

Resilience Theory: A Literature Review

with special chapters on
deployment resilience in military families
& resilience theory in social work

by

Adrian DuPlessis VanBreda

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Author: Adrian DuPlessis VanBreda

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Institution: South African Military Health Service, Military Psychological Institute,
Social Work Research & Development

City: Pretoria, South Africa

E-mail: Adrian@vanbreda.org

Address: Major A.D. Van Breda
Military Psychological Institute
Private Bag X02
Gezina
0031
South Africa

CHAPTER EIGHT: DEPLOYMENT RESILIENCE

8.1 INTRODUCTION TO DEPLOYMENT RESILIENCE

An area of resilience theory that has been extensively researched, and which forms the genesis and basis of much of the family resilience theory enjoyed today, is that of the resilience of military families during military deployments. Deployments (separations in the family due to military operations, missions, exercises, etc) place great stress on a family system (Knox & Price, 1995). Military members are often away from home for extended periods – among US military members who are married or have children, 26.1% report being separated from their families for 3-6 months and 16.2% for 7-12 months over the previous 12 months (Westat Inc, 1994, p. 5). Separations such as these threaten the entire family system and can cause complete fragmentation of the sense of 'family'.

The Salutogenic Question. My research and clinical experience indicate that some families, exposed to the same deployment stressor, were able to cope better than others. I have termed this ability to cope, that is the ability to resist the stress of deployment, "deployment resilience" (Van Breda, 1997a, 1998b, 1998c, 1999a, 1999b). This is an application of the salutogenic question described in section 2.3.2, viz "Why, when families are exposed to the same deployment which causes some to break down, do some remain healthy?" The theoretical answer to this question is that these latter families are resilient to deployment stress, that they have deployment resilience. The research and clinical question in response to this is to identify what constitutes deployment resilience, that is, what are the factors that make families resilient to deployments. [Many US military family programmes are also based in the salutogenic paradigm, such as the wellness model (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h, p. 11)].

Based on a literature review on military families and deployments conducted in the mid-1990s, I identified eight primary dimensions of deployment resilience (Van Breda, 1997a). On the basis of these dimensions I designed the *Deployment Resilience Seminar* (Van Breda, 1998a, 1999a), a one-day psychoeducational workshop for military couples aimed at enhancing their resilience to deployments or routine separations. The seminar was generally effective and has led to a greater refinement of the concepts of deployment resilience (ibid.).

Seven of the eight deployment resilience dimensions are located within the family system, while the eighth is located in the broader military system. This bias towards the family system was deliberate – I wanted to identify dimensions over which the family had control, rather than dimensions which, while influential, were beyond their control. The eight dimensions are as follows (Van Breda, 1999a, pp. 598-600):

- ❖ **Dimension 1: Emotional Continuity.** “This first dimension, emotional continuity, is defined as families having a reasonably stable emotional life over the cycle of a separation.”
- ❖ **Dimension 2: Positive Perspectives on Separations.** “The second resilience dimension is defined as the family’s positive attitude towards separations and the employing organization.”
- ❖ **Dimension 3: Support Systems.** “The third dimension is defined as the presence of support systems (viz family, naval, community and religious) for the family and employee.”
- ❖ **Dimension 4: Financial Preparation.** “The fourth separation resilience dimension is defined as the family having adequate financial resources during separations.”
- ❖ **Dimension 5: ‘Partner-Aware’ Family Structure.** “This fifth dimension of separation resilience is defined as the family having a ‘partner-aware’ family structure.”
- ❖ **Dimension 6: Resilient Children.** “The sixth dimension is defined as the family actively developing the separation resilience of their children.”
- ❖ **Dimension 7: Flexible Marriage.** “This sixth dimension, flexible marriage, is defined as a secure marriage in which partners are flexible in the allocation of gender roles and responsibilities.”
- ❖ **Dimension 8: Family-oriented Management.** “This last separation resilience factor is defined as the family-oriented management of the workforce and of separations.”

Much of the content of deployment resilience and my *Deployment Resilience Seminar* (Van Breda, 1998a) is based on indigenous knowledge or the wisdom of experience – the experience of military families. In Cline’s (1992) book for military wives, five pages of ‘tips’ from the ‘VMSC’ or ‘Veterans of Many Separations Club’ are provided. Here women

who have learned to cope with deployments provide ideas that have worked for them to those who are new to deployments or who have not yet learned to cope. In this way, they provide the solutions, strengths and resiliencies that they have discovered to others – a clear example of resilience theory in action.

Work-Life/Family Interface. Deployment resilience concepts are important not only for families (inasmuch as they point families towards greater resilience in the face of the stress of deployments and separations) but also for the military organisation (inasmuch as they promote the work-family interface and contribute to mission readiness) (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h, p. iii). The notion of individual and unit readiness is widely discussed in the literature on military families that will be cited in this chapter.

Individual or soldier readiness can be defined as “the capability of an individual in an Army unit to perform so that the unit may accomplish the mission for which it is organized” (Kralj et al., 1988, in Bell, Scarville, & Quigley, 1991, p. 23). Individual readiness includes various dimensions, including the professional/military knowledge and skill of the soldier, cooperation, job discipline, etc (Sadacca & Di Fazio, 1991, p. 6). There is, however, a body of research indicating that family factors contribute to individual and unit readiness (Knox & Price, 1995; Sadacca, McCloy, & Di Fazio, 1992; Sadacca, McCloy, & Di Fazio, 1993). The notion of ‘deployment resilience’ is an umbrella term for these family factors.

Theoretically then, deployment resilience works two ways:

- ❖ Firstly, deployment resilience protects families from the negative impact of deployments, enhances family coherence and integration and promotes family adjustment at reunion.
- ❖ Secondly, deployment resilience enhances the individual readiness of the soldier by enabling soldiers to focus more fully on the mission in the knowledge that their families are healthy (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h; Wright et al., 1995). This in turn enhances unit readiness, that is “the capability of an Army unit to perform the mission for which it is organized” (Sadacca & Di Fazio, 1991, p. 23).

Deployment resilience is thus also an application of work-family theory in the military context (Bowen & Orthner, 1989). For health professionals, such as social workers and psychologists, the first result of deployment resilience may be of greatest concern –

reducing the negative impact of deployments so as to protect family systems. For employers such as the military command structures, the second result of deployment resilience may be of greatest concern – ensuring the military’s bottom line, viz effective military missions. For professionals who intervene at the work-family interface, such as occupational social workers, it is the fact that deployment resilience works at both family and work levels that is of greatest concern – ensuring the goodness of fit between military families and the military organization.

Chapter eight will provide a detailed review of literature and theory regarding each of the eight deployment resilience dimensions. This will highlight not only the effects of deployments on families, but also the ways in which families can become resilient to deployment stress.

8.2 EMOTIONAL CONTINUITY

“Emotional continuity is defined as families having a reasonably stable emotional life over the cycle of a separation” (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 598).

Families that are resilient to deployment stress report experiencing a fairly stable sense of well-being before, during and after deployments (Van Breda, 1997b). This is not to say that the family is unresponsive to the departure, absence and return of the military member. Rather, the family is able to retain a sense of emotional continuity in spite of this disruption, which sustains the family. The emotional and relational processes through which families go during deployments have been well described by Logan (1987).

Logan’s (1987) model of the Emotional Cycle of Deployment proposes a cycle of seven stages with each deployment, beginning some time before the deployment and ending some time after (see Table 8.1). It is termed a ‘cycle’ in that, with ships coming and going on a routine basis, the seven stages are constantly cycling. Each stage of the cycle can be described according to changes in the emotions of the people involved.

Table 8.1 Emotional Cycle of Deployment in Peacetime

Stage	Title of stage	Duration of stage	Characteristics of stage
PRE-DEPLOYMENT PHASE			
Stage 1	<i>Anticipation of loss</i>	Four to six weeks prior to deployment	Crying, irritability, depression, marital conflict.
Stage 2	<i>Detachment and withdrawal</i>	Few days prior to deployment	Withdrawal, sexual tension, despair, hopelessness.
DEPLOYMENT PHASE			
Stage 3	<i>Emotional Disorganization</i>	First six weeks of deployment	Adjusting, worry, irritability, depression, aimlessness, numbness, sleep disturbance, anger, guilt.
Stage 4	<i>Recovery and stabilization</i>	Middle of deployment	New life is established, independent, anxious, depressed, illness.
Stage 5	<i>Anticipation of homecoming</i>	Six weeks prior to return	Excitement, joy, apprehension, tension, nervousness.
POST-DEPLOYMENT PHASE			
Stage 6	<i>Renegotiation of marriage contract</i>	Six weeks after return	Excitement, emotional distance, sexual difficulties, conflict, loss of independence, negotiation of roles.
Stage 7	<i>Reintegration and stabilization</i>	Six to 12 weeks after return	Established roles and routine, marital closeness.

(adapted from Logan, 1987)

Logan's model suggests a steady, predictable progression through the deployment. This is probably true for routine, peacetime deployments, but is not true for wartime deployments, such as Operation Desert Storm (Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994, p. 184). A somewhat different progression is found in such deployments, as outlined in the following table (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Emotional Cycle of Deployment in Wartime

Phase	Title of Phase	Characteristics of Phase
Phase 1	<i>Initial shock</i>	An initial powerful surge of intense affect – fear, despair and protest – followed by (or alternating with) emotional numbing. This numbing assists the family to complete the necessary predeployment tasks. Maintaining communication in the family, even if feelings are disconnected, is essential.
Phase 2	<i>Departure</i>	Although emotional disorganisation, sadness and despair may appear at the point of departure, emotional numbness is very common in wartime, as a defence against potentially overwhelming affect. Children often carry and express the emotional load of the family.
Phase 3	<i>Emotional disorganisation</i>	Emotional disorganisation typically sets in only some weeks (1-7) after departure, once the family runs out of activities to keep busy and the reality of the war separation sets in. Whereas emotional disorganisation in peacetime usually lasts only for several weeks, during wartime it can become chronic, with peaks during times of intense war conflict. In addition to the depressive symptoms experienced during peacetime separations, wartime separations introduce trauma symptoms, such as fears, nightmares, irritability, anger, vigilance, paranoia, etc. Continual reality testing is important.
Phase 4	<i>Recovery and stabilisation</i>	Stabilisation during a wartime deployment is transient, and tends to alternate with emotional disorganisation. Much of this is reactive to media information and rumours.
Phase 5	<i>Anticipation of homecoming</i>	In peacetime, the homecoming date is usually known and families may spend several weeks preparing for it. In wartime, the homecoming is often as sudden as the leaving, and families often have only a day or two to anticipate and prepare. Consequently, there is little or no time to process feelings or complete practical preparations.
Phase 6	<i>Reunion</i>	The reunion phase in peacetime lasts several weeks, but in wartime can continue for 3-9 months, often with residual effects 12-18 months later. There is often an incubation period, with the reunion crisis only starting a year after physical reunion.
Phase 7	<i>Reintegration and stabilisation</i>	Stabilisation of the family system is a continual process for many families, with period recurrences of wartime crisis. These crises can recur decades after homecoming, often in response to conflictual precipitants (eg a new war, a particular sensory stimulant).

(adapted from Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994, pp. 184-189)

Pre-deployment. In the pre-deployment phase, many wives experience shock and loss reactions upon hearing the news of the pending deployment (Bey & Lange, 1974; Black, 1993). Some describe the experience of the deployment being unreal (Paap, 1991, p. 17).

According to qualitative research in South Africa by Van Breda (1997b):

The *pre-separation phase* (stages 1-2) seems characterised by conflict, anxiety and sadness. In addition, many subjects seem to withdraw, particularly just prior to the actual separation. Apprehension or fear of the separation, as well as optimism or bravery about the separation are also apparent, particularly in the few weeks prior to separation. It would appear that detachment, by means of passive emotional withdrawal, conflict or task orientedness, is functional in this phase. (p. 157)

Deployment. During the deployment phase, researchers (Wexler & McGrath, 1991, p. 516) found that common feelings experienced by wives included loneliness (78% of respondents), worry (74%), sadness (65%) and anxiety (56%). Pride (75%), patriotism (57%) and commitment (53%) also featured strongly. This study also found that the level of stress peaks between the first and third weeks of the deployment, then decreases (ibid., p. 518; see also Helms & Greene, 1992, p. 2-10).

During deployments wives visit doctors for illnesses 5.4 times more frequently than usual (Snyder, 1978, p. 639; see also Neubauer Lombard & Neubauer Lombard, 1997, p. 80). Many spouses develop clinical levels of depression (Beckman, Marsella, & Finney, 1979; also Kelley, 1994b; Nice, 1983), with symptoms such as irritability (89% of wives), sleep difficulties (58%) and loss of appetite (36%) (Adler, Bartone, & Vaitkus, 1995, p. 15). Problems at home are perceived to increase in frequency and severity during deployments (Bell, Teitelbaum, & Schumm, 1996b; Bloch, Zimmerman, Perez, Embry, & Magers, 1991; Decker, 1978), loneliness is common (Duvall 1945 in Farish, Baker, & Robertson, 1976; and self-esteem deteriorates (Rozenzweig, Gampel, & Dasberg, 1981). Husbands/soldiers experience worry and guilt over 'abandoning' their families (Den Dulk 1980 in Hunter, 1982; Rosenfeld, Rosenstein, & Raab, 1973). The most common problem resulting in spouses seeking help during Operations Desert Storm/Shield was emotional problems, such as "feeling lonely, frightened for spouse, overburdened with responsibilities, anxiety about future" (Scarville, 1993).

Regarding the experience of aloneness during deployments, Boynton and Pearce (1978, pp. 140-141) stress that this is a normal though typically aversive experience. They argue that the sense of aloneness needs to be normalised, and that families should learn to understand, tolerate and grow from the experience, rather than merely avoid it. The avoidance of aloneness simply perpetuates rather than resolves it.

In a qualitative study among South African naval sailors and their wives, Van Breda (1997b) found:

The *separation phase* itself (stages 3-5) is characterised by longing and loneliness, two closely related variables, which indicate the importance of the family relationships. Men express marked concern about the family's coping over the bulk of the separation. A task or work orientation serves as a strong protective mechanism during this time. As the separation progresses from the initial stages into the middle of the separation, loneliness appears to give way to a sense of adjustment or having come to terms with the separation, which seems to indicate the growth and tenacity of naval couples. However, by the middle of the separation subjects are feeling restless and bored, and frustrated by the separation. As the separation draws to an end, couples feel excited and experience strong desires to be reunited, but also feel anxious and nervous about the pending homecoming. (p. 157)

In addition to the negative effects of deployment, separation can also be a positive or constructive experience for some (Caliber Associates, 1992):

As early as 1945, Hill noted that many wives grew as individuals due to their war-induced separations. Not only do separations provide the opportunity for greater independence, they can promote development of independence, self-sufficiency, and maturity (Schwartz et al., 1987; Hunter & Hickman, 1981; Jensen 1986). Many women also take advantage of the opportunity to enhance themselves educationally or vocationally (Lexier, 1982). Though separations may cause conflict and anxiety because the spouse must assume the role of both mother and father, the success of doing both well may also result in increased self-confidence (Hunter, 1982). (p. I-6)

It is likely that there is a curvilinear relationship between the duration of a deployment and its impact on the family. Deployments that are very short (under one month) allow the family little time to adjust to the separation, which can be very stressful (Howe, 1983), particularly if there is a rapid cycling of these short deployments (Van Breda, 1997b). Deployments that are very long (over six months) place excessive strain on the family's ability to maintain a sense of virtual family coherence in the face of prolonged physical absence (Bell, Bartone, Bartone, Schumm, & Gade, 1997, p. 3; Huffman, Adler, & Castro, 2000, pp. 4 & 10; Martin, Vaitkus, Johnson, & Mikolajek, 1992, p. 6). Deployments of moderate length (probably around two to four months) allow sufficient time for the family system to adjust to the separation but reunite the family before the separation 'turns sour' (Schumm, Knott, Bell, & Rice, 1996).

Post-deployment. The "stress of father-return after prolonged absence is as great as that experienced at the time of his departure" (Baker et al., 1968, p. 347; see also Orr, 1992, p. 46; Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990). Contrary to the popular impression that homecoming is a time of uncomplicated joy, it is typically marked by ambivalence and anxiety (Figley, 1993; MacDonough, 1991; Spellman, De Leo, & Nelson, 1991), as well

as disappointment when the fantasy of reunion does not materialise (Potts, 1988; United Nations, n.d.). Poor communication, emotional distancing, sexual difficulties and anger are common in marriages (Bey & Lange, 1974; Blount, Curry, & Lubin, 1992; Jolly, 1987; Pearlman, 1970). These difficulties, which occur transiently immediately after return, are termed a "releasing phenomenon" by some writers (Rothberg, Shanahan, Koshes, & Christman, 1994). Several programmes have been developed to facilitate homecoming and reunion (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994g).

Common tensions upon returning home are described by Figley (1993, p. 57):

- (1) *Family conflict* over what is done at home, how, and by whom;
- (2) *criticism about maintaining contact*, involving evaluation over the frequency and quality of letters, calls, and other communications from the trooper during her or his absence;
- (3) *family rearrangement* (reorganization of family roles, routine, rules, due to the trooper's absence);
- (4) *shifts in the social support networks* (eg trooper may discourage continuing contact with these individuals);
- (5) *jealousy* regarding potential or real extramarital affairs; and
- (6) *disappointments* over each person's homecoming fantasies (competition among the trooper and family members about activities to do when, where, and with whom).

In a qualitative study in South Africa, Van Breda (1997b) reports on the post-deployment period:

Happiness and contentment are the hallmarks of the *post-separation phase* (stages 6 & 7), with a growing sense of having adjusted back to a normal family life. The anxiety experienced immediately after reunion gives way to a sense of calm. However, conflict plays a role immediately after the reunion, and is perhaps a result of the difficulty experienced in resuming family roles and rules. In addition, apprehension about the next separation emerges within a week of the homecoming – a manifestation of the rapid deployments experienced by local sailors. (pp. 157-158)

Soldiers who were involved in combat or other trauma may introduce the after-effects of these experiences into the family system (Figley, 1993; Gimbel & Booth, 1994; Solomon, 1988), often for many years following the experience (Solomon et al., 1992). A study of soldiers and families in Operation Desert Storm found that 62% to 73% of respondents felt they had readjusted to family life within one month after return home, 17% to 21% had readjusted after several months, and 8% to 17% were still adjusting two years after return (single parents being the largest group – 17%) (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. VII-1). Factors which are associated with a speedy recovery

(bearing in mind these are correlations, not predictions) include (ibid., pp. VII-4 to VII-9):

- ❖ Being better prepared for the deployment.
- ❖ Experiencing less financial hardship as a result of the deployment.
- ❖ Experiencing pre-deployment information as helpful.
- ❖ Spouses receiving regular and adequate information from the base unit.
- ❖ Soldiers experiencing less stress during the deployment regarding missing the family, communicating with the family, worrying about the family's well-being, supporting the family emotionally and assisting the spouse with family matters.
- ❖ Spouses experiencing less stress during the deployment regarding getting information about the service member, staying in touch with the service member, managing the family's finances, running the entire household, missing the service member and handing reports from the news media.
- ❖ Eldest child not experiencing a negative impact from the deployment.
- ❖ Receiving a briefing on reunion and family homecoming.
- ❖ Spouse's perception of the soldier's supervisor being supportive of family needs following the deployment.

Sometimes these effects are only experienced some time later, following an "incubation period" (Ford et al., 1993, p. 94; Hogancamp & Figley, 1983, p. 152; Hunter, 1986). Trauma debriefing or time-limited family therapy on return from the field contribute significantly to long-term improved personal and family functioning and should be sought out by soldiers and families (Ford et al., 1998; Ford et al., 1997; Ford et al., 1993). Families seeking to bolster their resilience by requesting such interventions can be considered to be taking positive, adaptive action.

Gender Comparisons. While a great deal of attention has been paid to the experiences of families and wives who stay at home, little research has addressed the experience of soldiers as family members and husbands (Segal, 1989). One of the unique contributions of Van Breda's South African naval study was to directly compare the emotional cycle of male sailors with female wives, thereby confirming the hypothesis

(Logan, 1987) that, on the whole, their experiences are markedly similar (Van Breda, 1997b):

One of the key questions asked by this study was, 'Do the men who are deployed experience the separation as substantially different from the wives who are left behind?' The answer is, on the whole, 'No'. The differences that were found between men and women were confined to a few differences in the emotional cycle of separation. Men indicated significantly more 'work orientation' than did women ($X^2=4.10$, $p<.05$). Men seem to focus on the tasks at hand, which may account for two other gender differences. Although men and women report similar frequencies of anxiety, men experience the bulk (two thirds) in the pre-separation phase, while women experience the bulk (two thirds) during the separation itself ($X^2=11.67$, $p<.05$). Men also experience less loneliness than women ($X^2=8.59$, $p<.01$). It would appear that men experience anxiety and tension in the lead-up to the separation, but once they have left, they become absorbed in their work and experience less worry and loneliness. (p. 158)

Other researchers, however, have found that deploying members experience less distress than those staying at home, as measured on standardised scales, such as the SCL-90 (Zeff, Hirsch, & Lewis, 1997, p. 385).

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Families and soldiers can normalise the emotional cycles of deployment, thereby reducing their aversiveness.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can track their emotional well-being, taking preventive steps against depression and other psychopathology and identifying and dealing with symptoms early.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can talk with others who also experience deployments, to gain better perspective and to ventilate.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can attend to each other's emotional needs more consciously, with the understanding that there are more similarities in experience than differences.
- ❖ Families can obtain briefings about the deployment at all stages of the deployment cycle - these briefings would address both deployment and family related information.

- ❖ Families and soldiers can ensure adequate family preparations prior to deployment, including both instrumental tasks (eg arranging finances and servicing the vehicles) and affective tasks (eg talking with each other and with the children).
- ❖ Families can do small, special things that help to boost their resilience, eg cooking a special meal from time to time, decorating the house with flowers, growing vegetables, etc.

8.3 POSITIVE PERSPECTIVES ON DEPLOYMENTS

Positive perspectives on deployments are defined as “the family’s positive attitude towards separations and the employing organization” (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 598).

The literature indicates that one’s perception of, or attitude towards, deployments and the military has a significant impact on one’s coping with deployments (Bowen, 1984; Bowen, 1986, p. 194; Burnam, Meredith, Sherbourne, Valdez, & Vernez, 1992, p. 46; Frankel et al., 1992, p. 110; Kirby & Naftel, 1998; Milgram & Bar, 1993, p. 37). Knapp and Newman (1993, p. 78) found that wives who *perceived* the military life as more stressful experienced less psychological well-being than those who perceived the military life as less stressful (see also Amen, Merves, Jellen, & Lee, 1988, p. 442). Another study found that wives’ attitudes to their husband’s units affect their husband’s morale and that personal morale influences one’s perception of the army-family interface (Rosen, Moghadam, & Vaitkus, 1989b, pp. 208-209). Yet another study found that the degree to which spouses identified with the military influenced the adjustment of their children, while the military employee’s identification with the military was unrelated to child adjustment (Marchant & Medway, 1987, p. 293).

A further study found that perceptions of deployments was a more important factor predicting retention in the military than the actual frequency and duration of separations (Szoc, 1982, in Caliber Associates, 1992):

How the separations are viewed may be as important – if not more important – than actual time away. Indeed among those who left the service, separations were viewed as far more problematic than among those who stayed, but the actual amount of separation was [only] slightly higher among the stayers. (p. I-4)

Although commitment appears to buffer the aversive consequences of deployments, the experience of deployments, conversely, may have a negative effect on the commitment

of families to the military. Studies of families involved in Operation Desert Storm found that 26% - 30% of members experienced a deterioration in commitment to the military (from before to after the deployment), and only 2% - 6% experienced an increase in commitment (Caliber Associates, 1992, p. III-63). Factors that were associated with negative changes in commitment included not feeling adequately informed about the impact of deployment on children, experiencing greater stress around being separated from their children, not receiving pre-deployment briefings and experiencing the military supervisor or unit as unsupportive of families (ibid.). Interestingly, just over half the people who indicated a deterioration in commitment six months after returning from Operation Desert Storm, indicated that they felt more committed six months after that (Janofsky, 1992, p. III-25).

Perceptions of the military-family interface, particularly perceptions by the military spouse (Kirby & Naftel, 1998), have been repeatedly found to influence the military member's intention to stay in the military (Gill & Haurin, 1998; Green & Harris, 1992; Potts, 1988). One study, for example, found that "married soldiers whose spouses are more committed to the Army tend to be more committed themselves and expect to serve more years in the Army" (Burnam et al., 1992, p. 47). Although intention to stay in the military and retention rates are not directly related to deployment resilience they may suggest deployment resilience (Bowen, 1989a). A military job, whether a combat job or not, requires regular separation between soldier and family (to attend courses, do duties, deploy, etc). Intention to remain in the military can be seen as one outcome of deployment/separation resilience. A family that is resilient to separations will be more likely to remain in the military, and conversely a family that intends to remain in the military must have come to terms with the routine separations required by the military. This principle has been demonstrated in a number of studies of the intentions to remain in the military of soldiers involved in Operation Desert Storm (Kirby & Naftel, 1998; Rosen & Durand, 1995).

Deployments have been found to be less stressful when one has a positive attitude towards them (Eastman, Archer, & Ball, 1990, p. 114). A study of wives whose husbands were deployed in the Persian Gulf found that, "Groups with high levels of [emotional] distress also had the highest levels of unsatisfactory use of [military] services and the highest expectations of [what] the Army [should provide for them]" (Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1994, p. 43). Indeed many families report positive results of deployment, such as learning new things, becoming more independent and enhancing the marital relationship (Adler, 1995; Segal, 1989).

A study (Bell et al., 1997) of families during Operation Joint Endeavour (a US deployment to Bosnia and Hungary in 1996) found that spouse support for the deployment correlated with various other relevant factors, viz:

- ❖ Just over half (52%) of spouses who felt they were very prepared for the deployment supported the deployment, compared with only 15% of spouses who felt they were very unprepared (Bell et al., 1997, p. 2).
- ❖ Spouse support for the deployment was lowest “among spouses who were troubled by or worried about: (1) mission uncertainty, (2) their soldier’s safety, (3) accuracy or timeliness of information about the mission, or (4) news (probably bad news) about Bosnia” (Bell et al., 1997, p. 2).
- ❖ The following factors were not related to spouse support for the deployment: “spouse gender, pregnancy status, number of children, distance from post, and time assigned to Europe” (Bell et al., 1997, p. 2).

Given the link between support for a deployment and coping with that deployment (as detailed above), it becomes important for families to ensure that they have adequate information about a deployment before it begins and during the deployment, and that families are helped to understand and appreciate the need for and importance of the deployment (Bell et al., 1997).

Studies indicate that identifying with and adopting the identity or lifestyle of the organization decreases the stress that results from the demands of the organization (Boss, McCubbin, & Lester, 1979, p. 83; Fernandez-Pol, 1988, p. 420; McCubbin, 1979, p. 240). With the changes in the role of women in society, naval wives have moved out of the military community and lifestyle (Hunter, 1978; Kohen, 1984; Segal, 1989; Stoddard & Cabanillas, 1976). This may increase their deployment stress. In South African studies, the employment status of women (which may be an indicator of attachment to the military) was not, however, found to correlate with deployment stress (Van Breda, 1995d, p. 29).

Related to perceptions of deployment may be the psychological impact of deployments. One study found that the mental health conditions of 83% of the people diagnosed during a deployment in Bosnia predated the deployment (Winfield & Lafferty, 1997, p. 104). It therefore seems important that soldiers ensure their mental health prior to deployment.

The management of deployments by the military organisation can precipitate negativity among family members (Van Breda, 1997a):

In the South African Navy [in the mid 1990's], there are many external factors which impede the maintenance of positive attitudes. These factors include unpredictable and erratic deployments (which have been found to correlate with high deployment stress), lack of personnel which results in extended sea duty and slow promotions, frequent night duties which disrupt family life, frequent and brief deployments which increase the frequency of family adjustments, and lack of material and interpersonal rewards for going to sea. The subjective impression of naval social workers is that these factors prompt perpetually negative perceptions of deployments that result in poor deployment coping. (p. 20)

Families of deployed soldiers may become preoccupied with concerns over which they have no influence. During Operations Desert Shield/Storm, for instance, 86% of spouses reported at least moderate amounts of distress over the soldier's well-being and safety, 80% over their inability to predict the length of the deployment, and 61% over the living conditions the soldier was experiencing (Bell, 1991b, p. 2). These concerns, while valid and probably unavoidable, contribute to a perception of deployment which actually reduces deployment resilience, by virtue of their uncontrollability which results in a sense of powerlessness. Families would probably experience greater deployment resilience if they concentrated on what they *can* control, which would enhance their sense of coherence (ibid., p. 7; see also Covey et al., 1994).

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Families and soldiers can spend time discussing the positive and negative implications of the deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can make a conscious decision to dwell on the positive implications of deployments.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can learn cognitive techniques (eg ABC) to control and channel their thinking in a helpful direction.
- ❖ Families can get involved in the military community, thereby learning about the rationale for deployments (both in general and in specific).
- ❖ Families and soldiers can seek out sources of information that provide meaning and purpose to military deployments.

- ❖ Families and soldiers can concentrate on factors within their sphere of influence, rather than on factors within their sphere of concern but outside their sphere of influence.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can seek out counselling when their thinking becomes excessively negative.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can thoroughly prepare for deployments, thereby reducing the likelihood of negative experiences during the deployment that would contribute to negative perceptions of the deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can develop effective problem solving skills that will enable them to deal with inevitable life stressors effectively with minimal impact on emotional well-being.

8.4 SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The resilience factor 'support systems' "is defined as the presence of support systems (via family, naval, community and religious) for the family and employee" (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 599).

The literature strongly indicates that social support buffers the family and the deploying member from the stress of deployments (Adler et al., 1995, p. 18; Amen et al., 1988, p. 445; Caliber Associates, 1992, p. I-10; Koshes & Rothberg, 1994, p. 456; Pehrson & Thornley, 1993; Solomon & Mikulincer, 1990). One study found that "more active wives felt less lonely than less active wives" (Duvall 1945, in Farish et al., 1976, p. 332). Other researchers found that "dissatisfaction with social support was predictive of decreased marital happiness between pre-deployment and early deployment" (Frankel et al., 1992, p. 109). The children of mothers who felt supported showed better adjustment at home and school during deployments (Hiew, 1992, p. 219). Even for children, social support systems facilitated better coping with the deployment of their parents (ibid., p. 222). Studies of spouses of soldiers deployed in Operations Desert Storm/Shield indicate that a comprehensive support system reduces the incidence of negative events, which in turn enhances adjustment and emotional well-being (Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1991, p. 9).

Support networks used by women and men during deployments tend to be informal, viz. friends and family (Black, 1993; Decker, 1978; Montalvo, 1976; Pehrson & Thornley, 1993), although more recent studies suggest an increase in the use of formal, non-professional military support systems (Albano, 1995; Bell et al., 1997; Bell et al., 1996b; Department of Military Psychiatry, 1995; Helms & Greene, 1992; Martin, Vaitkus, Kikolajek, & Johnson, 1993).

A variety of strong support systems become increasingly important as most military families are dual-income families, and many are even dual-military families – 6-10% of military personnel were in dual-military families (that is, married to another military employee) in 1985 (Janofsky, 1989, p. 99; Morrison, Vernez, Grissmer, & McCarthy, 1989, p. 2). In the case of dual-military families, it is quite possible for both parents to be deployed simultaneously, requiring greater use of support networks for child care, pet care, home care, etc (Military Family Resource Center, 1998; Morrison et al., 1989, p. 50) – during the Gulf War, for instance, 5,700 military couples were deployed (Martin, 1992).

Four main types of social supports are described in the literature on military families: military, community, family and religious support systems.

8.4.1 MILITARY SUPPORTS

Women who felt they could rely on another military wife for help with a personal or family problem tended to experience a greater sense of general well-being, especially in the face of greater stress (Rosen & Moghadam, 1988, p. 68; Rosen & Moghadam, 1990, p. 200). Bell and colleagues (1996a) report a similar finding among soldiers who have a 'confidant' in the unit with whom to discuss their problems (see also Etzion & Westman, 1994).

These findings have been repeatedly confirmed in South African studies. Amongst sea-going men and their wives, those who felt unsupported tended to experience more sadness and depression during deployments (Van Breda, 1995d, p. 64). In another local study of sea-going and land-based naval personnel, those who felt supported were found to have better overall social functioning, were more satisfied with their work, finances, family and friendships, and experienced better health, less depression and higher levels of energy (Van Breda, 1996).

Much research on deployment resilience indicates that as soldiers and families get older (or perhaps more experienced in coping with deployments) their deployment resilience increases and deployment stress decreases (Aldridge, Sturdivant, Smith, & Lago, 1997b; Caliber Associates, 1992; Caliber Associates, 1993; Rothberg et al., 1994; Scarville & Dunivin, n.d.; Wong, Bliese, & Halverson, 1995). This finding is not very helpful to military families, nor is the advice "It will get better as you get older". One way in which to make use of age is through mentoring. Having a relationship with another military family in the same situation is valuable inasmuch as the families share a common experience. Having a relationship with a person more experienced in deployments opens the possibility for the sharing of deployment resilience factors (Parker, Hutchinson, & Berry, 1995, p. 90).

The availability of military support and the perception that the military is a supportive environment (its family friendly policies) have been found to be particularly important for single military parents, both mothers and fathers. "These policies, such as family support during deployment, on-post housing assignment, military child care priority, and emergency financial assistance, provide a supportive context for single parents and reflect a positive respect and appreciation for the family responsibilities of service members" (Bowen, Orthner, & Zimmerman, 1993, p. 302). Policies such as these assist single parents in balancing work-family role demands (as discussed in section 5.3).

There are four main forms of military support systems, viz informal friendships with other military families, formal Family Support Groups, rear detachment systems, and professional military support services.

Informal Military Friendships. Friendships with other military families are an important source of support for military families experiencing deployments (Wood, Scarville, & Gravino, 1995). Three quarters (75%) of the spouses of soldiers deployed to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope in 1993 relied on other army spouses for support, the second largest form of support used by these families (after friends and neighbours at 78%) and equal to support from extended family members (Bell, 1993, Figure 9). These families understand the experience of separation and are able to provide a kind of support not easily available elsewhere (Hunter, 1983). Other research suggests that military community cohesion promotes deployment readiness, retention and the overall ability of families to cope with the demands of military life (McClure & Broughton, 1998).

Formal Family Support Groups. Family Support Groups (FSG) are a cornerstone of nonprofessional military support systems in the USA and in some units in South Africa –

approximately half (52%) of the spouses of soldiers deployed to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope in 1993 made use of FSGs (Bell, 1993, Figure 10). "The Family Support Group is an officially sanctioned voluntary association of Army family members who join together to provide social and emotional support to one another" (Bell et al., 1996a, p. 3). The four primary functions of the FSG are "organizing social events, holding informational meetings, maintaining phone circles (trees), and publishing newsletters" (ibid.).

FSGs have been found to buffer families from the stress of deployments and increase emotional well-being (Martin et al., 1993, p. 26; Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1993b, p. 1592). Families with easy access to well functioning support groups experience lower levels of depression, compared with families with access to poorly functioning support groups or who live far from family support groups (Adler, 1995; Adler et al., 1995). The families of Reservists, who are not permanently attached a military unit, often experience a lack of military support resulting in a sense of isolation and greater deployment stress (Stuart & Halverson, 1996). FSGs are of value not only for the family, but also for the soldier – knowing that there is a FSG to care for one family during a deployment enables the soldier to concentrate on the mission (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h, p. 8; Van Breda, 1995a)

Several manuals for the establishment, guidance and training of Family Support Groups have been developed (101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), n.d.; Caliber Associates, n.d.; Schumm, Bell, Milan, & Segal, 2000; US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994a, 1994b, 1994c, 1994fr, 1994h)

Rear Detachment. Military units in the USA also have a Rear Detachment, as part of the formal, nonprofessional support system (Bell et al., 1996a; Godwin, 1992). Approximately half (53%) of the spouses of soldiers deployed to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope in 1993 made use of Rear Detachment command staff (Bell, 1993, Figure 10).

The SANDF also used to make use of a form of Rear Detachment. Recent transformation of the SANDF has resulted in the abolition of this system – when a unit deploys, the entire unit deploys and no-one is left behind. This has created various problems regarding the support of families and the liaison/communication between families and deployed soldiers.

Professional Military Support Services. Access to professional military support services plays an increasingly important role in the deployment resilience of military

families (Spellman et al., 1991). These services include professional social workers, chaplains, counsellors, financial advisors, etc. A study of army spouses during Operation Desert Storm and Desert Shield found that 17% of military spouses made use of military services during the deployment. Military families who “lived off-post (particularly those who lived beyond a 1 hour drive of the post) reported the greatest number of problems” (Helms & Greene, 1992). Although the authors do not make this interpretation, one can hypothesise that families who live ‘off-post’ have less easy access to military services.

There are various documents and manuals that guide the provision of such services (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994e).

8.4.2 COMMUNITY, RELIGIOUS & FAMILY SUPPORT

Community Support. Developing a social network, for both military employees and their families, has been shown to help families reduce deployment related stress, as well as general life stress (Eastman et al., 1990, p. 114; McCubbin, 1979, p. 240; H.I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1988, p. 248; Riggs, 1990, p. 152), particularly for couples without children and families with adolescent children (McCubbin & Lavee, 1986, p. 227). The spouses of soldiers deployed to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope in 1993 cited friends and neighbours as the most commonly used (78%) support system (Bell, 1993, Figure 10). Civilian friends are able to provide an important quality of support to military families that is distinct from military friends and that promotes the health and well-being of military families (Martin & Orthner, 1989).

Although being employed has usually been found to be unrelated to wives’ coping with deployments (eg Van Breda, 1995d, p. 29), one study (Wood et al., 1995) found that employment and other social supports (ie religion, church involvement and family support) improved adjustment to separation. The wives in the study who coped well with the separation most often indicated that their job helped them cope well (ibid., p. 228). Perhaps it is the nature of the job, or of the relationships in the workplace, that determine whether being employed is helpful. Another study found that soldiers whose partners were employed experienced fewer concerns during separations (Aldridge et al., 1997b, p. 41).

Religious Support. Religious support has been found to buffer families from the stress of deployments and increase emotional well-being (McCubbin, 1979, p. 241; Wood et al., 1995, p. 228), particularly in families with preadolescent children (McCubbin & Lavee,

1986, p. 227). A “religious orientation” and “spiritual support” have also been identified as ingredients that foster family “balance” for families with adolescent members (H.I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1992, p. 168). Close to one third (29%) of the spouses of soldiers deployed to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope in 1993 made use of church members for support (Bell, 1993, Figure 9).

The use of religion as a coping mechanism during deployments was found to be particularly advantageous to wives who were prepared for the possibility that their husbands might not return, but who were struggling with the demands of being both mother and father (McCubbin, Dahl, Lester, Benson, & Robertson, 1976b, p. 469).

Family Support. “Family and friends” were found to be an important component of “family balance” in all stages of the family life cycle prior to the empty nest and retirement stages (H.I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1992, p. 168). Three quarters (75%) of the spouses of soldiers deployed to Somalia in Operation Restore Hope in 1993 made use of extended family members for support (Bell, 1993, Figure 9) – this was the second most common form of support used by these spouses.

Evaluations of the Deployment Resilience Seminar, developed by Van Breda (1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 1999a) found a deterioration in satisfaction with family support following participation in the seminar. Van Breda (1999a, p. 602) explains, “Clinical experience indicates that the relationship with the extended family is a frequent source of conflict and tension during and after separations. It is possible that the [Deployment Resilience Seminar] conscientizes participants to this conflict without providing adequate tools for managing it.” It appears that family support is both important and dangerous – it provides families with important historical support during separations but can be fraught with complex history and baggage.

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Families and soldiers can seek out healthy and constructive friendships with other military families.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can develop strong, healthy and constructive support systems in their local communities, especially with neighbours, religious organisations and extended family.

- ❖ Families and soldiers can ensure both the quantity and quality of their relationships with others.
- ❖ Families can make active use of any military support before, during and after deployments, including Family Support Groups, Rear Detachment and professional support services.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can sort out conflicts or tensions with their extended families before deployments. This may entail establishing clear boundaries and expectations with the extended family.
- ❖ Families can set up a telephone circle with several other families whose partners are deployed.
- ❖ Families can take the initiative to establish small support groups with other military families.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can take active steps prior to a deployment, to ensure the availability to instrumental support systems, eg people who can assist with repairing a broken-down car, with transport, with child care, with health concerns, etc.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can foster their spiritual beliefs and relationships.

Regarding Family Support Groups (FSG) and FSG leaders:

- ❖ FSGs can be flexible in form and content, and can be created to meet the unique needs and styles of the families it supports.
- ❖ FSGs can organise social meetings so that families can meet each other and develop informal military friendships.
- ❖ FSGs can arrange welcome home parties or functions.
- ❖ FSGs can arrange information meetings for families to address deployment (eg the status of the mission) and/or family (eg how to promote the resilience of children) issues.
- ❖ Families who are new to a unit can be welcomed by the FSG.

- ❖ FSGs can establish telephone trees or circles, whereby messages or information can rapidly be communicated to families, even those who live far away.
- ❖ FSGs can develop and provide families with a deployment handbook that addresses issues concerning deployment resilience, telephone and contact details of key people or agencies, etc.
- ❖ FSGs can develop and distribute regular newsletters to families.
- ❖ FSGs can obtain a roster of unit members, including contact details prior to the deployment.
- ❖ FSGs can be trained to provide emotional support to those in distress and refer them for counselling as indicated.
- ❖ FSGs can be familiar with the range of support services available in the military and in the local communities.
- ❖ FSGs can be sensitive to issues of rank and race, and especially to the role of the wives of junior members in the FSG who often feel excluded.

8.5 FINANCIAL PREPARATION

The resilience factor 'financial preparation' "is defined as the family having adequate financial resources during separations" (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 599).

"Deployments place additional financial hardships on families; the hardships are compounded if deployments are frequent and unexpected" (USA Department of Defense, 1993, p. 9). The presence of financial difficulties (operationalised as not paying bills) has a direct and negative impact on unit readiness, that is, on the military unit's ability to execute its mission (Sadacca et al., 1992, p. 43; Scarville & Dunivin, n.d., p. 18), as well as on the well-being of family members (Adler et al., 1995, p. 16). In a South African naval study, 74% of sea-going families were significantly concerned about their finances (Van Breda, 1995d, p. 74), and financial concern was found to be highest amongst those who experienced the most deployment stress (ibid., p. 30). In another South African study with predominantly African infantrymen and their wives, the

management of financial affairs was one of the most common and severe problems reported by soldiers and wives (Van Breda et al., 1999, pp. 7SAI-22 & 2SAI-22).

This can be compared with a US study in which 27% of military members were concerned about whether the family had enough money to pay bills during separations (Westat Inc, 1994, p. 5). According to one author, 90% of the family problems reported by leaders during deployment are financial (Krueger, 2001, p. 15). A 1991 survey of US army families found that 34% of families deployed in Europe and 48% of other army families experienced financial difficulties (Martin, 1992). A study of families requesting assistance from Family Support Centres during Operation Desert Shield found that the most prevalent and severe problem was financial (Fuller, Myslewicz, & Brockwell, 1991, p. 1-5; Helms & Greene, 1992, p. 2-8). Another study from Operation Desert Shield found that soldier and spouse deployment stress was higher when they were concerned about family finances (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. III-17), and conversely that adaptation was enhanced when good financial resources were available (Bell, 1991a).

Financial problems were experienced by 43% of the spouses who reported having problems during Operations Desert Storm/Shield (Scarville, 1993). These problems were related to the purchasing of deployment related items, postage overseas, job loss by spouse, loss of soldier's second job and telephone accounts (ibid.).

Financial concern among South African naval families was associated with higher levels of anxiety and loneliness (Van Breda, 1995d, p. 45), and was considered a significant factor in the stress wives experience due to deployments (ibid., p. 49). Another study found that "financial difficulties had more impact on operational readiness than housing, child care, health care, or partner's job" (Luther, Garman, Leech, Griffitt, & Gilroy, 1997; see also Segal & Harris, 1993, p. 30).

Deployments are expensive for families. One area of expense for many families is the use of telephones during deployments (Bell et al., 1996a). Some families, particularly junior families, ring up enormous telephone accounts during deployments (Applewhite & Segal, 1990; Ender, 1995). These accounts (Bell et al., 1996a):

can be reduced if the families know in advance what calling plans are available, when the soldier can receive calls, what the time differences are between the family's location and the deployment site, and what the costs are likely to be. It also helps if the families know how and when to use alternative means of communication (eg audio and video tapes, FAXs, and government telephones). (p. 22)

It is, however, important to note experiencing financial hardships during a deployment is related to many other stress factors in the family, which suggests that certain families

experience multiple problems that may or may not be related to finances alone. These 'multi-problem families' may manifest financial problems as merely one of several symptoms of a basic dysfunction of the family system as a whole. In one study families who experienced financial hardships during Operation Desert Storm also experienced (Caliber Associates, 1993, pp. III-28 – III-31):

- ❖ Stress in managing the family finances.
- ❖ Stress in caring for the children.
- ❖ Stress in missing their spouse while deployed.
- ❖ Stress in managing the household.
- ❖ A weaker marriage following the deployment.

Finance is an important dimension of deployment resilience not only prior to deployments, but also after deployments, when financial control may be handed back to the returned soldier. A quarter (26%) of families in Operation Desert Storm reported difficulty in this regard (Bell et al., 1996a, p. 28). Finances may become the territory over which a power struggle between husband and wife is acted out – some researchers interpret female control over finances during deployments as an indication of female androgyny (Riennerth, 1978). During the separation, the wife may take ownership of the family's financial management. When her husband returns home, she may be unwilling to relinquish this control and authority to her husband, resulting in family conflict (see section 8.8 for further details).

Developing Financial Health. One study found that sound "financial management" was significantly related to family "balance" in families with children at home (H.I. McCubbin & McCubbin, 1992, p. 168). Similarly, financial security was found to correlate with general well-being and global life satisfaction (Rosen, Moghadam, & Carpenter, 1989a, p. 120). Other studies showed that financial preparedness (eg. having emergency funds available) decreased worry during military separations (Martin et al., 1993, p. 25; Segal & Harris, 1993, p. 85; Van Breda, 1995a, p. 11) and facilitate family adaptation to deployment (Caliber Associates, 1992, p. I-10).

Financial preparation before deployment is a critical component of deployment resilience (Marchant & Medway, 1987, p. 49 & 53), and includes actions such as writing a will, granting another person power of attorney and arranging life insurance (Caliber Associates, n.d.; Pliske, 1988, p. 28). Anecdotal information in the SANDF indicates that

one of the main reasons why soldiers have to return home from a deployment is financial problems. Families need to learn to manage the family expenses and other financial matters well before a deployment starts (Cline, 1992, p. 202).

The US military advises families to have two weeks pay available in case of emergencies during the deployment. Families that were unable to do so during Operation Desert Storm tended to have children or to hold junior ranks – two factors that probably increase the need for emergency cash (Caliber Associates, 1992, p. III-4).

Not having financial hardships during a deployment is related largely to having a more senior military rank and ensuring adequate preparation before the deployment (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. III-32). In addition, the following factors were associated with fewer financial worries during Operation Desert Storm (ibid., pp. III-28 – III-31):

- ❖ Reviewing the family's finances prior to deployment.
- ❖ Developing a budget prior to deployment.
- ❖ Having two weeks pay available for emergencies before the deployment starts.
- ❖ Spouse was employed.

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Families and soldiers can discuss the family finances on an on-going basis.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can ensure the availability of two weeks pay for emergencies during deployments.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can arrange for credit facilities prior to deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can make arrangements for the paying of accounts during the deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can arrange for power of attorney for the family during the deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can avoid getting into debt, and make use of services when they do get into debt.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can ensure routine, clear and participative budgeting.

- ❖ Families can exercise discretion in spending during the deployment, including their use of telephone and other communication facilities.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can avoid the use of credit facilities.
- ❖ Soldiers can ensure that their families know how to use cash machines, credit cards, debit cards, chequebooks, etc.
- ❖ Male soldiers who are reluctant to hand over financial control to their wives can find creative ways to ensure the financial well-being of their families without losing control of family finances, eg by arranging a routine (monthly or weekly) debit order from their account into their wife's account for family expenses.

8.6 'PARTNER-AWARE' FAMILY STRUCTURE

The resilience factor 'partner-aware family structure' can be defined as the family maintaining a firm but flexible boundary around the family, accommodating the smooth entry and exit of the deploying parent, and maintaining a symbolic or virtual intact family structure during separations.

Several studies indicate that military families often develop dysfunctional structures to assist in coping with the repeated coming and going of the husband-father. In some families, the father is pushed out of the family, in order for the family to cope without him during deployments. This family pattern, termed "closed-ranks" in military literature (Amen et al., 1988, p. 442), results in substantial post-deployment difficulties (Hall & Malone, 1974, in Lagrone, 1978, p. 1041; McCubbin, Dahl, & Hunter, 1976a, p. 304). The husbands in these families find it very difficult to regain entry into the family system, and often feel like a 'spare wheel' (Hunter, 1982, p. 16). Anecdotal information suggests that some husbands may resort to force, even violence, to regain their position as 'head of the house'.

In other families the ranks are kept open (termed "open-ranks"), resulting in the father being welcomed back in on his return. During the deployment, however, the family is unable to continue functioning effectively without the absent family member and disintegrates (Jensen, Lewis, & Xenakis, 1986, p. 227). Boynton and Pearce (1978, p. 130) note that, "The extent to which this adjustment to separation is successful,

however, is *inversely* related to the ease with which the family can accommodate his return" (see also Amen et al., 1988, p. 442; Bell, 1991a; Segal, 1989).

The net result of these coping styles is a sense of dissolution of the family as a unit. Mental health professionals and the military organization may, unwittingly, contribute to the demise of the family unit by advocating a closed-ranks approach with the intention of maintaining family integrity during deployments. While this may prove effective in the short term, it "often leads to a sense of artificiality and a chronic sense of fragmentation in the family and an ever-present threat to family stability" (Hunter, 1982, p. 29). I have had many cases of families who contemplate divorce once the sailor is drafted off a naval ship because they cannot tolerate the prolonged intimacy of living together every day.

Some writers suggest that maintaining a symbolic presence of the family (or soldier) helps soldiers (or families) cope better with separations (Jensen et al., 1986, p. 231; Kirkland & Katz, 1989, p. 66; Office of Family Policy, 1997, p. 26; US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h, p. 99; Waldron, Whittington, & Jensen, 1985, p. 106). This idea has been experimented with in clinical practice by South African naval social workers and has met with some success. It is hypothesised that such a practice helps the family find a balance between open and closed ranks, and has been termed "maintaining a partner-aware family" by the author (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 599).

Perhaps the simplest way of maintaining a partner-aware family is through regular telephonic contact between soldier and family during deployment. Although this can create problems (such as the negative experience of knowing about a problem that one can do nothing to solve), it is likely that the positive consequences such contacts outweigh the negatives (Applewhite & Segal, 1990; Wright et al., 1995).

Family rituals (Imber-Black, 1988; Imber-Black et al., 1988; Van Breda, 1995e) can assist families in maintaining a partner-aware family. The *Deployment Resilience Seminar*, for example, advocates keeping photographs and other mementos nearby as a reminder of the absent member(s), keeping the soldier's chair vacant at the meal table, and planning welcome home rituals or parties to facilitate reintegration of the absent family member (Van Breda, 1998a).

One aspect of these shifts in family structure is the shifts in role allocation. These shifts create stress for many military families (Boss et al., 1979; Hawes-Dawson & Morrison, 1992; Hertz & Charlton, 1989; Hunter, 1982; Rosenfeld et al., 1973; Rozenzweig et al., 1981; Stone & Alt, 1990), particularly when there is lack of marital consensus regarding

role allocation (Hunter, 1978, p. 190). The South African naval study found that 59% of couples “were not coping adequately with the continual changes in roles between themselves and their partners” (Van Breda, 1995d, p. 23). These difficulties were associated with higher stress, anxiety, loneliness and marital conflict, a lack of social support and a feeling of loss of control. Developing effective means to shift roles, then, is crucial for effective coping with routine family separations (Eastman et al., 1990, p. 123; Kralj, Sadacca, & Kimmel, 1991, p. 49). “The well being of the family unit directly impacts on the soldiers’ readiness, retention, and overall effectiveness” (Amen et al., 1988, p. 441; also Potts, 1988, p. 66).

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Soldiers can find creative ways to maintain a symbolic presence of their family during deployments, eg having photographs, personal mementos, tape recordings, etc of family members, writing a daily family journal that will be given to the family after the deployment, etc.
- ❖ Families can find creative ways to maintain a symbolic presence of their parent/partner/soldier during deployments, eg having photographs, personal mementos, tape recordings, etc of the soldier, writing a daily family journal that will be given to the soldier after the deployment, keeping the soldiers chair at the meal table vacant, etc.
- ❖ The remaining spouse can consider what the deployed spouse would say when decisions are required.
- ❖ Families can prepare a welcome home party for the deployed member.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can develop rituals that promote rhythm and identity in the family and that can be maintained during the deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can maintain communication during the deployment.
- ❖ Families and soldiers can negotiate shifts in roles and responsibilities before and after deployments, which will help to prevent conflict and promote healthy shifts in the family structure.

8.7 RESILIENT CHILDREN

The resilience factor 'resilient children' "is defined as the family actively developing the separation resilience of their children" (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 599).

The containment of children is a significant factor in effective coping with deployments. This author's studies indicated that men perceive the needs of the children to be the greatest factor making deployments difficult for their wives (Van Breda, 1995d, p. 47); see also (Adler et al., 1995, p. 16; Rosenfeld et al., 1973, p. 37). A study of US military families found that about half (40% - 58%) of all military members with children were often or very often worried about their child's health and well-being during deployments (Westat Inc, 1994, p. 46). Mothers (50% - 58%) tend to experience more worry than fathers (40% - 55%), and single parents (55% - 58%) tend to experience more worry than married parents (40% - 54%) (ibid.). One study found that "service members with dependents report more problems getting ready to deploy than do members without dependents" (USA Department of Defense, 1993, p. 13).

Military children experience an emotional cycle of deployment similar to that of military wives (Kelley, 1994b, p. 171), exhibiting sadness, anxiety, anger, encoyresis, sleep disturbance, somatic complaints, behavioural and academic problems, acting out, eating problems, regression, fighting and arguing, concentration difficulties, truanting and dependency (Amen et al., 1988; Applewhite & Mays, 1996; Bloch et al., 1991; Herbst, 1995; Hillenbrand, 1976; Igel, 1945; Levai, Ackermann, Kaplan, & Hammock, 1995; Rosen, Westhuis, & Teitelbaum, 1993a).

The deployment of single parents and dual-military couples (when both are deployed) has a disruptive impact on children. Studies of these parents during Operation Desert Storm indicate that 60-75% of children are placed in alternative care outside of their usual living area - 90% of these children are placed more than 150 miles away from home during the deployment (Croan, 1993, p. 2). Most children (43% of children living with a single parent and 70% of children living with dual-military parents) live with grandparents during the deployment (ibid.).

Some children develop clinical problems during deployments, notably dysthymia (Levai et al., 1995; Levai, Kaplan, & Daly, 1994). Many of these children, however, evidenced premorbid psychopathology that was precipitated into a crisis by the departure or absence of the military parent (Amen et al., 1988). Some studies have found that military children (outside of a period of deployment) do not evidence higher levels of

psychopathology than found in the general population (Jensen et al., 1995; Orthner, Giddings, & Quinn, 1989). Other children in fact become stronger as a result of deployments – more “stress-resistant” and “competent” (Hillenbrand, 1976, p. 452; Jensen et al., 1986, p. 228) – an example of the resiliency effects of stress. Just over one third (38-40%) of single parents and dual-military couples reported a negative long-term impact of deployment during Operation Desert Storm on their children, while 27% of these parents reported the deployment had a positive impact (Croan, 1993, p. 9).

The primary factors which influence the responses of children to deployment separations are “(1) potential death of a parent, (2) uncertainty of time of return, (3) a feeling of lack of control of the outcome, (4) the need for a base of emotional support, and (5) a critical period of development for children (Traylor, n.d., pp. 5-6). Traylor continues to point out critical periods in child development, notably the period between eight and twenty months during which core personality structures are developed. He recommends that “single parents should not be deployed to a combat zone until a child reaches school age and care for the child during the parent’s absence has been clearly established” (ibid., p. 6).

Table 8.3 (on the following page) provides a description of the changes children of three developmental stages and their parents go through over the deployment cycle.

Father absences have been shown to have a detrimental effect on many children (Stolz, 1951), particularly boys (Applewhite & Mays, 1996; McCubbin & Dahl, 1976; Mott, Kowaleski, & Menaghan, 1997) and younger children (Croan, 1993; Kelley, 1994a). Children, particularly the eldest son, are often parentalized during deployments (Long, 1986; Peck & Schroeder, 1976, p. 25; Riggs, 1990, p. 155), which can precipitate significant enmeshment with mother (Keller, 1973, p. 27; Wertsch, 1991, p. 187) and conflict with father (Levai et al., 1995, p. 106; Riennerth, 1978, p. 182).

Maternal coping and well-being, social support and the family functioning prior to deployment have repeatedly been shown to have a buffering effect on children (Amen et al., 1988, p. 442; Black, 1993; Hiew, 1992, p. 219; Kelley, 1994a; Segal & Harris, 1993, p. 85). One study found that parents who felt they were *prepared* for Operation Desert Storm also felt that the deployment did *not* impact negatively on their eldest child – 50% of soldiers and 60% of spouses who felt they were *unprepared* indicated *no* negative impact on the child, compared with 75% of soldiers and about 79% of spouses who were *prepared* (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. VI-14 & VI-15).

Table 8.3 Children's Reactions to Deployments

	Pre-Deployment Phase		Deployment Phase		Post-Deployment Phase	
	Any combination of these feelings	Could lead to any of these behaviours	Any combination of these feelings	Could lead to any of these behaviours	Any combination of these feelings	Could lead to any of these behaviours
Parents	Resentment. Anger. Guilt. Frustration. Anxiousness. Sadness.	Arguing - to distance and/or express anger. Father withholds notice of deployment until last minute. Lack of adequate preparation due to denial. Emotional and physical withdrawal.	Feel overwhelmed and depressed. Displaced anxiety. More independent and assertive. Anger. Fear of infidelity. Mom resents kids taking their anger out on her.	May just give in to battle with kids and ease up on rules, routines, etc. Overprotective, kids may begin to sleep with Mum. Increased alcohol consumption. Somatic complaints. Everything that goes wrong is blamed on father. Things start to be done Mum's way. Withdrawal from kids even more.	Fear of infidelity. Let down (fantasy reunion doesn't live up to expectations). Anger at absence. Jealousy of kid's preference for one parent. Husband forgets normal noise and confusion. Both feel "I had it worse".	Questioning. Suspiciousness. Withdrawal. Try to take power back through physical violence. Difficulties compromising. Want the other to "take care of me".
Pre-Schoolers	Confusion. Surprise. Guilt during magical thinking period. Sadness.	Clinging. Irritability. Increase of attention-seeking behaviour.	Sadness. Feelings of abandonment. Separation anxiety. Confusion at routine change. Feelings of guilt for Mum's sadness. The four or five year old child is most sensitive to separation from Dad.	Change in appetite or sleep. "Father hunger". Behaviour problems - may act out Mum's anger or anxiety. Evidence of lowered self-esteem. Attempt to care for Mum.	Joy and excitement. Wants reassurance. Anger causes desire to punish or retaliate against Dad. May be afraid of Dad.	May have made something for Dad - wants recognition. Clingy. Oppositional or avoidant behaviour. Attention-seeking behaviour. Compete with Mum and other sibs.
Junior Schoolers	Sadness. Anger. Separation anxiety. Guilt during sub A&B. May feel cause of father's leaving even if discussed. Feels lonely before he leaves.	Behaviour problems. Regressive behaviours. Angry outbursts mixed with clinging.	Feel like the man around the house/like Mum's companion. Loneliness (Dad is often a pal or friend at this age). Feelings of abandonment. Fear that separation between Mum and Dad may be permanent. Confusion over masculinity.	School problems ("Dad's not here to make me do it"). Swing from very responsible to very irresponsible. Encopresis and enuresis increase. May act out Mum's distress. May act out own anger. Increased aggressive or hypermasculine behaviour.	Joy and excitement. Remaining anger. Anxiety over changing roles in family. Competition with Dad for masculine role.	May have made something for Dad - wants recognition. Attention-seeking behaviour after things have settled. May act out anger. May initially attempt to split parents.
High Schoolers	Sadness. Fear of mother's rejection. Denial of feelings. Anger.	Alloofness, "don't care" attitude (arguing as defence against closeness or expression of anger). Friends take on increased value.	Sadness. Independence (as a defence and developmental task). Anger.	School problems. Behaviour problems. Control problems (Dad not there for control).	Anger. Relief. Resentment.	Defiance. Behaviour problems. School problems.

(adapted from Amen, Merves, Jellen, & Lee, 1988, p. 443)

Kelly (1994b) notes that when one family member is found to experience deployment stress, the entire family is likely also to be stressed, indicating that separation affects the entire family system. A related study found that the more stress experienced by the deploying parent or the at-home parent the greater the likelihood of the deployment having a negative impact on the eldest child (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. VI-13). Other authors suggest that deployments are not intrinsically stressful for children, but that they disrupt families that are already vulnerable (Levai et al., 1995).

Deployment of Mothers. More recent papers address the differences, or rather, the absence of differences between maternally and paternally separated children in military families (Applewhite & Mays, 1996; Kelley, Herzog-Simmer, & Harris, 1994). Contrary to the common sense expectation that children whose mothers are deployed would suffer more than children whose fathers are deployed, comparative research by Applewhite and Mays (1996) found no significant differences between the two groups of children.

Women, in a society that is making steady though slow progress from patriarchal to more egalitarian, tend to retain primary responsibility for the care of children, creating significant implications for mission readiness. One large survey of the US DoD, for example, found that "53.3% of females with children in joint-Service [ie dual-military] marriages reported dependent care considerations as a problem [delaying their ability to respond quickly to recall/alert or change in work schedule], compared to 30.1% of males with children in joint-Service marriages" (Westat Inc, 1994, p. 4).

Mothers express more concern about their husbands being able to care for their children during a deployment than do fathers regarding their wives – 81% - 84% of mothers were confident in their husband's ability to care for the children during a deployment, compared with 91% - 92% of fathers who were confident in their wife's ability to care for the children when they were deployed (Westat Inc, 1994, p. 56). A study of soldiers in Operation Desert Storm found that female soldiers experienced greater stress regarding their children than did male soldiers (Stuart & Halverson, 1996, p. II.1.2 & G.1.2).

Contrary to the popular military perception of problems related to the deployment of women (especially regarding single mothers, dual career married women and pregnant female soldiers), Teitelbaum (1990, pp. 3-4) notes that mothers, whether married or single, "report low levels of lost deployment time for their family needs" and indicates that "male single parents report a much higher percentage of lost deployment time for family reasons than female single parents and all other soldiers" (see also Wright, 1989).

Helping Children Cope. Many authors make suggestions on how children can be assisted with deployment coping (Amen et al., 1988; Black, 1993; Blaisure & Arnold-Mann, 1992; Blount et al., 1992; Cline, 1992; Moritz, n.d.; Office of Family Policy, 1997; Orr, 1992; Rabb, Baumer, & Wieseler, 1993; Toal, 1992; United Nations, n.d.; US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994d, 1994h; USA Department of Defense, n.d.; Van Breda, 1998a; Waldron et al., 1985).

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Parents can prepare children for deployment by explaining, with the aid of maps, calendars, photos, etc, where the military parent is going, for how long and for what purpose.
- ❖ Parents can develop creative methods to assist younger children visualise the passage of time, eg a deployment snake that is coloured in each day until the soldier's return.
- ❖ Soldiers can provide symbols or transitional objects to assist children maintain a symbolic relationship with the absent parent, eg photographs, personal mementos, tape recordings of children's stories or letters, assignment of age appropriate responsibilities during the separation, etc.
- ❖ Make tape recordings of stories or letters for the child to listen to during the deployment.
- ❖ Children can create a "survival kit" for the departing parent, including family photos, stationary, books, and something by which the parent can remember the child.
- ❖ Parents can help children talk about their feelings regarding a deployment, and to express these feelings through projective media, eg painting, sport, etc.
- ❖ Parents can help children understand the inevitable incidents of marital conflict prior to deployment, and to relieve the child's belief that the soldier has left because of the conflict.
- ❖ Parents can avoid allocating the oldest child or son the responsibility of being the 'man of the house' or of 'taking care of mummy'.

- ❖ The deploying parent can allocate a specific and age appropriate responsibility to each child – one that the deploying parent is usually responsible for.
- ❖ The parent who stays at home can avoid taking excessive responsibility for being both mother and father.
- ❖ The parent who stays at home can continue to care for self, so that s/he is in a better and richer position to care for the children.
- ❖ Soldiers can write *individual* letters to the children, and post them in separate envelopes so that each child receives their own complete and sealed letter.
- ❖ Children can write letters to or make drawing for the deployed parent.
- ❖ Children can prepare a welcome home party for the absent parent.
- ❖ Parents can read about how children of different ages respond to family separations so as to better understand and respond to their children's reactions.
- ❖ Parents can create or use deployment-related stories or colouring-in books for the child during the deployment.
- ❖ Parents can speak with other parents in the same situation to normalise the negative responses of their children and to learn new ways to cope.
- ❖ Parents can maintain family routines and rituals before, during and after deployments.
- ❖ Parents can plan how to handle discipline of the children during the deployment.
- ❖ The returning parent can enter the family and their role as parent gently, rather than suddenly.
- ❖ The returning parent can tolerate the children's ambivalent feelings as a normal part of the transition back to a complete family.
- ❖ Parents can prepare adequately for the deployment, thereby reducing the stress of the remaining parent, thereby reducing the family stress for the child.
- ❖ Parents can arrange support systems for the remaining parent prior to the deployment.

- ❖ Parents can track the emotional well-being of their children and respond appropriately, even taking the child for family counselling if indicated.
- ❖ Parents can ensure shared responsibility for parenting as a norm, particularly when the deploying parent is a mother.
- ❖ The remaining parent can take the children to see the soldier off at the point of departure.
- ❖ Parents can inform the child's teachers of the deployment, so that the teacher can be aware of and respond appropriately to any changes in the child's behaviour.

8.8 FLEXIBLE MARRIAGE

A 'flexible marriage' "is defined as a secure marriage in which partners are flexible in the allocation of gender roles and responsibilities" (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 599).

The author's research showed that, for both men and women, having a stable, secure and happy marital relationship was, by far, the most important factor in helping families cope more effectively with deployments (Van Breda, 1995a, p. 8). This finding confirms that of other researchers (Amen et al., 1988, p. 442; Blount et al., 1992, p. 78; Ferreira, 1988, p. 146; Jensen et al., 1986, p. 227; McCubbin & Dahl, 1976, p. 131), although even couples with healthy, well-functioning marriages find deployments stressful (Segal, 1986, p. 20). Deployments can place great stress on the marital relationship (Woelfel & Savell, 1978, p. 20), often contributing to divorce (Aldridge, Sturdivant, Smith, & Lago, 1997a; Gomulka, 1993; Spence, 1997).

A key dynamic in the marital relationship is that of role changes and authority. Riggs notes, for example, that wives' "establishing independence and self-sufficiency" enhances coping with deployments, and advocates women adopting an *androgynous* gender role (1990, p. 152; see also Bell et al., 1997; Bell et al., 1996a; Chapman, 1946; Cline, 1992; Hunter, 1982; Kirkland & Katz, 1989; Kralj et al., 1991; McCubbin et al., 1976b; Riennerth, 1978).

Androgyny for a military wife implies being able to take on roles and responsibilities that are traditionally considered male territory – such as taking family decisions, managing family finances, fixing the car, mowing the lawn, shovelling snow, ensuring the security

and safety of the family, etc (see for example US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h, p. 108). With the increase in the number of women who are beginning to deploy, one may also consider what androgyny for a military husband means, viz being able to take on roles and responsibilities that are traditionally considered female territory – such as cooking, cleaning, washing and ironing, attending to shopping and household hygiene, caring for children, attending parent-teacher meetings, assisting with homework, ensuring the affective and emotional needs of family members, etc.

One study (Burnam et al., 1992, p. 44) found that soldiers in training units, support units and combat units reported increasing levels of confidence in their spouses' ability to cope fully with family responsibilities during separations, indicating the importance of spouse self-sufficiency during deployments. This study also found that soldiers who had confidence in their spouses' self-sufficiency experienced greater emotional well-being and marital satisfaction than soldiers who were concerned about their spouses' self-sufficiency (ibid., p. 47). Other studies have similarly found that the individual readiness of soldiers is related to, among other variables, "spouse employment referral use [and] spouse having a driver's license" which suggest the independence of the spouse during the soldier's absence (Scarville & Dunivin, n.d., p. 17).

Advocating an androgynous gender role for military wives does not necessarily mean that the couple has an egalitarian relationship. It is quite possible for the wife to be capable of coping independently of her husband and running the family in his absence, without her considering herself or being considered by her husband to be an equal in the relationship (Mederer & Weinstein, 1992). Indeed, many military families have very traditionalist gender roles – the wife has learned to cope independently when alone, but moves back into a subordinate role on the return of her husband (Desivilya & Gal, 1996; Jolly, 1987). In other instances, however, a wife may resist returning to a subordinate role, having experienced her own competence and autonomy (Caliber Associates, 1992, p. I-12), potentially resulting in marital conflict.

Some authors suggest, in consequence, that husbands need to be able to cope with an independent wife (Lagrone, 1978, p. 1042). This can become a source of conflict, particularly with repeated or prolonged separations, when the wife does not want to hand over control to her husband on his return (Bell, 1991a; Hunter, 1982, p. 13). Men need to learn to adjust to an alternative marital relationship in order for the family to continue to function effectively in the face of repeated separations. At base, couples need to agree on the allocation of roles, whether patriarchal, matriarchal or egalitarian (Hunter, 1978, p. 190).

A study (Wooddell, Gramling, & Forsyth, 1994) of offshore oil personnel found that a husband's or wife's egalitarianism had no effect on life satisfaction for three samples: offshore oil workers (analogous to military employees who deploy), shift workers (which bears some resemblance to some military employees) and routine 8-5 workers. There was one exception, however, viz the egalitarianism of wives of offshore workers impacted positively on the life satisfaction of their husbands (ibid.):

The relatively strong effect of wife's egalitarianism upon offshore husband's life-satisfaction may lie in his reliance upon her to take care of absolutely everything – even the “man's” work, while he is offshore for extended periods of time. In some sense this finding would seem to support the notion, long held by feminists – men and women alike – that equality between the sexes constitutes liberation for them both. (p. 131)

These researchers do, however, present an alternative explanation, which will be agreed to by many of the military wives I have interviewed. They suggest that the shift to an 'egalitarian' marriage is the husband's means to the end of being able to continue his job, rather than an embracing of a liberated marriage. “The husband ... stands to benefit from a shift of the division of labor in the direction of his wife, and the principles of egalitarianism is the means of that end” (Wooddell et al., 1994, p. 131).

Deployment of Women. Although few studies have been reported on the deployment of women (and mothers), Burnam et al (1992, p. 51) indicate that “female soldiers with accompanying children, other things being equal, are least confident that their spouses can take full responsibility for family matters in the event of a wartime deployment.” This finding suggests that the fairly well documented conclusion that military wives need to be androgynous applies also to military husbands. While military wives need to be able to make independent decisions, fix the car and fight with the building contractors, military husbands need to be able to care for the developmental needs of the children, manage the family routine and be available to comfort frightened children. Certainly, gender roles are shifting (as discussed in section 5.3 of this document) and the role of men in nurturing the family is increasing, even in military families (Jolly, 1987, p. 9). It would seem, however, that women (military wives) may be more able to adopt an androgynous style than men (military husbands).

Another study (Dukes & Naylor, 1991) investigated the perceptions of civilian and military respondents to a pair of scenarios: (1) a male captain deploys and leaves his wife at home with the children, (2) a female captain deploys and leaves her husband at home with the children. Civilian respondents expressed more sympathy for the husband left at home than for the wife left at home, while military respondents expressed more

sympathy for the wife left at home than for the husband. Both civilian and military respondents, however, considered that women who were deployed away from home would have a more difficult time than men deployed away from home. These differences are not interpreted by the authors, but may reflect that military respondents have learned to cope with deployments (typically deployment of men, however). Consequently, they believe men will cope with being either at home or deployed, that women will cope with being at home but not being deployed. It would be interesting to replicate this study ten years later to see how these perceptions have changed.

A study of US military employees found that "male military members expressed greater confidence in their spouses' abilities to take care of family responsibilities than did female members" (Westat Inc, 1994, p. 6). Clinical experience in South Africa indicates that women are often more flexible in their gender roles and are able to learn and adopt their husband's roles with relative ease, when compared with men who are less easily able to adopt their wives' roles. Perhaps this is a consequence of gender role socialisation, which has probably become more flexible for women (in response to the woman's movement) than for men (who remain somewhat trapped in a rigid male gender role).

Communication & Conflict. Riggs (1990, p. 153) points to the issues of communication, conflict and estrangement just before and after separations (see also Bey & Lange, 1974; Blount et al., 1992). One large study found that "those living apart from their spouses in 1976 were nearly twice as likely to experience a marital dissolution within three years, compared with persons cohabiting with their spouses" (Rindfuss & Stephen, 1990, pp. 259 & 265; Williams, 1976, p. 235) – one of the primary reasons for non-cohabitation was military service.

Couples who cope well with deployments learn to communicate and handle conflict. Research in the South African Navy found that families who deploy do not experience significantly greater levels of family violence than families who do not deploy (Van Breda, 2000). Nevertheless, other research suggests that family violence may be more prevalent in military families (Cronin, 1995) and clinical experience suggests that family violence is more likely just before or just after deployments (Stone & Alt, 1990, p. 112).

Communication is perhaps the central ingredient of a resilient marriage both for couples who do not experience deployments and for those that do (Bell, 1991a; Van Breda, 1995a). Maintaining frequent contact during the separation assists in maintaining the health of the marriage (Hunter, 1982, p. 31). Couples sometimes report that these

phone calls are uncomfortable and that they even create more stress at the time. Nevertheless, these phone calls have long-term benefits of maintaining the couple system, despite the short-term stress (Applewhite & Segal, 1990).

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Remaining partners can develop a more androgynous gender role, so as to be able to fulfil most family functions during a deployment.
- ❖ Deploying partners can develop an appreciation for their partner's self-sufficiency, independence and androgyny.
- ❖ Remaining partners can actively include the soldier back into the relationship after a deployment.
- ❖ Partners can promote on-going healthy, clear, direct and constructive communication patterns in their relationship.
- ❖ Partners can maintain communication during the deployment, through phone calls, letters, journals, etc.
- ❖ Partners can commit to sexual and emotional fidelity.
- ❖ Partners who are not sexually faithful during deployments can use condoms to reduce the possibility of the transmission of sexually transmitted infections such as HIV.
- ❖ Parents can develop health conflict management styles, with a prohibition on violence.

8.9 FAMILY-ORIENTED MANAGEMENT

"The last separation resilience factor is defined as the family-oriented management of the workforce and of separations" (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 599), in which the military organization promotes the goodness-of-fit between employees/families and the organization, and seeks to minimize the impact of necessary deployments on families.

South African research highlights a number of factors external to the family that influence the family's ability to resist separation stress (Mathee, 1997; Van Breda, 1995d). The experience of separation was found to vary between different groups of ships. In exploring the reasons for this, two main factors emerge (Van Breda, 1997b):

- ❖ Firstly, those with the highest separation stress work on ships which have *erratic, unpredictable* separations, and which have *no support groups* for families during separations.
- ❖ Secondly, it appears that the duration of separations is a less significant factor in predicting separation stress than is the *frequency of separations* (Van Breda, 1997b). When separations are longer and less frequent, families have time to adjust to the phases of togetherness and separation. Short but frequent separations require the family to adjust continually to the coming or going of the worker, which effectively prevents the family from ever achieving a period of stable functioning (Howe, 1983; Peck & Schroeder, 1976).

Timing of Deployments. The way in which the military manages deployments may impact on the resilience of families. In particular, when soldiers are required to move rapidly from one deployment to another, with inadequate time at home in between, and when the 'coming home' date is undetermined, families experienced heightened stress (Bell et al., 1997, p. 3; Martin et al., 1992, p. 7). When deployments are erratic, implemented with little warning, of undetermined duration and likely to be hazardous or dangerous, the deployment escalates from being a routine separation stressor to being a catastrophic family stressor, with a much greater likelihood of precipitating severe family and personal breakdown (Bell, 1991a; Caliber Associates, 1992, p. III-2; Peebles-Kleiger & Kleiger, 1994, p. 179).

The US military endeavours to regulate the timing of deployments by policy directives. The Navy and Marine Corps, for instance, aim for deployments of no longer than six months, "with a minimum turnaround time between deployments equal to twice the length of the deployment" (Krueger, 2001, p. 6). The Army and Air Force aim to deploy individuals for no longer than 120 days per year (ibid.). There do not appear to be comparable policies in the SA National Defence Force.

Leader Support for Families. Soldier and family perceptions of the adequacy of military leadership and practices have been found to correlate with deployment readiness and individual well-being (Burnam et al., 1992, p. 29 & 44), highlighting the important role of 'soft issues' in the management of military operations (Oliver, 1991).

In particular, the perceived support of supervisors for family issues and needs is closely related to soldier and family well-being, deployment readiness and retention intention (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. III-17; Croan, 1993, p. 16; Sadacca et al., 1993, pp. 51-52; Segal & Harris, 1993, p. 27; see also Ullenberg & Rundmo, 1997 for a similar finding among offshore oil personnel).

Units in which a soldier's family problem is seen as a unit problem evidence greater combat readiness than units in which a soldier with a family problem is considered a trouble maker (Kirkland & Katz, 1989, p. 69). Another study found that leaders who prioritised morale highly had units that functioned better and were more combat ready, compared with leaders who prioritised discipline, decisive leadership, combat skills, etc highly (Kirkland, Bartone, & Marlow, 1993). Similar studies found that the family variable that most strongly influenced unit readiness was the "amount perceived support given to families by the unit" (Sadacca et al., 1992, p. 44). Peacekeeping soldiers in the Canadian Forces indicate strongly that "family support was central to the morale and well-being of those who had left spouses/partners and children behind" (Pinch, 1994, p. 56).

Research on military families indicates a strong relationship between a male soldier's sense of the goodness of fit between the family and the military organisation, and both personal and work adjustment (Bowen, 1989b; Bowen, Orthner, & Bell, 1997). Since a soldier's readiness for deployment (one of the dimensions of work adjustment in this study) is in part dependent on that soldier's perception of a good fit between organisational and family demands, it is in the military interests to promote goodness of fit between these two systems.

One of the principles ways in which military leaders can demonstrate their support for families is by promoting and supporting Family Support Groups during deployments (US Army Community and Family Support Center, 1994h, p. 8).

Communication Facilities. "Information flow [between partners has been] identified as the major concern of family members" during the deployment of US soldiers to Europe and South-West Asia in 1991 (Martin et al., 1992, p. 3). One of the most important ways military management can enhance the resilience of military employees and families is to ensure the availability of communication facilities between deployed soldiers and their homes (Bell, 1991a; Caliber Associates, 1992; Pinch, 1994). Modern technology allows easy communication, with the ready availability of commercial telephones, military/satellite communications, email, cellular phones, etc.

In a study of soldiers and wives at two infantry units in South Africa, with research samples comprising predominantly Africans (84-100% of respondents), communication between soldiers and families was one of the top three concerns for participants (Van Breda et al., 1999, p. 7SAI-22 & 2SAI-22). This included issues such as lack of communication facilities (phones, postal services, etc), messages not being received, families being ill-treated when they phone the unit, the use of cell phones being restricted, families not knowing who to contact about family problems, and messages taking a very long time to be delivered (ibid., pp. 7SAI-13 & 2SAI-13).

Applewhite and Segal (1990, p. 125) and Ender (1995) note that the availability of telephones to deployed soldiers may be a "mixed blessing". While the majority soldiers in their study indicated extremely positive feelings towards the availability of telephones, several respondents had very negative experiences (for example, see Caliber Associates, 1993, p. III-16). These were largely related to being confronted with a family problem over which they had no control or ringing up very large telephone accounts. Nevertheless, the availability of telephones assists in maintaining a sense of family integrity in the face of physical separation (Applewhite & Segal, 1990; Bell et al., 1997), and it would seem that the benefits of having communication facilities available outweigh the negative consequences.

Information and Spouse Readiness. Spousal support for deployments is an important component of mission readiness, so much so that some researchers even refer to the concept of "spouse readiness," one component of which is spouse support for the military (1991, p. 42; Kralj et al., 1991, p. 61). Research (Bell et al., 1997, p. 2) on the families of soldiers deployed in Bosnia and Hungary in 1996 found that spouse support for the mission was lowest "among spouses who were troubled by or worried about: (1) mission uncertainty, (2) their soldier's safety, (3) accuracy or timeliness of information about the mission, or (4) news (probably bad news) about Bosnia". Ensuring adequate information during deployments and ensuring that families understand the reasons for a deployment are thus critical components of the management of people (soldiers and families) during deployment.

Preparation & Planning Opportunities. The first seven resilience dimensions discussed in this chapter all require adequate planning by the family. Indeed, time to plan for a deployment is probably the most essential ingredient in deployment resilience and underlies all of the dimensions, including this eighth dimension of family-oriented management. In a study of US military families whose partners were deployed in 1991 to South-West Asia, 35% "felt that they were not given adequate information, 65% said

that there was insufficient time for family needs, and 41% said that leaders were not supportive of families during the pre-deployment period (Martin et al., 1992, p. 6). Without preparation, all of the efforts of families to develop their resilience are undermined (Bloch et al., 1991; see Simon, 1990 for a similar perspective regarding shift work schedules).

Planning and preparation need to be on-going tasks for all who may be required to deploy (Caliber Associates, n.d.). If planning is only done on a deployment-by-deployment basis it will be inadequate – all soldiers and families must be in a constant state of readiness (Dibert, 1994; Hunter, 1983; Martin et al., 1992). Deployment simulations are helpful in ensuring readiness, as well as routine preparation for deployments (whether or not a deployment is foreseen in the near future). These preparations keep the family system resilient to potential deployments and ensure that the military can deploy at short notice when required.

Military Responsibility for Preparing Families. Military management can also assist in preparing families (Bell et al., 1996a):

This principle is seen in many of the activities that the Army undertakes just prior to a deployment. Dual military couples and single parents are asked to see if their child care plan is currently viable. Soldiers are given opportunities to make wills and draw up powers of attorney. Soldiers and families are given briefings and written materials. If possible, the soldier is also given time off just before the deployment to get his/her personal and family affairs in order and to spend time with his/her family. (p. 29)

The military has a great responsibility for communicating well with families, particularly prior to deployment. Studies of families during Operation Desert Storm found that while 30% of couples who received two or more briefings prior to the deployment experienced the deployment as very stressful, “this number jumped to 50% or higher for respondents who received one briefing or no briefings” (Caliber Associates, 1992, p. III-11).

Another study of the same operation found that receiving a briefing or deployment handbook prior to deployment significantly increased the likelihood of families (Caliber Associates, 1993, p. II-13 & III-16):

- ❖ Making the necessary family arrangements prior to deploying.
- ❖ Reviewing the family’s finances with spouse.
- ❖ Developing a budget or spending plan.
- ❖ Arranging for two weeks salary for emergencies.

- ❖ Arranging ID cards for family members.
- ❖ Getting a power of attorney for spouse.
- ❖ Experiencing less stress during deployments

The *Deployment Resilience Seminar* (Van Breda, 1998a), which is being used to prepare South African soldiers for deployments, has also yielded positive results. At two month follow-up, with a one-month deployment in between, 20 of the 24 participants indicated that the seminar had helped a lot or quite a lot in enabling them to cope better with the latest deployment (Van Breda, 1999a, p. 602). A positive correlation was found between the reported helpfulness of the intervention and the number of changes the family had made based on the intervention ($r = .91, p < .001$) (ibid.). An evaluation of the intervention indicated that “those who incorporated the principles of separation resilience in their families showed relative improvements in 80% of the [35] factors assessed” (ibid.).

Care of Deployed Soldiers. The military organisation also has a responsibility to promote the psychosocial well-being of soldiers during deployments. One study of US soldiers deployed in Europe in 1993 found that about 14% of soldiers increased their intake of alcohol to reduce tension, and that these soldiers also reported “experiencing significantly greater stress from boredom, isolation, separation from spouse, and unit leadership than those who reported no alcohol increase” (Adler & Bartone, 1995, p. 2).

The above information has the following implications for enhancing deployment resilience:

- ❖ Management can regard family care and support as part of the core business of the military, from the top management structure down to section leader.
- ❖ Management can express and actively demonstrate their concern for family well-being, eg by allowing soldiers time off for family matters even when these are not urgent.
- ❖ Management personnel (from top down to section leader) can model care for their own families and the families of their subordinates.
- ❖ Management can evaluate unit leaders and supervisors at least partly on the basis of their success in meeting soldier and family needs.

- ❖ Management can arrange unit family activities.
- ❖ Management can, as a rule, give families fair warning of pending deployments so that families have adequate time to prepare.
- ❖ Management can give soldiers leave prior to deployments to make family arrangements, particularly for soldiers whose families live elsewhere.
- ❖ Management can give soldiers and families detailed information about a deployment prior to separation. Predeployment briefings can be scheduled at several different times to promote maximum attendance.
- ❖ Management can ensure opportunities (facilities, affordability and time) for soldiers and families to stay in communication during deployments.
- ❖ Management can promote and facilitate the establishment of Family Support Groups during separations, with the support of military social workers. Management can ensure instrumental support to the FSGs, eg information, phone numbers, photocopying facilities, transport, etc.
- ❖ Management can ensure that Rear Detachments are staffed by mature and experienced personnel who are committed to family well-being and who liaise closely with the Family Support Groups.
- ❖ Management can promote and facilitate the availability and use of professional military support services, such as social workers.
- ❖ Management can arrange family deployment briefings to educate families and assist in developing their deployment resilience. Briefings can also be arranged for families and soldiers just prior to reunion, to assist in preparing families to reintegration.
- ❖ Management can compensate families for deployments, by allowing additional leave time.
- ❖ Management can ensure the soldiers plan for financial and child care of their families during deployments as a prerequisite for individual deployment readiness.
- ❖ Management can ensure smooth coordination between the soldier, the family, the military and mental health services in the event of a family problem.

- ❖ Management can ensure the routine availability and presence of an occupational social worker or industrial psychologist who is able to assess and intervene at the work-family interface, through organisational interventions, to ensure the goodness-of-fit between the military and family systems.
- ❖ Management can conduct comprehensive routine and predeployment health assessments, which include social work assessments, to identify families with potential difficulties and to ensure that these families receive predeployment interventions before being marked as ready for deployment.
- ❖ Management can ensure the psychosocial well-being of deployed soldiers by providing adequate recreational opportunities, information, food, etc during deployments.
- ❖ Management can ensure the debriefing of soldiers during demobilisation to reduce the spillover of deployment stress into the family system.
- ❖ Management can ensure the habitual readiness of families for deployment.
- ❖ Management can regulate the duration and frequency of deployments and the turnaround time between deployments.
- ❖ Management can provide a reasonable amount of flexibility to soldiers undergoing family transitions, eg marriage, parenthood, separation, divorce and bereavement).

8.10 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT DEPLOYMENT RESILIENCE

There are many examples of work-family conflicts. Perhaps one of the most outstanding of these is that of military deployments. Such work demands are unique in their duration, geographical separation, danger component, and frequency. Early literature on deployments has tended to work from a pathogenic model, examining principally families that do not cope or who experience various forms of personal or family problems in consequence to the deployment.

Deployment literature over the past two decades has, however, increasingly worked from a salutogenic or resilience perspective. The theoretical models underpinning such literature are not always explicit, or have different terms, such as the 'wellness model'. The work of McCubbin and others in the field of family resilience (as described in Chapter

3 of this document) was largely based on exploring what makes families resilient to deployments.

On the basis of this literature and my clinical experience, I coined the term “deployment resilience” to refer to the capacity of families to resist the stress of deployments. A review of the literature has identified eight primary components of deployment resilience. It is theorised that families with high deployment resilience will also evidence family and individual readiness, which in turn will contribute to unit readiness and an effective mission. It is further theorised that families with high deployment resilience will not suffer adversely as a result of deployments, when compared with families with low deployment resilience.

This chapter has provided details concerning the research on these eight components and has also provided practical guidelines for families, soldiers and the military organisation on how to promote these deployment resilience components. It should be clear that deployment resilience requires a close and collaborative partnership between soldiers, their families and military management. This chapter has, however, endeavoured to highlight those things that families and soldiers can do for themselves to promote their own deployment resilience, rather than to concentrate excessively on the role of the military in promoting the deployment resilience of families.