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Examining the efficacy of the same sky sharing program on worry and academic performance in military children experiencing parental deployment

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Examining the Efficacy of the Same Sky Sharing Program
on Worry and Academic Performance in Military Children
Experiencing Parental Deployment

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Abstract

This study sought to investigate the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing Program on decreasing anxiety and academic difficulties in students experiencing parental deployment. Student participants completed the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale, Second Edition prior to participation in the Same Sky Sharing program, and then completed it once again following completion of the program. Teachers of participating students provided information regarding student performance in the classroom, including any academic strengths or difficulties. An analysis of pre and post RCMAS-2 scores indicated that the mean student anxiety scores remained in the average range after participation in the Same Sky Sharing program. However, a review of qualitative data indicated that student participants had learned new coping mechanisms for dealing with anxiety and worries. Furthermore, results did not reveal a significant decrease in academic difficulties, however due to outside variables, and the qualitative nature of data collection, this may not be an accurate conclusion. Recommendations for future research are included.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Military families have always faced additional sources of stress such as frequent moves, separation from family and support systems, and periods of separation due to training, than their civilian counterparts. Recently, the periods of separation in military families has grown from separation due to training, to an increase of separation due to extended deployments as a result of the US War on Terrorism (Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler, 2006). In spite of these added grounds of stress, military families, including their children, have adjusted and have shown great resiliency in adapting to this unique lifestyle.

Statement of the Problem

In 2005 Pentagon officials described US troops as one of the most experienced combat forces in recent history, with the majority of troops having served at least one tour of duty (Bender, 2005). Five years later, over 2 million service members have been deployed in support of the Global War on Terrorism, many for multiple tours (Sherman, & Glenn 2011). Even the Reserves, who previously advertised “one weekend a month, one week a year,” have activated 779,729 soldiers since 9/11 (Defense Manpower Data Center 2010), and currently make up approximately half of the troops deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan when combined with the National Guard. In response to world events including war and terrorism, military deployments may now be longer, more frequent, and more often involve being in harm's way. These factors cause service members and families additional stress, and have increased the challenges of deployment readiness, managing separations, and successful reunions (Military Homefront).

Extended periods of deployment, often to combat zones, are an added source of anxiety and worry for military families, and can be emotionally traumatic for both spouses and children. The American Psychological Association has stated that *“having a primary caregiver deployed to a war zone for an indeterminate period of time can be one of the most stressful events a child can experience”* (2007). Additionally, research shows a parental deployment has adverse affects on a student’s emotion and behavior (RAND 2009; Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009), standardized test scores (Engel et. al 2010), and even increases risky sexual behavior and self-injury in an attempt to keep the parent home (Chandra, Martin, Hawkins, &Richardson, 2010).

Although these children have managed to cope with the general military lifestyle, they are now facing extended parental separation coupled with worries and anxiety for that parent’s safety. Now, more than ever before, additional supports are needed to help this vulnerable population with the emotional distress caused by parental deployment.

While research has shown the adverse affects of parental deployment on children, there is currently a lack of research supporting the efficacy of any specific intervention program/treatment for these military youth within the school system. More specifically the effects on a specific intervention decreasing the anxiety caused by worry due to the deployment of a parent have not been explored. With about 96% of the 1.96 million military dependents in non-Department of Defense Educational Activity Schools in the U.S in 2009, this would suggest an overwhelming majority of military dependents are enrolled in United States public schools (*“Learning and social-emotional,”* 2010). Therefore, the need to investigate the effectiveness of such a program on children’s anxiety and academic difficulties is important for school mental health professionals.

Same Sky Sharing

Same Sky Sharing (SSS) is currently in pilot testing by The Children's Institute, an organization known as a center of excellence in research investigating the social and emotional health of children (The children's institute, 2009). SSS targets children from kindergarten to grade 6 who are currently experiencing parental deployment. The program is designed to be implemented by counselors, mental health professionals in schools, community groups, or after school groups. It includes a procedure manual, board games, training for staff, and adaptations to address the needs of different ages and circumstances. The objective for the program is to reassure children that even though they are miles apart from their parents, they still share the same sky (Johnson, 2009).

The goals of the SSS are to: minimize emotional and behavioral problems that may result when children experience military separations in their families, increase children's abilities to identify and appropriately express their feelings and understanding about family change and transitions, increase children's relevant coping skills and help them identify and use support systems, and enhance children's positive perceptions and strengths of themselves and their families (Johnson, 2009).

The program, which is generically designed to help children whose families are in all branches of the military, takes place over eight-sessions. The eight sessions are divided into three overall parts: I. Deployment: families, change and feelings (sessions 1-3), II. Coping and support: learning how to handle difficult feelings and problems (sessions 4-6), and II. Children's thoughts about themselves and their families (sessions 7-8).

Participation in a SSS group requires that the deployed adult be a parent or other significant adult to the child, that the child is not in need of more intensive group or individual therapy, and that written permission from a parent is obtained.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the current study was to learn more about children's worries associated with the deployment of a parent and to examine the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing program as an intervention to reduce anxiety and decrease academic difficulties often associated with parental deployment. The Same Sky Sharing program is still in pilot testing and is not yet available for commercial use. The researcher participated in training on the Same Sharing program and had permission to use the curriculum to gain more information on its usefulness. While the stated goals of the SSS curriculum does not directly address anxiety and academic difficulties, by minimizing emotional problems, increasing the student's ability to identify and express feelings, increasing coping skills, and enhancing positive perceptions and strengths of themselves and their families, it follows that anxiety could be reduced and academic difficulties could improve as a secondary effect. A fuller understanding of the efficacy of an intervention for children dealing with parental deployment can assist with the implementation of future interventions to reduce the anxiety and academic difficulties associated with parental, and will lend support for use of the program within school systems.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

A deployment can be an extremely difficult time for soldiers. They are not only facing combat, but must also spend an indeterminate period of time away from their family members and support systems with sometimes infrequent communication. These service members are sacrificing a great deal, but these deployments also have an emotional impact on their families back home.

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment

Military literature describes deployment within three phases. These three basic phases are: Pre-deployment, Deployment, and Post-Deployment (which includes reunion) (Military Deployment Guide, 2011; Educator's Guide). Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler however, have identified a cycle of deployment which focuses primarily on the emotional cycle of the family. This cycle is more relevant when thinking about the effects of parental deployment on children. The five stages identified by Pincus, House, Christenson, & Adler are: Pre-Deployment, Deployment, Sustainment, Re-Deployment, and Post-Deployment (2011). Each of these cycles is successive and identified by its own timeframe, and set of emotions.

The Pre-Deployment stage is extremely variable in terms of timeframe, starting when notice of the deployment is initially received and ending with the actual departure. There are often delays or changes to the time frame as well as some extremely short notices. This stage is characterized by the internal fight between anticipation of loss and denial. During this stage parents must work to get their affairs in order, while the parent set to deploy must participate in additional training and preparation. This preparation

forces parents to spend an increased amount of time away from each other which in turn creates an increasing sense of emotional and physical distance, often becoming the source of arguments. This is an important time for all families, as improper preparation during this stage can lead to increased anxiety later in the deployment. (Pincus et al, 2011)

Children may display a myriad of emotions through this phase, from denial to extreme fear for the safety of their parent. During this period adolescents face emotional strain including pre-deployment sadness about a parent's departure, anxiety regarding a parent's death in the war, and concerns about the stress and worry of the parent remaining at home (Mmari, Roache, Sudhinaraset & Blum, 2009).

The Deployment stage is more concrete in timeframe, starting with the departure from home and continuing through the first few months of deployment. This stage can be a mix or roller coaster of emotions ranging from relief to sadness. The amount of stress experienced during this stage is variable for families, and highly dependent upon their ability to communicate. Most report that the ability to stay in close contact, especially during key milestones such as birthdays, and anniversaries greatly helps family members to cope with the separation (Pincus et al, 2011). Technological advances have helped to bridge the communication gap, but have also have come with a disadvantage: it is virtually impossible to disguise negative feelings of hurt, anger, or frustration with your loved ones when you communicate by live video. One may begin to feel helpless for the inability to assist their loved ones, or may become jealous of those who can. In addition to coping to the physical and sometimes emotional distance from their deployed parents, children also may experience a change in their role in the household, which can have additional feelings of confusion.

The Sustainment stage is the period during separation when new roles and schedules have been established. Throughout the Sustainment period new routines are established by families, new sources of support are found, and parents begin to feel more confident and in control. School age children, however, may begin to whine, complain, and become aggressive or act out. Teenagers may be irritable, rebellious, fight or participate in attention getting behavior. Pincus and colleagues (2011) suggest that these children may experience sleep disturbance, loss of interest in school, loss of appetite, and loss of interest in friends.

The Re-deployment stage is primarily the last couple months of deployment, and contains mixed emotions similar to the Pre-Deployment stage. Spouses and children are excited for the return of their soldier, but may experience some apprehension. Parents may be concerned with getting things done before their spouse returns, and expectations are almost always inevitably high (Pincus et al, 2011).

Post-Deployment, the final stage, begins with the return of soldier, and while variable in time depending on the family and deployment length, it typically lasts three to six months after the deployment (Pincus et al, 2011). Ternus, however, reported that families who experienced parental deployment during Operation Desert Storm continued to experience difficulties associated with to the deployment as long as one year after the reunion (2010). During this stage the soldier must reintegrate into the family. Reunion with children is variable, but it is typical for school-aged children to want a lot of attention, and for teenagers to be moody and appear to not care.

This deployment stage comes with a slew of additional difficulties stemming from reintegration. These difficulties include: soldiers feeling like a guest in their household,

children being afraid of their parent or not being warm to them, and family members being unsure of their role (Sayers, Farrow, Ross, & Oslin, 2009).

In addition to experiencing a mix of emotions during this post-deployment period, (excitement for the returned soldier, and confusion with reintegration and role changes), some families also face the possibility that their soldier has returned with post-traumatic stress disorder. The Congressional Research Service, who define a person with PTSD as being an individual who has had at least two outpatient visits or one or more hospitalizations at which PTSD was diagnosed, reported that as of September 7, 2010 66,935 deployed soldiers had been diagnosed with PTSD (2010). This disorder will not only affect the family during the post-deployment period, but has the potential to affect the family for years to come.

Effects of Parental Deployment on Children

The National Association of School Psychologists recognizes that stressful family transitions (including absence of a parent) can lead to a number of issues including: social emotional difficulties, behavioral issues, depression and anxiety, increased family responsibilities, inattention and low work completion, falling behind academically, grade retention, substance abuse, and isolation (2010). As stated before, research shows parental deployment has adverse effects on a student's emotional and behavioral health (RAND 2009; Flake, Davis, Johnson, & Middleton, 2009), and academic performance, including standardized test scores (Engel et. al 2010).

While early research indicated that children seen at a military health clinic had a higher incidence of behavioral disorders compared to children and adolescents seen at a civilian health care clinic (Lagrone, 1978), research conducted in 1991 by Jensen and

colleagues using the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale and the Child Behavior Checklist, and reaffirmed in 1995 by the same lead researcher found that military children had symptoms consistent with their non-military counterparts. This information indicates that military children within the at-risk or significant levels for behavioral or emotional disorders are not a result of the day-to-day military lifestyle, but may be caused by disruptions to that lifestyle, such as military deployments.

Flake and colleagues conducted a study in 2009 examining the psychosocial profile of school age children during parental deployment and examined predictors of children at "high risk." During this study the research team recruited Army spouses with children aged 5 to 12 years from a military installation in the Northwestern United States. Recruitment was done through announcements at community deployment meetings and by posting flyers at a clinic. Participants were given a deployment packet consisting of a demographic questionnaire and psychosocial questions. Instruments used to measure psychosocial health included: the Pediatric Symptom Checklist (PSC), the Parent Stress Index-Short Form, and the Perceived Stress Scale.

This study concluded that parents of children experiencing parental deployment reported significantly higher levels of psychosocial difficulties in their children on the Pediatric Symptom Checklist. Parents reported their children had difficulty sleeping, had school related problems to include dropping grades, decreased school interest, and teacher conflict.

In addition to psychosocial effects, researchers often report school problems, and a decrease in grades with parental deployment (Chandra et al, 2009; Engel et al, 2006; and Strategic Outreach, 2005). Engel and his colleagues analyzed academic

achievement among children in Department of Defense Education Activity Schools who were experiencing parental deployment. Their findings indicated that children experienced modest academic difficulties, which dissipated to some extent after the parent's return home. They also found that certain academic subjects, such as math and science, posed more trouble for students with parents deployed, and that longer deployment, especially during exam months, exacerbated these effects. Additionally they added that younger children are more negatively affected than their older counterparts because the cumulative effects of a parent's deployment lingers over time and causes them to fall permanently behind their peers. It may also be a result of their parent being absent from critical early development.

Predictors

Some studies have provided us with predictors for students who tend to be more negatively affected by the deployment of a parent. Flake and colleagues found that parental stress levels were the greatest indicator for psychosocial effects on children, while parents with higher education levels and parents who utilized support reported less psychosocial difficulties (2009). While Engel and his colleagues have noted that younger children can experience more difficulties academically due to deployment, Chandra and colleagues found that older children and female children experience more difficulty with deployment overall as well as with reintegration, and found that living in base housing was related to fewer deployment challenges.

Interventions

Many of the intervention efforts with children mentioned in the literature focus on preparing them for the separation. Research also provides suggestions for other

interventions during the deployment. For example, *The Educators Guide to the Military Child during Deployment* suggests some interventions for school aged students including relaxation techniques, writing in a journal, exercising, taking part in counseling, and engaging in art activities (2011). Recommendations are also made by several researchers to assist and support families and children throughout the deployment. None of these interventions, however, have been evaluated for effectiveness.

The Educators Guide to the Military Child during Deployment also recommends participating in support groups, which research has given support for as an intervention for children who are experiencing parental deployment (Houston, Pfefferbaum, Sherman, Melson, Jeon-Slaughter, Brand & Jarmon 2009; Chandra, Burns, Tanielian, Jaycox, & Scott 2008). Additionally, Ternus (2010) reported that military, family, and community supports help mitigate family stress during periods of deployment.

One of the largest support group studies took place in 2007 at Operation Purple Camp (OPC). Operation Purple Camp was developed in 2004 by the National Military Family Association. OPC was a summer camp program that children with a deployed parent could attend free of charge. The camp engaged children in a variety of fun activities while learning how to cope with the stress associated with the deployment of their parents. The goal of OPC was to bring together youth who were experiencing some stage of deployment and the stress that goes along with it. OPC provided coping skills and support networks of peers. At the conclusion of their study examining the benefits of the camp, they found that caregivers and children found benefits in being able to meet other military children, cope with deployment, gain independence, and learn to enjoy life.

Same Sky Sharing

The Same Sky Sharing program has similar goals of OPC in that they are both designed to assist children experiencing parental deployment through peer support groups. The Same Sky Sharing program, as stated before, targets children from Kindergarten to grade six who are currently experiencing parental deployment. The program is designed to minimize emotional and behavioral problems that may result when children experience military separations in their families, increase children's abilities to identify and appropriately express their feelings and understanding about family change and transitions, increase children's relevant coping skills and help them identify and use support systems, and enhance children's positive perceptions and strengths of themselves and their families (Johnson, 2009).

The program consists of 8 group sessions, with a recommendation of group sizes between 2 and 8 children. While the program targets a range of children, there is a different set of activities for each age range, so children participating in a group together should be close in age.

Research Hypotheses

This study used a mixed-method approach with an exploratory design to examine anxiety in children dealing with parental deployment, and the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing program in reducing anxiety and decreasing academic difficulties associated with the deployment. The qualitative portions of the study were used to identify, describe, and expand on the quantitative data of worry yielded by the Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale. The goal was to use the quantitative and qualitative information to evaluate the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing program in reducing anxiety and worry in children along with a decrease in academic difficulties associated with parental

deployment. Additionally the qualitative data helped to understand the interventions and coping mechanisms most helpful for students enduring parental deployment.

Hypothesis1: It was hypothesized that participation in the Same Sky Sharing program will reduce the anxiety of students experiencing parental deployment.

Hypothesis2: It was hypothesized that academic difficulties during parental deployment will be reduced with the student's participation in the Same Sky Sharing Program.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The current study explored the effectiveness of participation in the Same Sky Sharing program on reducing anxiety/worry in elementary aged children in addition to decreasing academic difficulties associated with parental deployment. This chapter discusses the methods involved in conducting the current study and addresses the research design, participants and recruitment, procedure for data collection, research instruments, and statistical procedures for data analysis.

Participants

Participants in this study were military children attending an elementary school on a military installation in Virginia, who were in one of the stages of parental deployment. Their teachers and parents also provided information for the purpose of this study. A total of 6 students and their teachers participated in this study. Students included a 4th grade male, a 5th grade male, two 4th grade females, two 5th grade females, two 4th grade teachers (one of which had two students participating), and three 5th grade teachers. All students ranged from nine to eleven years of age.

Demographic information was provided by the participant's parents. The majority of parents identified the participating students as Black/African American (3 students), one student was identified as White, one student was identified as Other, and one student was identified as White & Other. Parents were asked to report the education level of both parents. The father education level included high school graduates (2 participants), tech school graduates (2 participants), a college graduate (1 participant), with one missing participant response. The mothers education level ranged from tech school graduate (1

participant), to college graduates (5 participants). Participants were asked their religious affiliation. Two participants identified as Catholic, one identified as Christian, one identified as Baptist, and two offered no response. Parents were asked how many individuals were living in the home, and responses ranged from 3-6 with an average of 4.12 individuals. Individuals in the household included a range of 2-4 children, with an average of 2.3 children.

Additionally, parents were asked information specifically related to the deployment. The majority indicated the person deployed as the father (4 participants), while 2 Participants identified the deployed person as the mother. All participants had experienced previous deployments. Two participants had experienced one previous deployment, two participants had experienced two previous deployments, one participant had experienced three previous deployments, and one participant had experienced 4 previous parental deployments. While the length of 3 out of the 13 combined previous deployments was not provided, the lengths of all other previous deployments were provided. Lengths of previous deployments ranged from 6 months to 15 months with 9 of the previous deployments being 12 months or longer. Participants were also asked to identify which stage of deployment they were currently in. Two parents identified their families to be in the pre-deployment stage, one parent identified their family in the deployment stage, one identified their family in the post-deployment stage, and two parents identified their families as being in multiple deployment stages (post and pre, and deployment and post). All participants had experienced each stage of deployment at some time in their life.

All demographic information was not used in the analysis.

Procedures

Prior to the start of research, permission from the Institutional Review Board at James Madison University was granted to conduct the research project. The lead researcher participated in training provided by one of the developers of the Same Sky Sharing program. It was originally intended for the lead researcher to lead the group; however, the schools available did not have enough participants necessary to conduct the group. A social worker serving an elementary school located on a military installation was contacted to be the group leader. The group leader had also participated in training provided by the Same Sky Sharing developers, and was given direction by the lead researcher in addition to copies of the research proposal.

All families with children attending the participating elementary school were sent home a letter from the group leader inviting families within the deployment cycle to participate in the Same Sky Sharing program. The program is designed for students from K-6, but the *Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale* is designed for children aged 6 to 19, and the school serves grades K-5, so students six and older from K-5 were asked to participate. Families who responded with interest were contacted by the group leader and provided with more information and were given the opportunity to ask further questions about the project. Appointments were scheduled to complete the paperwork at the elementary school.

The parents were asked to complete consent forms, demographic information, and a deployment questionnaire. Students were asked to sign assent forms, complete a checklist, and participate in a brief qualitative interview. Teacher of participating students were asked to complete consent forms, and participate in a brief qualitative interview.

Following completion of the Same Sky Sharing intervention the group leader met with the student's individually to administer the checklist and conduct the qualitative interview, and conduct the qualitative teacher interviews.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire: Demographic questionnaires provided by the developers of Same Sky Sharing were completed by the parent or guardian of the child prior to participation. The questionnaire covered basic information such as the child's age, gender, and ethnicity; family information such as people residing in the household, religious affiliation, and parental education; and questions more specific to military history such as branch or service, years of service, and current rank (See Appendix D for a copy of the Demographic Questionnaire).

Deployment History: In addition to basic demographic information, parents were asked to provide information regarding their families' deployment history. This information was required as SSS is still being piloted by The Children's Institute. Information collected included: the person deployed, number of previous deployments, length of separation(s), location of deployment(s), anticipation of future deployments, and preparation of the deployment. The parent was also asked about their perceptions of: their child's response to the deployment, and how prepared they were to discuss deployment with their children. Additionally parents were asked about the dates for the following: notification of the deployment, when they told/planned to tell the family of the deployment, most recent deployment, and length of most recent deployment.

Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale 2nd Edition (RCMAS-2). The Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scales, 2nd Edition was selected to examine student's

anxiety, with a focus on the subscale “worry”. The scale is designed for screening and monitoring anxiety in children. The scale uses a simple yes/no format and is designed to be completed in 10-15 minutes. While the 49 item RCMAS-2 focuses on performance and social anxiety, it contains five scales: physiological anxiety, defensiveness, inconsistent responding index, worry, and social anxiety. Written at a 2nd grade reading level the test is designed for 6 to 19 year olds with norms for three age groups. The RCMAS-2 was filled out by the student participants prior to participation in the program, and after the conclusion of the program.

Qualitative Interview: Following scoring of the RCMAS-2 students participated in a brief 5-10 minute interview with the school social worker, who was the group leader. Students were asked questions related to worry and their current coping mechanisms. Questions were designed to explore the nature of worry in students who are experiencing parental deployment, and what they perceive to be helping them cope. No serious emotional concerns were brought up by the child, however the lead researcher was instructed to address any serious concerns with the child in the moment, and then refer to an appropriate mental health professional.

At the conclusion of each group session students were also asked about their experience and their reactions to the activities.

Qualitative Teacher Questionnaire: Teachers were asked to provide written answers to a few questions related to the participating student’s behaviors Academic standing, and academic or behavioral concerns noticed in the classroom were noted to investigate the influence of parental deployment on academic performance and the impact the Same Sky Sharing program has on any academic difficulties associated with

parental deployment. The questionnaire was given prior to the Same Sky Sharing program being implemented and again at the completion of the program to check on any changes. Teachers were also encouraged to provide any additional information regarding noticeable changes in the participating student since participation in the program began.

Same Sky Sharing Program:

SSS targets children from kindergarten to grade 6 who are currently experiencing parental deployment. The program is designed to be implemented by counselors, mental health professionals in schools, community groups, or after school groups. It includes a procedure manual, board games, training for staff, and adaptations to address the needs of different ages and circumstances. The objective for the program is to reassure children that even though they are miles apart from their parents, they still share the same sky.

(Johnson, 2009)

The program, which is generically designed to help children whose families are in all branches of the military, takes place over eight-sessions. The eight sessions are divided into three overall parts: Deployment: Families, change and feelings (sessions 1-3), Coping and support: Learning how to handle difficult feelings and problems (sessions 4-6), and Children's thoughts about themselves and their families (sessions 7-8).

Participation in a SSS group requires that the deployed adult be a parent or other significant adult to the child, that the child is not in need of more intensive group or individual therapy, and that written permission from a parent is obtained.

The group followed the curriculum laid out by the Same Sky Sharing developers. Every session of the program is laid out by specific topics of discussion and activities to complement the topic. (See Appendix J for overview of Same Sky Sharing curriculum)

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

This chapter presents the results of the current study, beginning with a summary of scores, followed by the analyses associated with the stated research hypotheses, qualitative information provided by the group leader and participants, and concluding with a discussion of individual student participants.

Analyses

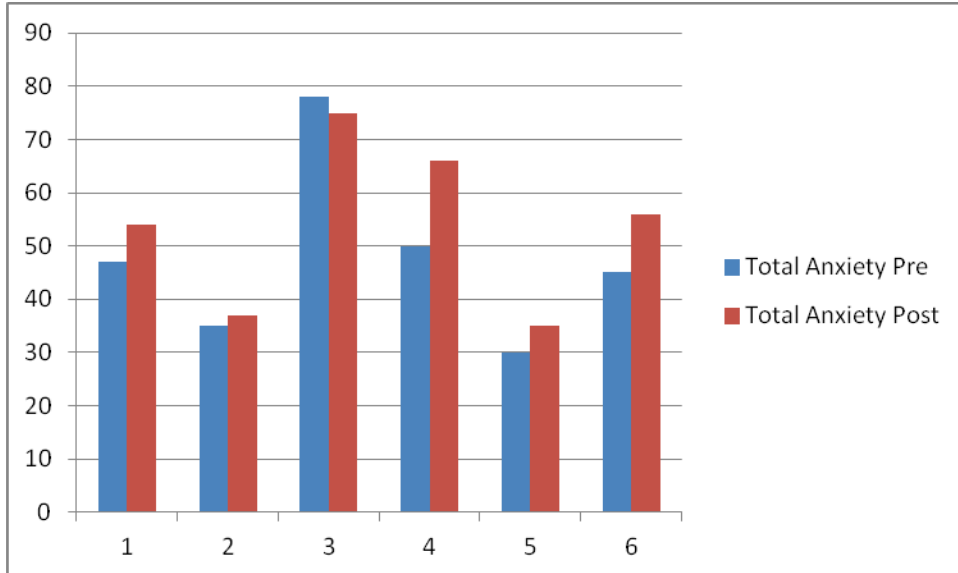
The RCMAS-2 provides a total of six scores: total anxiety, physiological anxiety, worry, social anxiety, defensiveness, and an inconsistent reporting index score. Before Analyses are presented with respect to hypotheses, and descriptive statistics of the primary variables of interest are presented. Variables of interest include index scores obtained on the RCMAS-2. The suggested Qualitative Descriptors for scores on the total anxiety, physiological anxiety, worry, and social anxiety scales are located in Table 1. The defensiveness and inconsistent reporting index score do not follow these descriptors.

Table 1: RCMAS-2 Qualitative Score Descriptors

Score Range	Descriptor
71 and Higher	Extremely Problematic
61-70	Moderately Problematic
40-60	No more problematic than for most individuals
39 and Lower	Less problematic than for most individuals

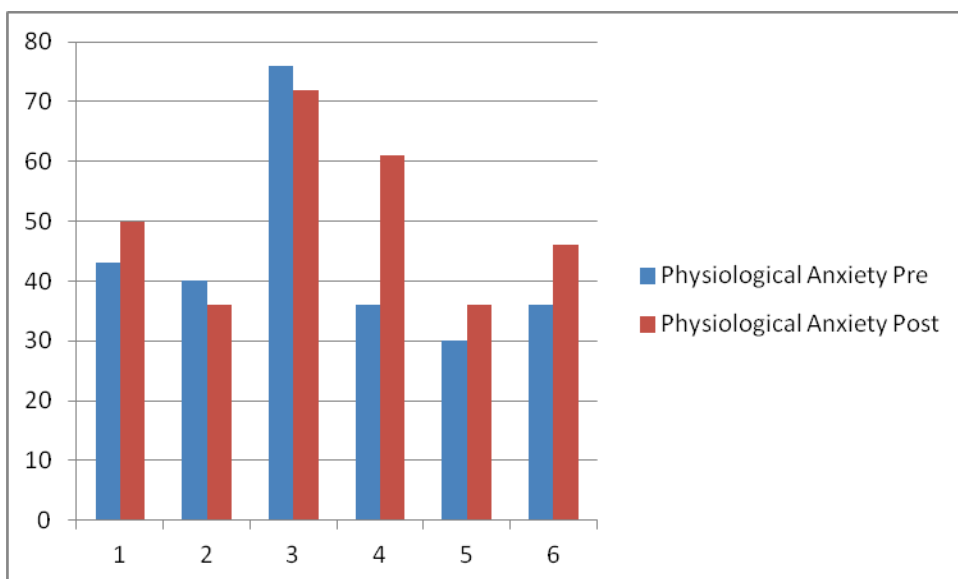
The Total Anxiety score on the RCMAS-2 provides an evaluation of the overall level of anxiety experienced by each given child. The range of Total Anxiety reported by the student participants pre-intervention was 30-78, with a mean score of 47.5. The range of Total Anxiety reported by the student participants post-intervention was 35-75, with a mean score of 53.83 (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: *Pre and Post Intervention Total Anxiety Scores*



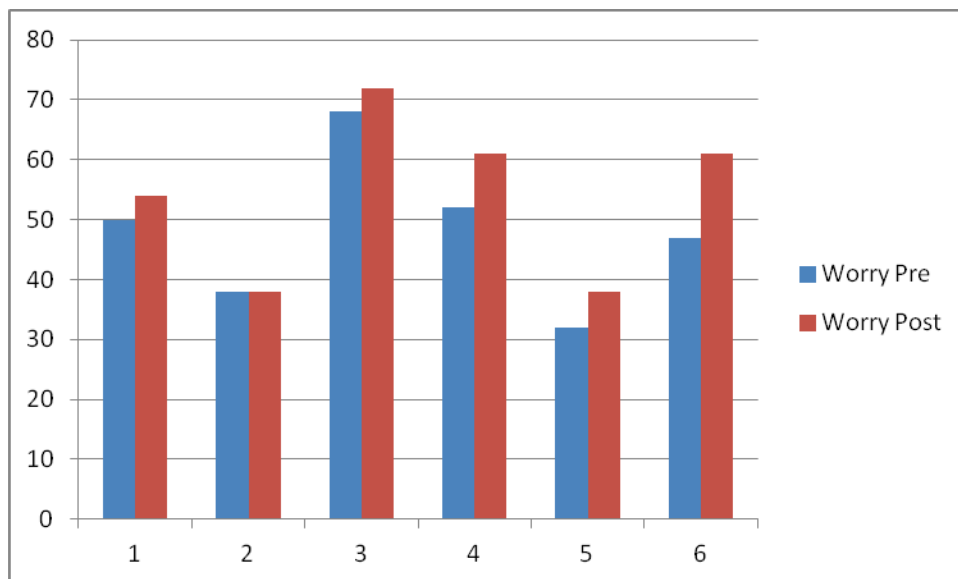
The Physiological Anxiety score on the RCMAS-2 provides a measure of anxiety whose expression is physiological in character. The range of Physiological Anxiety reported by the student participants pre-intervention was 30-76, with a mean score of 43.5. The range of Physiological Anxiety reported by the student participants post-intervention was 36-72, with a mean score of 50.17 (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: *Pre and Post Intervention Physiological Anxiety Scores*



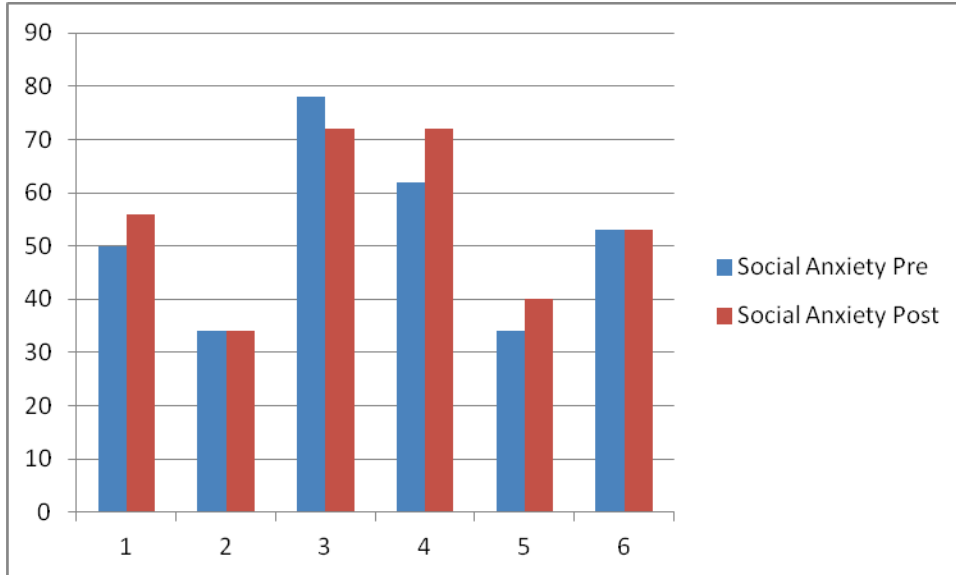
The Worry score on the RCMAS-2 asks about a variety of obsessive concerns. The range of Worry reported by the student participants pre-intervention was 32-68, with a mean score of 47.83. The range of Worry reported by the student participants post-intervention was 38-72, with a mean score of 54 (See Figure 3).

Figure 3: *Pre and Post Intervention Worry Scores*



The Social Anxiety Score measures anxiety in social and performance situations. The range of scores for Social Anxiety reported by the student participants pre-intervention was 34-78, with a mean score of 51.83. The range of scores for Social Anxiety reported by the student participants post-intervention was 34-72, with a mean score of 54.5 (See Figure 4).

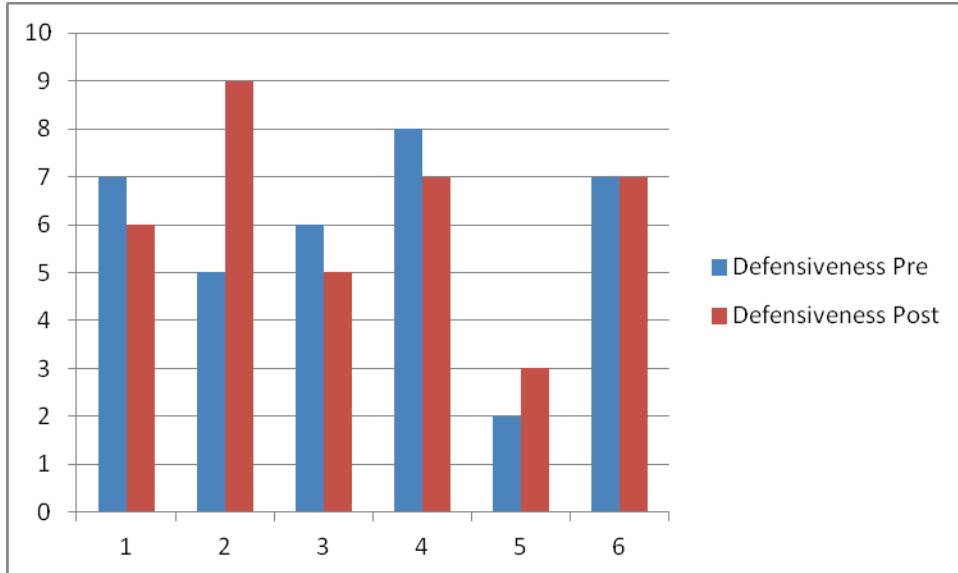
Figure 4: *Pre and Post Intervention Scores of Social Anxiety*



In addition to the previously discussed scores, the RCMAS provides a Defensiveness score, as well as an Inconsistent Responding Index. The Defensiveness score addresses whether responses have been given in a defensive way, with the aim of presenting a positive image that is probably not realistic from the respondent's true state, while the Inconsistency in Responding Index pertains to responses that may have been given randomly or without regard to the content due to noncompliance, carelessness, vision problems, or lack of understanding of item content.

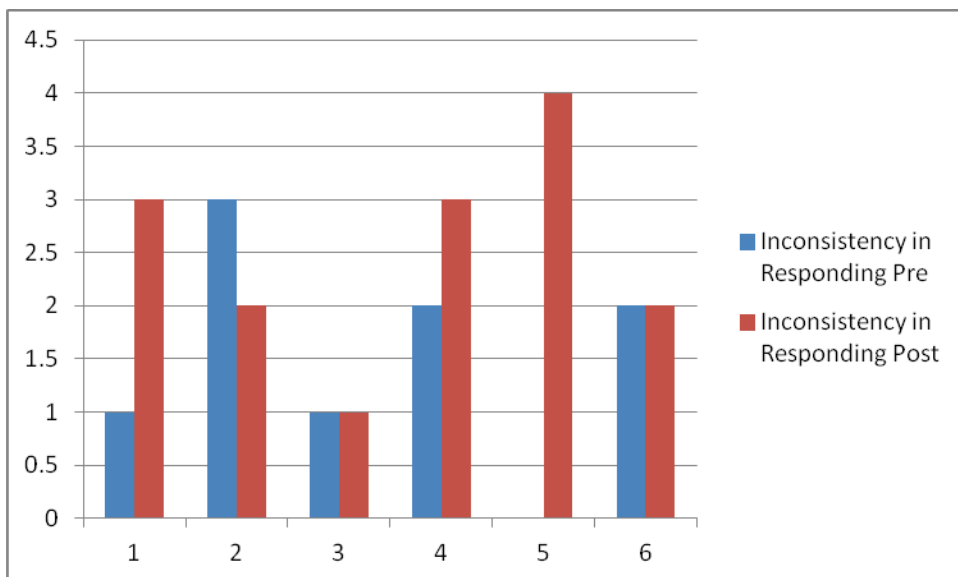
A raw score of five or six on the Defensiveness scale is typical for this particular age group. Raw scores above six however may indicate that the student may have tried to present themselves more positively; therefore, low scores should be interpreted with caution. Raw Defensiveness scores for participating students are reported in Figure 5.

Table 5: Raw Defensiveness scores Pre and Post Intervention



When a score of 6 is obtained on the Inconsistent Responding Index, it is likely that the student was careless in responding, and that scores obtained are invalid. Scores obtained in the Index pre-intervention ranged from 0-3, while scores post-intervention ranged from 1-4 (See Figure 6). No student's scores were considered invalid as a result of their score in this Index.

Figure 6: Pre and Post Intervention scores on the Inconsistency in Responding Index



Hypothesis 1: It was hypothesized that participation in the Same Sky Sharing program would reduce the anxiety of students experiencing parental deployment. A post-intervention score analysis showed mean scores among students had increased slightly, however all mean scores remained in the average range.

Hypothesis 2: It was hypothesized that academic difficulties during parental deployment would be reduced with the student's participation in the Same Sky Sharing Program. Changes in academic performance were evaluated through review of pre and post teacher questionnaires. Most teachers reported that academically there were little changes among participating students. Students who were below peers prior to the intervention continued to remain below peers, and students who were on level or above level also remained the same. Only one student's performance was reported to have increased from being 'slightly below peers' in all academic areas to being 'same as peers,' although this student did remain 'slightly below peers in math.'

A review of the student interviews was also conducted to analyze any themes of worry or coping mechanisms for the students before and after the intervention was complete. While a review of the qualitative responses regarding worry indicated responses fairly consistent among student participants pre and post intervention, 50% (3 out of 6) of student participants were able to articulate better coping mechanisms for responding to these worries/fears/anxiety. They were also able to identify more support systems available to them in times of need. Additionally, students were able to identify things they had learned from the group, such as "you should talk about your feelings with someone," "kids cope in different ways," "we are able to cope with a lot of things," "feelings are normal," "you feel better when you do things to cope," "everyone is

different in a special way,” and “other people at school have parents who are deployed, I am not alone.”

Individual Student Data

Student One

Student one was identified as a ten-year-old Black/African American fourth grade boy. His mother indicated her highest level of completed education to be at the college level. His father’s education level was not reported. He lived at home with his mother and 12-year-old sister. He was identified as being in the post-deployment stage however his mother was set to deploy once again in two months. His mother, who is an E-4 in the Army had deployed twice to Iraq, once for 15 months, and most recently for 10 months. Student one was reported to stay with his grandmother during his mother’s deployments, and she reported he ‘cried a lot’ when his mother was away.

Prior to participation in the group student one reported he worried about school, grades, and moving. He mentioned playing with friends helped him feel better when he was worried, and that he could talk with his parents or grandmother about his worries. After the intervention he identified his grandmother as someone to talk to (he did not mention his mother however due to timing of the post-intervention interview, it is likely she had deployed and therefore was not available for student one to talk to on a consistent basis). Student one’s coping strategies remained consistent, but he did identify additional worries such as being worried when his grandmother takes care of him because he “gets in trouble.” When asked what he had learned through participation in the group student one stated “you should talk about your feelings with someone at school.” He also reported “you can be more confident when you understand what is going on.”

Prior to the group student one's teacher reported he was quiet and uninvolved in the classroom, he was argumentative with classmates, he had been written up for hitting another student, he experienced difficulty completing assignments, he was below peers academically, lacked focus, was passive, and often seemed withdrawn. After participation in the group his teacher reported he continued to be quiet in class and did not volunteer to participate. Academically he remained below peers and continued to not return work. Overall she reported no changes were evident, he displayed concerns with homework completion, class participation, and continued to struggle with mathematics.

On the RCMAS-2 student one's scores increased slightly, but all remained within the average range.

Student Two

Student two was identified as a ten-year-old fifth grade girl. Her ethnicity/race was identified as Other. Her mother who self-identified as a 'homemaker' indicated her highest level of education to be at the college level. Her father, who was reported as an E-4 in the Army was reported high school as his highest level of education. Student two lived at home with her parents and 8-year-old sister. She was identified as being in the pre-deployment stage, and had experienced one previous 12 month deployment. Her mother reported that she had responded very well to the first deployment, although her younger sister "didn't do so well emotionally."

Student two initially reported she "really didn't worry too much," but could talk to a teacher, her mother, a school counselor, or a family member if she did have worries. After participation in the group she reported she worried about "moving away and going to a new school," she identified similar people to talk with about worries, and identified

reading as a way to cope with her worries. When asked what she had learned through participation in the group she reported “everyone’s parents go away, kids cope in different ways,” and to “talk when they’re gone.” She also mentioned that it is important to keep in touch with your parents and letters are a nice way to keep in touch.

Prior to participation in the group, student two’s teacher reported she was shy in the classroom, but was a hard worker. She stated student two was performing on level with her peers, but would have liked to see her ask questions more and make sure she was studying. No behavioral concerns were present. Following participation, student two’s teacher reported she seemed to have gotten more confident, and continued to perform on level academically with her peers however, it was also reported student two needed frequent reminders to turn in work, and had begun to get talkative and easily distracted. Overall, student two’s teacher reported she was more confident and more willing to participate in class.

On the RCMAS-2 student two’s scores remained within the average range.

Student Three

Student three was identified as a ten-year-old White fifth grade girl. Both parents identified college as their highest level of education completed. Student three lived with her mother, step-father, and 8-year-old sister. Her mother was reported as an E-4 in the Army, while her step-father was identified as a full-time student. The student’s biological father was also in the Army, but resided in Texas. Student three was identified as being in the deployment and post-deployment stage due to her unique living situation. Her biological father had previously been deployed two times for one year each, and another deployment was expected. Additionally, her mother was leaving for several weeks for

training in another state. Her mother reported that student three responded to her father's deployment with upset/sad emotions.

Prior to group participation, student three reported she worried about people coming in her house and hurting her, poisonous snakes biting her, and her [biological] dad getting hurt. She reported no coping strategies and stated she kept things to herself. After participation in the group, student three reported her worries consisted of fighting with her sister, and bullies. She was also able to identify coping strategies such as drawing or playing, and stated that she could talk with her mother and step-father, and that she could try to call her dad. When asked what she had learned from participating in the group, student three reported "we are able to cope with a lot of things," and that "if you are saying goodbye to someone you can place a picture in your room to remind you of them."

Student three's teacher reported she was slightly below peers in all academic areas prior to participation in the group. She also reported student three was easily distracted and tended to doubt herself in her work. Following participation in the group, student three's teacher reported student three "desired a lot of attention," day-dreamed in class, and continued to be easily distracted. Academically, student three had improved to be on level in almost all academic areas, but continued to be slightly below peers in the area of mathematics. Overall, student three's teacher reported there was not much change, although student three did appear more confident in herself.

On the RCMAS-2, student three's scores decreased slightly however, scores remained in the extremely problematic range. Student three's elevated scores may be due

to her unique living situation, in that even when her biological father is not deployed she is still living quit far from him and continues to be concerned for his safety.

Student Four

Student four was identified as a nine-year-old fourth grade girl. Her ethnicity/race was identified as White and Other. Her mother was described as a homemaker/crafter, and indicated she had completed college. Student four's father reportedly completed a technical/training school and was an E-9 in the Army. Along with her parents, student three lived at home with her three older sisters who ranged in age from 11 to 23. Student four's father had been deployed a total of four times prior to participation in the group, and was expecting to deploy again sometime in May of 2012. Student four was identified to be in the pre-deployment stage. Previous deployments had been to Afghanistan (twice), Iraq, and Texas. Lengths of separation were for 10.5 months, 13 months, 14 months, and 12 months. The upcoming deployment was set for Korea, with no length indicated. Student fours mother reported she asked many questions about the upcoming deployment such as "when is he leaving," "when is he coming home," "how long will he be gone," and "can we visit?"

Prior to participation in the group, student four reported she worried about what others thought of her. She mentioned she plays outside to make herself feel better and she can talk with her sister and mother about her worries. After participating in the group, student four reported she worried about oversleeping, and stated that she sleeps to make herself feel better. She also continued to report her sister and mother as people to talk with about her worries. When asked what she had learned through participation in the group, student four reported "that all feelings are normal. We can feel better when we do

things to help us cope.” She also stated that she thought the group helped because they “talked about things I have felt.”

Before participating in the group student four’s teacher reported that she was shy in class and would only participate in small groups. She always completed her work, but was slightly below grade level. After participating in the group student four’s teacher reported she was a very sweet girl, and tried hard at everything she did, but continued to be below grade level in reading and math. Overall her teacher stated she had not really noticed any changes.

On the RCMAS-2, student four’s scores initially ranged from the average range to the problematic range. After participation in the group, student four’s scores ranged from the problematic range, to the extremely problematic range. This is not unexpected as her father was set to deploy around the same time the group was ending.

Student Five

Student five was identified as a ten-year-old Black/African American fifth grade boy. His mother had completed college and was an E-7 in the Army. His father was reported to have finished high school, but occupation was not provided. It was reported that he lived with his mother, step-father, and older sister. His mother reported she had deployed once before for a six-month period to Iraq. Her upcoming deployment was set for June 2012. Student five was identified to be in the pre-deployment stage. His mother reported that student five did not want her to go, and changed the subject when she told him about it.

During the first student interview, student five reported he does not usually worry, but if something was wrong he could talk to his mother. After participation in the group,

student five indicated that he still does not worry much, but if he does he can go outside, ride his bike, or talk to his mother. When asked what he had learned through participation in the group, he stated “everyone is different, in a special way,” and also mentioned “we all have feelings and they are okay whatever you feel.”

Prior to participation in the group, student five’s teacher described him as a “bright” and “good boy.” She mentioned that he likes to do well, and for the most part does do well. She reported he was above level in most areas and generally catches on quickly. While academics were not a concern, his teacher also mentioned that other students could sometimes influence his behavior, and he sometimes tattled on his classmates. Following participation in the group, student five continued to remain above level academically. He continued to tattle on others, and was still described as a motivated student.

On the RCMAS-2, student five’s scores increased slightly after participation in the group, but all scores continued to remain well within the average range.

Student Six

Student six was identified as a ten-year-old fourth grade Black/African American female. Both parents had completed a technical/training school. Her mother identified as a homemaker, and her father was an E-7 in the Army. She lived at home with her parents, and younger brother. Her father had three previous deployments to Afghanistan with varied lengths of separation, although the exact lengths were not provided. During participation in the group student six was identified as being in the deployment stage, as her father was at another domestic base for training. He was set to return home at the end

of the school year. Student six's mother reported that when she told her children about their fathers upcoming deployment student six stated "not again."

Before participation in the group, student six reported she worried about making others mad at her, and worried about standing up in front of the class. She said she did not know what to do to make herself feel better, and stated she did not talk to anyone about her worries. After participating in the group, student six reported she worried about moving because she would "not get to see this place again." She stated that to make herself feel better she could talk to her mother, or call her father if he was away, and she mentioned she could talk to her aunt who lived in North Carolina. When asked what she had learned through the group, student six reported "Other people at school have parents who are deployed. I am not alone." She also mentioned that it helps to know that she can connect with her parents wherever they are.

Prior to participation in the group, student six's teacher reported her to be "very quiet and uninvolved in class," and mentioned she struggled with following directions, was frequently off-task, easily distracted, and very unorganized. She was however, on-level with peers even though she needed directions repeated frequently and reminders to stay on task. After participation in the group, her teacher continued to report she was a quiet student, but remained on level with peers. She completed all assignments, but did need repetition of directions and reminders to stay on task. Her teacher mentioned that she did seem to ask for help a little more.

On the RCMAS-2, all scores were originally in the average range. After participation in the group, her worry scale increased to the problematic range, while all other scores remained average.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to learn more about the effects of participation of the Same Sky Sharing program on worry and academic performance for children experiencing parental deployment. This chapter provides a discussion of the results of this study. Limitations of the current study and considerations for future research are also discussed.

Discussion of Results

Two hypotheses were developed prior to data collection based on previous research, and the goals laid out by the developers of the Same Sky Sharing program. The first hypothesis analyzed if participation in the Same Sky Sharing program would reduce the anxiety of students experiencing parental deployment. The findings from this analysis revealed that participants experienced slightly higher levels of total anxiety, physiological anxiety, worry, and social anxiety after participation in the Same Sky Sharing program rather than experiencing less levels of anxiety, however all scores remained in the average range.

There are several possible explanations that may provide insight into the findings associated with Hypothesis 1. It is possible that students participating in the Same Sky Sharing program transitioned from one emotional deployment phase to another during the course of the study. For example, students who initially identified themselves as being in the pre-deployment phase may have transitioned into the deployment phase. As every phase can be associated with different worries or fears, this may account for some of the increased anxiety. Additionally, it is possible that during participation in the group

activities, worries and fears were shared among students and therefore students began to acknowledge and internalize the new fears and worries identified by their peers.

While these results would suggest that the Same Sky Sharing Program was ineffective at reducing anxiety based feelings in students experiencing parental deployment, qualitative information gathered from the student participants, and the group leader, indicate that although anxiety levels appeared to increase, students demonstrated knowledge of better coping mechanisms, appreciation of differences, and realizing they were not 'alone.' Therefore it is possible that although anxiety levels were not decreased, students gained skills in order to appropriately handle the anxiety and fears associated with their parent's deployment.

The second hypothesis examined changes in academic performance. While it was hypothesized that academic difficulties would decrease with participation in the Same Sky Sharing program, teacher narratives indicate that no change was observed among five out of the six participants. One student was reported to increase from being below grade level across academic areas, to being on grade level in all academic areas with the exception of mathematics, which remained the same.

There are several possible explanations that may provide insight into the findings associated with Hypothesis 2. It is possible that due to the Same Sky Sharing program not being implemented until mid school year, students had fallen too far behind their peers to catch up, or that they had already missed foundational skills and therefore were unable to catch up. In addition, previous studies have indicated that parental deployment affects younger children more drastically in the area of academics because they miss foundational knowledge from the school year which causes them to continually be behind

peers (Engel et al, 2006). Due to all of the participants experiencing multiple deployments prior to participation in the Same Sky Sharing program for the current deployment, academic difficulties may have preceded the current deployment, making them more difficult to overcome. Additionally, academic performance was only based on written teacher responses, and not quantitative data. Due to the vague nature of teacher responses, it is difficult to say that a student did not make progress simply because they continue to remain 'below peers'. For example, child may have risen from the 5th percentile in their grade to the 49th percentile, and would still be considered below peers. There did not appear to be any decline in academic performance over the course of the intervention.

Implications of Current Study

The present study adds to the existing literature in a few ways. Although there is a growing body of literature on deployment and the effects that parental deployment has on children across age groups, the literature regarding interventions which can be implemented by school professionals is limited. Although anxiety was not reduced, and academic progress was not made among student participants, this study revealed positive outcomes. For example, after completing the Same Sky Sharing program students reported learning that they could seek emotional support from school personnel (such as school counselors), and they reported they felt they were 'not alone' after meeting other students within their school who were also experiencing a parental deployment. These outcomes are consistent with the goals laid out by the Same Sky Sharing developers, and support the Same Sky Sharing program goals and objectives.

While the hypotheses for the current study were not supported, results indicate the goals of the Same Sky Sharing program were fulfilled and the student participants experienced positive outcomes. It is important for school psychologist and other school personnel to be aware of the positive outcomes that a group experience such as Same Sky Sharing provides for students facing parental deployment. Additionally, it should be considered that similar outcomes could be expected for populations of students who are separated from their parents, even when it is not due to a military deployment. For example, students whose parent are incarcerated, or students whose parents spend a lot of time away for the home, such as pilots or firefighters.

The Same Sky Sharing program is not currently available to the public; however, there are several other ways to help a student who is facing parental deployment. During the pre-deployment stage suggestions include making video's/recordings, discussing/practicing new routines while staying consistent with rules/structure, developing a timeline, asking parents to provide the school addressed envelopes for work to be sent, making the parent a class pen pal, and exchanging hand -made gifts. During the deployment and sustainment stages suggestions include ensuring the stateside parent has supports, being mindful of media exposure, encouraging various modes such as letters, Skype, e-mails, utilizing flat Daddies/Mommies, encouraging journal writing/book, and using the deployment as a teaching opportunity- language, culture, geography, etc. Suggestions for the reunion and reintegration stages include encouraging the family to discuss expectations prior to reunion, providing/referring the family for counseling as necessary, encouraging the family to keep routines, and encouraging school attendance.

Limitations of the Current Study

Although the hypotheses were not proven for this study, the findings should be interpreted with caution as there are several identified limitations of the current study. First, the study includes a small number of participants and the analysis is based on a small sample size. Several factors limited the sample size. Some military families prefer that their military affiliation and deployment status be kept private from the school system, especially if there is a small military population present as with the Reserves and National Guard. School psychologists and other school personnel should be aware that this 'hidden population' may be present in your school. While all students attending the elementary school in which the study was conducted were military affiliated, deployment status is not information readily available to school personnel. In an exploratory study inquiring about issues faced by adolescents and their families when their parent goes to war, researchers found that students expressed mixed opinions about the degree to which it is helpful for teachers and counselors to be notified of ahead of time that a parent is deployed (Mmari et. al, 2009). Some students felt that it would be beneficial for teachers to know what they were going through especially when it came time for tests and homework, while others did not want to be singled out from non-military students [or in this case, students with non-deployed parents]and be reminded that their parent was gone. In some cases families wanted to keep deployments private because there were some reports of students being bullied by other students with anti-war parents. (Mmari et. al. 2009)

With that in mind, parents may have chosen to keep their deployment status private from the school, which may have prevented additional students from participating

in the Same Sky Sharing program, and the study. In addition, the Same Sky Sharing Program promotes group sizes of 2-8; therefore limiting the sample size of this particular intervention even further.

Another limitation of the current study is related to the nature of the data collected, and the lack of quantitative data. While qualitative data from students was collected via interview, information collected from teachers was conducted through a written response questionnaire. These written responses were vague and therefore offered limited information. Additionally, because hypothesis 2 was only evaluated using qualitative data it was based on teacher perceptions of students and therefore may not be completely accurate.

Furthermore, the population available for this study was limited to particular services branches (Air Force/Army). With this restricted sample the external reliability of the study will be limited. This data will however contribute to the much larger pilot testing sample being conducted by the Children's Institute.

Considerations for Future Research

Results highlight the need for future studies which will address the limitations acknowledged in this study as well as new directions of further inquiry. Specifically, future researchers interested in further understanding of the effects of participation in the Same Sky Sharing program on academic difficulties and feelings of anxiety or worry. Future researchers should explore the feasibility of running multiple groups across grade levels and branches of service in order to increase the generalizability of results. Moreover, future research should consider utilizing more quantitative data. Suggestions for academic difficulties would include benchmark testing, grades, standardized test

scores etc. The Behavior Assessment System for Children, Second Edition would also assist in gathering quantitative data. Additionally, it would gather information from teachers, parents, and the student participant in regards to anxiety, academic difficulties, and additional areas of concern which can be associated with parental deployment such as externalizing behaviors, or social withdrawal. Parent/caregiver input pre and post intervention would also be beneficial to assess improvements within the home.

While the Same Sky Sharing program is not currently available to the public, those interested in using the Same Sky Sharing program for further research are encouraged to contact the developers to assist with pilot testing.

Appendix A Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

Your child is being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Francine Torres from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the worries associated with the deployment of a parent, and the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing program (an overview of Same Sky Sharing is attached) as an intervention to reduce anxiety and worries and decrease academic difficulties often associated with parental deployment. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her Ed.S. Thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. Participation in this group would require you as the parent to provide answers to a series of questions related to your deployment history, two brief interviews (pre and post) with your child's teacher to discuss any difficulties your child may be having in the classroom due to the deployment, two brief interviews (pre and post) with your child to discuss worries and coping, and your child's participation in eight group sessions. The group and interviews will be run in your child's school, during school hours, with the hopes of the group sessions occurring during your child's designated intervention/enrichment time (given your child is not participating in a school wide intervention program). In the event that participant's intervention/enrichment blocks do not match up, some students may miss thirty minutes of classroom instruction a week throughout the time of the study (8-10 weeks).

Time Required

Participation in this study will require 30 minutes of your time, and 5-6 hours of your child's time.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life). Due to the small risk of emotional distress associated with this study due to sharing of feelings throughout participation in the group, a list of mental health resources will be made available to you, and the school counselor will be readily available for your child throughout the study. There is also a risk that your child will miss thirty minutes of instruction time a week throughout participation in the study.

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include: child participation in a supportive group free of cost, learning identification of feelings and expression, learning relevant coping skills, identification of support systems, and enhances positive perceptions of themselves and their families. Your child's participation in this study will also enhance our understanding of the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing program on academics and anxiety and will lend support for its implementation in the school setting.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at a defense of thesis meeting, with the possibility of results being presented at future conferences. A copy of the research paper will also be shared with the Children's Institute, the developers of the Same Sky Sharing program. The results may also be shared with administration at Haydon Elementary School in Manassas City Public Schools, if this information would be beneficial in assisting other students. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation and you child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she is free to choose not to participate. Should you and your child choose to participate, he/she can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your child's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the individual results of your child, please contact:

Francine Torres
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
torresfe@dukes.jmu.edu

Patricia Warner
Graduate Psychology
James Madison University
Telephone: (540) 568-3358
warnerpj@jmu.edu

Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
 Chair, Institutional Review Board
 James Madison University
 (540) 568-2834
cocklede@jmu.edu

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

 Name of Participant (Parent) Printed

 Name of Participant (Parent) Signed

 Date

 Name of Researcher Signed

 Date

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child, as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

 Name of Child (Printed)

 Name of Parent/Guardian Printed

 Name of Parent/Guardian Signed

 Date

 Name of Researcher (Signed)

 Date

Appendix B Child Assent Form

Examining the Efficacy of the Same Sky Sharing Program on Worry and Academic Performance in Military Children Experiencing Parental Deployment

We would like to invite you to take part in this study. We are asking you because you are a child whose parent is deployed. Deployed means your parent has to spend a long period of time, usually more than a month, away from you and your family because of work.

In this study we will try to learn more about how participating in a group called Same Sky Sharing will help children who have a parent that is deployed. To do the project we will talk to your parents about the times your other parent has been away for work, talk to your teacher about how you are doing in class, and we will ask you to:

1. Meet with the researcher to answer some questions.
2. Come to a Same Sky Sharing group during school once a week for eight weeks.
3. Meet with the researcher after the last group meeting to answer questions and talk about what you have learned.

If you choose to participate in this study you will leave your classroom to meet with the researcher during school time two times, and you will leave your classroom to meet with the researcher and other students eight times. Participating in this group would mean that you may miss thirty minutes of class time a week for ten weeks. If you choose not to participate you will follow your normal school schedule.

Participating in this study will not hurt you in any way, but you will be asked to share your feelings which may make you feel uncomfortable. Some questions asked may make you feel happy or sad. The school counselor will be available for you to talk at any time if you become upset. We believe that by having you do this project with us that we will learn how the Same Sky Sharing group can help other kids who have a parent that is deployed. Some of the things you say during our time together may be reported after the project, but your name will never be used so no one will be able to know that you took part in the project.

Your parents have been asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate in the study, you can stop participating at any time.

If you have any questions at any time, please ask one of the researchers.

IF YOU PRINT YOUR NAME ON THIS FORM IT MEANS THAT YOU HAVE DECIDED TO PARTICIPATE AND HAVE READ EVERYTHING THAT IS ON THIS FORM. YOU AND YOUR PARENTS WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS FORM TO KEEP.

Name of Child (printed)

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

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Appendix C Teacher Consent Form

Identification of Investigators & Purpose of Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Francine Torres from James Madison University. The purpose of this study is to learn more about the worries associated with the deployment of a parent, and the effectiveness of the Same Sky Sharing program (an overview of Same Sky Sharing is attached) as an intervention to reduce anxiety and worries and decrease academic difficulties often associated with parental deployment. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her Ed.S. Thesis.

Research Procedures

Should you decide to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of a brief interview that will be conducted at Haydon Elementary School. You will be asked to provide answers to a series of questions related to a student's performance in your classroom, and any academic or behavioral concerns you may have regarding that student.

Time Required

Participation in this study will require up to one hour of your time over two interviews. One interview will occur prior to the student's participation in an 8-week group, and one will occur following participation.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

Parental deployment can have many affects on a student, including a negative impact on academic performance and standardized testing. Potential benefits from participation in this study include: increased academic performance in the classroom, and decrease of emotional impact on the student whose parent is deployed. Additionally, participation in this study will enhance our understanding of the Same Sky Sharing program as an intervention for academic and anxiety effects of parental deployment, and will lend support for the implementation of such an intervention in the school setting.

Confidentiality

The results of this research will be presented at a defense of thesis meeting, with the possibility of results being presented at future conferences. A copy of the research paper will also be shared with the Children's Institute, the developers of the Same Sky Sharing program. The results may also be shared with administration at Haydon Elementary School in Manassas City Public Schools, if this information would be beneficial in assisting other students. The results of this project will be coded in such a way that the respondent's identity will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher

retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate. Should you choose to participate, you can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a summary of the results of this study, please contact:

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Questions about Your Rights as a Research Subject

Dr. David Cockley
Chair, Institutional Review Board
James Madison University
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Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Participant (Printed)

Name of Participant (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

Appendix D
Demographic Questionnaire

Parent Age: _____ Gender: M F

Child Age: _____ Gender: M F

Ethnicity/Race (Please check all that apply)

- White
 Black or African American
 American Indian or Alaska Native
 Asian
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 Other Race
 Two or More Races

Occupation: _____ (mother) _____ (father)

Mother's highest level of education completed:

High School GED Technical/Training school College Post-College

Father's highest level of education completed:

High School GED Technical/Training school College Post-College

Religious Affiliation: _____

Who lives in your household?

	Name	Age	Gender	Relationship to child
1.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____
6.	_____	_____	_____	_____
7.	_____	_____	_____	_____

Appendix E Deployment History

Person Deployed: _____ (ex. Self, mother, father, brother)

Branch: _____ Rank: _____

of Previous Deployments _____

Length of Separations: _____

Location of Deployments: _____

Deployment can be thought of in several phases. What phase is your family currently experiencing?

___ Pre-Deployment

___ Deployment

___ Post-Deployment

(Preparation)

(Separation)

(Home-coming/Reunion)

Please provide approximate dates for the following questions:

When you received Alert Notice for most recent deployment: _____

When did you tell your family about the deployment? _____

Length of preparation: _____

Most recent deployment: _____

Length of separation: _____

Do you expect another deployment? _____

If yes, when? _____

Write the age and gender of your children

What did your child(ren) say about the deployment?

How did the child(ren) respond?

Rate how prepared you were to discuss deployment with your children.

1	2	3	4	5
Not Well		Moderately Well		Well

Appendix F
Student Interview Questions
(Pre Intervention)

1. Everyone has things that they worry about, what kinds of things to you worry about?
2. What do you do to make yourself feel better when you are worried?
3. Do you talk to anyone about your worries?

Student Interview Questions
(Post Intervention)

1. Everyone has things that they worry about, what kinds of things to you worry about?
2. What do you do to make yourself feel better when you are worried?
3. Do you talk to anyone about your worries?
4. Tell me about some things you have learned through our group that have helped you.
5. How do you think they have helped you?

Appendix G
Qualitative Teacher Questionnaire
(Pre Intervention)

1. Tell me about Students Name in the classroom.
2. How would you say Students Name is currently performing in class? (same as peers, below peers, above peers)
3. Have you noticed any academic concerns with Students Name in the classroom? (not completing work, not returning assignments)
4. Have you noticed any behavioral concerns with Students Name in the classroom? (frequently off-task, easily distracted, disruptive)

Qualitative Teacher Questionnaire
(Post Intervention)

1. Tell me about Students Name in the classroom.
2. How would you say Students Name is currently performing in class? (same as peers, below peers, above peers)
3. Have you noticed any academic concerns with Students Name in the classroom? (not completing work, not returning assignments)
4. Have you noticed any behavioral concerns with Students Name in the classroom? (frequently off-task, easily distracted, disruptive)
5. What changes, if any, have you noticed in Students Name since the participation in the Same Sky Sharing program began?

Appendix H
Same Sky Sharing Curriculum Overview
(Peabody & Johnson, 2009)

Same Sky Sharing is an 8-week curriculum for children grades K-6 who are dealing with military family changes, particularly due to deployment. The curriculum is designed for three separate developmental age ranges: K-1, 2-3, 4-6. Sessions range from 20-40 minutes depending on age and activities. The optimal group size is 4-5 children with one facilitator, and is recommended to not exceed 8 children.

Goals of the curriculum (page 4)

1. Foster a supportive group environment
2. Facilitate the identification and expression of feelings related to deployment
3. Teach relevant coping skills and identification of support systems
4. Enhance positive perceptions and strengths of self and family

Group facilitators will typically be the school counselor, school social worker and/or school psychologist. However, other community counselors familiar with group work and young children could also facilitate the group.

		K-1	2-3	4-6
Part 1- Deployment: Families, Change, & Feelings	Session 1: Getting to know each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name Tags • Introduction Activity: <i>The same as me...that's not like me game</i> • Introduce Group • Group Theme: Same Sky Sharing • Review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name Tags • Outside and Inside of me art • Defining Deployment • Discussion of group • World Wide Sharing • Inside of me sharing • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction and name tags • Defining deployment • Discussion of group • A slice of me • Worldwide sharing • Group review • Wrap up
	Session 2: Feeling Focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the purpose of the group • Review previous session • Introduce topic of feelings • Play Simon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the purpose of the group • Introduce the topic of feelings • Dice Game • Star Hopping Board Game • Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the purpose of the group • Introduce basic feeling concepts • Star Hopping Game • Group review • Wrap up

		<p>Says “Focus on Feelings”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Star Hopping Board Game • Review • Wrap up 	<p>review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wrap up 	
	<p>Session 3: Feelings about family and deployment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review basic feelings and feelings concepts • Introduce concept of families and “My Family” clap-play activity • Same as me and Not like me: thumbprint Clay-Play a family activity • Review • Wrap Up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of basic feelings and feeling concepts through a skit or puppet show • Introduce sharing about their family and their deployment experiences • Play Game: If the show fits • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review basic feelings and concepts through a skit or puppet show • Phases of moon picture from library/or computer handout • Tied together activity • Group review • Wrap up
<p>Part 2- Coping and support: Learning how to handle difficult feelings and change</p>	<p>Session 4: Connections between thinking, feelings & behaving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theatre time • Chain art activity • Follow the leader • Group review questions • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and introduction of thoughts-feelings-behavior connection • Theatre time • Links art activity • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and introduction of thoughts-feelings-behavior connection • Comic strip • Problem solving skit • Group review • Wrap up
	<p>Session 5: In our control and not in our control</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept discussion • Difference between wish and belief • Define coping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Things we can and cannot control • Defining wishes, beliefs and coping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of things we cannot control • Define coping • Coping Clouds Game • “What works for me”

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping Clouds Board Game • Umbrella of Helpers Activity • Group review questions • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping Clouds board Game • Feelings helper drawings • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group review • Wrap-up
	Session 6: Ways I cope, ways my family copes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umbrella helper art activity • Guessing game • Family coping • Endings • Review of concepts • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing: My coping • Sharing: Ways my family copes • Coping Connection: Kite Activity • Endings • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of both individual and family coping skills • Coping Clay • Constellations: my support connections • Endings • Group review • Wrap up
Part 3- Children's thoughts about themselves and their families	Session 7: Strengths: Me and my family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cotton Cloud Toss • Family strengths sky picture • Party planning • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniqueness of military families • Strengths pictures • Party Planning • Group review • Wrap up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the uniqueness of military families • Family creations • Strengths pictures • Party Planning • Group review • Wrap up
	Session 8: Celebrating our time together, Saying goodbye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play time • Outside time • Wrap up: Memory of our time together 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free playtime • Outside time • Wrap up, review, art memory activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free playtime • Outside time • Wrap up, review, art memory activity

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