Military Families: Extreme Work and Extreme 'Work-Family'

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Abstract

While the U.S. military might at first glance appear to be a model of rigidity rather than flexibility, there are strong incentives to address the work-family concerns of service members and their families. The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have exposed millions of men, women and children in the U.S. to combat-related sequelae including prolonged and repeated family separations, psychological and physical injuries, and disruptions to subsequent life as civilians. From a work-family perspective, military service generates substantial structural, energy, psychological, and behavioral tensions with family life. Although the U.S. military had already implemented extensive programs, policies and practices to support families prior to the current conflicts, the wars and demographic changes have spurred the development of innovative new models, some far outside previous boundaries of military workforce flexibility. The wars have also challenged civilian employers to 'step up' to support not only their employees who serve, but also their employees who are the family members of those who serve. Future challenges include continuing to adapt as military conflicts and missions evolve, defining the ideal balance between military support and family self-sufficiency, sustaining excellent leadership throughout the military around work-family issues, and caring for the millions of individuals whose lives have been changed by their own or a loved one's military service during the past decade.

Specialist Alexis Hutchinson, a 21-year-old Army cook and single parent, was days from deploying to Afghanistan last fall when her mother backed out of an agreement to take care of her 10-month-old son for the duration of her one-year tour. Specialist Hutchinson's mother, Angelique Hughes, had a child of her own at home and was also caring for a sick sister while running a day care center from her home in Oakland, Calif. Feeling overwhelmed, Ms. Hughes took the boy back to Savanna, Georgia, where specialist Hutchinson was based, and begged her to find someone else. That is when Specialist Hutchinson did what some might seem natural to a parent but to the Army was a serious offense: she stayed home with her child and missed her flight to Afghanistan. She was arrested and later charged with offenses that could have led to a court-martial and jail time. On Thursday, Specialist Hutchinson received an other-than-honorable discharge, ending an impasse that had surprised many legal experts and spurred lively debate in military circles. … The legal wrangling over Specialist Hutchinson's case stirred much discussion on blogs, with sympathizers wondering why the Army would prosecute a parent struggling with child care problems and critics questioning the soldier's motives. Ms. Hughes has heard some of that criticism firsthand. "People have said to me, 'She signed this contract. She's supposed to go. That's her first priority,'" Mrs. Hughes said. "My response is: 'I don't think so. This is her child. This is her family. This is her priority. The military is a job'" (Dao, 2010).

The case of Alexis Hutchinson brings painful tensions among work, family, and gender into sharp relief. The reactions below demonstrate that her situation is not only complex but also emotionally evocative. The first disparages Ms. Hutchinson for being irresponsible and the Army for being too accommodating. It targets her gender, ignoring the single fathers in the military whose children are presumably deprived of their mothers (using the writer's logic):

Statistics show that a large number of female soldiers in the military are, indeed, single mothers, likely with no father figure in their kids' lives. That's bad enough. What happens if they die? What happens if they refuse to go when called up to go to war, using their kids as an excuse? That's what's happening in Hutchinson's case. Her story shows how much our military is hampered by and bends over backwards for single mothers in its ranks. It's absurd. It's time to ban single mothers – and perhaps any mothers of kids younger than their teens – from the military. It clearly exacts more costs and bureaucratic BS than it's worth. And it harms the kids even more than they're already harmed without having a father in their lives (Schlussel, 2009).

The next response focuses on the gap between the diversity of modern families and the mindsets of military leaders who are perceived as closed-minded and unyielding.

'Her situation shows the Army is not really friendly to families,' Sussman (Hutcinson's attorney) told Truthout. 'The lives of military families are very difficult and they often face a command that isn't understanding or empathetic towards the situation of raising a child in that environment' (Jamail, 2010).

When considering flexible work arrangements, the U.S. military does not usually spring to mind. The military is a male-predominated and dominated organization (Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (MC&FP), 2010) with an overt and rigid hierarchical structure of ranks and privileges that emphasizes 'command and control.' Its members must legally commit to several years of service, and by law can be prevented from leaving even when their terms of service are complete. They can be re-called several, sometimes many, years beyond their original term of service (U.S. Army Human Resources Command, n.d.). Service members face rigorous standards for personal behavior in order to maintain their occupation and their security clearances, including submitting to random drug tests, meeting requirements for weight and skill level, and avoiding questionable behavior related to finances, sexual behavior, personal conduct, and use or alcohol and/or drugs (Cohen, 2000). Failure to satisfy these expectations can lead to military disciplinary action.

In addition to these internal restrictions, the activities of the military are constrained by many external stakeholders. For example, Congress not only oversees but is actively involved in structuring the Department of Defense budget, regulating matters such as which bases are closed, aircraft are ordered, how many high-ranking officers there will be and how service members will be compensated. Every state passes also laws that affect service members and their

families, such as rules regarding residency and taxation. And as commander-in-chief, the President can change the assignments of thousands of service members with the stroke of a pen.

For all these reasons, the U.S. military can be seen as rigid rather than flexible.   But there are also counterbalancing factors. First, for almost 40 years the military has been composed entirely of volunteers, requiring the Department of Defense to constantly adapt its policies, programs and practices to compete successfully with private employers for workers who meet its standards, despite the difficult and dangerous work it requires.   The percentage of the population aged 17 to 24 qualified to join the military has fallen to 25%, increasing the competition (Gilroy, 2009). And as diversity in the population grows, the diversity of service members also grows, putting pressure on the military to be more accommodating.

Second, there are strong incentives to retain members because training and therefore replacement costs are very high given the military's secret and specialized technologies. Retention is also very important because virtually all military members are hired at entry-level and thus all promotions come from within. This means that the person who will be the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs twenty years from now is already serving and must be prepared for that leadership opportunity when it arrives.

Third, the military must constantly find ways to inspire its members to contribute discretionary effort. Every medal that is given for valor documents the effort of a service member to complete his or her mission despite odds many would consider insurmountable, such as Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Private First Class Ross A. McGinnes, who:

> *distinguished himself by acts of gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty while serving in connection with combat operations against an armed enemy in Adhamiyah, Northeast Baghdad, Iraq. While Private McGinnis was manning the M2 .50-caliber Machine Gun, a fragmentation grenade thrown by an insurgent fell through the gunner's hatch into the vehicle. Reacting quickly, he yelled "grenade," allowing all four members of his crew to prepare for the grenade's blast. Then, rather than leaping from the gunner's hatch to safety, Private McGinnis made the courageous decision to protect his crew. In a selfless act of bravery, in which he was mortally wounded, Private McGinnis covered the live grenade, pinning it between his body and the vehicle and absorbing most of the explosion. Private McGinnis' gallant action directly saved four men from certain serious injury or death. Private First Class McGinnis' extraordinary heroism and selflessness at the cost of his own life, above and beyond the call of duty, are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army (Congressional Medal of Honor Society, n.d.).*

In the heat of battle, the confusion of natural disasters, or the ambiguity of urban warfare, service members must choose over and over again to engage danger – sometimes with tragic results.

Finally, the military is a 24/7 global organization that must always be ready to mobilize with little or no advance notice, usually into situations that are highly unpredictable and require flexible and rapid responses. For example, within three weeks of the 9/11 terrorist attacks Operation Enduring Freedom had been launched in Afghanistan and within 100 days the military destroyed 11 terrorist training camps and 39 Taliban command and control sites (Bush, 2001).

Thus, despite the barriers that make it difficult for the military to offer flexibility to its members, there are powerful incentives to recruit and retain the best-possible workers, to engage them in contributing high levels of discretionary effort, and to embrace their diversity. Because the family and the military are "greedy institutions," however, both requiring substantial amounts of time, commitment, and loyalty, this is a daunting challenge (Segal, 1986).

The purpose of this paper is to consider workplace flexibility from a military perspective. We begin by describing military families and the challenges they experience in relation to war. We then consider the tensions between military work and the personal lives of members. Finally, we describe organizational responses to the work-family challenges of military families and offer some observations about future work-family challenges in the military.

Who Are Military Families?

There are nearly 1.4 million service members on active duty in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine Corps (DUSD (MC&FP, 2010). The Reserve component, which includes the National Guard and several categories of Reserves (e.g., the Individual Ready Reserve, the Selected Reserve) includes an additional 539,775 members (Institute of Medicine, 2010). Women comprise 14.3% of the active-duty and 17.8% of the Selected Reserve populations (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). About one third of service members (36% active duty, 30% of selected reserve) are members of ethnic minority groups (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). Regardless of active or reserve status, over 90% of enlisted members have high school diplomas, while over 85% of officers have bachelor's degrees; these rates are much higher than those in the civilian workforce (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010; MacDermid Wadsworth, 2010). Over half (52.3%) active duty enlisted personnel and 39.4% Selected Reserve enlisted members are 25 or younger. In contrast, 44.4% of Active duty and 72.1% Selected Reserve officers are 36 or older, compared to 50.9% in the U.S. population (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). Over half of all military members have family responsibilities for spouses, children or other dependents (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). New entrants to the military come from all social classes, with underrepresentations of individuals at household median income levels below $34,000 and above $65,000 (Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, 2007).

In total, military personnel report about 1.1 million spouses and 1.9 million children; thus, there are considerably more family members than service members, especially if parents and unmarried partners were to be considered (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). The largest group of children of service members on active duty are preschool-aged (i.e., 41.5% are younger than 5), whereas the largest group children of service members in the Selected Reserve are school-aged (i.e., 45.3% are aged 6 to 14; (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010).

Among married personnel, 12.1% of active-duty and 5.4% of Selected Reserve members are married to other service members. Slightly more than 1 in 20 of service members on active duty (5.3%) and slightly less than 1 in 10 of service members in the Selected Reserve (8.7%) are single parents, compared to almost 1 in 5 (17.1%) of the households in the U.S. population. The circumstances of women in the military are distinct from those of men in several ways. Women are much more likely to be in dual-military marriages: Almost 1 in 2 of the married women on active duty (48.4%) and 1 in 4 in the Selected Reserve (23%) are married to other service members, compared to only 7.2% and 2.6% of men, respectively (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). The marriages of female service members are about twice as likely to end in divorce (Karney & Crown, 2007). And women have a greater *probability* of being single parents, although the *number* of single fathers is about double that of single mothers (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010).

Military Family Challenges Related to War

As of April, 2009, 1.9 million service members had completed three million deployments of 30 days or longer to Iraq or Afghanistan since September 2001. The current conflicts have placed heavier demands on military forces than seen

in recent history: Among current service members 40% have been deployed more than once, and although policies specify goals for 'dwell time' – the time between deployments – of two and five years for Active and Reserve component members respectively, actual dwell time over the past decade has averaged less than 600 days for both groups (Institute of Medicine, 2010). There has been extensive use of 'individual augmentees,' or service members drawn from units in other states, components, or even branches to fill empty slots. Thus, members of the Navy might be deployed in small groups from all over the world to serve in an Army unit deploying from Kansas, leaving families behind and potentially isolated because no one around them is experiencing the same deployment.

Deployments occur for many reasons and each is unique. Nonetheless, every deployment has certain operational stages to which families must respond. Prior to deployment, families must prepare for someone to assume full financial and logistical responsibility for the household – including legal preparation for that to be permanent in the event of the death or incapacitation of the service member (Castaneda, Harrell, Varda, Hall, Beckett, & Stern, 2008). Single service members may need to prepare to become essentially homeless during deployment, losing leases on apartments and having to put belongings in storage. If there are children, the at-home parent may need to alter arrangements for employment and childcare. In Reserve component families, service members may lose access to their employers' health insurance plan while activated, requiring the family to find new medical providers. The service member's income will change, requiring additional planning (Castaneda et al., 2008). And of course, everyone in the family must prepare for the emotions that accompany the impending separation (Castaneda et al., 2008).

Based on data from prior wars, exposure to combat is the aspect of deployment with the most consistently negative later impact on personal and family life -- both the marriages and the lives of veterans exposed to combat end sooner than veterans not exposed (MacLean & Elder, 2007). According to the Institute of Medicine (2008), there is an association between deployment to a war zone during the first Gulf War and subsequent psychiatric disorders including PTSD and depression; alcohol abuse; accidental death and suicide in the early years after deployment, and marital and family conflict. These sequelae are long-lasting: needs for care typically peak several decades after a given conflict – 47 years after World War I, 33 years after World War II, and still rising for Vienam veterans (Institute of Medicine, 2010). Veterans who experience symptoms of combat stress are at even higher risk of negative outcomes, including increased likelihood of aggressive behavior, disrupted relationships with spouses and children, difficulties finding and maintaining employment, elevated risk of substance abuse, and other factors (MacDermid Wadsworth, 2010).

As of November 2009, 5,286 U.S. military members had been killed and 36,021 seriously wounded in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan (IOM, 2010). The likelihood of survival is much higher during the current conflicts than in the past, which has increased the number of service members returning from deployment with wounds or injuries that will alter the course of their – and their families' -- lives (IOM, 2010). An estimated 10 to 20% of Army soldiers and Marines have experienced concussions, which are associated with higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep disruptions, and persistent severe headaches (Ruff, Ruff, &Wang, 2008). As more service members have survived their physical injuries, concerns about psychological injuries have intensified: In one study, about 27% of those who had been deployed three or four times had received diagnoses of depression, anxiety or acute stress, compared with 12% of those deployed once (Mental Health Advisory Team-V, 2008). Suicide rates, which were lower in the military than among civilians of comparable age and gender in 2003, are now as much as double those among civilians, with

relationship issues often implicated. Diagnoses of alcoholism and alcohol abuse also have almost doubled since 2003 (IOM, 2010).

Not surprisingly, deployments have effects beyond service members. Depending upon the nature of the deployment, service members' spouses, parents, siblings and others worry about their safety, especially if they know little about the member's location or duties (Faber, Willerton, Clymer, MacDermid, & Weiss, 2008). Spouses report finding it stressful to perform all of the adult duties in the family by themselves. For example, in one study of 346 spouses the geographical separation caused by deployment was negatively related to psychological wellbeing, physical well- being, and marital satisfaction (Burrell, Adams, Durand, and Castro, 2006). Spouses of service members with symptoms of PTSD are themselves more likely to experience elevated symptoms of depression and PTSD (Renshaw, Rodrigues & Jones, 2008).

Although the reunion period is very welcome for most families, it also can be challenging, as families once again re-organize to accommodate a change in structure. Domestic divisions of labor, standards and rules for children, and patterns of authority all must be re-negotiated (Faber et al., 2008; Hosek, Kavanagh, & Miller, 2006). Despite these challenges, rates of divorce and unemployment are not so far substantially higher among OIF/OEF veterans and their civilian counterparts (Karney & Crown, 2007; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a). The reintegration stage can be especially difficult for veterans returning with combat-related disabilities (Ahrens, 2009). In a random sample in 2007 of 1,730 OEF and OIF Active component, Reserve component and retired veterans, between 15% and 37% reported having a family member or friend who had relocated or left a job to provide care for a veteran (IOM, 2010).

Deployment also affects children. Multiple studies have shown that compromised mental health among caregivers in relation to deployment is associated with and lower levels of child well-being (e.g., Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Jaycox, Tanielian, Burns, Ruder, & Han, 2009). Children's behavioral responses (such as depression and aggression) to their parent's deployment appear to vary according to age (Chartrand, Frank, White, & Shope, 2008). Children between the ages of 3 to 5 appear to be especially vulnerable to behavioral problems (Chartrand et al., 2008), while children age 7 and older, especially girls and children whose parents have longer deployment periods, may experience more difficulty at home, school, and with peers (Chandra et al., 2009). Regrettably, rates of child maltreatment appear to rise in association with deployment and reunion (Rentz, Marshall, Loomis, Casteel, Martin, & Gibbs, 2006).

Understanding Military Families through a Work-Family Lens

In this section, we examine tensions related to military life that might benefit from greater flexibility in work arrangements. There is of course a large and well-developed literature regarding the connections between work and non-work life among workers in the civilian sector. These constructs and mechanisms have well-established implications for important outcomes such as psychological well-being, physical symptoms, quality of sleep, substance use, and the quality of relationships with spouses and children (Adams, Jex & Cunningham, 2006). Although there is no evidence that these fundamental processes operate differently in military populations, and military jobs are not the only jobs that expose workers to danger, family separation, or heavy work demands, military jobs are unusual in the degree to which they require all of these for prolonged periods and have substantial implications for the welfare of the country. Therefore, it is important to consider the specific work-family circumstances of military families, and what strategies might best support their abilities to continue their military service without having to forgo family life, and

reduce feelings of overload and strain even when job demands are extreme. We focus primarily on four types of tensions implicated in the work-family interface: time-based or structural tensions, strain- or energy-based, psychological , or behavior-based tensions (van Steenbergen et al., 2008).   We recognize that the following summary cannot possibly do justice to the enormous range of military work assignments and environments that exists.

Tensions related to the structure of work and family

These tensions pertain to how much, when, and where work occurs. Perhaps the most notable feature of military service is that members can be charged with a crime if they try to leave the military before their service obligation has expired. Theirs is is a 24/7 obligation – service members must be constantly ready to be called to duty with no advance notice and stay until the job is done, regardless of location. This occurs, of course with deployments, but it also can occur whenever a supervisor decides that any job is not yet complete – with no possibility of overtime pay.   Common features of military life include repeated relocations, some overseas, and frequent separations because of training, temporary duty assignments or deployment (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003).   Deployments related to war are only one of many types of deployments that occur every day for disaster relief, humanitarian aid, border patrol, and training (Department of Defense, 2009). Sometimes these separations occur with little advance notice, little information available to family members, and sparse communication while away.

Military service also affects where active-duty families live, both in terms of where around the world they are assigned as a 'home base,' and where they live in that local area. Most military families live and most military children attend school in civilian communities (Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA), 2009). The mobility of military families and the remote or overseas locations of many installations can make it difficult for spouses to complete educational degrees, transfer licenses and certifications, maintain employment, or pursue careers. As a result, military spouses are less likely than their civilian counterparts to work full-time, and on average work fewer hours and fewer days in the year (Hosek, et al., 2002; Little & Hisnanick, 2007). In 2000, military wives earned 50% less than civilian wives, while military husbands earned 30% less than civilian husbands (Little & Hisnanick, 2007).

Mobility also can impede children's educations by interrupting involvement in sports teams or requiring extra courses to satisfy academic requirements unique to each new state. The Military Child Education Coalition has tackled this problem and so far 35 states have signed an interstate compact to ease the transitions of military children (USA4 Military Families, 2010).

Tensions related to capacity and energy

Since the current conflicts began in 2001, deployments have reached levels not seen since World War II. War increases workloads throughout the military, not just among deployed service members, because it takes enormous effort and resources to support service members during deployment with food, vehicles and fuel, weapons, medical services, housing, and the necessities of daily life (IOM, 2010). During deployment service members may be exposed to harsh physical conditions (e.g., heat, cold, rain, mud and the resulting sleep disruptions); toxins in the form of biological or chemical weapons, burn pits, or other environmental challenges; a variety of diseases transmitted through physical contact, air, water, or by insects; or injury from weapons (McCarroll et al., 2005).

Family members also experience increased workloads associated with deployment. The continuous or intermittent absence of the service member due to overseas deployment or extended work hours at home can require other family members to take on new responsibilities for caregiving, household maintenance, emotional support, or other matters

(Castaneda & Harrell, 2007). Family members may feel that they are under extra military scrutiny to ensure that they do nothing to disrupt the service member's readiness and performance.

Psychological and emotional tensions

The tight interconnections between personal and professional life in the military, as well as the heavy workloads and serious consequences of errors, can easily produce the combination of high-demand and low-control work environments indicted by Kelly et al. (2008) in the production of work-family conflict. When lengthy or risky deployments occur, additional psychological tensions may come into play, including worry and anxiety about separated family members, feelings of ambiguity about commitment to the relationships in the family, anger at the military or others, and feelings of hopelessness or boredom. These stressors are thought to contribute to problems with substance abuse or other addictive behavior, risk-taking, and promiscuity (McCarroll et al., 2005).

Tensions related to behavior moral conflicts and injuries

Tensions in this category include not only incompatible behavior but also moral conflicts and injuries that affect personal life. During many types of deployments, service members are at risk of being exposed to traumatic experiences including being the targets or perpetrators of violence, seeing or handling dead bodies, explosions, and other disturbing experiences. In addition, service members and their families may feel ambivalent about their assignment, or find their own views out of step with those of friends and neighbors, political leaders, or the commander-in-chief (McCarroll et al., 2005). Military life also may impose codes of conduct for family members, especially when living in military housing, using military support services, or when the service member occupies a leadership positions (Segal, 1986).

Although our focus in this section has been on tensions between military and personal life, military families also report significant positive effects (Schok, Kleber, Elands, & Weerts, 2008). These include increased earnings from hazardous duty pay, personal growth from surmounting difficult challenges, increased appreciation of personal relationships, and a sense of purpose from performing an important mission for the country (Newby et al., 2005).

Military Policies, Programs, and Practices Related to Work-Family Relationships

The relationship between the U.S. military and the families of service members has been officially recognized for centuries, even though it was 1942 before service members were permitted to enlist or reenlist during peacetime if they had wives or children (Albano, 1994). Albano (1994, pp. 294-298) argues that six trends characterize the historical evolution of military policies and programs related to families:

1. From neglect to a partnership philosophy
2. From informal to formal support systems
3. From categorical to universal support
4. From local, private funding to federal funding and guidance
5. From in-kind benefits to monetary allowances to a mixed benefits system
6. From an ad hoc, reactive, piecemeal approach to a proactive, planned approach to program development and a comprehensive system of services.

The tradition of support for disabled soldiers extends back to Plymouth Colony, and in 1865, Abraham Lincoln included a line in his second inaugural address that is now the mission of the Veterans Administration: "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan" (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-a, n.d.) In 1917, Congress passed legislation creating the first system of 'family allotments' that included financial benefits and allowances, and by 1942 additional policies addressed family housing, education of children, and family insurance in the case of death or dismemberment of the service member (Albano, 1994).

Since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973 and the subsequent growth of the proportion of service members with spouses or children, the array of services and programs has expanded to rival or exceed that of many large employers in the civilian sector. Today, military leaders routinely assert that the ability of service members to do their jobs depends heavily upon their families, as in a recent speech by Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Admiral Michael Mullen:

> *...our readiness to be able to carry out our mission as United States military is directly impacted, fully integrated, by how our families are taken care of, paid attention to, and that is a fundamental readiness issue. … And there's a real basic principle here for all of us in the military – been that way a long time. If it's not going well at home, it's not going well wherever I am. I cannot focus; I can't stay focused on what's going on. (Mullen, 2009)*

Today, the U.S. military offers an array of policies, practices and programs that includes not only traditional benefits such as pensions and health care, but also modern benefits like subsidized childcare. According to the Congressional Budget Office, when basic pay, cash allowances, and tax breaks are included military compensation has exceeded the compensation of civilians in comparable jobs since about 2001 (Murray, 2010). Examples of military benefits include:

- **Basic benefits** – health care for service member and family members; allowances for housing and cost of living, and (when applicable) hazardous duty and subsistence; defined benefit retirement plan; coverage for job-related relocations.

- **Care for children** – subsidized care for children and a large system of child development centers and family child care homes; youth programs such as 4-H on military installations; DoD schools in remote areas and overseas; support for children with special needs including consideration in parents' work assignments.

- **Family functioning** – family support services including marital and family therapy; parenting classes and new parent support; programs for prevention and treatment of domestic violence and substance use; programs for spousal employment and education; transition assistance and tuition support.

- **Deployment cycle support** – training before, during, and after deployment, family support groups, military liaisons assigned to address family concerns. (IOM, 2010).

Moving from general benefits to those focused specifically on workplace flexibility, we next examine military work according to the flexibility taxonomy developed by Workplace Flexibility 2010 (Workplace Flexibility 2010, 2009). We were unable to locate published or unpublished data documenting service members' perceptions of access to each type of flexibility, so we rely here on review of policies, and assessments by informants with experience as administrators of military personnel policies.

The first category of flexibility defined by Workplace Flexibility 2010 pertains to how much, when and where work is done. Alternative work schedule programs have been implemented in the Department of Defense, but most apply only to civilian employees. There are exceptions, however. For example, the Coast Guard alternative work schedules program permits military members to work 80 hours in 8- or 9-day compressed work week schedules,

and/or flexible schedules with core hours (U.S. Coast Guard Commandant, 2009). All of these programs are based on full-time work. In terms of military members' ability to choose to work some or all of the time at a different location, such as home, the Department of Defense almost a decade ago authorized telework programs for both civilian employees and military members to carry out assigned official duties including training (see for example DoD Instruction 1035.01). In response, the Air Force established guidelines for reserve personnel to complete training remotely (Air Force Instruction 36-2254). Service members' access to control over how much, when and where work is done appears to be similar to that of civilians: while there are examples of significant flexibility, access overall is limited, tends to favor officers, and command approval is required for every absence. Regardless of policies, there are also many examples of informal flexibility practices in many jobs.

The second category of flexibility defined by the Workplace Flexibility 2010 is time off from work in either short (such as for unexpected illness), episodic (such as for repeated medical treatments or regular volunteer work), or longer increments (such as for the birth of a child). Military members compare favorably to civilians in this category, accruing 2.5 days of paid leave per month to use for family emergencies, national holidays, religious observances, adjusting to moves, and resting after difficult work tasks. They also have access to several additional types of leave that are not 'charged' against their regular paid leave, including 'special leave' that accrues separately as a function of deployment to hazardous areas; leaves for morale or rest and recuperation; for convalescence, maternity, paternity or adoption; and emergency unpaid leave. Short periods of 'special liberty' may be given under special circumstances such as a reward for exceptional performance. Finally, permission may be given for administrative absences to participate in professional development, retirement preparation programs, or other special events (see DoD Instruction 1327.06).

The third category of flexibility defined by Workplace Flexibility 2010 is career flexibility, including employee control over when to leave their career permanently or intermittently, and when to enter or re-enter. In the military, service members may leave their military careers only when terms of enlistment or service obligations are fulfilled. Substantial incentives are offered to some service members to re-enlist, and if a member stays in long enough to formally retire, there is a public ceremony, often a service medal, and a substantial retirement benefit. Some service members return to active duty, but these are isolated examples.

The policies, programs and practices that affect military service members and their families do not reside only in the Department of Defense. Over half of military spouses and an unknown percentage of parents of service members are employed (DUSD (MC&FP), 2010). In addition, military members who serve in the Reserve component must leave and return to employment in the civilian sector as they complete each cycle of deployment. Service members receive some assistance from the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), which protects their rights to employment, reemployment, retention, promotion and other benefits (Veterans' Employment and Training Service, n.d.). Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, a Department of Defense organization, formally recognizes especially supportive civilian employers for practices such as maintaining contact with employees while they are performing military service, publicly acknowledging their contributions, publishing policies for leave and military mobilization, providing pay differential or 'top-up pay' during military training and mobilization, continuing insurance and financial benefits during mobilizations, and assigning a company sponsor to Guard and Reserve family members during deployments (Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, n.d.).

Responses to Military Families' Work-Family Challenges Since 9/11

As the demands of the wars in Afghanistan and later, Iraq, evolved, the work-family challenges of service members and their families also changed, and in response new programs and policies began to emerge in the Department of Defense and the military branches. As it became clear that the war would impact hundreds of thousands of families, DoD devoted more resources to assisting families who were not within easy reach of installation-based services and facilities. In 2002, a technology-based employee assistance program called Military OneSource was created, giving service members and their families continuous global access by internet or telephone to counselors who could locate resources, make referrals, or provide other assistance in over 100 languages (Mixon, 2005). OneSource was eventually expanded to include multiple sessions of free nonmedical counseling for service members and/or their families.

The extensive deployments of Reserve component forces made it clear that the support infrastructure, designed originally for Active component families, contained significant gaps. The Joint Family Support Assistance Program was created in 2007 to provide comprehensive state-based deployment cycle support to Reserve component families. Military Family Life Consultants – counselors who could provide support, reassurance, and very short-term counseling to families (MHN, n.d.) -- were assigned to each state, as well as resources for information and referral, financial assistance, child care assistance, outreach by military food and retail stores, and recreational programs (Military Community and Family Policy, 2010). In 2008, the Department of Defense Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program was developed to provide programming to Reserve component members and their families throughout the deployment cycle. Now, instead of being prohibited from being called to duty for 90 days following their return from deployment, Reserve component members are required to gather at their usual 30-day intervals, not to train for deployment, but instead to work on returning and reintegrating to their families and civilian life. Some programming is also available to family members, who receive some financial support for travel costs (Yellow Ribbon Program, n.d.).

Educational benefits have also figured prominently in 'family-friendly' benefits in the post-911 era. Perhaps the best-known of these is the 2009 'Post-9/11 GI Bill,' the most comprehensive veterans' education bill passed to date. Under this program, members of both the Active and Reserve components who have served since September 10, 2001 can receive up to 36 months of tuition, fees and funds for living expenses and supplies, regardless of whether or not they are still serving in the military. A popular innovation is the plan for qualified career service members to be able to transfer some unused benefits to family members (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs-b, n.d.). For members still completing their service, tuition assistance is also available from the Department of Defense; approximately 45,000 degrees were completed in 2009. Officers are required to extend their years of service in exchange for receiving tuition assistance (Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support, n.d.). In 2009, a tuition assistance program was also created for military spouses. So popular that it ran out of money, MyCAA was abruptly suspended in early 2010, generating considerable negative attention. Recently reinstated, the program now offers more constrained benefits than before, limiting participation to spouses of service members at junior enlisted or officer paygrades and in the Active component or on activated status if in the Reserve component; limiting the total benefit to $4000; and limiting degrees to Associates, licenses and certificates, excluding Bachelors or advanced degrees (Schogol, 2010).

Several cabinet departments have also implemented new policies to support military families during the war. Most visibly related to workplace flexibility are significant expansions in the Family and Medical Leave Act in 2008, which created new provisions for job-protected leave for the family members of military members to allow them to care

for injured service members, and also 'qualifying exigencies' that allow time away from work to participate in activities related to deployment, such as farewell ceremonies and reintegration training. The new rules also allows coverage for family members not routinely included in military definitions of 'family,' such as parents of adult children (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). State governments also have passed statutes targeting support for military families. For example, many states permit unemployment compensation to be paid to spouses of military personnel under certain circumstances, such as when a change in the military member's duty location causes spouses to leave their jobs (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2010.; Sloan Work and Family Research Network, 2008).

Perhaps the most visible military effort to systematically respond to workforce needs from a business perspective is the Navy's 'Task Force Life/Work,' launched in 2007 in response to a 10-year slide in representation of women among Navy officers, and shifting attitudes and growing diversity of newer Navy personnel (Navy Personnel Command , n.d.).

During an information-gathering effort to learn about the concerns of service members, Navy leaders learned that junior officers were leaving not because they disliked their military jobs, but because of conflict between personal and professional goals. These losses of junior officers were especially costly because of the lack of mid-career hiring in the military. Service members also reported lack of control and predictability as factors in increasing their thoughts of leaving. Heavy workloads, unpredictable moves and deployments, and lack of control over work schedules were described as interfering with service members' ability to maximize productivity by scheduling work time to avoid heavy commutes, pursue educational goals, or arrange child care coverage when military duties extended beyond regular work hours. Data also showed that Navy women about twice as likely as civilian women and Navy men to be childless (Barrett, 2010).

Based on this information, the Navy selected three priorities for work-family policy efforts: Parenting is a priority; Flexibility is the Key; and Demand for Balance (Covell, 2010). These priorities have now been translated into numerous policy changes that are already implemented or under consideration:

- **Supporting parenting**: a) 1 year operational deferments for new mothers, extended from 4 months; b) phased return from maternity; c) paternity leave of 10 days; d) coverage for in-vitro fertilization treatment; e) 21 days leave for adoptive parents (Covell, 2010).

- **Supporting flexibility**: a) a career intermission pilot program that allows Sailors to move to the Reserve component for 3 years while maintaining benefits and promotion eligibility, in exchange for extending their service obligation (Covell, 2010); b) telework programs that permit eligible military and civilian personnel to work from remote locations, some full-time and at large distances from their 'parent command;' c) a "menu of options" that allows service members to choose monetary bonuses, geographic stability, jobs of choice, and other options that cater to individual and family needs while still satisfying all mission requirements (Barrett, 2010; Covell, 2010).

- **Supporting balance:** a) Part time work for part-time pay; b) 2 year deferment for new reservists for individual augmentee assignments; c) compressed work week schedules (Covell, 2010).

Since the task force was created, the representation of women in both officer and enlisted ranks have risen to historic highs, and the representation of enlisted women in technical areas has risen from 42% to 51% (Covell, 2010). Women are especially likely to report that the career intermission and operational deferment policies motivate them to

stay in the Navy (Covell, 2010). These and other efforts by the Navy to increase workplace flexibility have been recognized with numerous national awards in the past two years (Barrett, 2010, Covell, 2010).

Looking to the Future

Given the extensive array of policies and programs available in the military, and the creative innovations being created to respond to the needs of increasingly diverse service members, why did Specialist Hutchinson end up in such a difficult situation? Of course she could have chosen not to enter the military, but civilian jobs with health care coverage, pensions, and subsidized childcare are not readily available to young workers with high school educations and limited work experience. Specialist Hutchinson joined the military well after 2001, when it was obvious that deployment would be very likely. Although she was required to make a family care plan and did so, it ultimately proved unworkable. In the end, the military expected her to have made adequate arrangements for her child, and to deploy with her unit. How can young women like Specialist Hutchinson pursue their goals of having and raising children who – like 40% of all children in the U.S. – are born to single mothers, and yet also fulfill the demanding responsibilities she accepted when she swore to "obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me" (U.S. Army, n.d.)?

As the relationship between the military and the families of service members has evolved, there has been greater examination of the issue of how best to support families. One topic of debate is the potential tension between the role of individual families and the military organization. Military policy makers and service providers worry that providing too many entitlements encourages military families to believe that they are not able or expected to take action on their own behalf -- ultimately feeling *dis*empowered and less able to cope – completely opposite the original intent. In 2002, the Department of Defense altered its stance toward family programs in its New Social Compact: "The Services have also recognized that quality of life is determined both by what an organization does and by what people do for themselves in concert with that organization." In addition, DoD emphasized that supportive programs and services are intended to support work outcomes: "These initiatives demonstrate the Services' recognition of the strategic value in addressing the nexus of work life and personal/family life, as it affects key organizational goals related to recruitment, retention, morale, and mission readiness" (Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (Military Community and Family Policy), 2002). The debate between accommodations that support the mission by making it possible for families to do their jobs, and those that interfere with the mission by encouraging families to rely too heavily on external support will continue, and will be complicated by the need to continually offer new incentives to attract new workers in a competitive marketplace.

The tension between individual workers and organizations also plays out in relation to flexible work arrangements, where one of the thorniest challenges is who controls workers' time. The military needs to be nimble, able to quickly deploy service members whenever and wherever they are needed. But service members appear to be becoming less tolerant of having so little control over their time, as well as becoming more diverse in germs of ethnicity, family structure, overt sexual orientation, and gender (Covell, 2010). In order to continue to attract high-quality recruits, the military will need to keep looking for ways to accommodate their interests. Creative innovations such as those in the Navy boost members' control over their time at key periods such as after the birth of a child, and are not entitlements but selective investments generating a return in the form of extensions of service obligations. Thus, for a relatively

small investment, the organization secures a firm retention commitment from a highly trained worker. But because they are selective, these programs would be unlikely to help junior enlisted members like Specialist Hutchinson.

Despite the extensive array of programs and services, and increasing flexibility, significant work-family challenges persist in the military. One receiving widespread attention at present is stigma, particularly in relation to mental health problems. Service members and their families often express reluctance to seek a variety of types of help for fear that the service member's performance record will be damaged in some way (Department of Defense Task Force on Mental Health, 2007). Another challenge is that the ever-changing array of programs and services offered by the Department of Defense, the individual service branches, states, and local communities can be overwhelming in its scope and complexity, requiring an extraordinarily efficient exchange of information to ensure that families find what they need. The constant entry, exit, and mobility of service members makes it even more difficult to ensure that every family has the information they need at the moment they need it – especially when some families cannot or will not acknowledge that help is needed.

Even when services are used, they may not be effective. Allen and Schockley (2009) raises questions about workplace flexibility, for example, citing studies showing that its effects are mixed at best. Evaluating the effectiveness of many programs and services in the military is very challenging because of the difficulty in controlling external factors like changes in command, deployments, and the mobility of service members.

As in civilian workplaces, front-line supervisors are often the lynchpins in service members' quality of life and access to flexibility (Castro, Thomas & Adler, 2006). Because access to most types of leave and flexibility programs require supervisor approval, service members may be denied access either because they ask and are refused, or because they are hesitant to ask. In addition, the pressure of the war has stretched commanders, adding many urgent tasks and domains of responsibility. The 'lost art of leadership in garrison' was blamed in a recent report examining the high rates of suicide in the Army, which concluded that the heavy workload, dynamic deployment schedule, and rapid turnover caused by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have weakened the awareness, vigilance, and effectiveness of frontline commanders. As a result, service members' high-risk behavior has risen, and communication and clarity of roles and responsibilities has fallen, creating a climate where worrisome signs are not acted upon (U.S. Army, 2010).

The U.S. military exists to serve our country, and its mission evolves constantly with geopolitical, technological, and financial events. Trends in China, Iraq, Mexico, and wherever Al Quaeda functions – as well as other parts of the world -- require vigilance. Since the end of the Cold War, the nature of military conflict has shifted toward nonconventional or asymmetrical conflicts characterized by terrorism, urban warfare, and insurgency. Just as the members of the 'greatest generation' of World War II veterans and their counterparts from the conflict in Vietnam remain a visible part of our society, the wartime experiences of the veterans of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom are likely to affect our society for decades to come. The Reserve component of the Armed Forces has now become an operational force, expecting to deploy at least every five years, imbuing the term 'citizen soldier' with new meaning. In some cases, service members and their families will be strengthened by their experiences; other families might experience no obvious consequences now but might experience psychological or physical symptoms later in life. Both their military employers and civilian workplaces have the potential to be affected, and the potential to be part of strategies that reduce or exacerbate the challenges. Given the 'extreme work' these service members and their families volunteered to perform on behalf of our country, it is reasonable to consider the need for 'extreme work-family' support in return. But

it is also important to attend to what works, what is cost-effective, and what makes sense, because above all, we rely on the military to complete its mission.

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