How did you find re-integrating back into family life and civilian life?

There was some nervousness about coming home and trying to fit back in with the children, especially after Sam's episodes of not wanting to have anything to do with me. I made the decision to take a step back with the kids for 1-2 weeks after Afghanistan and that helped. After East Timor and then during the extra time away, Sam had a rebellion against me I suppose you would say. This improved with age.

There was no great drama fitting back into civilian life for me.

What were the positives of deployment?

Well there is the financial gain and a certain amount of personal growth. You also develop an appreciation for what we have as a couple and a family. We were resilient. We appreciate each other in the marriage more compared to other couples who have never been apart.

How did Fiona cope when you were deployed and what supports did she have?

Fiona coped by being busy. She is busy anyway with kids, but she had friendships as a support base along with family.

What supports did the ADF give you as a parent and spouse to deal with deployment?



There was one talk we went to one day. It was a seminar and there were some handouts. The Welfare Officer and Padre were also available.

In the lead up to East Timor my unit was based away, so I had to keep travelling to them to train. That helped the family and I get used to being apart.

What led you to the decision to leave the defence force?

We had never planned as a family that I would be there forever. In the end it came down to more time away for promotion and I was away all of 2012, came home in February for 6 weeks, then home for 2 weeks then away for 3-4 months again.

The main reason I left was just lifestyle. It was a nervous time as I left in February and although I had part-time casual work to go to, I did not get full-time permanent work until May. We had a home-loan and bills and the usual expenses with kids.

It was the right decision for our

The main reason I left was just lifestyle...It was the right decision for our family to leave.

A family contemplating multiple deployments

How old were the children when your husband first deployed? Brian was 2.5 and Davina years was almost 1.

Can you explain to me the lead-up to deployment?

It was really tough for us all. On the day, we went to the airport that I found really helpful for the children because I had explained to them that was what was happening. We could say goodbye and see his plane fly away. Then I could refer to that when they asked where he was. I could say 'He went on the plane and he will come back on the plane. Then we will go to the airport and pick him up'. The kids needed that. Seb hated it though. He says he doesn't want that to happen again because it was just too emotionally draining saying goodbye to the kids at the airport. He said because he started crying, the kids started crying and that just made it all too hard for him. I still want to do it though, so it is an issue we need to keep talking about as a family. I got a recording of Seb reading a story and sent it in for a book with the recording so they can press the button and read through the book. We did the same for some bedtime prayers because that is important for Seb.

How did you cope after he left?

I found it really tough at times. The kids would be asking for him, asking why he had to go away. I told them he needed to go to another country and help them learn how to behave. Before he left, we moved to the coast to be near my Mum and Dad so I could have that support when he deployed. We had lots of sleep-overs with them and they would look after me. It's nice going home and someone caring about me. The girls also just go there sometimes and I have a break. Working part time, having the girls and coping by yourself is hard, so they are a big help. Moving was good, but it means Seb has to do more travelling when he gets home, 90 minutes each way. He can stay overnight at the base when he needs to.



What communication did you have available to your family with Seb during his deployments?

Skype™ and phone calls helped. Sundays were special Skype™ days once a fortnight normally. There were no mobile phones or texts. Seb left his phone at home. We emailed each other every day. Sometimes Brian would say 'Tell dad this' or 'Show dad that' and I would scribe for him. The kids fought at times over time on the phone with Seb. Davina would stay on the phone for a long time just listening to Daddy's voice and trying to talk and Brian would get very cross when he had to wait.

How much detail could you give over such a distance?

I was not told to hold back any information from Seb, but I felt guilty if I told him how bad things were at home and how hard I was finding it. There was a period of about 2 months when the children were continually sick between the two of them and I was really struggling with very little sleep. After it was over I told him. Then he was really upset I had held that back from him and he felt really guilty I had gone through that by myself.

When did you find it the hardest?

Around the first month mark; that's when reality set in and I was getting so tired. For Seb, he found the month before he left the hardest. I also got really emotional on ANZAC Day when Legacy made us some ANZAC Biscuits all wrapped up beautifully with a card for us each saying, 'Thanks for your sacrifice in letting them go'. That just made me lose control completely and I cried and cried. I thought 'finally, someone understands'. I still cry when I think about it now.



What was it like reconnecting again as a family?

I made him come away on a family holiday soon after he came back. He didn't want to, but it made a big difference to reconnect. It is hard because the kids were up to different stages so he was often babying them and they didn't like it. Nine months is a long time in a young child's life and they changed a lot. He was also really upset by some of the parenting decisions I had made in his absence. It was hard having those very honest conversations where he was saying he thought those decisions were wrong. I made them in order to cope during that tough time. Issues like the kids coming and sleeping in our bed. We were all having trouble sleeping and Brian was having nightmares. It just saved the fights at the time and was much easier on everyone. I think I just had to get through it at the time by doing things my way.

Was he changed when he got back?

He was really tired and tried sleeping during the day to catch up. The kids just made really loud noises suddenly and he would be angry at being woken up. I kept saying: 'They are just young kids, Seb'. He said it is hard because when you are on base you are with adults for 9 months; adults who are good at following orders. When he came home, he was dealing with a toddler and a preschooler. He also said it was really hard to fit back in as a civilian. When he was deployed, people just got out of their way because they were heavily armed and soften in armored vehicles. Back here he found it really difficult to be just someone ordinary again. When people cut in front of him in traffic he would be so angry. He needed help with anger management at first.

How have things moved on now?

Well we are facing the real possibility of another deployment. That just makes things so hard and we are both really struggling. It puts a real strain on the relationship knowing that is going to happen. Now we know how hard it is and I think that makes it worse.



We need resources for parents that appropriate for really young children and that are Australian.

What do you think the ADF could do to support your family, and other defence families more?

We need resources for parents that appropriate for really young children and that are Australian. There is just nothing out there that helps us. We need books that help them understand what is happening in their families and that explains deployment in a way they can understand.

Appendix 8: Journal article

Narrative, Acculturation and Ritual: Themes from a Socio-ecological Study of Australian Defence Force Families Experiencing Parental Deployment

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Military deployment is typically considered a stressful period for families, generally lasting between 3 to 6 months for Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel. To date, insufficient research has been conducted concerning children and families who experience deployment within an Australian context. This study seeks to provide valuable insight into families with young children and explore their experiences of military deployment in an Australian context. Using a socio-constructivist approach, where truth is socially constructed both individually and culturally, ADF parents' perceptions of their experiences are examined. Using Narrative Research, multiple methods of data collection are combined to gather various insights into families' experiences. Data analysis was conducted using thematic verification identifying two main themes. Embracing an interpretivist epistemology, the researcher aims to create a shared knowledge around families' understanding and experiences of deployment. Such knowledge will be helpful for effective support of parents, educators and professionals in their role with these children in the community.

Keywords: military family, deployment, acculturation, cultural meta-narrative

Introduction

This paper examines data from three ADP families collected as part of a larger study being conducted by University of New England researchers, entitled 'Young children's understanding and experiences of deployment within an ADP family'. This paper addresses a particular subset of data collected from families who participated in the author's PhD study investigating children's experiences and understandings of deployment within an ADP family using a mosaic methodology.

The project, overall, has a number of unique qualities including giving attention to children's voices, with 11 families engaged in interviews. However, the subset of data used in the development of this paper used only data from interviews with parents and employed narrative analysis. Although only three of the families are represented here, the themes emerged as significant because they have not been fully explored before. Additionally, much of the data comes from family types normally marginalised in military family research, warranting specific attention. The paper aims to give educators, family workers, parents and the ADP greater knowledge of the experiences and understandings of young children in Australian military families during parental deployment cycles by focusing on the two core themes: first, narrative and, second, acculturation and ritual. It is hoped from this increased knowledge that support, resources, procedures and policies can be improved for these families and their young children.

The next section gives a brief background of deployment within the ADP to contextualise this discussion of parental experiences.

Background of the Australian Defence Force (ADF)

The ADF is one of Australia's largest employers with over 80,000 permanent and reserve members of the Navy, Air Force and Army (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Of these, 50% are under 30 years of age and the next largest cohort under 40 years (Department of Defence, 2010). These age brackets are when most people are starting families and have dependent children. The number of troops deployed from Australia varies due to international and national policies and events and federal government decisions. Duties during deployment cover myriad of supportive and combative roles. Between 1997-2010, around 64% of ADF employees have been deployed at least once, with redeployment rates averaging 22% over this 3-year period. Redeployment rates are more than 32% in the Army, but the Navy holds the record for the number of members who have redeployed six or more times, at over 6% (Australian Defence Force, 2013). The typical length of deployment is 3 to 9 months in active combat, strategic defence and peacekeeping operations (Australian Defence Force, 2013). Some deployments occur within Australia, but removed from their base and can be in remote communities or locations. Lengthy training sessions

leading up to deployment are common and are generally situated away from their base. This may involve relocation of the whole family or just extra time apart.

Relocation is a feature of military life which increases stress for the family (Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser, 2008; Masten, 2013; Mcfarlane, 2009), undermines family support systems and children's ability to learn (Siebler, 2009) and increases children's attachment insecurity to parents (Medway, Davis, Thomas, Chappell, & O'Hearn, 1995). Many efforts have been made by the ADF to support families and modernise; however, in some ways the manner in which the ADF deals with families is structured according to an outdated model of families, which positioned the male as the breadwinner and sole worker outside the home with limited child-rearing and household responsibilities. Conversely, both the military and the family have changed the demands it makes of its members (Andres, Bowen, Manigart, & Moelker, 2015a, p. 321; De Angelis & Segal, 2015, pp. 37-38) and in many ways both have become even 'greedier' institutions.

Various ADF support strategies and services are in place including social workers, education officers and padres for non-deployed family members. Their perceived effectiveness varies depending upon individuals' experiences (Siebler, 2015, p. 295). Also, there are issues with restructuring, funding, training and accessibility as discussed by Siebler (2009) and Siebler and Goddard (2014). Physical and online resources are available, although there is an ongoing problem of families being unaware of what is available. This is exacerbated by difficulties in accessing information and variations in the way that information is delivered (Cromptvoets, 2012). Innovations, such as an all-hours Defence Family Helpline for personnel and family that opened in 2012 have been welcomed. Healthcare is available for personnel through the ADF although family members need to use community services (Siebler, 2015, p. 289). An overarching issue is the stigma associated with accessing help, which is the antithesis of the stoic defence family image (Siebler, 2009), an ideal that is entrenched by a strong acculturation process.

Deployment and Families

Deployment is typically described as stressful for families (Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009; Gibbs, Martin, Kupper, & Johnson, 2007; Jensen-Hart, Christensen, Dutka, & Leishman, 2012; Lowe, Adams, Browne, & Hinkle, 2012, p.

17; Medway et al., 1995; Palmer, 2008) and both the deployed and non-deployed parents and children are changed by the experience (DeVoe & Ross, 2012). McGuire et al. (2012) largely disagree with these findings; however, their study- which focused on the families who had survived deployment, and even re-deployment- did not capture those who either had left the ADF or had struggled.

Parental deployment also increases stress for the returned parent. The returning parent may experience depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011), have difficulties readjusting to family roles and responsibilities (Mogil et al., 2010), issues fitting in with civilian life (MacManus et al., 2012) and demonstrate hyper-vigilance (Brown, 2014), violence, flashbacks, nightmares, addictions, anxiety, risky behaviour and suicidal thoughts (Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994). There may be secondary transfer of PTSD to other family members (Bowling & Sherman, 2008) that may impact on the wellbeing of all family members and the family system as a whole.

Brooks (2011) describes the deployment cycle in terms of four phases: pre-deployment, deployment, reunion (reintegration) and post-deployment. Lester and Flake (2013) refer to it as the deployment spiral as often re-deployment occurs adding to the family's stress. A review of the literature revealed a distinct lack of Australian data about the impact of deployment on families (McFarlane, 2009; Siebler, 2009). Even less research has been done with families who have experienced the death of a parent during deployment, or with families who have eventually left the ADF.

Overall, families generally seem to manage best when they 'accept the military lifestyle and see meaning in the sacrifices they make' (Brooks, 2011, p. 496), gaining identity within the military community (Lester & Flake, 2013). Families understand that the 'military is not simply a job, because it demands sacrifice from soldiers and families' (Andres, Bowen, Manigart, & Moelker, 2015b, p. 6). Further, Eran-Jona (2015), when discussing her research with Israeli military families, says 'the wives are recruited to provide all of the necessary assistance for their husbands' work, so that they become, in effect, invisible workers in the military' (p. 54). To achieve this level of acceptance and value given to the sacrifices families make, a high degree of acculturation is needed. This culture of sacrifice is created to justify

the family's unpaid service in the military. Eran-Jona (2015, p. 48) found this culture was created by six elements: absence from home, an erratic work schedule, an exhausting work- load, difficult living conditions, an uncertain career path and dangerous workplaces including combat operations.

The military is often described as a tight community and there are expectations of adherence by all to their beliefs and norms (Baber, Fussell, & Porter, 2015, p. 41; Knouse, 1991). The acculturation filters down within the ADP with defence decisions made in response to Australian Government decisions and policies around international events (macrosystem) and decisions and policies implemented by members of the ADP (exosystem). Hayes (2013) suggests acculturation is asserting power over a group of people and it is those with the most power that are the least likely to be aware of its force. Welch (2013) is less harsh and acknowledges that, although cultures have influence and control, it is multi- faceted and complex. One strategy to achieve acculturation is through the construction of cultural memory.

Cultural memory is reliant on a constructed memory including events, people and places deemed important to a group of people or a nation (Allan, 2014). Monuments serve to keep these memories alive, along with 'rituals, acts of remembrance, commemorative ceremonies and creation of heroes' (p. 16). Cultural memory often starts with eyewitness accounts or story swapping. Allan (2014) explains that over time selected parts of the story are highlighted and important places become revered throughout generations and used to elicit cultural memories. Lake (2010) explains that international battlefields have become important national places for Australians. Cultural memory works at the levels of family, community, nationally and globally. Allan (2014) describes the process of keeping alive cultural memory that may involve bodily performance (such as marching or clapping, lighting or blowing out candles [or flames], singing songs, dancing) or ritualised acts (being silent and remembering the fallen at an ANZAC service). Symbolism is often utilised in keeping cultural memory (Mallan, 2014, 3), which is evident in many ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day ceremonies even though not all participants and observers realise the significance of these symbols. Such practices create family memories, assisting members deal with grief and loss and, on another level, perpetuate the cultural meta-narrative for new generations.

Deployment and Young Children

Parental deployment is also considered difficult for young children who show myriad of physical, emotional, social and cognitive responses. These include: behavioural issues (Barker & Berry, 2009; Chartrand, Frank, White, & Shope, 2008; Medway et al., 1995), developmental regression (Paris, DeVoe, Ross, & Acker, 2010), attachment difficulties (Barker & Berry, 2009; Lowe et al., 2012), increased internalised behaviours (Chartrand et al., 2008; De Pedro & Astor, 2011), depression and anxiety (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, & Richardson, 2010; Chartrand et al., 2008; Waliski, Bokony, Edlund, & Kirchner, 2012). A major issue for young children and their parents is the impact deployment has on their development overall. Parents repeatedly deal with progression and regressions during the deployment cycle (DeVoe & Ross, 2012; Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler, 2007). Redeployment (Chandra et al., 2010) and the length of deployment is also significantly related to poorer child wellbeing (Chandra et al., 2009; Cozza & Lerner, 2013; Lincoln et al., 2008). Conversely, other studies have shown little difference in the functioning of civilian and military family members, including children (McGuire et al., 2012; Ryan-Wenger, 2001).

For babies and young children, attachment relationships are affected as a parent leaves the household for periodic or sustained absences. Sims and Hutchins (2013) argue that the 'quality of the attachment relationships children have with significant people in their lives influences all areas of their development' and that these attachments are directly linked to their emotional health and social development (p. 184). However, as Linke (2007) explains, parents will claim that their baby is too young to understand that one parent is no longer there. Whilst they may be unable to articulate verbally, this does not mean babies do not notice that one parent is absent during deployment. Linke (2007) explains that babies will show that they are missing someone in the family when they realise they are not there to provide the comfort they typically sought from that parent, especially at bedtime. Babies and young children can also pick up on the increased stress levels (Brooks, 2011) and decreased time and attention of the deployed parent (Lester & Flake, 2013), who is required to do the work of both parents. Even during predeployment, Brooks (2011) reports infants increased irritability and difficulty with feeding and sleeping as common reactions due to increased

family stress. This is an example of the influence of the mesosystem that is the level of impact on other microsystems (Sims, 2002). Linke (2007) recommends parents inform pre-school children about what is happening in the family as soon as possible using age-appropriate language that emphasises the parent's return. She also suggests the parents create narratives for their children about hypothetical families who work through issues of deployment.

During pre-deployment, pre-school children may communicate their unhappiness about the impending departure through confusion, sadness, crying (Brooks, 2011), anger and fear (DeVoe & Ross, 2012). Soon after deployment occurs, young children ask questions about when the parent will return (Barker & Berry, 2009) because they have difficulty retaining and recalling the narrative about deployment and struggle with the complex notion of time. Due to its intangible nature, the concept of time is not something young children generally fully comprehend until the concrete operational period of cognitive development (Charlesworth & Lind, 2013). This period is when logical, organised and rational problem solving develops; most typically from around 7 to 11 years of age.

Deployment often triggers internalising and externalising behaviours in young children, such as sleep disturbances and emotional outbursts. Adjustment in roles and responsibilities occur, which may include pre-school children taking on small household tasks such as caring for pets, assisting with cleaning and gardening. During reunion when excitement is high, young children need to get accustomed to the reappearance of the deployed parent and likewise, the young child will have 'new skills and abilities and new feelings' (Brooks, 2011, p. 497).

Reintegration is one of the most important times for families and one of the least supported. It is also one of the most stressful and the least understood times (Lester & Flake, 2013). For the returning parent, living back home with young children can be challenging (Mogil et al., 2010) after being in a base with adults whose occupation demands extreme compliance to rules. Re-establishing an effective co-parenting relationship is often difficult because it requires very high levels of negotiation, compromise (Mogil et al., 2010) and relinquishment of power (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). During deployment, new roles have been taken on (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003) and everyone in the family has changed in

some way, so the family will never be exactly the same again. Most families do manage to move on successfully despite the threat of impending redeployments. Individually, family members will fashion their own meanings and narratives from the experience. Bowling and Sherman (2008) state that families can use narrative to create 'a shared sense of meaning' which can assist in 'reducing stress and fostering increased family cohesion' (p. 454).

In general, research on military children and their families has been largely been conducted within a deficit model, highlighting their responses to stressful situations (Cozza & Lerner, 2013). Whilst this is important information for those who work with children, the research has often ignored or minimised the strengths of the children, their families and their communities to assist them through adversity. Masten (2013) argues for the use of a resilience framework to understand and focus on the successes in defence families. This framework

... emphasizes positive objectives; building the capacity to respond effectively; the potential for recovery; and the power of relationships, families, communities and other external re- sources to boost resilience, in addition to individual strengths and skills (Msten, 2013, pp. 199-200).

In summary, very little is known globally about the effects of military family life on children from birth to 5 years old who are the most vulnerable members of the military community (Cozza & Lerner, 2013). Even less is known about the Australian experiences of young children within ADF families and the strengths they exhibit that enable them to manage their lives. With this in mind, I sought to investigate these research questions:

- What are the experiences of ADP families with young children when a parent deploys?
- What strengths do these families exhibit during these experiences?

The following section explains the theoretical framework underpinning this research and how the methodology aligns with this framework.

Theoretical Framework

A socio-constructivist approach has been adopted for this study that I understand to be the socially mediated construction of truth. This construction occurs through

language practices, on the external plane, and is then internalised. Socio-constructivism theory identifies 'truth' as socially constructed by humans both individually and within social world influences based on their own experiences and their perception of these experiences (O'Toole & Beckett, 2013). The way people express their knowledge and understandings is 'socially occasioned' (Atwater, 1996, p. 827) through language which forms the basis of social constructionism (Gergen, 1995). In this study, parents shared their experiences through narrative, making meaning from their own previous social and cultural understanding that they have acquired through their life experiences within their families, communities, workplaces and national culture. Parents also are in a position of power within their family unit, relating their understandings, interpretations and experiences of what has occurred. Additionally, in this study, parents also share their understandings of not only their own feelings and experiences, but what they understand of their children's feelings and behaviours. Within defence families, each family member will have their own meanings and narratives about deployment (Bowling & Sherman, 2008); however, this study, as stated previously, only deals with the parents' perspectives.

Methodology

The methodology employed was narrative research, which by definition is the study of stories that researchers gain from others (Polkinghorne, 2007). These *stories* may be oral or written. Narrative research is about studying people, experiences or phenomena through listening sensitively to their stories to elicit the original peculiarities of participants' human experiences guided by agreements about characteristics, methods and facts. Narrative research encompasses new ways of observing and learning about others and new views of social or psychological context (Shaw, 2001). Narrative research is less about the story that people are telling and focusses instead on the meaning people make of what has occurred. Moen (2006, p. 4) argues that there is a strong socio-cultural basis for all narrative research that flows from Vygotsky's belief that human development and learning happens in socially and culturally devised contexts (UNICEF, 2015; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). The need to look at the whole context that shapes a person's experience and their interpretations is at the foundation of narrative re- search. The goal is to view human experience in

a new way so we can have insight into what life means to the participant at the time of the research and give value to their experiences.

Participants

These three families were chosen using convenience sampling and represent three different defence bases within two different geographic states. They were selected due to their involvement in a storybook project about defence families conducted by the author and colleagues, one of which has been published (see Baber et al., 2015). Of the 15 storybooks created, these families feature in four that were written specifically for defence families addressing issues parents identified as being difficult to discuss with young children. Another storybook is for a mainstream audience and as a teaching resource addressing the significance of ANZAC Day as told through the eyes of one of the children from these families. The five children from the three selected families vary in ages from 18-months old to 5-years old. Their experiences with deployment and defence force culture vary and are summarised in Table 1 below.

This study had ethics approval from the University of New England, and did not require additional ethics approval from the ADP due to the participants not being current members of that organisation. Interviews with parents were conducted face to face, over the phone and via email contact over a 2-year period. The children's ages in Table 1 are the age they were when I initially interviewed the parent. In certain studies, it is difficult to protect the identity of the individuals involved due to the size of the town in which the study is undertaken (Habibis, 2013, p.82) or the sample size. In order to protect the identity of the small population of participants, the names and selected family details have been changed. Further to this, the data has been partly scrambled between the families at their request. Similarly, Dempsey (1990) changed details of the town in which his study was conducted in order to protect participants identity.

Data Collection

The adults participating in this study were positioned as sources of knowledge about their children's experiences as Mazzoni and Harcourt (2013) acknowledge. The construction of each family narrative was iterative, with families providing

information in a variety of ways as best suited to their needs. Individual parents who were not currently in the ADP chose a combination from: face-to-face interviews, telephone and email communication. The style of interviewing was informal, with interviewer prompts and questions to promote their retelling. The participants shared both their family's experiences of deployment and their interpretations of these over a 4-year period from 2012. Using the written notes taken during the interviews, the data was written into separate family narratives, then thematically analysed within Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological framework.

Analysis

Thematic analysis, one of the most common types of qualitative analysis was employed to identify themes emerging from the data, including 'those that are predetermined and those that emerge' (Willis, 2013, p. 323). The socio-ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) has been applied to help 'see and think differently', and as Stanger (2011) argues this is a necessary component of data analysis (p. 172). This framework is based on the theory that children both impact on and modify the environment around them and are themselves impacted upon and changed by the environment around them (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). The ecological framework reveals the 'complex layers of contextual influence' on the child and family displaying 'the complexity of the real world and all that happens to influence the way in which a child grows and develops' (Bowes, Grace, & Hayes, 2012, p. 5). The framework acknowledges the role of adults in children's lives and views them as sources of knowledge (Mazzoni & Harcourt, 2013) and power. Adult behaviours can mitigate or exacerbate environmental impacts on children. I concede that power in research needs to be acknowledged and used for the good of others by those in possession of it, but that it is more complex than a good or evil force (Gallagher, 2008).

Each collated family narrative was scrutinised, using the socio-ecological framework for themes. In developing these themes, a process of constant comparison as originally defined by Glaser (1965) was used. Willis (2013) describes this process as moving beyond the descriptions within the interviews to an

interpretation of how these explanations fit into the field of research. Themes were compared across all three families and two major themes are discussed below.

Family Vignettes and Themes from the Data

Vignettes from the Data

Five vignettes from the data are offered here and then discussed within two major themes. They were developed from the narrative data obtained in the interviews and email communication with parents and are a way to present the data separately to the results here. The five vignettes reveal different episodes within the family's experiences and help display various family strengths and the two themes in differing ways.

Vignette A. Within Family 2, the role of place within the family narrative was particularly important. The mother, Brenda, found that explaining the difficult concept of deployment to her young children much easier when she could remind them of the trip to the airport to see their father depart. This concrete use of place seemed to aid their recall of the event because it served as a touchstone for the accompanying cultural narrative and family discussions. For Brenda's spouse, Seb, farewelling the children at the airport was emotionally difficult because he ended up crying and then the children also cried. This created added stress for Seb who commented to Brenda he never wanted to endure this again if he was redeployed.

Table 0-1TABLE 1 Information about the three families.

Family number	Child, age and position in family	Family make-up	Experience of deployment /which parent deployed	Experienced lengthy training sessions	Notes
Family 1	Sam, 4 years-old, Jess 19 months	Mother (Fiona) Father (Caleb)	Father has deployed for 8 months initially and then re-deployed for 6 months. Sam has experienced both deployments and Jess only experienced the second deployment	Numerous	The father has since left the defence force
Family 2	Michael, 5 years old, only child	Mother (Wendy) Father (Nathan) deceased	One deployment at time of birth (Father had deployed once previously before he and Wendy met)	Nil	Michael's father came home on leave after his birth, then returned and was killed in action soon afterwards

Family 3	Brian, 3 years old and Davina 18-months old	Mother (Brenda) Father (Seb)	Father deployed for 9 months	Numerous	The father is being trained for more deployments involving significant time away
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Vignette B. Family 1 were involved in two of the storybooks previously mentioned exploring issues raised by many defence families with young children. These issues included difficulties the children had with understanding the concepts of deployment as well as dealing with their emotional, physical and social reactions. The parents, Caleb and Fiona had identified a lack of culturally appropriate resources for young children within the Australian context. They had requested picture books to assist children grapple with identified issues and provide a springboard for family discussions.

The author and co-researchers have been involved in the production of these storybooks, using data from the families. Eighteen months after Caleb had left the defence force, Fiona showed the children the storybook involving their family again. She thought they would enjoy looking at the books and seeing photographs of themselves at a younger age and photographs of Caleb in uniform. On reading the books the son, Sam, became overwhelmed, cried for a long period and was upset for 2 days. He said he was remembering how sad he was when his father was away. His sister, Jess also cried for a long time and was upset for a day as well.

Vignette c. In Family 1, Michael's mother Wendy created a narrative to help him understand his father's death. This narrative involved his father being on the moon, rather than trying to 'explain heaven when he was so young'. This narrative seemed to work for the family and Michael eventually asked questions as he matured about what dying actual meant and if his Daddy could come back to Earth. Wendy felt she was able to answer these questions adequately until Michael was 5-years old when issues arose. At this time, they had attended an ANZAC Day service and a reporter had said to him 'You must be so proud to have a Daddy so brave, to die in Afghanistan'. Michael then said to Wendy 'My Daddy died in Afghanistan'. She then contacted an older ADF parent who had lost a son in a recent battle for advice. When explaining what she wanted Michael to understand, Wendy spoke of the 'important

sacrifice her spouse had made', that 'he did not die in vain', 'he enjoyed his job' and that 'he had died fighting the enemy and protecting others'.

Vignette D. Wendy, from Family 2 spoke of the importance for Michael to attend ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day services to 'keep the traditions of remembering and respecting'. In the case of Wendy's family, "Michael has a day off school each year on the anniversary of his father Nathan's death and for Nathan's birthday to attend the gravesite and have quiet time together.

Vignette E. In Family 3, Brenda was touched by the message on a card she had received with a gift by the charity Legacy. They had given these to many non-deployed spouses on ANZAC Day. She was teary when she described the wording on the card '*Thanks for your sacrifice in letting them go*'. Brenda found it very moving because she felt someone finally understood how much she was going through and how much she and her children were sacrificing to have her spouse, Sebastian, on deployment.

Table 0-2 Family strengths identified within the data (adapted from Sims, 2002).

Family strength	Vignette example
Investing time by observing family customs, services, celebrations and practices	D
Caring for one another	A,D
Flexibility	B
Coping by working together, or realising when they need additional support	B,C
Connecting to other families and communities within a culture	E
Supporting one another emotionally	A
Communicating effectively	A
Attempting to resolve differences	A
Sharing their emotions and experiences	B

Family Strengths Identified

A number of family strengths were identified within the vignettes. These are outlined in Table 2 and then discussed further in the themes below.

Overview of Themes

Using the model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1986), the identified protective factors came from many parts of each family's ecosystem. These include protective factors within the microsystem (e.g. family, early childhood educators) and exosystem (ADF supports, Australian Government services, community charities) as shown in Figure 1. The mesosystem represents the 'degree of congruence' between the players in the microsystem (Bowes et al., 2012, p. 7), so for example, how well the early childhood service and the parents work together to support the child. Communication and technology issues were evident throughout the microsystems, exosystems and the macrosystems that includes information technology issues in other countries where a parent was deployed. The narratives (including rituals and acculturation) are present throughout the microsystem, exosystem and more broadly through the macrosystem as meta- narratives.

Themes

From the themes discussed above, two core themes of 'narrative' and 'ritual and acculturation' became evident when thematic verification was employed. The next sections explore the roles of narrative and ritual and acculturation within the three families at the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem levels.

Narrative. Family life is complex, involving family narratives that are 'created, re-created, inhabited and challenged' (Thomson, Hadfield, Kehily, & Sharpe, 2012, p. 196). Within ADF families, parenting strengths are revealed in narratives that are often created by parents to prepare children for the impending deployment. Strong families often display strengths in parenting and communication, as outlined by Sims (2002). For young children, this narrative often involves a brief, simple, two or three sentence statement that focusses on where the parent is going, how they are travelling there, the duration of the deployment and how they are returning home. The parents, older siblings, educators, extended family and friends often encourage and scaffold children's learning of these narratives by rote, displaying congruence between the players in the mesosystem.

Fellowes and Oakley (2014) explain that 2 to 3 year old children readily enjoy listening to stories. The children in the study seemed to find great comfort in listening to and repeating the family narrative, and the non-deployed parent repeated the familiar narrative when the child became distressed asking for their

deployed parent. This type of effective emotional support is an important family strength (Sims, 2002). Physical props were often used to assist the learning. This sometimes included a globe or map of the world with marks to depict the country of deployment and Australia. This was often complemented by a homemade calendar with stickers with which the child could mark off the days until the deployed parent returned. The ADF also supplied cultural artefacts in the form of teddy bears dressed in military uniform. These 'care bears' were often held when the story was being told at bedtime as a comforter and prompt. Whilst assisting children's understanding about their parent's deployment, these types of narratives aided acculturating the children into the ideals and expectations of the ADF community (Baber et al., 2015, p. 41) and provided them with opportunities to imaginatively play with the narratives. Nicolopoulou, McDowell, and Brockmeyer (2006, p. 125) discuss the intertwining relationships between play and narrative and how this promotes young children's burgeoning language acquisition. Symbolic or pretend play is largely based on narratives enacted by young children and facilitates exploration and understanding of underlying concepts by taking on 'roles and relationships they wish to explore' (Harley, 2010, p. 129).

Additionally, the narratives also focused on place, such as the departure and arrival of the deployed parent at the airport, which facilitated children's understanding the process of deployment. This was outlined in Vignette A, when Brenda insisted that the children attend the airport to farewell their father as he deployed. Narratives typically involve characters, settings and events (Fellowes & Oakley, 2014) and without the trip to the airport, it was difficult for Brenda to create the setting to assist the family narrative. Due to the children's developmental abilities to recall information, the special trip to the airport provided a place-based bookmark for the children's memories whereas the setting for the deployment is likely to be an abstract notion. Other developments, such as children's speech occurs at vastly different rates and times with plateaus and regressions (Winch & Holliday, 2010, p. 55) which in turn is related to cognitive development. Despite her spouse Seb's protests, Brenda was determined the children's presence at the airport for future departures was something they would discuss as a family as she believed it was a pivotal part of supporting the children with the difficult concepts of deployment. In line with this, Osofsky and Chartrand (2013) recommend military parents prepare young children by talking to them about what is happening and answering their

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questions about these family changes, including sharing any feelings they are having. Additionally, the data may indicate Brenda's reluctance to deviate from the expectations within the tight ADP culture because departure events are often shared social occasions among ADP families. Vignette A also reveals parents 'attempting to resolve their differences' which is a characteristic family strength (Sims, 2002, p. 56). Moreover, Vignette A exposes a family strength of effective communication and care for one another in the creation of the children's narrative.

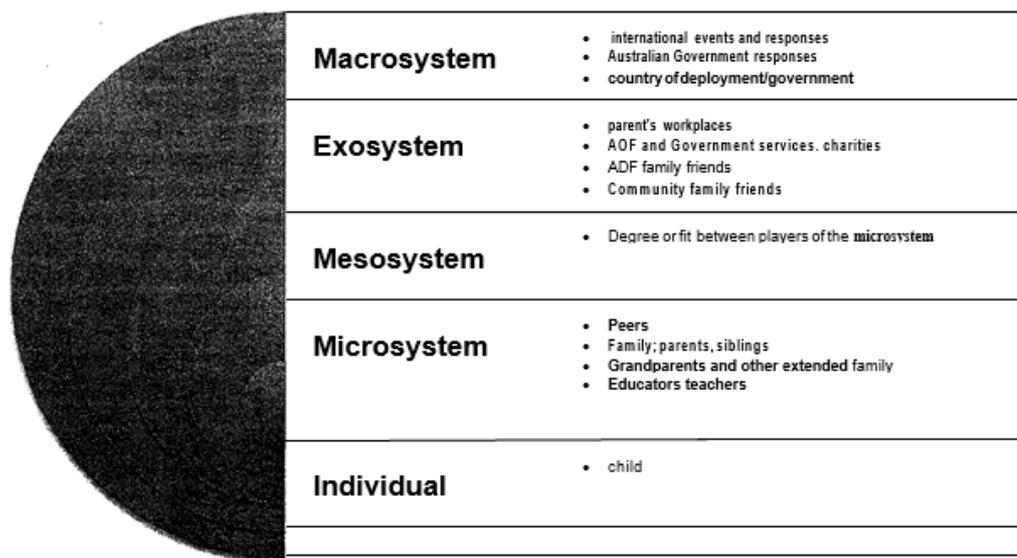


Figure 0-1 FIGURE 1 (Colour online) Socio-ecological family model showing protective factors within the three families (adapted from Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Vignette B revealed the ability of young children to re- member emotionally difficult times with the aid of storybooks containing family photos. The mother, Fiona, was surprised at the children's reaction to the storybooks and she said it made her realise how much emotion the children were holding on to from that stressful time. For Caleb and Fiona, that part of their family life had moved on so it was not something on which they dwelt. This may also be a reflection on the stoicism which is evident in many defence families (Siebler, 2009) and highlights the need to 'pay attention to each family member's feelings, as each person may perceive the situation differently and have different needs' (Brooks, 2011, p. 498). Fiona and Caleb quickly realised they needed to revisit the children's memories of deployment and talk as a family about the issues, showing the family strengths of being 'flexible', 'pulling together' and being able to 'share their feelings ... and experiences' (Sims, 2002, pp. 55-56). In particular, the incidence offered Caleb a

chance to talk about their new life and why they had chosen it over a life within the defence force. The storybooks facilitated much-needed family discussion. This reinforces the importance of children's literature in supporting children's cognitive, social, emotional and resilience development through processing and exploring challenging issues. The important role of children's literature is described by Fellowes and Oakley (2014) who argue it has 'a significant role to play in the cognitive, social and emotional, language and literacy, and moral development of young children' (p. 532).

Social and emotional development is particularly important in early childhood education programmes because these can often predict life success. Davie (2015) quotes Professor Heckman who states these skills are 'empirically documented and now rigorously established as common sense that people need multiple skills to successfully navigate all of life's challenges' (Heckman, in Davie, 2015, p. 2). Investing in resources, effective programmes and access for families is seen globally as critical in creating solid grounding for increased national workforce participation and productivity long term (Brennan & Crosby, 2015), although care needs to be taken to ensure the programmes are relevant and adaptable to specific communities (Sims, 2002). Brennan and Crosby (2015) also believe such family assistance increases the wellbeing and happiness of children.

Vignette C outlined necessary changes in the family narrative. This was prompted by the journalist's questions and Wendy subsequently became very upset and felt the journalist had ruined the narrative that she and Michael had shared for many years. On another level, it showed Michael's need for a more detailed narrative, a more meaningful sense of his father's death and changes in the level of scaffolding required within the microsystem over time (chronosystem). Wendy's explanations had previously been adequate but a more mature narrative for Michael was something Wendy struggled with emotionally because it was about letting go of Michael's early years and accepting his maturing cognitive and emotional skills. Wendy realised she needed support and contacted another mother who had a similar life experience for advice, therefore 'identifying when they need outside help', another family strength highlighted by Sims (2002, p. 56). A crucial factor in family member's responses is their perspective on the death, 'whether they see it as meaningful or meaningless' (Holmes, Rauch, & Cozza, 2013, p. 152). In a larger

sense, both these examples show a telling and a re-telling of the family's narrative as a constantly evolving action. This is described by Gillies and Neimeyer (2006) who state:

We continually author our own life stories as we reflect, interpret and reinterpret what happens in our lives, and we tell and retell our stories to other people and ourselves. Meaning then, is embedded in our life stories, and can be evoked by accessing people's stories in their own words (p. 38).

Saltzman et al. (2011, p. 220) recommend family members share their experiences and issues about deployment, then construct a family narrative that recognises the way the family has overcome multiple adversities and demonstrated resilience. This should help them see their experiences and reactions as typical and 'develop a sense of coherence about these shared experiences' (Saltzman et al., 2011, p. 220). There may be instances where narrative may not be enough, and counselling is necessary during times of family trauma, such as the death of a parent on deployment. Mallan (2014) reminds us that 'story and storytelling are embedded practices in all cultures and have evolved over time from cave drawings to digital stories' (p. 10). Cultural narrative also plays a large role in acculturation and ritual prevalent in the ADF culture within each family's exosystem. It also features in the broader Australian cultural metanarrative within the macrosystem which are the 'broad societal or cultural contexts' (Bowes et al., 2012, p. 7), including government.

Acculturation and ritual. In Vignette D, Michael's attendance at his father's gravesite necessitating days off school is common within the defence community, as is the marking of special days within families. Spending time together observing 'family traditions, celebrations, ceremonies and routines' is a characteristic of strong families and is displaying their commitment to care about each other' (Sims, 2002, p. 55). Michael's mother Wendy is a multi-generational member of the ADF community with both a grandfather and a father who served (microsystem). In her explanations about what she wanted Michael to learn about his father through the book project, it was evident the degree of acculturation was understandably very strong. For the ADF to exhibit this level of acculturation, cultural narrative and ritual are heavily utilised.

In Vignette E, an example of community cultural metanarrative was revealed in the card and present Brenda received from the charity organisation, Legacy. In this example, Brenda is displaying a family's strength of being 'connected to others in their

communities, and culture', thereby increasing their support base (Sims, 2002, p. 56). On one level, the words on the card given by Legacy can be seen as an insightful and experienced level of understanding in an effort to provide emotional support for the family members left behind. On a different level, it can be positioned as part of the cultural meta-narrative within the Australian community and beyond about service to country and sacrifice for a higher purpose. Lake (2010) questions these cultural meta-narratives and calls for an explanation in the shifting of the Australian cultural meta-narrative that has been heightened by the centenary of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli. Such cultural meta-narratives have been carefully reinforced by politicians, organisations and the media because national myths are a way to bind a society together (Gottschall, 2012). Conversely, national myths are often divisive, giving a view from the dominant culture and marginalising those with differing opinions or cultural backgrounds. In the case of the ANZAC myth, Indigenous Australians, those who are pacifists and those who are from the countries we fought against are likely to have quite different narratives, but may feel silenced by the popularity of the dominant meta-narrative.

A challenging and perplexing dichotomy. Within this cultural meta-narrative, as a researcher and an early childhood educator, I have been asked by many families to write children's storybooks explaining a number of the concepts that children struggle with around deployment and explore a few common experiences. I have found this task enjoyable and rewarding, but conversely, I also struggle with the idea that I am adding to the cultural meta-narrative as described above. Whilst I have had extended family members serve Australia in various wars in the past, I myself am not from a defence family. Due to my lack of family acculturation, I am reminded afresh when I hear expressions of acculturation during the interviews with parents and when I have worked with other families including children within the larger study that is a PhD thesis in progress as previously noted. Not having a military background has been very useful in separating myself from the cultural narrative; in a research sense, assisting me see the acculturation from the outside. However, I question if I am assisting potentially vulnerable families or am I adding to the cultural meta-narrative and national myth that helps keep recruitment in the ADF at one of the highest levels since 1999 (Department of Defence, 2015). Am I perpetrating a national myth which is used to bind a society together (Gottschall, 2012), or merely supporting vulnerable children and parents as they understandably struggle with deployment? Professionals working with families

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may also have similar ethical struggles as they reflect on their practice, which Newman and Pollnitz (2005) believe is essential for ethical practice with children. Similarly, the practice standards of the Australian Association of Social Workers (2013) list the components of social work practice to include: 'values and ethics, professionalism' and 'culturally responsive and inclusive practice' (p. 7).

Conclusion

This study has provided insight into the experiences of three military families that serves to promote understanding of the issues they face and the way in which their experiences and perceptions are shaped by the world around them. Thematic analysis highlighted the main themes that were analysed using a socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) giving insight into the scaffolding structures within families and communities. A culture of sacrifice was achieved through acculturation using cultural narrative and ritual at all levels of the family's socio-ecological system. Greater understanding of these issues and how they affect ADP families is important for those assisting military families. It is also important for those who make decisions about the way the ADP provides for their families. After all, as Andres and Coulthard (2015) state, the efficacy of a defence force 'depends on maintaining the well-being of not only its service members, but also their families' (p. 187).

Educators and family workers need to be aware of how important a family narrative is in assisting children re-member, normalise and verbalise the events of deployment. Providing support by first communicating with families, then providing scaffolding to the children will support their understanding and ability to answer questions adults frequently ask. Wilson (2016) describes this type of effective partnering as a means to provide 'support signposting, ideas and strategies as well as improve children's lives' (p. 17), providing a higher degree of congruence within the mesosystem. Educators also would benefit from communicating with parents about important dates within the calendar for their family and for the ADP in general.

Similarly, Saint-Jacques, Turcotte, and Pouliot (2009) outline the essential collaboration between the family worker and family in the strengths-based approach. In line with this, Elliott (2014, p. 199) outlines the importance of

accepting and valuing family cultural practices and principles for professionals connecting with families. Lyons, Ford, and Slee (2014) also recommend educators teach about resilience as well as build children's self-esteem by recognising children's strengths. The Australian *Early Years Learning Framework* (DEEWR, 2009) outlines the integral sense of belonging children gain within their families, cultural group, neighbourhood and community. Within the ADP community, strong acculturation helps its members feel connected and supported. To enhance children's learning by building connections between home and the early childhood setting, educators are encouraged to 'explore the culture, heritage, backgrounds and traditions of each child within the context of their community' (DEEWR, 2009, p. 27). Family workers and educators can employ the powerful use of narrative to build and reinforce children's understandings of deployment and help them grow from their experiences. They can assist families resilience by helping them view themselves as 'resourceful and skilled' so they become 'actively engaged in the process of addressing their issues and solving their problems' (Silberberg, 2001, p. 57). Where there has been grief and loss within military families, Walsh (2007) recommends professionals should help families create a 'shared experience of loss and survivorship' through 'active participation in memorial rituals' with their community (p. 210).

Overall, many factors impact a defence children's resilience during deployment, however 'relationships and connections matter, inside the family and out' (Hollingsworth, 2011, p. 225) increasing the level of congruence in the mesosystem. As a community and nation, we need to support these families and to do this we need increased understanding of their experiences and needs. Additional research is needed in this area within Australia (McFarlane, 2009; Siebler, 2009) and with young children within military families at a global level. Further research is needed into the use of family narratives, cultural narratives, acculturation and ritual and the challenging dichotomy for researchers reinforcing the cultural meta-narratives.

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Appendix 9

Protective factors in families: Themes from a socio-ecological study of Australian Defence Force families experiencing parental deployment

Abstract

Families sometimes face prolonged and frequent absences of a parent due to employment in industries that require work away, or for military deployment. Many families, however, are finding ways to survive and thrive. Within Australian Defence Force (ADF) families, despite the high stress and inherent danger, most do cope, displaying strength and resilience. Limited research has been conducted with Australian military families with young children, even less focusing on protective factors. There is particularly a dearth of research about families who have left the ADF or who have experienced the death of an ADF parent. This study offers unique insights through exploring family experiences of parental deployment by applying a socio-constructivist approach from data derived through Narrative Research. Protective factors were identified through relationships, the ADF, social media, community organisations, government departments and digital communication technologies. Understanding how these families manage and the protective factors they utilise may enable early childhood educators and family support services to better understand family resilience and thus, provide appropriate services for military families with young children.

Keywords: defence family, military deployment, resilience, protective factors

Stories from ADF families

Family 1

He (Sam, 3 years) didn't understand the difference between deployment and going to work, which created huge meltdowns when Caleb was home after deployment and then said he was going to 'work'.

Family 2

You are not really in or out after they die. I find it hard to connect with other defence families at Army unit days.

Family 3

He was also really upset by some of the parenting decisions I had made in his absence. It was hard having those very honest conversations where he was saying he thought those decisions were wrong.

Introduction

As it is clear from these stories, in addition to fears for the safety of deployed parents, military families also deal with the ongoing stress associated with prolonged absence of one family member. This stress places other individual family members, as well as the whole family unit, at risk and contributes to higher levels of workplace attrition (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010). Risk factors are experiences and issues that place strain on the wellbeing of the family unit, and thus the children. In particular, Pincombe and Pincombe (2010) note that families who are apart are likely to grow further apart the longer the separation. Despite this, there are a significant number of families who find ways to cope with this kind of stress (McGuire et al., 2012).

Research about Australian military families is very limited and urgently needed (McFarlane, 2009; Siebler, 2009). Globally, research about the influence of protective factors within these families is scarce, hence, limiting defence forces and others who assist the families to effectively strengthen, target and resource their support. Protective factors in families act as a buffer in times of stress and change (Cologon & Hayden, 2012) and protect their 'well-being, outcomes and mental health' (Wilson, 2016, p. 13). Protective factors are 'experiences that can help the development of positive social and emotional skills, essential for good mental health' (Australian Government & Beyondblue, 2014). Within military families, despite the stresses of deployment, most families seem to manage short-term separations that are less than six months (Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009) and show strengths and resiliency (Jensen-Hart, Christensen, Dutka, & Leishman, 2012; Sheppard, Malatras, & Israel, 2010). To date much research has been focussed on understanding the impacts of deployment on families and children, but little is understood about the protective factors that operate to support families throughout the deployment cycle (Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser, 2008; Palmer, 2008). Knowledge about family stressors helps direct policy-makers to work towards reducing stresses within the workplace and the broader community and may contribute to raising the awareness of professionals who collaborate with families.

This study uses the socio-ecological model, created by Bronfenbrenner (1986) to explain both the origins and effects of the stresses military families face and the protective factors that buffer them during difficult times. The model is made up of concentric circles and places the child at the individual level at the centre. The next layer of the model is the microsystem, made up of those people the child has direct contact with. This typically includes immediate family members, peers, health workers and educators. The levels of congruence within the microsystem is termed the mesosystem (Grace, Hayes, & Wise, 2016). The next layer consists of those people the child normally does not have regular contact with and is called the exosystem. This may include parent's workplaces, community services, government policies, media, family friends and extended family that live away. The macrosystem surrounds the exosystem and is made up of the culture, ideologies, economy and global issues. Lastly, within the model, the chronosystem is the changes that occur over time for the individual child due to developmental changes or changes in circumstances. This model takes into account the changeable physical, social and psychological environment in which they live (Grace et al., 2016). In such a view, children are impacted by their environment but also impact upon their environment. The following sections outline relevant literature that underpins the study.

Characteristics of healthy family functioning

Healthy family functioning is about families spending time together, building and maintaining intimate relationships. These intimate relationships involve supporting, sharing and caring for each other within the family unit and includes couples, children, other kin and family friends (Poole, 2011). According to Sims (2002), strong families are flexible and view change positively, work together to cope, can identify when outside assistance is needed and connect with extended family, friends, community and their culture. Shimoni and Baxter (2008) believe strong families effectively communicate, value one other, have a shared belief and balance their needs. Additionally, they support others in times of need and try to reconcile differences (Sims, 2002). The ability to maintain levels of intimacy and family strength is challenged when a family member is absent for significant periods of time, such as when a parent is away for work. Currently, this occurs among families who experience long absences of at least one parent due to military deployment or employment on oilrigs. Other families may experience frequent parental absences for military training, transport industry

requirements and Fly-In-Fly-Out (FIFO) and Drive-In-Drive-Out (DIDO) mining rosters. These frequent absences can be just as difficult as prolonged absences, as Hubinger, Parker, and Calavarino (2002) explain the frequent separations and reintegration's are emotionally draining.

Protective factors in military families

Although the study of protective factors within military families is limited, and much more is needed, this section outlines some of the findings within the literature. For non-deployed spouses, Spera (2009) found that military 'unit relationship quality, leadership effectiveness, and tangible social support from community members' were the most important protective factors to wellbeing (p.286). For returned personnel, Rentz et al. (2007) outline protective factors such as disciplinary measures particular to the military may help decrease the prevalence of family violence and addictions but unfortunately these measures may increase the likelihood of non-disclosure due to stigma, and fear of curtailed career progression. For children experiencing difficulties during deployment, Saltzman et al. (2011) explain that nurturing and adaptive parenting is the most important protective factor. For families, Andres and Coulthard (2015), in a cross-country comparison, found that effective communication was a protective factor. In the Australian Timor-Leste study, identified protective factors included parental and child wellbeing, relationship quality, access to care, social support and the family's ability to function during times of increased stress (McGuire et al., 2012). Importantly, the Timor-Leste study did not explore the role of other protective factors addressed in this paper: relationships with educators support through social media, relationship quality through digital communication technology, effective parenting and economic security.

Stresses and risk factors caused by work related parental absences and deployment

Deployment itself causes ongoing stress for the deployed parent, even after they are back at home. Deployment for combat, peacekeeping and border protection can result in a combat stress response (CSR) (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010), moral injury (Sherman, 2010) or mental health issues including depression, addictions, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and violence. Compounding this issue is a strong acculturation process that positions seeking help as a route to potential dismissal and the impact disclosure could have on their career progression (Crompvoets, 2012).

Stressors unique to shorter or lengthy parental absences, and stressors that are common across all parental absences are summarised in Table 1.

Palmer (2008) and Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler (2007) outline the reasons military families are at risk, both as a family unit and as individuals due to the ongoing stresses they experience. For families, poor access to communication was found to be a risk factor by Andres and Coulthard (2015) in a cross-country comparison. For children, some risk factors are associated with the non-deployed parent's reduced ability to manage effectively due to the stress of parenting alone.

Table 1: Stressors in families experiencing work-related parental absences

Common stressors	Stressors with lengthy absences	Stressors with shorter absences
Parent working away withdraws emotionally and ignores personal needs (Kalaf, 2014)	Safety issues affect the whole family (De Angelis & Segal, 2015; De Pedro & Astor, 2011)	Parent leaving unprepared for the lifestyle before starting the job (Kalaf, 2014; Meredith, Rush, & Robinson, 2014)
Family members not utilising services (Torkington, Larkins, & Gupta, 2011) due to limited knowledge, access issues or stigma (Kalaf, 2014; Meredith et al., 2014)	Combat Stress Disorder (CSR) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affect the whole family (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010)	Increased rates of sleep disturbance (Vojnovic, Michelson, Jackson, & Bahn, 2014), depression, loneliness, substance abuse, (Torkington et al., 2011) for the parent working away
Increased difficulties for divorced, separated and/or families who have other major stresses (Kalaf, 2014; Siebler, 2009)	Times of separation and reintegration are very difficult for whole family (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010)	At-home parent's emotional outbursts and tensions indicate a 'lack of emotional and informational support', (Hubinger et al., 2002, p. 81)
Increased stress due to isolation and increased domestic and child rearing duties for the at-home parent (Hubinger et al., 2002; Meredith et al., 2014)	Deployed parent's reintegration into the community can be difficult (MacManus et al., 2012) and exacerbated due to the unpopularity of particular conflicts (De Pedro & Astor, 2011)	At-home parents report difficulty with partners reconnecting, socialising and meeting their sexual needs (Hubinger et al., 2002)
Difficulty with consistent co-parenting (Lester et al., 2015; Meredith et al., 2014)		
Difficulty for families with children with mental health issues or disabilities (Norman, 2015; Siebler, 2009)		
Relocation of the family can create added stress (Allan, 2011; De Angelis & Segal, 2015; De Pedro & Astor, 2011)		

Higher stress levels for all family members before the parent leaves (Kalaf, 2014; Rentz et al., 2007) and on return (Meredith et al., 2014); drinking culture of the worksite merging into the home (MacManus et al., 2012; Meredith et al., 2014)

Strength-based approach

Strengths-based approaches are more commonly accepted as the best way to assist families, but conversely Wilson (2016) reports that the evidence to confirm this approach is only just emerging. Concentrating on the negative is a legacy of the medical model that adheres to a deficit model of human behavior (Graybeal, 2001). It is an approach many professionals cling to because of their conventional instruction in this approach (Sims, 2002) and one that infiltrates policy makers.

Strengths-based practice is grounded in the concept that strong families not only cope but also flourish despite the stressors they face. Bowes and Warburton (2012) describe family strengths that arise from the way families communicate, problem solve, make decisions, interact and sustain relationships. The operation of these strengths changes over time as families respond to stress inside and outside the family (Bowes & Warburton, 2012, p. 99). A more comprehensive list of the characteristics of strong families that has been adapted Sims (2002) is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Characteristics of strong families (adapted from Sims, 2002)

Strong families:
are committed to one another practically and verbally
encourage one another to pursue individual goals within a cohesive unit
spend plenty of time together observing family customs, anniversaries, celebrations, formal ceremonies and routines
enjoy being with each other, care for one another and appreciate each member
are flexible and view change in a positive light
work together to cope and can identify when outside help is needed
are connected with extended family and/or family friends, community and culture that increases their resource base as needed
help others in times of need
give emotional, social, community, informational and altruistic support

communicate well without blame or prejudice
try to reconcile differences
share happiness and utilise humour to reduce stress
share experiences, emotions and hopes

Contemporary early childhood education, social work and community work focuses on working with families from a strengths-based approach as described by Guo and Tsui (2010) and Sims (2002). This approach requires professionals to understand the protective factors that can empower families to thrive even when they are experiencing challenges (Anuradha, 2004) or are at risk. It is important to note that risk and protective factors are not static within families and individuals (Allison et al., 2003; Hawley, 2000). Further, Sims (2002) identifies a number of protective factors within the various levels of the ecological family system, as outlined by Bronfenbrenner (1986), starting from individual characteristics and moving through the various layers where government decisions and policies within the macrosystem impact on the family and child.

Once these strengths and resources have been identified, professionals can work with families on utilising the resources to improve the current issues or situation (Anuradha, 2004). As Itzhaky and Bustin (2002) state, this process empowers individuals and families. It helps children to utilise support factors within the community and family (Allison et al., 2003), thus building resilience through the provision of services. For early childhood educators, the strengths-based model aligns with Vygotsky’s notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978) because it begins with what children are familiar with and what they can already manage (Sims, 2011). This complex process involves empowering the parents and children as they acquire and demonstrate the language skills and practices effective in the context in which they are operating. In the strength-based approach it is hoped that eventually these acquired skills become established behaviours within the family.

Protective factors

The study here concentrates on the protective factors that enable families with young children attending early childhood services to manage and thrive under difficult circumstances. The wide variety of these factors may be useful for professionals and policy makers who work with these families by revealing a broad picture of families’

capacities and limitations. Concentrating on families with young children emphasises the importance of the early years. Internationally, research corroborates easier access to quality education and care in the early years, that is acknowledged by the Australian Government's programs and policies (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2015).

Closer examination of the protective factors is useful because it enables support services and professionals, including early childhood educators to understand and explore family strengths and thus, provide appropriate resources. Importantly, engaging effectively with potentially vulnerable families and children in early childhood settings is vital, before crisis intervention is necessary and negative behaviours have become entrenched (Bowes, Hayes, Cashmore, & Hodge, 2012). In early childhood settings, parents are more likely to actively engage in authentic partnerships with educators and associated professionals; and, through the building of relationships and trust, information exchange and provisions can be targeted where there is apparent need (Wilson, 2016). While globally there has been 'an increased recognition of the importance of the early years' (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2012, p. 2), due to funding shortages within Australia early intervention programs often focus on the families who are either in crisis or have the highest need (Bowes, Hayes, et al., 2012). This lack of funding to preventative programs, transfers the responsibility to parents, early childhood educators and family workers to source the information and provision needed to effectively assist children who are living with stressful circumstances, such as the absence of a parent due to work.

This study focuses on the protective factors identified within three families with young children who experienced prolonged parental deployments and frequent, short-term parent training periods away from home during ADF service. The data allows us to examine their experiences and importantly, gives rare insight into a family who had left the ADF and another who has experienced a death of a parent.

Methodology

In this study a narrative methodology was employed, that involves rebuilding individual experiences within personal and social contexts (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), solicited through research (Polkinghorne, 2007). While it is seen as a contemporary research approach, Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) argue that we have discussed the

stories we tell for about as long as we have been telling them. Gottschall (2012) believes humans have been telling stories since they have been on earth and this ability is what sets humans apart as a species. Narrative methodologies have become increasingly popular in the fields of social science bringing with them higher levels of analysis and discourse around stories and their importance in our lives (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). This study examines the stories participants share about their experiences of deployment and their interpretations of these stories.

Participants

The participants were engaged through convenience sampling of three families. The families were invited to participate due to their involvement in a storybook project about defence families as part of a larger, unpublished doctoral study entitled ‘Young children’s experience and understanding of deployment within an ADF family’. The unique data from these three families, including five children was separated into a subset, summarised in Table 3. The three families represent two different Australian states and from three different military bases.

Table 3: Participant information

Family number	Children	Parents	Experience of deployment	Experiences of lengthy training sessions since having children
Family 1	Sam, (4-years-old), Jess (19 months old)	Father (Caleb) Mother (Fiona)	Father initially deployed for eight months. His second deployment was six months. Sam has experienced both deployments while Jess was born after the first deployment.	Many
Family 2	Michael, (5-years-old), only child	Father (Nathan) deceased Mother (Wendy)	Father deployed before Michael’s birth then returned after family leave. One previous deployment when Nathan was single.	Not applicable
Family 3	Brian, (3-years-old) and Davina (18-months-old)	Father (Seb) Mother (Brenda)	Father has deployed for nine months previously, experienced by both children	Many

Caleb, from Family 1, had left the defence force during the period of data collection. In Family 2, Nathan had come home on leave briefly after the birth of Michael, however

he was killed in action very soon after he returned to active service. In Family 3, Seb was undergoing extensive training (away from home) to prepare him for further deployments. Table 3 lists the ages of the children at initial contact with the family, although the data was collected with various methods over a three-year timeframe. Small-scale studies such as this often face issues of identity protection of participants. Newman and Pollnitz (2005) discuss the importance of maintaining self-sufficiency, and managing personal information and identity. For this reason, the data has been scrambled between families, pseudonyms were used and some of their details were changed.

To understand the context of the participants, it is important to have a degree of knowledge concerning the ADF as an employer. As one of the biggest employers in Australia, the ADF has over 80,000 permanent and reserve personnel (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) working across the Navy, Airforce and Army. Most of these employees are at an age when they have a young family or are starting to have children. The Australian Defence Force (2013) describes deployment as normally lasting for three to nine months and may involve peacekeeping, strategic or combat operations. Redeployment rates are as high as 33% of all personnel who stay with the ADF. Attrition rates are of concern for the ADF (Department of Defence, 2010) due to the loss of skills and the high cost of training and recruitment.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected over a period of three years via face-to-face interviews, emails and phone conversations with families utilising the mode of contact that suited families and the researcher at the time. Contact with the families for interviews and conversations occurred four to six times over this period. The interviews were semi-structured and questions centred on themes about their experiences of deployment as parents, co-parents and as a couple. I also explored their perceptions of the children's experiences and understandings and the protective factors they utilised. Member checking occurred by presenting the parents with various data outputs for validation. To increase researcher integrity and reflexivity, I kept a reflective journal during the process and discussed the findings and themes with other academics and research supervisors to monitor any inherent bias. The parents were positioned as knowledgeable sources of information about their children. In narrative data collection, thick, rich descriptions of

the contexts, environment, participators' emotions and nuances are necessary to enable the researcher to look for transferrable data through shared characteristics (Moen, 2006). Once this awareness was constructed, analysis of the data was undertaken.

Data was analysed using a thematic approach and application of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological framework to understand the way families created meaning in their lives. The steps in narrative analysis included firstly, an immersion in the data. Secondly, a narrative retelling of the data was created from all sources of data for each family while keeping in mind the adult's role and authority in the children's lives. Thirdly, these family narratives were developed from themes within the framework, emerging from the data by inductive analysis. Fourthly, the data was inspected again, moving from description to an interpretation of participant's accounts within the research themes (Willis, 2013). Narrative analysis is a useful method in this research field because it brings out the hidden voice (Spector-Mersel, 2010) and emphasises that there is not one truth or interpretation. As Reissman (2005) explains, narrative analysis can create links between stories and social and political organisation.

The next section explores the themes identified within the data.

Overview of protective factors employing Bronfenbrenner's model as a framework for analysis

A major theme that emerged from the data was the importance of protective factors for the young child and their family. These factors encompassed relationships, the ADF, community provisions and communication and technology. These themes reflect the concept of resilience by focusing on positive outcomes and utilising a strengths-based approach as described by Cologon and Hayden (2012). When examining resilience, the relationship between protective factors, susceptibilities and liabilities is highlighted (Cologon & Hayden, 2012). The quality of the protective factors within the layers of the socio-ecological family system will often affect the families' ability to survive the deployment cycle. Being a member of the defence community builds resilience because of the protective factors it provides (Baber, Fussell, & Porter, 2015). In this study, the narrative data reveals varying protective factors within the case study families across the four levels of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) model shown below in Figure 1.

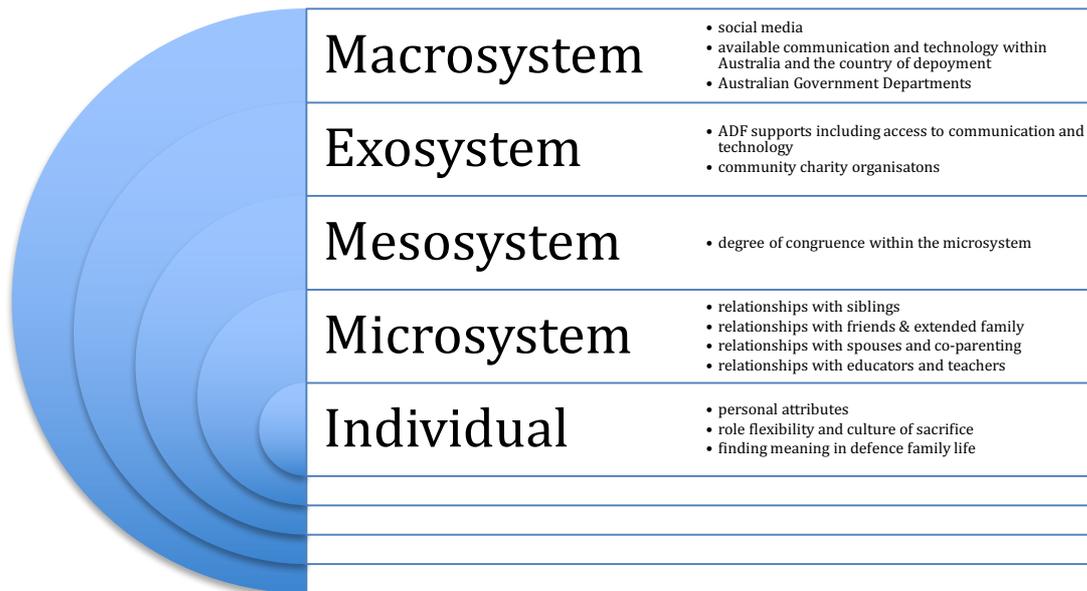


Figure 2: Summary of protective factors identified in the three families applying Bronfenbrenner's (1986) socio-ecological model

Themes from the data

In this next section, each identified protective factor is examined in turn with reference to the layers within the socio-ecological model. The identified protective factors are summarised in Figure 2.

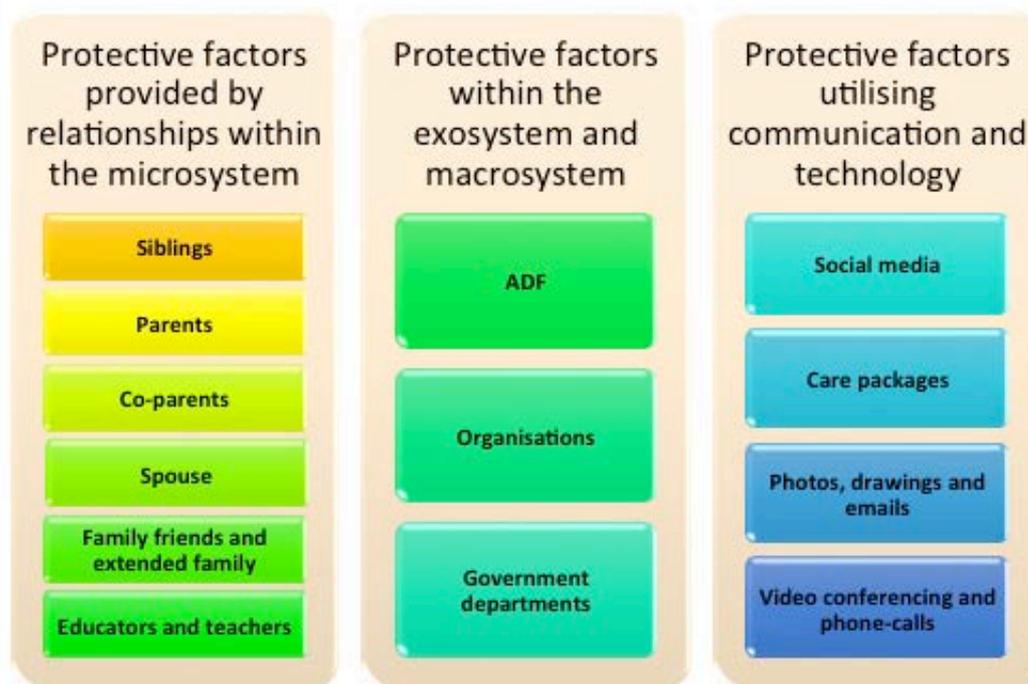


Figure 3: Identified protective factors within the families' socio-ecological model

Protective factors provided by relationships (microsystem)

The protective factors provided by relationships with siblings, parents, family friends, extended family, educators and teachers are explored in the next three sections.

Sibling relationships

Family 3

The kids fought at times over time on the phone with Seb. Davina would stay on the phone for a long time just listening to Daddy's voice and trying to talk and Brian would get very cross when he had to wait.

Typical of sibling relationships, Brian and Davina in Family 3 exhibited some competition for parental attention, as evidenced by the verbal and physical altercations over phone calls with their deployed father. Conversely, Fiona from Family 1, as a positive response, identified sibling assistance, role flexibility and emotional support.

Family 1

Sam was also helpful at home, he would bring me toys and give me cuddles, bring me the tissue box if I was crying and help with the bins, gardening and feeding the dogs. He would also help me to get Jess ready sometimes if we were going out.

Parenting relationships

Family 1

I had some photo books made with photos of Caleb and the kids. We also video-recorded Caleb reading to the children that they loved to watch. We made up a special calendar so Sam could mark the days he was away with stickers. He didn't understand the difference between deployment and going to work, which created huge meltdowns when Caleb was home after deployment and then said he was going to 'work'.

Family 3

We were all having trouble sleeping and Brian was having nightmares. It just saved the fights at the time and was much easier on everyone. I think I just had to get through it at the time by doing things my way.

In Family 3, Brenda displayed responsive and supportive parenting by adjusting to the children's physical and emotional responses and allowing them into her bed and by

providing supports to help Sam understand the concepts of deployment. In Family 1, shown below, both Caleb and Fiona, showed role flexibility during the initial time of reintegration. Additionally, the Caleb and Fiona revealed parenting strengths and emotional support of the children by revisiting unresolved issues the children had. They were surprised the children's emotional issues were still evident a year after Caleb had left the ADF.

Family 1

After Afghanistan Caleb decided to take a step back for the re-integration period. This meant I took care of them and all discipline was handled by me for the first couple of weeks.

I was surprised to see how upset Sam got since Caleb hasn't been away for a large stint since last year. It has shown me how much they have held onto the emotions they used to feel when he was away and how raw it obviously still is for them. It was a good chance for Caleb to have a good chat to them about the whole thing.

Co-parenting relationships

Family 1 Caleb

We had never planned as a family that I would be there forever. In the end it came down to more time away for promotion and I was away all of 2012, came home in February for 6 weeks, then home for 2 weeks then away for 3-4 months again. The main reason I left was just lifestyle. It was the right decision for our family to leave.

Family 1 Fiona

When Jess turned 3 we realized Caleb had only been there 1 year of her life. All the time away was the big issue for us. Caleb had missed the first soccer games and other big events in the children's lives. Getting used to Caleb being home full time took a while for the children. Sam acted out at him being home all the time and would avoid him and Jess did not want to speak to him in the mornings. She would completely ignore him at other times. I told Caleb the kids were 'punishing him' for having been away for so long. Since leaving things are much easier for us all. We can plan events and know we will all be there, including the holidays. The uncertainty is gone. The children are more settled. It's great knowing the time you have will be yours as a family.

This data reveals Family 1's ability to make career decisions in the interest of family cohesion, showing flexibility with goals and arrangements. It displays the family's

ability to move on positively despite lingering issues from the past, such as the children's behaviours. It shows their ability to focus on the improvements such changes have brought to the family as a whole, regardless of the drawbacks of financial and career sacrifices. In the example below, Brenda from Family 3 exhibited determination to spend time together as a family unit, despite her husband's protests. It demonstrates Seb's struggles with reintegration as a parent when decisions have been made he disagrees with and children have developed new skills and matured in his absence. The vignette demonstrates Brenda's empathetic response, by avoiding blame for the difficulties that arose during reintegration.

Family 3

I made him come away on a family holiday soon after he came back. He didn't want to, but it made a big difference to reconnect. It is hard as the kids were up to different stages so he was often babying them and they didn't want to be babied. Nine months is a long time in a young child's life and they changed a lot. He was also really upset by some of the parenting decisions I had made in his absence. It was hard having those very honest conversations where he was saying he thought those decisions were wrong. I made them to cope during that tough time. Issues like the kids coming and sleeping in our bed.

He was really tired (during reintegration) and tried sleeping during the day to catch up. The kids just made really loud noises suddenly and he would be angry at being woken up. I kept saying: 'They are just young kids, Seb'. He said it is hard because when you are on base you are with adults for 9 months, but adults who are good at following orders. When he came home, he was dealing with a toddler and a pre-schooler.

Spousal relationships (individual)

Family 1

Before he deployed there was a family information session defence put on where they said not to bother your partner with things that can be solved by yourself or with support at home. They also said to avoid telling them things that might play on their mind and affect them on duty. That made it really hard. Jess was really sick and we were in and out of hospital and medical visits and testing a lot for many months and I couldn't mention it except to downplay the seriousness of it. Caleb's Aunt also got really ill and I couldn't mention that either. It was weird when he came back as we

had lots of conversations where I had to explain to him what really happened. That was hard as he felt he was lied to.

Family 3

I was not told to hold back any information from Seb, but I felt guilty if I told him how bad things were at home and how hard I was finding it. There was a period of about 2 months when the children were continually sick between the two of them and I was really struggling with very little sleep. After it was over, I told him. Then he was really upset I had held that back from him and he felt really guilty I had gone through that by myself.

In this study, two families spoke of the issues around protecting each other from what was happening at home. One family was told by the ADF to keep stressful issues to themselves to avoid distracting the deployed parent. The other non-deployed parent just kept quiet about her struggles without being instructed by defence personnel to do so. Both non-deployed parents spoke of the later difficulties this caused in their communication when the deployed parent eventually realised the truth. Similarly, the deployed parents did not share detailed matters of defence with their spouses to avoid burdening them with what they were witnessing and experiencing and for security reasons.

At the individual level of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) model, parents choose to filter the information given to the other spouse and the non-deployed parent often controls what the children communicate in order to soften the news. Brooks (2011) stresses the importance of establishing boundaries about what is shared in communication. Minute details may be overwhelming for deployed parents and they may become distracted through worrying about how to solve issues at home when they are away (Brooks, 2011). Conversely, Tomforde (2015) explained one coping strategy of the spouses of German deployed military personnel that involved writing everything down, including all the emotions they were experiencing in letters or diaries. Carefully chosen excerpts of the diaries were sent to the deployed spouse during deployment or left at home for them to read when they returned. In their U.S. based research Andres, De Angelis, and McCone (2015) discovered deployed spouses generally protected their spouse by keeping military operations to themselves. Family members at home may become anxious if the deployed parent shares too much about their operations or surrounds (Brooks, 2011). In line with these family's experiences, stress can be caused by

unhealthy family communication patterns which can include both ignoring other family members or sharing too much information (Dekel, Wadsworth, & Sanchez, 2015).

Family friends and extended family relationships

Family 1

My parents were great during both deployments, but especially the first because I moved in with them. There was another mother whose husband was a FIFO worker (Fly in Fly Out miner). I don't think I would have survived without her.

Family 2

We were living in Army accommodation and then he found out he was to be deployed. They offered me the option of relocating to be with my family as we were both away from family at the base.

Family 3

Before he left, we moved to the coast to be near my Mum and Dad so I could have that support when he deployed. We had lots of sleepovers with them and they would look after me. It's nice going home and someone caring about me. The kids also just go there and I have a break sometimes. Working part time, having the kids and coping by yourself is hard, so they are a big help.

The narrative data demonstrated that non-deployed parents found assistance during their first deployment experience from their own parents. The ADF offered families the opportunity to relocate to be near other family members during deployment and families were grateful for the ADF's facilitating role. The extended family provided both physical and emotional support. Some of the non-deployed parents viewed this support as offering opportunities to catch up on rest, helping them cope with the demands of parenting alone and alleviating their feelings of being stretched. Relocation closer to extended family also provided opportunities for parents to access child minding that enabled them to socialise, thus reducing their feelings of isolation. The parents often cited benefits including special time for the children with their grandparents and other extended family. Interestingly, following the death of a parent, the ADF severing these supports was taken personally during such an emotional time, as shown in the excerpt below.

Family 2

I took up the offer (of relocating to her parent's house) and most of our belongings were packed up and left in a Commonwealth Storage Facility for when Nathan returned. Six months after the funeral they moved our belongings down to my mother's house because they could no longer be in a Commonwealth Storage Facility. I was no longer considered a defence family. That was a rude shock. You are not really in or out after they die.

In Family 1, Fiona's narrative data identified that she found the second deployment, when she had two young children, more difficult than the first when she had only one child. She and the children did not relocate to be near her own parents during the second deployment and when both children were very sick for an extended period, her narrative outlined how difficult and stressful she found this experience. Given the absence of family close by, both Fiona and Caleb reported how they found the physical and emotional encouragement given by a family friend as critical to their coping. The friend, who was in a similar situation because her husband worked away as a FIFO worker at a mine site, was more easily able to empathise and respond appropriately. Fiona was not living on a military base at the time, reducing the amount of available support.

Educators and teacher relationships

Family 2

The Early Childhood teacher was great and helped me access funding for a specialist for Michael due to his hyperactivity. His school teacher is not very helpful getting a letter organized to help with funding now that he has been diagnosed with ADHD and Aspergers. The school counsellor has had a chat to Michael too.

In Family 2, Wendy emphasised the importance of a supportive early childhood educator who was able to help source defence funding for her son Michael's additional learning needs. Subsequently, Wendy had more difficulty building this type of relationship with Michael's first primary schoolteacher and this impacted on the provision of additional school assistance. She believed Michael's education suffered because of the difference of opinion about the need to access funding to support his learning difficulties. In the excerpt below, Fiona from Family 1 stressed the importance of the provision and knowledge of Sam's early childhood educator who was able to suggest effective strategies to assist family communication. Sam initially reacted with joy for the first few days when his father returned from deployment or lengthy training episodes. This subsequently changed to ongoing displays of anger and refusals to speak

to his father or be physically near him for a number of weeks, impacting the father's anxiousness about reintegration each time. Interestingly, Caleb attributed the eventual improvement to Sam's increasing maturity.

Family 1 Fiona

Sam's preschool teacher was amazing and had child psychology training. She was very helpful with Sam's phases and behavior and encouraged us to have conversations with Sam when he was acting out before the deployment. She told us Sam might have been behaving like that because of the things he may have overheard about deployment. We took her advice and put a map of the world in Sam's room with a star where we lived and one where Caleb was going to Afghanistan. Once we explained it all the behaviour stopped immediately.

Family 1 Caleb

After East Timor and then during the extra time away, Sam had a rebellion against me I suppose you would say. This improved with age. There was some nervousness about coming home and trying to fit back in with the children, especially after Sam's episodes of not wanting to have anything to do with me.

Protective factors within the exosystem and macrosystem

ADF support

Family 1 Fiona

The Padre was really good and the social worker was helpful. There was also a head person to email if anything was needed and he was really excellent. The welfare people called a few times and I totally panicked of course. Those calls were really reassuring though, after I calmed down. It was great to know that they were checking up that we were OK. For our personal experience I really don't think there was much more they (the ADF) could have done for us. We were given a book on dealing with deployment that was very informative and helpful. They covered everything from the emotions of deployment to a checklist of things we should organise before Caleb left. It also gave tips to deal with the homecoming. I had been given a list of all the numbers and email addresses of all people we could contact if I needed help or had any questions. There was a farewell parade before Caleb left which was turned into a family day where all families got to meet each other and meet people like the welfare officer. For us I think they prepared us very well and I never felt like they were not supportive of us.

Family 1 Caleb

There was one talk we went to one day. It was a seminar and there were some handouts. The Welfare Officer and Padre were also available.

Family 1 identified Army Unit days as useful to connect with other families and ADF support staff. Information shared verbally and in booklets at pre-deployment family events was considered relevant and helpful. Being able to meet support staff such as Padres and Social Workers, for possible later access was seen as useful. For Family 2, there had been a change in the chronosystem as Wendy had once enjoyed these days. Attendance at such events since the death of her husband on deployment had been difficult as she did not feel part of the defence culture anymore and found it hard to relate to families who had not experienced this type of loss, although her son enjoyed them and gave him an opportunity of mixing with other fathers. Wendy found the ADF funded trip to the overseas base very helpful to give meaning and closure to her spouse's death.

Family 2

Army days are hard with the hierarchy and feeling like I am not really part of the defence culture anymore. I find it hard to connect with other defence families at Army unit days. It is hard to hear the other wives whining about how tough they have it when their husbands are on night duty. Michael enjoys them though and tends to gravitate toward the other Dads. He gets upset when he sees other Dads at school or at the park. I got a lot of closure when I was allowed with a small group of other families to Afghanistan. I got to see Nathan's room, and got some understanding of what his work was like over there for him at the base.

Organisation (exosystem) and government department (macrosystem) support

Family 2

Legacy have been helpful, but mostly are older. They got me a new computer. The local RSL (Returned Services League) branch have been a great support. The Defence Trust is also there to help but I am not entitled to the Commando Trust because I was given the wrong paper work by the Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA).'

A number of charity organisations and Australian Government Departments assist military and veteran families. The veteran's charity organisation, Legacy, had provided funding to Wendy and her son Michael (Family 2) and the organisation also offered

ongoing emotional care. Other assistance was welcomed from the local branch of the Returned Services League (RSL). After her spouse's death, the Department of Veterans Affairs had issued the wrong form for Wendy's claims, thus limiting her entitlements. They had, however funded a number of needed resources, but not to the level she was entitled.

Protective factors utilising communication and technology

Both positive and negative communication and technology issues arose from the data with families during respective deployment cycles.

Social media (macrosystem)

Family 2

I am close to other war widows in our Facebook group. They have been a great support and know what it is like.' I could access it (counselling) but it would be a waste of time. How would a counsellor know what I was going through? They have not experienced the death of a husband and the father of their child. I just talk to my Facebook group.

At the macrosystem level, Wendy (Family 2) took great comfort in the emotional support offered by a group of young war widows who communicated using Facebook™. Conversely, Wendy did not access the ADF supplied counsellors who she felt would not understand her. She felt her situation was unique and that being a war widow was not something counsellors would understand or could assist with.

Care packages (macrosystem)

Family 1

He sent some parcels and we sent him a care package most weeks. We would cook his favourite biscuits and send drawings the kids did and other things.

Care packages are parcels containing presents and non-perishable food sent from home to deployed parents. Items from the deployed parent can also be sent, often containing toys or tourist items depending upon the nature and area of deployment. During deployment, the family or deployed parent can post one package a week free of charge. Parents from two of the case study families cited care packages as an effective communication strategy for the families at home to communicate with the deployed

parent. Parents who discussed this type of communication used the packages to show children's artwork and send favourite food items they had baked with the children.

Video conferencing and phone-calls (macrosystem)

Family 1 Caleb

I was able to use Skype™ most days and that was great. It was really helpful to me to be able to see them and know they were safe and OK.

Family 1 Fiona

He was able to use Skype™ most days. He said he found that really helpful being able to see us every day and know we were OK. I found it very draining. Phone calls are better as Caleb can be on speakerphone and I can keep attending to the children and do housework while we chat. Skype™ sessions every night meant you had to be totally available for an hour at a really bad time of night. The kids and I were both tired, the kids were whingey and sometimes it was the last thing you felt like doing. I did it anyway and of course would never tell him how much I hated it.

Family 3

Skype™ and phone calls helped. Sundays were special Skype™ days once a fortnight normally. There were no mobile phones or texts. Seb left his phone at home.

Another type of communication technology, video conferencing software, such as Skype™ was often utilised by families during deployment when it is available. For one family within this study, utilising such services was a pleasant weekly event, looked forward to by all concerned even though it involved the deployed parent lining up for lengthy periods of time. For another family, the deployed parent took great comfort in the ability to see and hear his family each night, but for the non-deployed parent it became yet another responsibility. She felt she had to cope with the nightly sessions without complaint to attend to the needs of her spouse.

Discussion

This discussion focuses on the three areas of protective relationships within the microsystem, exosystem and macrosystem evident from the data.

Protective factors provided by relationships (microsystem)

Protective factors provided by personal relationships revealed family cohesion, support, role flexibility and awareness. Protective factors provided by professional relationships demonstrated the parent's desire and high regard for quality partnerships.

Personal relationships

Many families are able to show an increased level of flexibility, with members taking on new responsibilities and roles during deployment (Bowling & Sherman, 2008). This flexibility was revealed in Family 1 when Sam took on his father's household chores and helped his sister get ready for day-care. Sibling relationships often promote resilience in children as they learn to help others in times of need and this behaviour can become an ongoing part of their lives (Brooks, 2011). However, love and friendship often go hand-in-hand with fights and competition within sibling relationships (Burton, Westen, & Kowalski, 2012) and children in this study also demonstrated this tension. Manigart, Lecoq, and Lo Bue (2015) identify a typical response of older siblings, where they feel they need to take care of younger siblings to assist during deployment. Sheppard et al. (2010) lists 'flexible gender roles and comfort performing multiple roles' as useful in helping families cope with the difficulties during deployment (p. 603). Children's emotional development begins in infancy (Gonzalez-Mena & Widmeyer Eyer, 1997) and is dependent on social support (Hayes, 2013). This social and emotional development occurs most commonly within parent and sibling relationships and therefore the manner in which these relationships operate can be protective, or conversely, potentially expose children to greater risks.

Social support across a range of levels is important to nurture resilience in families (Burton et al., 2012). In military families, as in all families, resilience is generally linked to a supportive extended family (Lemmon & Chartrand, 2009). Further, Linke (2007) stresses the importance of the non-deployed parent having access to emotional and physical support. When families are stretched, they are often working at their peak emotional and physical capacity, meaning that even small changes or disruptions can cause major upsets (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2008). While one might argue that relocation could potentially trigger feelings of overload, it does appear that the family assistance resulting from the relocation mitigated the stress to an extent. In this study, all families relocated to be closer to the children's grandparents at some

stage. It is clear that extended family, family friends and educators can be a source of special relationships that operate as protective factors assisting the development of resilient children as reported by Brooks (2011).

MacManus et al. (2012), Lara-Cinisomo et al. (2011) and White, de Burgh, Fear, and Iversen (2011) have argued multiple deployments increase the risks families experience. This is most likely due to the repeated feelings of grief and loss (Gillies & Neimeyer, 2006) when families are still vulnerable and are less able to be resilient. This was evident in Family 1 who found the second deployment far more stressful for a number of reasons. Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, and Richardson (2010) stressed the need for increased assistance for families affected by multiple re-deployments or longer deployments. In contrast, Lowe, Adams, Browne, and Hinkle (2012) and McGuire et al. (2012) found little difference between the impact of single and multiple deployments on families, however McGuire et al. (2012) does concede that parents tend to be increasingly negative about the effects of deployment on their children with multiple deployments. DeVoe and Ross (2012) describe this as a common reaction of non-deployed parents who are dealing with the loss of their partner and the overwhelming 'financial, household, and parenting responsibilities' (p. 186). Reinforcement is more readily available for families when they live on or close to the defence base (Brooks, 2011), which is particularly important for those without extended family nearby because access to parental support also affects the children. Flake et al. (2009) believe parenting, resources, supports and resilience influence children's psychosocial functioning during the deployment cycle.

Sims (2002) outlines characteristics of strong families, including spending time together, encouraging individual growth within a cohesive unit, communication without blame or prejudice, supporting each other physically and emotionally, working together to cope and caring for one another. Walsh (2003) discusses the key processes in family resilience as the ability of a family to make sense of difficulties along with adaptability, interconnectivity, attitude, shared problem solving and healthy emotional expression. These abilities are diminished when multiple and ongoing stressors overwhelm the family, increasing their susceptibility to further problems (Walsh, 2003). Within ADF families, constant comings and goings of parents due to training episodes can cause this type of ongoing, spasmodic family disruption and along with deployment, can increase family stress (Pincombe & Pincombe, 2010). The returned parent's needs

are heightened by anxiety about the reunion and reintegration. Many experience a sense of being no longer needed, nor part of the family. Others fear rejection that may lead to more serious reintegration issues (Palmer, 2008). Seb, within Family 3 demonstrated some of these issues during integration. An understanding and supportive spouse can help alleviate many of these issues, as evidenced in the data.

Professional relationships with educators and teachers

Belonging, Being, Becoming, *The Early Years Learning Framework* for Australia (EYLF)(DEEWR, 2009) outlines the importance of genuine partnerships between families and educators to achieve the best learning outcomes for children by valuing each other's knowledge and efforts and collaborating in decision making. Elliott (2014) recommends building this type of trusting relationship based on the socio-cultural assumptions those families' diverse cultures; experiences and family traditions are esteemed and appreciated. In this study, all families expressed the desire for educator support, input and suggested strategies.

In Family 2, Wendy had more difficulty building this type of relationship with Michael's first primary schoolteacher and this impacted on the provision of additional school assistance. She believed Michael's education suffered because of the difference of opinion about the need to access funding to support his learning difficulties. The ecological framework positions the mesosystem in terms of relationships between different players within the microsystems: the greater the coherence between the players, the better the outcomes for Michael. This level of coherence and the relations between the players is framed as the mesosystem (Bowes, Grace, & Hayes, 2012). Specifically, there was a change over time (chronosystem) in the quality of the relationships between Wendy and Michael's early childhood educator, then schoolteacher, with negative consequences for Michael.

Andres and Moelker (2011) describe the difficulties a number of children have during the reintegration stage of the deployment cycle, due to the feeling separated and uncertain. Educators who have strong relationships with young children or are communicating with the family will be more likely to identify times of need and may be able to provide extra time to support during this vulnerable stage. They need to invest time to listen to the children and acknowledge their emotions, responding professionally and creating joint understandings (Nolan, Stagnitti, Taket, & Casey,

2014, p. 243). Lowe et al. (2012) stress the importance of addressing issues during this period to promote the long-term stability of the whole family unit. Sharing insightful dialogues with an early childhood professional to assist with family communication during this stressful reintegration period was very comforting for Fiona, from Family 1. This type of communication with families is recognised as a crucial element in quality early childhood service delivery where educators and families reciprocate information in a respectful manner (DEEWR, 2009). For example, Gonzalez-Mena (2009) recommends educators become knowledgeable about ways to support families' connection with the community and help engage the assistance they need. Additionally, educators can often be the link between families and support services (Arthur et al., 2015).

Protective factors within the exosystem and macrosystem

Within this theme, several sub-strands are discussed, including: the formal supports and various forms of communication.

Formal supports (exosystem and macrosystem)

Within the exosystem, the ADF culture can be quite encouraging of many families during times of stress (Baber et al., 2015). Additionally, Brooks (2011) states that 'Families cope best if they accept the military lifestyle and see meaning in the sacrifices they make' (p. 496). In this study, Wendy from Family 2, also stated that she wanted her son Michael to understand this. Bowling and Sherman (2008) explain that creating a shared narrative can help bind families together and reduce stress. The content of these narratives demonstrate a high level of acculturation from the ADF and the wider community and Australian Government meta-narratives.

A number of charity organisations and Australian Government Departments assist military and veteran families. Similar experiences to Wendy's are identified by Cromptvoets (2012) who raised issues of out-dated models being used to deal with current veterans and their families, thus creating issues in accessing appropriate and effective provision, revealing a need for reform.

Communication (macrosystem)

Within research with FIFO families, Meredith et al. (2014) reported on the impact social networking sites can have as an ‘important mediating effect’ (p. 15). Other war widows sharing their experiences of ADF counselling via social media may have influenced Wendy’s decision not to use ADF counselling. Within the ADF, Siebler (2015) reported family members experiences accessing the ADF’s professional support staff who struggled to effectively listen to their concerns, empathise, and build relationships that is essential in engendering trust and usage of such services. His findings recommended the use of digital communication technologies and social media as an opportunity to build upon assistance for ADF families in online communities’ (Siebler, 2015).

The availability of being able to send ADF funded care packages helped Family 1 and Family 3 feel connected. Linke (2007) states care packages provide excitement when they arrive for the children whereas for the deployed parent it can be encouraging having something familiar from home arriving at the base (Defence Community Organisation, 2013).

Along with letter writing, emails are thought to serve as a protective factor for families during deployment (Palmer, 2008). Families who made the effort to stay in touch were easing the way for the reintegration process because maintaining contact and regular communication kept relationships strong and fresh, potentially relieving feelings of loneliness and loss, and reducing stress. Family 1 also involved the children in this process, sharing artwork and captions. Such opportunities to share special moments, emotions and reaffirm love and care also help maintain relationships (Defence Community Organisation, 2014) highlighting the importance of ADF supplied communication technologies for the deployed parent.

Bartone (2015) rationalises other defence force’s extensive funding of video conferencing communication services for deployed forces to increase morale and mitigate stress. Within Family 1, Fiona’s frustrations of nightly Skype™ sessions with Caleb reflects the increasingly crowded and stressful family life associated with managing dual careers and family responsibilities described by Poole (2005). In defence families De Angelis and Segal (2015) describe this conflict, stating ‘Military families, ... exist at the intersection of two major social institutions that make great,

often competing, demands on their time, energy and loyalty' (p. 22). In line with the revelations from the data, military families are encompassed by a culture of service and sacrifice that features heavily in the justification of the regime, legitimising the gender inequities (Eran-Jona, 2015).

Limitations of the study

While various themes have emerged during data analysis, the study represents only three families from defence forces in Australia. While every effort was made to reduce researcher bias, the narrative methodology including interview questions and interpretation of secondary data about the children was open to my understandings. As a researcher, I am not from a military family. This may be beneficial, being able to detect detailed nuances of the culture and the acculturation processes, however, Chandra and London (2013) indicate this may also limit my understanding of the defence culture.

Conclusion

This study acknowledges and identifies the stressors of having a parent who works away, especially in defence families. De Angelis and Segal (2015) describe both the military and the family itself as greedy institutions who have undergone enormous change over the past decades, increasing the conflicting interests between them. Outdated models of deployment still place family responsibility onto the non-deploying spouse who is generally juggling their own career and family responsibility (De Angelis & Segal, 2015) while often isolated from their extended family. Despite deployment being taxing and testing for families (Siebler, 2015), a number of protective factors were identified for the three families in this study. These protective factors came from the microsystem, including within the families themselves, in the extended family and friend network and from educators. Protective factors were also identified within the exosystem, through the ADF provisions and community organisations and within the macrosystem through Australian Government Departments and social media. Communication tools and technology also provided a medium for many of these provisions. By utilising these protective factors, the families were showing varying degrees of resilience. All identified protective factors were acknowledged as important to assist defence families cope with the deployment cycle and even after the death of a family member. Although not all families utilised all available supports, it can be

reassuring to know assistance is available (Baber et al., 2015). Importantly, these protective factors form a vital buffer for the children and families during the stresses of deployment cycle, therefore reducing risk factors. The wellbeing of military children is important and understanding which protective factors are valued and effective may increase our capacity to support these potentially vulnerable families. These findings can inform the ADF: policy makers, Social Workers, Regional Education Liaison Officers (REDLO's) and others that support military families such as counsellors and educators. Further research into these protective factors is crucial so assistance can be targeted and effective for military children and families.

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