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Parental Incarceration, Transnational Migration, and Military Deployment: Family Process Mechanisms of Youth Adjustment to Temporary Parent Absence

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Abstract

The temporary absence of a parent (e.g., due to incarceration, migration, or military deployment) is experienced by many youth and can have profound effects. Available research within these disparate literatures primarily has catalogued contextual and individual variables that influence youth adaptation, which are integrated and summarized here. In addition, we present a systematic review of *proximal family process mechanisms* by which youth and their family members adapt to periods of temporary parent absence. This systematic review across the different types of parent absence produced four themes: communication among family members, parenting characteristics during absence, negotiation of decision-making power and authority, and shifts in family roles. By juxtaposing the three types of temporary parent absence, we aim to bridge the separate research silos of parent absence due to incarceration, deployment, and migration, and to bring wide-ranging characteristics and processes of temporary parent-absent families into sharper focus. The review highlights possibilities for fuller integration of these literatures, and emphasizes the clinical value of considering these types of experiences from a family and relational perspective, rather than an individual coping perspective.

Keywords

Temporary parent absence; Family relations; Incarceration; Migration; Military deployment

Introduction

Temporary absence of a parent is a common but poorly understood experience in modern family life. The reasons for parental absence are diverse. Within the borders of the United States, an estimated 1.7 million children and adolescents have a parent in federal or state prison (Glaze and Maruschak 2008). Another 1.2 million children have a parent on active duty in the U.S. military (2012 Demographics Profile of the Military Community); even in periods of limited combat/conflict involvement, the majority of these families will experience at least one temporary absence due to deployment during the service members'

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careers. Another 730,000 children have a parent on reserve military status, and may experience deployment absences. Beyond the United States, additional causes for temporary absences of family members are common; the United Nations estimates that 232 million people live and work outside of their native nations, and migration from Mexico to the U.S. has averaged 1 million new migrants per year for over a decade (UN News Centre 2013). Although no worldwide estimates of the number of children with absent migrant parents are available, some data exist on individual nations. For example, in China and the Philippines, between one-fifth and one-fourth of each nation's youth population is separated from one or both parents (China Youth Research Center 2006; Parreñas 2005). In light of the prevalence of temporary parent absence due to incarceration, deployment, and migration— yet the somewhat limited research base for each—this review is presented to integrate knowledge across fields and draw more generalized implications for youth and families experiencing the absence of one parent.

The available literatures on incarceration, deployment, and migration have developed in relative isolation from one another—they trace their origins to different disciplines (incarceration primarily to sociology and developmental psychology; migration to sociology and anthropology; military deployment to psychology/psychiatry and social work) and ask somewhat different questions through different methodologies. The practical barriers and methodological challenges to conducting research with families experiencing temporary parent absence provide an explanation for why these literatures do not yet reflect the degree of scientific rigor in other family science literatures and suggest the value of integrating across literatures. Families affected by incarceration, migration, and military deployment include members of vulnerable or protected populations (i.e., prisoners, potentially undocumented migrants, military personnel, and children). These families are more geographically mobile than other family populations, making it difficult to initially contact and locate them or complete follow-ups. Similarly, for a substantial subgroup of youth with absent parents, transitions in caregiving arrangements occur that may leave youth in the care of an adult who cannot legally provide consent for the youth's research participation. Likewise, transitioning to a caregiver who does not wish to provide such consent might lead to attrition from longitudinal studies. Finally, it is the nature of temporary separations to be unpredictable; separations may end suddenly (e.g., when military deployments are cut short or prisoners obtain early release) or may become permanent (e.g., when migrants and their partners in the sending nations divorce).

Larger and more established literatures describe the processes and outcomes associated with permanent parental absence (e.g., divorce, bereavement) or with acute or chronic parental incapacitation (e.g., medical or mental illness). Researchers who study temporary absences tend to draw upon these empirical literatures heavily to understand, for example, family members' affective reactions to absence and transitions to new divisions of roles and responsibility. However, the defining phenomenological feature of temporary parent absence for most families is ambiguity or uncertainty. This aspect has been most thoroughly assessed by Boss (1999), who developed ambiguous loss theory; she suggested that families handle the ambiguity accompanying temporary physical absence of a family member by negotiating ways to keep the absent individual emotionally or psychologically present within the family system, while also compensating for the absence by redistributing functional roles and

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responsibilities. It is important that families recognize that the adjustments made during the absence are of temporary utility for the family and will need to be re-addressed or reversed upon reunion with the absent family member.

Additional family and relational theories predict systematic alterations to family processes during parental absence. Structural family theorists (e.g., Bowen 1978; Minuchin 1974) focus on the disruption to existing family structures, which can create opportunities for families to reassign roles or change existing family structures of power or influence (e.g., family hierarchies, coalitions). Spillover and emotion transmission theories (e.g., Almeida et al. 1999; Erel and Burman 1995) utilize common family systems concepts (e.g., interdependence, feedback loops) to assess the transmission of individual and relational distress about the absence that may heighten collective distress and dysfunction. Attachment theory (see Riggs and Riggs 2011 for application to military deployment) focuses on parents' or caregivers' abilities to sensitively respond to children and on children's perceptions of caregivers' reliability. Additionally, attachment theory would predict heightened proximity-seeking (i.e., care-eliciting) behavior in family members who are seeking emotional reassurance during physical absences.

Existing research on temporary parent absence has suggested that such separations are generally linked to poorer youth adjustment. Meta-analyses find small but significant increases in youth internalizing and externalizing symptoms and school problems linked to parental military deployment (Card et al. 2011) and large increases in odds of youth antisocial behavior as a function of parental incarceration (Murray et al. 2012). In the case of parental migration, no meta-analytic studies have yet been performed, but individual studies document risks related to diminished youth happiness and social support seeking (Graham et al. 2012), poorer academic performance and increased depressive and suicidal symptoms (Pottinger 2005), and increased negative health behavior and diminished school engagement (Wen and Lin 2012).

Excellent and recent reviews of child and family functioning do exist within each of the separate temporary parent absence literatures addressed by the current review, and these reviews provide both detailed theoretical insights and coverage of some of the relevant empirical literature. For example, Paley et al. (2013) provide an excellent overview of family systems and ecological theories as they relate to family responses to military deployment, and Murray and Murray (2010) discuss attachment-related dimensions of parental incarceration. Mazzucato and Schans (2011) provide an overview of the existing research, and emphasize current methodological and conceptual challenges, within the transnational families/migration literature. The focus of the current review is not to duplicate this work, but to conceptualize all of these disparate literatures as specific cases of temporary parent absence in order to strengthen empirical inquiry into the common family relational processes by which families adapt to absence and the anticipation of reunion.

Several risk/resilience factors relating youth adjustment to temporary parent absence have been examined to date (e.g., duration of separation, gender of youth and absent parent, caregiving stability). Although the identification of these stressor and context factors provides clues to underlying mechanisms, empirical research on modifiable psychosocial

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processes that foster adaptation or alternatively enhance risk has been limited. Family functioning has received primary *theoretical* attention as the domain in which mechanisms of risk and resilience are likely to operate; yet, *empirical* evidence on family dynamics during temporary parent absence remains sparse. The current review draws upon literatures assessing several types of such absence to provide empirically based recommendations for further research and applied work.

Aim and Scope of the Current Review

The current review was undertaken to describe the proximal family relational process mechanisms that may account for associations between temporary parent absence and youth outcomes. Three disparate causes of temporary parent absence were included in the literature search: military deployment, incarceration, and migration. The first author conducted a search of the PsycINFO, ERIC, Pro-Quest Research Library, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, Google Scholar, PubMed, and Medline databases to locate peer-reviewed empirical studies published from 1993 to 2013. The search terms for military deployment were "military deployment" AND *parent* AND *child*, for incarceration —("parental incarceration" OR "maternal incarceration" OR "paternal incarceration") AND *child*, and for migration—"transnational migration" AND *separation* AND *parent* AND *child*. These searches returned a total of 6,052 viewable records (note: Google Scholar only permits viewing of the first 1,000 records), of which 53 were included in the current review. Ten studies assessing military deployment were retained (of 1,615 records), 20 assessing incarceration (of 1,675 records), and 23 assessing migration (of 2,762 records). For inclusion in the current review, each study had to (a) report original empirical data (i.e., reviews were excluded), (b) involve assessment/data collection during a period of parent–child separation (i.e., studies involving retrospective report after reunification or those assessing the impact of historical separations only were excluded), (c) collect data from or about minor children (versus adult children), and (d) include an assessment of whole family or parent–child relationship functioning. Both qualitative and quantitative empirical studies were included in order to balance the phenomenological descriptiveness of qualitative interviews with the rigorous operationalization of constructs and enhanced generalizability of larger quantitative assessments. Studies of military deployment were limited to the United States military due to the variability in deployment practices and military service cultures across countries; additionally, too few studies exist of non-U.S. military families exist to provide strong comparisons. Although not specified in advance as a criterion for inclusion, transnational migration studies that emerged from the search assessed separations due to parental labor and employment reasons; in some cases, it appeared that a portion of the sample also included migrants with additional reasons for migration, e.g., refugees or asylum seekers.

Studies that reported only response frequencies and provided no analyses (qualitative or quantitative) of interrelationships among study variables were excluded. Studies involving records review only (i.e., children's standardized test scores or medical visit/hospitalization records) were also excluded. Additionally, to prioritize basic empirical research on these topics, clinical case studies were omitted, as were efficacy studies of intervention or prevention programs. Studies that included parent or child stress/distress or symptom

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measures *without* measures of family relationships were also excluded; although we recognize that individual family member experiences of absence are important influences on family functioning (see Chandra et al. 2010a; Flake et al. 2009; Lester et al. 2010; Poehlmann et al. 2008a), we focused our review on the relationship processes more proximal to youth experiences of the family. Finally, although (as noted above) several theories posit direct and indirect effects of marital relationship processes on youth adjustment, studies focusing exclusively on marital relations were excluded from the current review.

Design and sample characteristics of the 53 studies included in the review are presented in Table 1. The included studies range considerably in the ages of children assessed (incarceration and migration: infancy to late adolescence, deployment: generally school-aged children 5–18), and region or nation (incarceration: at least 7 different U.S. states and the Netherlands, migration: four different sending continents, deployment: from multiple states). Additionally, the identity and gender of the primary reporter(s) varied considerably, with some studies assessing the perceptions of the youth, absent parent, caregiver, other family member, school personnel or some combination. Notably, because of the variability in family and care arrangements within these families, reporters had a variety of relationship and role statuses (e.g., caregiver parents who have relationships as spouse versus grandparents who have relationships as parent or in-law to the absent parent).

The included studies evidenced some marked differences in design across separation type; for example, the majority of included incarceration studies (12 of 20) focused on absent mothers, studies of migrant parents tended to involve mixed gender samples (15 of 23), and studies of deployment largely assessed the absence of fathers (7 of 8; 2 did not report parent gender). Studies of incarceration primarily employed quantitative analyses (10 studies versus 3 studies, 7 mixed-method) and four of these included some form of observational assessment, whereas studies of migration primarily employed qualitative or ethnographic methods of inquiry (15 of 23). The majority of the deployment studies were quantitative (7 of 10). Both the incarceration (10 of 20 studies) and migration (19 of 23 studies) literatures were most likely to assess the relationship between the absent parent and child; by contrast, the deployment literature focused more on the caregiver–child relationship (8 of 10 studies). Across all three literatures, the assessment of the parent–caregiver relationship was the least characterized, and was directly assessed in only 7 incarceration studies, 8 migration studies, and 1 study of deployment.

For simplicity, a few labeling conventions are used. The terms "youth" and "child/children" are used to designate the minor children that are the focus of the articles reviewed; this reflects the wide age ranges assessed in many of the reviewed studies (e.g., 4–18). However, when studies confined their assessment to narrower age/stage ranges (e.g., adolescence), this is noted. Finally, the inclusive terms "absent parent" and "caregiver" are used, although other terms may be more precise within individual literatures; when all caregivers in a given study are also parents of the focal children, we refer to these as "caregiver parents."

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Structure of the Review

Our review contains two distinct sections. First, we begin with a presentation of important characteristics of the separation stressor and of the family and community context that impact youth adjustment to temporary parent absence. By providing a broad frame of some defining features of the separation, family, and community, this first section introduces dimensions that make the separation more or less challenging and that set the stage for our review of salient family processes. Second, we present our systematic review of family processes and relationship dynamics during temporary parent absence. Through our systematic review across the literatures, we are able to extract and identify *explanatory mechanisms within the family* that may account for heterogeneity in family members' experiences during temporary absence. This section contains both qualitative and quantitative findings regarding family relational process mechanisms drawn from the studies identified through systematic review. We then conclude with comments on the implications of the review and the state of the literature.

Stressor and Context Factors Affecting Youth Adjustment to Temporary Parent Absence

Youth adjustment to temporary parent absence is influenced by a vast array of factors associated with the separation. Characteristics of the separation event and the youth's family and community context, although influential for youth functioning, are likely less amenable to intervention or prevention efforts. Research on these factors is summarized here briefly to provide context for the systematic review of potentially modifiable relational mechanisms within family systems.

Separation Factors

Duration and Frequency—Temporary parent–child separations that are longer or more frequent tend to more negatively impact children's adaptation and family coping (Barker and Berry 2009; Chandra et al. 2010a, b; Everson et al. 2013; Harper and Martin 2013; Lester et al. 2010). However, youth and parent ratings of family functioning improve and become more similar with increasing number of military deployments experienced (Crow and Seybold 2013). Youth appear to be at higher risk for maladaptation immediately following separation, and to experience diminishing problems over time (Aaron and Dallaire 2010; Trice and Brewster 2004). Unforeseen extensions of separations have been linked to reports of distress and strain for absent parents (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011) and at-home parents (SteelFisher et al. 2008), though there is little information on how extensions affect youth.

Social Acceptability of Separation—Separations may change families' objective and subjective social status. Stigmatized separations, such as those due to parental incarceration, may create barriers to seeking or securing social support (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008). Youth secrecy about separations in such circumstances may thus be protective (Hagen and Myers 2003). Alternatively, separations like migration may elevate a family's status. During migration separations, the absent parent has contact with a desirable culture and provides additional economic resources (see Dreby 2007); such positive changes may elicit supportive gestures from the community. Even if separation has a neutral or positive impact

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on social status, some families or children may be reticent to disclose a parent's absence because they do not wish to be treated differently by others or because they are concerned others will not understand their experience. In the case of military deployment, youth may also be hesitant to disclose a parent's absence if he or she perceives that others in the community are unsupportive of current military operations (see Mmari et al. 2009), but may be likely to disclose the deployment if living among other military families, for example, on or near a military base.

Unexpected, Sudden, or Traumatic Separation—Some researchers (Peebles-Kleiger and Kleiger 1994) have suggested that the suddenness of the parent's departure partially explains the degree of child distress. Some separations (e.g., migration, routine deployments) are generally somewhat planful and may allow families to discuss the implications and prepare for the consequences of separation. However, children often report receiving little information about impending separations due to migration (e.g., Pantea 2011) and some parents also report leaving without informing children (see Dreby 2006). Sudden separations limit families' opportunities to prepare; however, families may also experience distress during extended periods of preparation for separation, to the extent that they must handle the ambiguous presence of the departing family member (i.e., physical presence paired with psychological absence; Wiens and Boss 2006).

Other sudden separations occur due to traumatic circumstances, as in the case where a child witnesses a parent's arrest (Aaron and Dallaire 2010; Arditti 2012) or when war trauma leads to a parent fleeing as a refugee. Some youth who have had parents suddenly deported or arrested report post-traumatic stress symptoms such as heightened anxiety and internal pressures to hide or flee when exposed to cues that remind them of the event (Bockneck et al. 2009; Dreby 2012; Poehlmann 2005b). Assessment of youths' separation-related outcomes has often failed to distinguish effects of separation from a parent from effects of concomitant traumatic events; this may lead to the overestimation of risks specific to the experience of parental absence.

Perceptions of Danger to Absent Parent—In addition to the psychosocial strain of being away from family, many separations place the absent parent at risk physically. Wartime versus peacetime military deployments and deployments to a theater of war versus out-of-theater deployments have been linked with increased distress and mental health problems among family members (Faber et al. 2008; Kelley 1994; Pierce et al. 1998). Youth in military families report that the deployed parent's safety is one of their primary concerns during deployment (Houston et al. 2009; Mmari et al. 2009; Pfefferbaum et al. 2011). Families' concerns about the dangers associated with border crossings during migration or with a parent's safety in the prison environment are also likely to be relevant to their adjustment, although little empirical work has addressed the impact of these concerns on youth functioning (but see Nesmith and Ruhland 2008 for qualitative description of youth's perceptions of prison).

Secondary Economic Losses or Gains—For many families, separation initiates processes that result in additional losses or gains, particularly financial. Permanent separations tend to lead to a shift to single-earner status, which has been associated with

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several forms of disadvantage for youth (Biblarz and Gottainer 2000). Even temporary separations can lead to a decrease in the earnings of the at-home parent, due to decreased labor force involvement in order to meet family/home demands (e.g., Arditti et al. 2003). However, some separations may allow the absent parent to earn more (e.g., migration, military deployment), which may compensate for losses of the at-home spouse's income or result in a net financial gain for the family, which may be protective for youth individually (e.g., Nobles 2011) and for parent–child relationships (Harper and Martin 2013).

Context Factors: Family and Family Member Characteristics

Absent Parent Gender—Most studies assessing absent parent gender have used father-only or mother-only samples; few have directly compared children of absent mothers to those of absent fathers on outcome measures. The literature suggests that maternal and paternal separations differ in important ways; differences in youth adjustment may be more attributable to these proximal factors than to parent gender. For example, in Applewhite and Mays' (1996) sample of youth with a deployed parent, children separated from fathers were significantly younger during their first parent absence than those separated from mothers and had moved more often; when these variables were controlled, between-group differences in youth adjustment to the index deployment were nonsignificant. Similarly, Dallaire and Wilson (2010) found higher rates of youth internalizing problems when mothers were incarcerated, but also found that youth are more likely to witness mothers' crimes, arrests, and sentencing than fathers'. Duration of separations may also differ by parent gender; migrant mothers tend to have shorter absences than fathers, and they are less likely to be permanently separated from their children by migration (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). Research on Chinese children of migrants suggests that mother absence (relative to father absence or dual parent absence) is linked to poorer school engagement and health behavior (Wen and Lin 2012). Notably, many studies comparing the adjustment of youth to paternal versus maternal absence are influenced by systematic differences in the adult reporter's gender and relationship to the youth; whereas mothers tend report on child adjustment to father absence, youth with absent mothers are variously described by fathers or family caregivers (often grandmothers).

Youth Gender—Each of the literatures contained mixed evidence of gender-specific youth vulnerability to adjustment problems. Complicating the picture are common gender differences in: rates of internalizing and externalizing symptoms (Leadbeater et al. 1999), coping strategy utilization (Vélez et al. 2011), and susceptibility to environmental factors, including parenting (Leaper 2002), among youth. Although early studies on parental deployment suggested boys were at elevated risk (Jensen et al. 1996), most recent studies (e.g., Chartrand et al. 2008; Flake et al. 2009) find no main effect of gender on outcomes. However, during adolescence, boys appear more at risk for suicidality (Reed et al. 2011) and girls for emotional, behavioral, and academic problems (Chandra et al. 2010a, b) during deployment. More complex patterns have been documented; Lester et al. (2010) found a deployment phase by gender interaction in school-age children, such that parents of girls reported higher externalizing symptoms during deployment and parents of boys reported elevated symptoms at reunion. In the incarceration literature, Cho (2010) found boys more vulnerable to school problems when incarcerations were more frequent, and girls more

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vulnerable when incarcerations were lengthy. Literatures on divorce and parental incapacity due to illness highlight the importance of dyadic congruence or incongruence of the absent parent's gender and youth's gender (Pedersen and Revenson 2005); however, gender congruence has not been fully assessed in the context of temporary separation.

Youth Age at Separation—Within the military deployment literature, a few reviews provide detailed information about the intersection of deployment demands and developmental changes during early childhood (Lieberman and Van Horn 2013) and adolescence (Milburn and Lightfoot 2013). Desert-Storm era studies suggested younger children were more at risk during deployment (e.g., Jensen et al. 1996). However, studies of recent conflicts have found a positive association between problems during deployment and age (e.g., Chandra et al. 2010a, b). Card et al. (2011) found greater evidence of deployment-related maladjustment among school-age children than among preschoolers or adolescents; however, very few studies in this meta-analysis assessed preschool or adolescent youth. Murray et al. (2012) found elevated risk of antisocial behavior when parents' incarceration occurred in adolescence versus childhood. The contradictory nature of the results on age as a moderator of youth outcomes suggests the operation of multiple mechanisms. Age effects may reflect individual developmental or family life cycle challenges that may co-occur with separation from the parent; for example, young children and adolescents are forming and re-negotiating relationships with parents, and separation from a parent during these stages may be particularly disruptive. Some developmental stages may pose additional caregiving difficulties during deployment, resulting in increased caregiver symptoms (e.g., Chartrand et al. 2008). Age is also likely a proxy for other important variables, such as the youth's reasoning about the separation, access to and ability to utilize extrafamilial resources for coping and support, and level of responsibility within the post-separation household. Accounting for these factors may clarify the nature of age differences in youth adjustment to separation.

Pre-existing Resources and Relationships—Though the multiple types of temporary parent absence assessed have much in common, they may differ systematically from one another in the level of resources versus disadvantage that already characterize families prior to separation. Pre-existing disadvantage in families experiencing incarceration, for example, often include patterns of instability in family structure and residence, lower socioeconomic resources (education, income, and occupation), poorer quality local environments, and parents' illegal behavior (Poehlmann et al. 2010). Although the individuals who join the military come various backgrounds, once within the military institutional system, these families tend to be advantaged by stable employment and benefits, and safe, well-maintained local environments. Stability in this context provides a backdrop for the instability inherent in military occupations (relocation, deployment). Despite preexisting differences between families experiencing distinct types of temporary absence, considerable heterogeneity exists within each group of families. In the military literature, little empirical attention has been paid to various structural (e.g., youth in dual-career families or stepfamilies) or experiential differences (e.g., living overseas, parent on unaccompanied tour of duty) that are likely to affect youth responses to the additional stress of deployment. Families also differ in their pre-absence family relationships and organization; qualitative

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evidence suggests that caregivers assess the overall impact of a parent's incarceration in light of the absent parent's previous relationships and involvement in the family system (Turanovic et al. 2012). Families with emotionally distant relationships prior to separation may find a sense of continuity maintaining these relationships during separation; however, distance imposed by separation may ease pre-existing tension relationships and open opportunities for more positive exchanges (Echegoyen-Nava 2013).

Context Factors: Community Characteristics

Community Norms for Separation—Some communities are better prepared to support a family enduring parental absence than others. For example, families who are separated from a parent due to transnational migration may live in communities with a high enough concentration of families also enduring migration-related separation so as to render it normative. These communities may be more likely to offer support to one another (see Pottinger 2005). By contrast, if the type of parental absence is uncommon, the community may be ill-prepared to offer appropriate support to youth and families. Military youth who live on military bases or attend Department of Defense schools are likely to benefit from the experience of other youth and community members with deployment, and to have their experiences appreciated and normalized. In support of this, adolescents reported military peer support helpful during deployment (Mmari et al. 2009), and at-home parents reported lower adolescent problems when living in base housing (Chandra et al. 2010a, b).

However, research has also documented risks of separation being normative in communities. A "culture of migration" may promote lower educational aspirations and achievement among children of migrants; it has been observed that these youth tend to utilize their parents' networks to seek and obtain employment in the receiving culture and may thus be less invested in education in their home nation (see Nobles 2011). Due to the high rates of mobility in military families, these youth may similarly avoid becoming connected to their local communities and may then have difficulty accessing support during deployment.

Transitions Between Communities—In some cases, separation from the parent leads to a relocation of the remaining family members to a new community. For some military families experiencing deployment (or enduring an unaccompanied tour of duty), a move to a previous duty station or to the location of either parent's family of origin may provide additional tangible (e.g., childcare), emotional, and financial support (MacDermid 2006). Families may move for other reasons when a parent is absent: to be closer to the absent parent, which may allow for increased visitation (e.g., Roy and Dyson 2005); to leave the current environment and gain a "fresh start" (particularly if absence is stigmatized); or because secondary financial gains or losses associated with separation have made a move possible or necessary. Mobility may thus be associated with both potential risks and protective factors, but at the least, moving likely alters families' perceptions and receipt of social support in the short-term.

Altered Community Access or Engagement—Even when families remain in their communities during a parent's absence, the youth's access to the community (relationships, institutions, or activities) may be affected. Some youth may find it more difficult to engage

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in extracurricular activities due to practical issues (e.g., transportation problems) or because they no longer wish to be involved in activities previously shared with the absent parent (Mmari et al. 2009). Others, however, may increase their involvement in relationships and activities outside the home as a method of coping (e.g., forming/maintaining social connections or keeping busy; see Nesmith and Ruhland 2008). Some of these relationships and activities may be protective, whereas others (e.g., affiliation with deviant peers, experimenting with substances or risky activities) may enhance the likelihood of maladjustment.

Additional Caregivers—Some parents create new childcare arrangements during separations. The available evidence suggests that generally, the mere presence of additional adult caregivers is a protective factor for youth (Lahaie et al. 2009), as is a high quality caregiver–youth relationship (Mackintosh et al. 2006). However, youth who were in nonfamily care during maternal incarceration had elevated levels of noncompliance and higher rates of school dropout (Trice and Brewster 2004).

Even if caregiver–youth relationships are positive, children in non-parental care during parent absence may also experience difficulties with new caretaking arrangements. Studies of youth whose parent’s migration or incarceration leaves them in another adult’s care suggest that youth’s attachment to their new caregivers or conflict between caregiver and parent may diminish the parent’s presence and influence in the youth’s life (Bernhard et al. 2009; Poehlmann 2005a). Transitions between caregivers (which are more common when parent–caregiver relationships are strained; see Poehlmann et al. 2008b) are linked to increased depressive and self-esteem problems for youth of migrant parents (Pottinger 2005). Finally, youth may experience an additional loss when separated from their caregivers in order to reunite with their parent(s) (Suárez-Orozco et al. 2011). Research should more fully assess the impact of supplementary caregivers (i.e., in addition to an at-home caregiver) during parental absence; especially since some evidence suggests that time spent in multiple concurrent care arrangements is linked to poorer child health (Arditti et al. 2003).

Summary: Stressor and Context Factors Related to Temporary Parent Absence

As the foregoing section suggests, each of the included temporary absence literatures describes potentially influential contextual factors—related to the features of the absence or to characteristics of the family and community context—that may affect family relationship processes of adaptation. Generally, absences that pose more danger or hardship to the absent parent (e.g., when separations are traumatic, long, or lead to financial deprivation) are linked to poorer functioning for youth. In addition, the developmental stage of the youth and the structure of the family may confer additional risks or serve as protective factors—however, these indices of risk/resilience often hint at more proximal family mechanisms (e.g., parent gender may suggest which roles parents fill in the family that will need to be managed differently during absence; youth age likely indexes both levels of youth understanding of the absence and the presence of other developmental or social challenges like puberty or starting school). Finally, investigations of community-level factors suggest ways in which absence may alter the availability or quality of community support for the youth during the

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parent's absence. However, most of the factors described are indices of risk or resilience whose mechanism of action within the individual youth or family is largely unexplained. The family is the proximal environment in which many of these mechanisms unfold; based on a systematic review, the remainder of this paper describes themes that emerged and the supporting literature of key parent–child relationship processes in the context of temporary parent absence.

Proximal Family Relationship Processes During Parental Absence: A Systematic Review

We undertook our systematic review of the temporary parent absence literatures to identify parent–child relationship process mechanisms that may account for the influence of the context factors reviewed above. The family system variables presented here represent ways that family systems adapt to temporary parent absence and, as contrasted with the dimensions previously described, represent responses that family members themselves determine. Based on the systematic review, we present common qualitative and quantitative findings across the three temporary parent absence literatures. Each individual literature, due to its disciplinary origins and/or theoretical perspective, tends to emphasize different dimensions of the parent–child separation experiences. However, the comparisons drawn below are offered in hopes of fostering dialogue among these independent but related literatures, to better characterize the influence of temporary parental absence on family processes.

Themes were developed through repeated review of the results reported by the included studies, with particular attention to patterns of results that were similar across absence types. In keeping with the integrative aims of this review, a similar pattern of findings had to be evident within at least two of the three literatures to be identified as a common theme. Initially, four general themes of inquiry emerged from this process: (1) communication among family members, (2) features of parenting during absence, (3) negotiation of decision-making power and authority, and (4) shifts in family roles. Further review within each of these domains suggested subordinate themes or approaches to assessing the general themes; some were specified clearly by theories guiding the research (e.g., distinctions between instrumental and emotional support in family roles) and others arose from apparent differences across studies in the conceptualization of relevant issues within broad themes (e.g., communication processes reflecting regulation of opportunities for contact versus types of information discussed). When possible, labels for themes were derived from the literature itself or theory; however, these labels should generally be viewed as attempts to identify overarching family process concepts addressed by studies of temporary parent absence rather than empirical constructs assessed by the included studies.

Table 2 provides short descriptions of the findings of individual studies for each theme and subtheme across the three types of temporary parent absence. The table summarizes findings across the three literatures (in columns) within each of the four general themes and subordinate themes (listed as rows). Studies in each cell of the table are sorted by publication date and then by author. When studies had findings applicable to multiple theme areas (e.g., parent–caregiver relations affecting communication), these findings appear at both locations in the table.

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Communication

Effects of Contact—A central concern in the temporary absence literatures has been to assess the extent of the absent parent's continued involvement in family affairs; many studies have assessed the frequency and type of contact between the youth and absent parent (for a detailed review of parent–child contact during incarceration, see Poehlmann et al. 2010). Some studies find that contact positively influences youth functioning. For example, youth who have contact with their incarcerated parent report less alienation from and anger towards the parent, and are less likely to be suspended from or drop out of school (Shlafer and Poehlmann 2010; Trice and Brewster 2004). Another study of incarcerated mothers (Foster 2012) found that mothers with less contact with their children perceive their children to be growing up or maturing faster than their peers. Loper et al. (2009) reported that incarcerated mothers' stress about their parenting competence was negatively associated with contact frequency. Similarly, the frequency of migrant father visitation and telephone contact was associated with lower emotional and behavioral problems in a sample of overseas Filipino worker families, and the frequency of telephone contact was positively associated with parent–child relationship quality (Harper and Martin 2013). In a study of Indonesian and Filipino migrant households, Graham et al. (2012) found that Indonesian youth who had less than weekly contact with their migrant mothers reported significantly lower levels of happiness than youth whose mothers were in contact more frequently. In the same study, Filipino youth who had less than weekly contact with migrant fathers reported significantly lower willingness to seek social support when in need than those with more frequent contact.

However, not all studies find parent–child contact to be protective or beneficial for youth development. Nobles (2011) failed to find a link between migrant fathers' contact and involvement with their children and children's educational aspirations or attainment. Dallaire et al. (2012) found higher frequency of contact with incarcerated parents was linked with more evidence of role reversal in children's family drawings. One possible explanation for these mixed findings concerns the absent parent's risk factors or lack of resources, which may create structural or emotional/relational barriers to contact; incarcerated mothers with more risk factors had less frequent visitation (Poehlmann et al. 2008b) and Vietnamese migrant mothers who could only obtain inflexible work arrangements had particularly low levels of contact with home (Hoang and Yeoh 2012).

Barriers to Contact—The literature suggests various reasons for family members' failures to establish or maintain contact during separations. Absent parents may avoid contact with youth to the extent that they feel ashamed about their absence or aspects of their separate lives. Dreby (2006) found that shame over failing to provide (either financially or emotionally) was linked to diminished contact with children among Mexican migrants. Caregivers may also directly affect communication between the absent parent and child(ren) by serving as facilitators or barriers to contact. Findings on migration and incarceration suggest that at-home caregivers tend to limit parental access to children when the relationship between caregiver and parent is discordant or when they perceive the parent to be a bad influence for children (Bernhard et al. 2009; Nesmith and Ruhland 2008). Even if caregivers are not personally invested in limiting parental access to children, other barriers

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may prevent them from establishing contact. Several studies of transnational families found initiation of contact was nearly always one-sided, from the absent parent to the family due to the prohibitive costs of telecommunications in the sending country or irregular migrant work schedules (Echegoyen-Nava 2013; Hoang and Yeoh 2012; Lee and Koo 2006). Visitation with incarcerated parents is also difficult to arrange given the often remote locations of facilities and institutional restrictions on visits (see Nesmith and Ruhland 2008 for children's perceptions of these difficulties). On the other hand, the pre-existing bond between parent and caregiver may facilitate parent–child contact; Loper and Clarke (2013) found children are placed with their maternal grandmother during maternal incarceration had increased contact if the incarcerated mother had positive memories of her own childhood attachment to her mother (i.e., the grandmother/caregiver).

As youth develop their own strategies for managing relationships, they may actively seek connections with an absent parent or, alternatively, reject the parent's contact attempts. These behaviors may be independent of the influence of the caregiver; some youth in Shlafer and Poehlmann's (2010) study had contact with their incarcerated parent without the caregiver's knowledge or approval. In contrast, some children avoid or refuse contact with their absent parent, particularly if they resent the parent's absence or if they are too young to have meaningful exchanges. Adolescents in Dreby's (2007) study and Pantea's (2011) study limited their contact with parents as a way to achieve some authority in the relationship, or to undermine parental authority. In contrast, young children in Hoang and Yeoh's (2012) study refused their parent's calls due to "fear" and unfamiliarity.

Quality of Contact—One common finding in the migration literature is that, particularly during lengthy separations, contact with the absent parent is sustained but the intimacy of that contact diminishes over time. Parrenas (2001), in her research on Filipina mothers, referred to this process as the "commodification of love", in which parents show their affection for their children though provision of their wants and needs while experiencing a loss of intimate connection (see also Moran-Taylor's 2008 sample of Guatemalan parents). Similarly, Dreby (2006) noted that weekly phone contacts between parents and children revolve around finances and Hoang and Yeoh (2012) reported that calls become routinized as parents inquire about the same subjects and offer the same advice repeatedly. Youth who visit their parents in prison generally report negative experiences and limited ability to interact with their parents as they would like (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008; Shlafer and Poehlmann 2010). Folk et al. (2012) found that frequency of contact was not associated with the quality of incarcerated parents' messages nor with their children's responses to them. Youth experiencing deployment report diminished quality of communication with the deployed parent as well as shifts in their methods of contact; during deployment, contact by email becomes more frequent and contact by phone diminishes (Houston et al. 2013).

Information Regulation About the Separation Event—Once contact has been made, youth and parents also attempt to regulate information (a) about the separation stressor and (b) about the lives they live while separated. The extent to which youth and parents share information openly versus engage in strategies to conceal information is likely to affect the

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parent–child relationship and parent and youth psychosocial functioning, although data on these outcomes are currently lacking.

Parents of children coping with parental absence may desire to protect their children from distress associated with the loss; this concern is often manifested in parents' decisions about the types and quantity of information children should have about the circumstances surrounding parent absence. Children with incarcerated parents (Bockneck et al. 2009) and migrant/deported parents (Pantea 2011; Pottinger 2005) often report that they received little information about the reasons for the parent's absence. Absent parents struggle to explain both the necessity of their absence and their preference not to be separated. Salvadoran migrant mothers in Horton's (2009) study reported difficulties explaining or justifying the decision to migrate to their children; children in this study attempted to bargain with their mothers to keep them from leaving, which made parental explanations more difficult. Perhaps because of this difficulty, return migrant fathers report that they may leave without telling their children (Dreby 2006).

Caregivers also must determine how much information children will be given about the separation. Perhaps because of concerns about stigma, caregivers of children with incarcerated parents often given minimal information or occasionally actively mislead or deceive the youth about the parent's absence. For example, Poehlmann (2005b) found that 35 % of youth in her sample were given misinformation (e.g., that mother was away at college, in hospital) or no information about the reasons for maternal incarceration; some of these children—who knew about the incarceration anyway—felt that it was a secret even from their caregivers. In this sample, caregiver honesty about the separation was marginally positively associated with the security of the child's attachment representations of the caregiver. Even if children are not misinformed, many are given few details about the separation and may begin to regard the separation as a secret or mystery. Youth in Hagen and Myers' (2003) study, particularly younger children, reported that they were requested to maintain secrecy about the parent's absence; for youth, this secrecy was related to perceptions of stigma overall, but was related to better psychosocial outcomes (i.e., lower internalizing and externalizing) among youth who had low social support. In the military deployment literature, limiting child knowledge about the deployment may also be protective. School staff perceived that children's knowledge about their parent's deployment was linked to greater anxiety surrounding the parent's safety (Chandra et al. 2010b); children of deployed parents do report parental safety as their primary worry during deployment (Houston et al. 2009) and worries about the absent parent were positively associated with youth internalizing symptoms during deployment (Pfefferbaum et al. 2011). Youth reported that their communication with the caregiver parent about deployment improved during the deployment phase—although general communication worsened—and this deployment communication was associated with more parent-reported youth internalizing problems (Houston et al. 2013). It thus is possible that both minimal information (or deception) and extensive information about a separation may pose risk to some children.

A child's understanding of separation is likely to be co-constructed within the family; children tend to receive information about reasons for separation from parents or caregivers,

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and are guided by parents to make sense of conflicting messages (namely "my parent loves me" and "my parent left me"). Children may believe that their parent is honorably sacrificing his/her own desires to be with the family for the betterment of the family (e.g., migration) or others (e.g., military service). Alternatively, children may believe that the parent chose to leave for self-interested reasons or because he/she is rejecting or abandoning the family. Children who are angry or dissatisfied with separation (Poehlmann 2005b; Wen and Lin 2012), or feel rejected and/or abandoned by the parent (Pottinger 2005), are vulnerable to negative psychosocial outcomes. The effects of positive attributions (e.g., that the parent's absence is sacrificial or honorable) are not well understood, although youth do report these attributions and feelings (Houston et al. 2009). Additionally, some youth may view the separation as required or influenced by outside forces/institutions (such as the military, employer, justice system), controlled by God or fate, or as completely uncontrollable. Youth in Nesmith and Ruhland's (2008) study described complex attributions about their parents' incarceration, in which they recognized the parent's responsibility and the role of the sentencing body or legal requirements, but also expressed positive feelings about their parent.

Information Regulation About Family Members' Separated Lives—During parent absence, both at-home and absent family members may be motivated to protect one another by concealing some information about their separate lives. Protective buffering is conceptualized as a behavioral strategy of minimizing disclosures of potentially upsetting information with the intent to reduce the hearer's distress or to avoid interpersonal conflict (Coyne and Smith 1991). Parents located in warzones or prisons may engage in protective buffering to avoid sharing details about daily dangers (e.g., RPG fire, aggression from other inmates) and privations (e.g., insufficient food, poor living conditions) to which they are exposed. Schmalzbauer (2008) described the frustration that Honduran migrant parents experience when they engage in protective buffering of their at-home family members. These parents wish to protect their children from the knowledge of their struggles in the United States, but are also distressed that their children do not perceive how hard they work and how much they sacrifice for their wellbeing. When absent parents do maintain high quality contact with youth during deployment separations, this is associated with heightened youth internalizing and school problems, as well as youth feelings of anger and loneliness (Houston et al. 2013). This may suggest that less intimate communication during separation could protect their children from worry and loneliness, as parents anticipate.

Children and at-home spouses may similarly wish to avoid burdening the absent parent with their daily hassles (e.g., car troubles, behavioral problems at school). Romanian adolescent children of migrants in Pantea's (2012) study reported that they protected their absent parent(s) by concealing their strains and sacrifices at home; and other youth in the same study reported frustration that parents were not aware of strains at home. Other at-home family members also tended not to discuss any stress or difficulty at home, believing that the migrant parent already had enough to worry about; this may particularly be the case for male migrants and their female relatives (Echegoyen-Nava 2013). Although the health literature shows negative mental health and relational outcomes related to protective buffering (e.g., Langer et al. 2009), outcomes for protective buffering associated with a parent's temporary

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absence is not known. Interestingly, with modern technologies—particularly those that combine audio and video media in real time (e.g., webcams, videoconferencing)—family members have greater access to one another during separations due to deployment and migration. Concealing evidence of chaos in the home or mortar fire on the battlefront or in the receiving country may be more difficult as a result of these technologies.

Parenting

Several studies have assessed parenting behaviors in families experiencing parental absence. With few exceptions (e.g., Lawrence-Wills 2004; Parrenas 2001), these studies have focused on the caregiver's parenting rather than the absent parent's parenting behavior, making the latter domain a fruitful area for further research. Across varied separation types, the caregiver's functioning and the quality of the youth's relationship with him/her emerge as primary covariates of youth adaptation to separation (Chandra et al. 2010a, b; Harper and Martin 2013; Jensen et al. 1996; Mackintosh et al. 2006); these findings have inspired further investigations into parenting behaviors that may transmit risk or resilience. Currently, the empirical evidence describes the effects of broad positive (e.g., support) and negative (e.g. harshness) aspects of parenting in the context of parent absence; future research should assess discrete parent behaviors within these domains, and examine the function of other well-described parenting behaviors (e.g., monitoring/supervision) during parent absence.

Support/Warmth—There is some evidence that at-home parents and youth perceive a decline in the parent's positive engagement with youth during temporary separations. In the deployment literature, mothers reported a decline in intimacy with their children during their husbands' deployment to Somalia, and mothers' lowest level of intimacy with their children coincided with the highest level of child problems behaviors (Zeff et al. 1997). During the Gulf War period, mothers whose husbands were deployed to warzones reported lower nurturance across the deployment cycle than those with husbands on peacetime deployments (Kelley 1994).

High levels of warmth and support in the caregiver–child relationship have been associated with better youth functioning during parental absence. Nurturance by the at-home caregiver was negatively associated with youth internalizing and externalizing behavior during paternal Naval deployment (Kelley 1994), Filipino migrant fathers' absence (Harper and Martin 2013), and mother's incarceration (Mackintosh et al. 2006). Grandparent caregivers' responsivity was negatively associated with externalizing symptoms among youth enduring maternal incarceration (Poehlmann et al. 2008a). In a rare assessment of the parenting behaviors of the absent parent, more positive relationships between incarcerated mothers and their daughters were associated with lower rates of daughters' antisocial behavior (Lawrence-Wills 2004).

Harshness—Caregivers also may be required to assume new disciplinary roles during parental absence. Parents who previously relied on the absent parent to discipline children may struggle to determine or deliver appropriate punishments for bad behavior. Inexperience and discomfort with the disciplinary role may lead to permissiveness/

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indulgence or punitiveness among temporarily single parents. Even if caregivers previously administered discipline, the strain of single parenthood may lead to increased harshness of punishments or a lower tolerance for misbehavior. In a study of Navy families' deployment experiences, mothers of boys reported that they yelled more before and during deployment than after (Kelley 1994). Similarly, adolescents in Huebner et al.'s (2007) study reported increased conflict and negativity in their relationships with their caregiver parents during the deployment period.

Coercive and harsh parenting has been associated with child functioning. Higher levels of yelling and physical punishment were associated with higher child externalizing problems prior to parental military deployment (Kelley 1994). Among youth experiencing parental incarceration, caregiver hostility and rejection have been associated with greater evidence of attachment insecurity in family drawings (Dallaire et al. 2012) and with elevated child psychosocial problems (Mackintosh et al. 2006).

Power and Authority

Changes in the structure of a family can lead to ambiguity regarding its daily functioning. For example, children may be uncertain whom they should consult about desired activities, and caregivers and absent parents may find it difficult to coordinate attempts to parent their children. Studies of families experiencing temporary parent absence have documented several patterns of relating that arise from this ambiguity.

Parent–Child and Caregiver–Child Relationships—A few studies in the international migration literature have explicitly focused on shifts in parent–child relationships. Dreby (2007) documented common patterns in Mexican youths' relationships with their parents by developmental stage. Among preadolescents, deference to the caregiver's authority was common, and was seen as a way for children to slight their absent parent and undermine his/her authority. Latin American migrant parents living in Canada in Bernhard et al. (2009) study also reported that their authority as a parent was undermined as their children began to obey their local caregivers. Adolescents appeared to exploit the ambiguity of parental authority by either defying of both parent and caregiver or by deferring to the more lenient parent figure (Dreby 2007), a pattern that was also apparent in Moran-Taylor's (2008) study of Guatemalan migrant parents and Schmalzbauer's (2004) study of Honduran families affected by migration.

Other studies of children of migrants describe youths' strategic use of communication media to challenge parental authority. As mentioned earlier, youth may choose to refuse their absent parent's attempts to contact them (e.g. Hoang and Yeoh 2012). Youth in Pantea's (2011) sample of Romanian youth in migrant families reported that they selectively disclosed information to their absent parents in order to assert their own power in the relationship. Other youth resisted discussion of their own migration or reunion with the absent parent as a way of asserting their own wills (Dreby 2007). The extent to which changes in parental authority permit greater involvement of youth in family decision-making processes is a topic worthy of additional empirical attention, particularly because these

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changes may promote positive outcomes (e.g., allowing youth to gain valuable skills) or negative outcomes (e.g., undermining parental authority).

Parent–Caregiver Relationships—Caregivers may struggle to maintain the same levels of parental authority in the family in the absence of the parent. When the absent parent is only occasionally available to consult with about decisions within the family, the at-home caregiver must make at least some parenting decisions (particularly time-sensitive ones) alone. Difficulty managing co-parenting relationships during temporary separations is common. Migrant parents from several sending nations have voiced concerns about the quality of care their children will receive from the caregiver in their absence; common worries include that caregivers will be too permissive, "spoiling" children or failing to provide discipline or structure (Coe 2008; Dreby 2006) or will be overly punitive or neglectful (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997). Moreover, as noted above, the alliance between caregiver and parent has implications for the degree of contact and connection the absent parent and child will maintain during separation, with more positive relationships associated with more contact (Poehlmann et al. 2008b) and with relationships marked by tension or distrust associated with little or no contact (Dreby 2006; Nesmith and Ruhland 2008; Roy and Dyson 2005).

Finally, the co-parenting alliance may be a powerful influence on parents' identity as parents and in the child's confidence in the parental subsystem. Loper et al. (2009) found that incarcerated fathers' parenting competence stress was associated with the parent–caregiver alliance but not with parent–child contact frequency; fathers with better alliances with the caregiver reported lower levels of stress about their competence to parent. Similarly, Bernhard et al.'s (2009) participants reported that the interposition of other caregivers in the parent–child relationship led to the participants' perception that their parental identity and significance had eroded. Conflictual relationships between the parent and caregiver also appear to undermine all "parental" authority among children of migrant parents (Moran-Taylor 2008; Schmalzbauer 2004). This tension may have implications for youth behavioral outcomes; observational research conducted on co-parenting discussions between incarcerated mothers and their children's caregivers found that the quality of co-parenting was negatively associated with child externalizing problems (Baker et al. 2010).

Less information is available about the processes that lead to high-quality parent–caregiver relationships. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997) found that Latin American migrant mothers reported that their engagement in care-giving work in the receiving nation increased their empathy for their own children's caregivers. Incarcerated fathers on work release described several behaviors that their childrens' caregivers engaged into facilitate father–youth contact, including orchestrating opportunities for youth and fathers to "run into" each other in the community, moving closer to the father's workplace, or driving fathers to and from work; these men noted that part of the reason they felt the caregivers engaged in these behaviors was because they understood the difficulty of the father's situation (Roy and Dyson 2005). Finally, incarcerated mothers who had previous high-quality relationships with their mothers during childhood tended to have high quality parent–caregiver alliances when they placed their children with their own mothers, suggesting continuity in the quality

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of parent– caregiver relationships from pre-separation to the period of absence (Loper and Clarke 2013).

Role Shifts

As described by ambiguous loss theory (Boss 1999), families often must negotiate a redistribution of responsibilities and roles during a family member's (physical or psychological) absence. In this process, youth and at-home parents attempt to meet both instrumental *and* emotional needs. Almost without exception, the empirical literature has focused on youth assuming new roles and responsibilities during a parent's absence, although theoretical work discusses the caregiver assuming new responsibilities, particularly relating to discipline and decision-making (both of which are primarily instrumental).

Instrumental Roles—Recent qualitative evidence from youth experiencing parental military deployment (Houston et al. 2009; Huebner et al. 2007) suggests that youth help during parental absence by babysitting and doing more housework. Youth may also take on more explicitly adultlike responsibilities, such as providing supervision for siblings (Pantea 2012) or tangible care for parents (e.g., sending food/clothing; Nesmith and Ruhland 2008). Youths' provision of instrumental support to their at-home parents may lead to short-term distress but may also promote resilience and prepare these youth to fulfill adult roles.

Emotional Roles—During a period of marital separation, at-home/custodial parents may experience even a temporary loss of the spouse as creating a vacuum for emotional support, and children may fill this vacancy. Some forms of youth provision of emotional support can blur or dissolve boundaries between generations. These types of role shifts have been primarily characterized as "parentification" of the youth, indicating that youth assume roles previously filled by the absent parent—those of spouse and co-parent. Children of incarcerated parents described worries about their parent and caregiver (Nesmith and Ruhland 2008), as have youth with deployed parents (Huebner et al. 2007; Pfefferbaum et al. 2011) and migrant parents (Pantea 2012) although it is not yet clear whether these worries stimulate the development of parentified child roles. A few descriptions of youth's support of their parents suggests that some youth do become carers for their parent or caregiver; Nesmith and Ruhland (2008) included a few descriptions of children who felt it was their role to provide physical protection for the parent and Pantea (2012) described children of migrants who felt called to boost the morale of a disheartened caregiver. School officials also perceive that some youth in military families provide peer/parental care to their caregiver parents (Chandra et al. 2010b). These qualitative descriptions are striking, but no research exists documenting the prevalence or quantifying the impact of these role reversals on youth or family functioning.

Summary: Proximal Family Relationship Processes During Parental Absence

Our systematic review of the three literatures revealed several family processes associated with temporary parent absence that elucidate how stress and/or resilience are transmitted within the family during incarceration, migration, or deployment. These findings highlight ways in which temporary changes in overall family structure impact the family's functioning in everyday contexts. Youth and their caregivers often attempt to maintain a degree of

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continuity in their relationship with the absent parent by communicating with the parent, but conversation within the context of absence may be particularly fraught with anxiety and uncertainty due to the parent's circumstances as well as ongoing stress at home. One of the primary ways such home stress may manifest itself is in the caregiver's altered parenting of the youth, through diminished support and enhanced harshness. Making routine decisions may also be challenging during temporary absences and, as the literatures suggest, amplified conflict may surround those decisions. That is, the caregiver's proximity to issues at home may give him/her additional power in the co-parental relationship, and youth may attempt to participate in decision-making in new ways (sometimes attempting to make the decisions themselves). Parental absence may also require new role fulfillment for the youth, particularly if they need to become more involved in providing tangible help or emotional care. These domains of relationship change suggest the diversity of impacts that uncertainty —which may be the primary characteristic of *temporary* separations—has on family systems. Families must constantly determine (a) which aspects of family functioning should be altered and (b) whether and how these changes will involve present or absent family members, and they make these determinations knowing that their solutions may ultimately be rescinded at reunion.

Discussion and Implications

The paper integrates the literature across three types of parent absence—migration, incarceration, and military deployment—to highlight the similarities and differences across different types of temporary absence. Despite developing within different disciplines, asking somewhat different questions, and using different methodologies, common themes emerged. Juxtaposing the three types of temporary parent absence draws attention to wide-ranging characteristics and processes of parent-absent families, highlights points of intersection across types of parental absences, and suggests shared features of parental absence that pose risk to children.

In light of the numbers of families and youth affected by temporary parent absence, this paper was written to begin a dialogue about what family characteristics and processes are harmful or adaptive. The first focus in this paper on stressor and context factors provides information on a range of variables that contribute to the way that families and children might respond when one parent is temporarily absent. For example, research on families affected by incarceration has emphasized the importance of understanding the implications of social stigma for family life; studies of migration and military deployment have also considered the impact of informal community support and norms on family adjustment. Although many of the context and individual variables cannot be changed (e.g., length, suddenness, frequency, and economic ramifications of separation, youth age, community acceptance, and so on), these are important variables to consider when trying to understand the complexities of children's experiences in a household with a temporarily absent parent.

The second focus of this paper, on family processes that serve as proximal mechanisms of youth adjustment to temporary parent absence, offers a somewhat different perspective on these families. Typically the absence of a parent is described by family members and treated by service providers as a significant stressful life event with which the individual must cope.

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The systematic review of studies suggests that an individualistic perspective on assessing and treating youth with temporarily absent parents may overlook central aspects of the experience that are entwined in family relational dynamics and that involve and affect multiple family members and family subsystems. The ways in which families adapt during temporary parent absences—through availability and openness of communication, the manner in which parental warmth and discipline are expressed, the distribution of authority for making family decisions, and the redistribution of functional and emotional roles—are dimensions that, to a large degree, are determined by family members themselves. These dimensions also can be important influences on family and individual well-being and relationship health. Clinical prevention and intervention efforts must attend not only to facilitating family members' adaptations to individual stressors associated with these absences (e.g., stressful jobs; involvement in new overarching prison, military, national systems; intensified caregiving or household demands) but also to ways that families can adapt to altered family patterns.

It is reasonable to conclude from this review that temporary parent absences potentially have profound and broad effects on family life, ranging from alterations in "mundane" routines such as talking about the day or who is responsible for chores, to more significant shifts in styles of relating, adopting new parenting approaches and strategies, and altered decision-making authority. Not surprisingly, the temporary absence of one parent appears to involve a weakening of that parent–child relationship and intensification, i.e., more involvement and potentially more conflict, of the current caregiver–child relationship. Temporary parental absence also appears to give youth more voice/choice in family affairs, such as the ability to reject or seek contact, providing care and instrumental support, and questioning or defying authority. As noted by Link and Palinkas's (2013) discussion of long range effects on families associated with military deployment, there still is much to be learned about how families again adjust with the return of the absent parent and about the long-range implications of temporary shifts in family process.

Nonetheless, in interpreting the findings, it is important to recognize several important limitations. First, to our knowledge, there have been no direct comparisons of family functioning across these types of parent absence. Thus, we are limited in what we can conclude about common themes and parallel circumstances, as well as what we can say about differences in the experiences associated with parental incarceration, migration, or deployment. Second, our review of the existing research suggests that the noted changes in family relationships are not yet described to the extent necessary to provide explicit instruction about which processes are most harmful or most adaptive. We have discovered hints about important processes but more research is needed to translate this information into recommendations for intervention or prevention. Third, there are other forms of temporary parent absence beyond the three studied here. Work related separations and temporary parental hospitalizations due to physical or mental health problems, although not having extensive literatures on their child-related impacts, are other circumstances that could be examined through a similar lens. Finally, many of the studies included in our systematic review suffered from methodological limitations—particularly the use of cross-sectional designs, single reporters, and small convenience samples—that limit the generalizability of their individual findings. Despite these methodological constraints, a number of important

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family process themes did emerge and generalize across multiple studies. Recent research has addressed some of the conceptual limitations evident among the included studies; for example, deployment researchers are beginning to attend to the history of temporary absence (e.g., through assessing duration of absence rather than number of deployments; Mansfield et al. 2011). Other temporary absence studies might similarly strengthen cross-sectional investigations by incorporating similar variables that assess cumulative indices of absence exposure and experience.

In sum, the aim of this review was to bridge the separate research silos of temporary parent absence due to incarceration, deployment, and migration, and to present an integrative review, thereby bringing some of the family and relational features of temporary parent absence into sharper focus. Research assessing temporary parent absence has the potential to inform diverse areas of inquiry in family science, and literatures on disparate causes for these absences can also potentially strengthen one another. This review suggests some underlying similarities and differences in the types of stressors experienced by these families. If future studies rely upon diverse sources of previous knowledge, and assess broad dimensions of family experience that may characterize parental absence generally, findings in this area of family science might increase in generalizability and in rate of knowledge accretion and application.

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Table 1

Description of included studies

Authors	Parent gender; location	Sample	Child age; gender	Design	Family process constructs assessed (modality and reporter)
Incarceration					
Baker et al. (2010)	Mother; Florida	40 mother–grandmother pairs	2.5–7.5, *M* = 3.4; gender NR	Mixed, Obs	Parent–caregiver co-parenting (Obs Discussions, PR and CR Interviews)
Bockneck et al. (2009)	65 % father, 20 % mother, 15 % other family; Connecticut	35 children	1st–10th grade; 54 % male	Mixed	Child's family relationships (YR Interview)
Dallaire et al. (2012)	71 % father, 29 % mother; Southern U.S	44 children separated from parents (24 due to incarceration) and their caregiver	6–10, *M* = 7.7; 58 % male	Quant, Obs	Parent–child contact (CR Questionnaire), caregiver warmth/hostility (YR Questionnaire), attachment insecurity (Obs Children's Family Drawings)
Folk et al. (2012)	56 % mother; Virginia	186 families; 61 caregivers	Range: NR, M = 7.6; 53 % female	Quant, Obs	Quality and content of parent messages (Obs Messages), parent–child contact (PR and CR Questionnaire) child response to parent messages (CR Questionnaire)
Foster (2012)	Mother; Texas	120 incarcerated parents	1–17, *M* = 12, report on oldest; 57 % male	Mixed	Parent–child relationship (PR Questionnaire)
Hagen and Myers (2003)	Mother; location NR	116 children attending summer camp	6–13, *M* = 9; 64 % female	Quant	Perceived secrecy required by caregiver (YR Questionnaire), perceived support (YR Questionnaire)
Hissel et al. (2011)	Mother; Netherlands	30 mothers of 68 children, 31 of those children, and 35 children reported on by caregivers (caregiver *N* = NR)	Child participants: 5–18, *M* = 9; 52 % male	Mixed	Child well-being/ concerns, parent–child contact (YR, PR, and CR Interview)
Lawrence-Wills (2004)	Mother; Midwest urban city	99 mothers of adolescent daughters	10–16, *M* = 13, report on oldest; 100 % female	Quant	Mother–daughter relationship (PR Questionnaire), maternal supervision (PR Questionniare)
Loper et al. (2009)	53 % father; Texas and Ohio	211 incarcerated parents	0–21, *M* = 11; gender NR	Quant	Alliance with caregiver (PR Questionnaire)
Loper and Clarke (2013)	Mother; location NR	138 incarcerated mothers (51 placed children with their mother; 87 with	Range NR, *M* = 9.8; 54 % female	Quant	Mother–grandmother attachment relationship during mother's childhood (PR Questionnaire),

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Authors	Parent gender; location	Sample	Child age; gender	Design	Family process constructs assessed (modality and reporter)
		other caregiver)			coparenting alliance with caregiver (PR Questionnaire), contact with child and caregiver (PR Questionniare)
Mackintosh et al. (2006)	Mother; location NR	69 children at summer camp, and 25 caregivers of 34 of those children	6–12, $M = 9.3$; 52 % female	Quant	Caregiver acceptance of child (YR and CR Questionnaires administered by interview)
Nesmith and Ruhland (2008)	Father (2 families both parents); location NR	34 children from 21 families	8–17, M = NR (most 13); 62 % male	Qual; up to 3 interviews each within 12 months	Perceived family changes (YR Interview)
Poehlmann (2005a)	Mother; Midwest	96 parents, and 60 of their children and children's caregivers	2–7.5, $M = 4.7$; 53 % male	Mixed	Children's attachment representations (YR Story-Stem Completion), information given about separation (CR Interview), visitation with parent (PR and CR Questionnaire)
Poehlmann (2005b)	Mother; Midwest	Same as Poehlmann (2005a)		Quant, Obs	Home environment quality (Obs)
Poehlmann et al. (2008a)	Mother; Midwest	79 children in grandparental care (37 due to incarceration; subsample of Poehlmann 2005a)	3–7, $M = 4.41$ (Inc), $M = 2.55$ (comparison); 51 % of full sample male	Quant	Caregiver responsivity (Obs Home Environment), child attachment (YR Story-Stem Completion)
Poehlmann et al. (2008b)	Mother; Midwest	96 mothers [from (Poehlmann 2005a) sample]	NR	Mixed	Mother–child contact, mother–caregiver relationship quality (PR Questionnaire and Interview)
Roy and Dyson (2005)	Father; Indiana	40 incarcerated fathers in a work release program	NR	Qual	Caregiver restriction/ facilitation of parent–child relationship (PR Interview)
Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010)	86 % father, 7 % mother, 7 % both; Wisconsin	57 children in mentoring program and their caregivers and mentors	4–15, $M = 9.1$; 60 % female	Mixed; monthly follow-ups for 6 mos	Contact with parent (CR Interview), parent- and caregiver–child relations (CR, YR, and Mentor-report Interviews, YR Questionnaires)
Trice and Brewster (2004)	Mother; Virginia	38 mothers of 58 children, and 47 of those children's caregivers (comparison group: 41 same-sex best friends)	13–19, M = NR; 52 % female	Quant	Contact with parent (PR Questionnaire)

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Authors	Parent gender; location	Sample	Child age; gender	Design	Family process constructs assessed (modality and reporter)
Turanovic et al. (2012)	54 % father, 44 % mother, 2 % both; Arizona	100 caregivers	NR	Qual	Pre-incarceration parent–child and parent–caregiver relationships and changes since incarceration (CR Interview)
Migration					
Aguilera-Guzman et al. (2004)	Father; Mexico to U.S.	310 youth (106 children of migrants)	11–14, *M* = NR; gender NR	Quant	Stresses and compensators associated with parent absence (YR Questionnaire)
Bernhard et al. (2009)	Mother; Latin America to Canada	40 migrant parents (20 reunited with children)	NR	Qual	Changes in parent–child relationship (PR Interview)
Coe (2008)	Mixed, gender NR; Ghana to U.S.	35 interviews with parents/ couples (14 reunited with children), 52 children	9–25, *M* = 15; 58 % female	Qual	Views of the impact of migration on family relations (PR Interview, YR Focus Groups)
Dreby (2006)	51 % father; Mexico to U.S.	43 migrant parents (3 reunited with children)	NR	Qual	Child care arrangement, contact, reactions to separation (PR Interview)
Dreby (2007)	Mixed, gender NR; Mexico to U.S.	60 children, 37 caregivers	24 pre-adolescents, 24 adolescents, 12 young adults; gender NR	Qual	Parent–child and caregiver–child relationship (YR and CR Interview)
Dreby (2009)	Mixed, gender NR; Mexico to U.S.	Combination of (2006) and (2007) samples		Qual	Gossip about parent (YR and CR Interview)
Echegoyen-Nava (2013)	50 % fathers; Mexico to U.S.	30 women (40 % migrant) and 22 men (91 % migrant/return migrant); proportion parents NR	NR	Qual	Emotional distance in family relationships (PR and FR Interview)
Graham et al. (2012)	Quantitative = 30 % fathers 57 % mothers 13 % both, Qualitative = 68 % fathers 26 % mothers 7 % both; Indonesia and Philippines to various	Questionnaire: 515 children of migrants; Interview: 32 children of migrants	0–11 (one child 3–5 or 9–11); gender NR	Mixed	Frequency of parent–child contact (YR Questionnaire and Interview)
Harper and Martin (2013)	Father; Philippines to various	116 families of migrants (non-migrant family comparison group *n* = 99)	3–11, 9 % 3–5, 58 % 6–8, 33 % 9–11; 50 % male	Quant	Parent and caregiver warmth, parent–child relationship quality, contact and visitation frequency (CPR Questionnaire)
Hoang and Yeoh (2012)	Quantitative = NR, Qualitative = 62 % mother 32 % father 5 % both; Vietnam to various	Questionnaire: 581 migrant households (youth and caregivers), Interview: 37 caregivers	0–11 (one child 3–5 or 9–11); gender NR	Mixed	Parent–child contact/ communication (CR/YR Questionnaire and CR Interview)
Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997)	Mother; Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala to	26 female domestic workers (8 separated from	NR	Qual	Mothering behavior, relations with caregivers,

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Authors	Parent gender; location	Sample	Child age; gender	Design	Family process constructs assessed (modality and reporter)
	U.S.	children)			worry about children's care (PR Interview)
Horton (2009)	Mother; El Salvador to U.S.	12 migrant parents (6 reunited with children)	NR	Qual	Parent–child communication/ relationships (PR Interview)
Lee and Koo (2006)	Father; South Korea to US	8 kirogi fathers (remaining in Korea when mothers and youth migrate)	9–20, *M* = 13.8; 69 % male	Qual	Contact and relationships with spouse/children (PR Interview)
Moran-Taylor (2008)	Mixed, sample 57 % female; Guatemala to U.S.	35 adults ("most" parents)	NR	Qual	Parent–child and child–caregiver relationships (CR Interview and Fieldwork)
Nobles (2011)	Father; Mexico to U.S.	10,649 Mexican children (739 with migrant fathers)	0–15, *M* = 7.9; 52 % male	Quant	Parent–child involvement/ contact (CR Questionnaire)
Pantea (2012)	Mixed, gender NR; from Romania	21 children of migrants	13–21, *M* = 18; 76 % female	Qual	Youth's caregiving experience (YR Interview)
Pantea (2011)	Mixed, gender NR; from Romania	19 children of migrants (probably from [2012] sample)	14–20, *M* = 17; gender NR	Qual	Family power dynamics (YR Interview)
Parrenas (2001)	Mother; Philippines to Rome (64 %) and Los Angeles (36 %)	72 migrant women (39 mothers)	NR	Qual	Changes in parent–child relationship (PR Interview)
Pottinger (2005)	74 % father, 26 % mother; from Jamaica	54 youth (27 children of migrant parent)	9–10, *M* = NR; 52 % male	Quant	Child reactions to migration (YR Questionnaire), family functioning (CR Questionnaire)
Robila (2011)	53 % mother, 47 % father; from Romania	382 youth (134 children of migrant parent)	12–16, *M* = NR; 51 % female	Quant	Parental behavior, support from parents (YR Questionnaire)
Schmalzbauer (2008)	53 % mother, 47 % father; Honduras to U.S.	34 migrants, 12 family members, 36 children of migrant parent	13–20, *M* = NR; 50 % male	Qual	Maintaining family by communication, misunderstandings between family members (PR and YR Interview)
Schmalzbauer (2004)	Interviews = 53 % mother 47 % father (same as 2008 sample), Observation = gender NR; Honduras to U.S.	84 migrant parents (50 observed, 34 interviewed) and 12 family members; migrant focus groups (*n* = 25)	NR	Qual	Caregiving arrangements and emotional challenges (PR and FR Interview, PR Focus Group)
Wen and Lin (2012)	50 % both parents, 36 % father, 14 % mother; from China	625 youth (303 children of migrant parent)	8–18, *M* = 12.9; 50 % male	Quant	Family monitoring, cohesion, and social support (YR Questionnaire)
Military deployment					
Chandra et al. (2010a)	95 % father; multiple states to OEF/OIF	1,507 military youth (32 % Army, 14 % Navy, 5 % Marine Corps, 11 Air	11–17, *M* = 13; 53 % male	Quant	Global family functioning (CPR and YR Questionnaire by phone interview)

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Authors	Parent gender; location	Sample	Child age; gender	Design	Family process constructs assessed (modality and reporter)
		Force, 38 % Guard/ Reserve) who applied to Operation Purple camps			
Chandra et al. (2010b)	NR; multiple states to OEF/OIF	148 school staff (teacher, counselor, administrator) in Army-connected schools	NR	Qual	Home stress, family roles (TR Focus Groups and Interviews)
Everson et al. (2013)	Father, 9 % dual military; southeastern U.S. to OIF	200 female caregiver parents from U.S. Army families	Range NR, *M* = 2.5; gender NR	Quant	Family coping (CPR Questionnaire)
Houston et al. (2013)	Father; Oklahoma to OIF	13 caregiver parents (and 13 children from 9 families) from National Guard families	8–18, *M* = 11; 69 % male	Quant	Communication frequency with absent parent (CPR and YR Questionnaire), quality of deployment and general communication with all family members (CPR and YR Questionnaire)
Houston et al. (2009)	Father; Oklahoma to OEF/ OIF	24 children of deployed members of National Guard	6–17, 50 % 6–9, 33 % 10–13, 12 % 14–17; 63 % male	Qual	Things children miss about parent, changes in life since deployment (YR Interview)
Huebner et al. (2007)	NR; Washington, Hawaii, Texas, Virginia, and Georgia to OEF/OIF	107 children of deployed service members (39 % Army, 10 % Air Force, 4 % Marine Corps, 3 % Navy, 36 % Guard/ Reserve) attending National Military Family Association camps	12–18, *M* = NR; 54 % male	Qual	Boundary ambiguity, relationship conflict (YR Focus Group)
Kelley (1994)	Father; Virginia to various locations during ODS (23 % to warzone)	61 caregiver parents from Navy families	5–13, *M* = 8.5, report on oldest; 59 % male	Quant; assessed pre-, mid-, and post-	Family adaptability and cohesion, caregiver parenting (CPR Questionnaire)
Medway et al. (1995)	Father; South Carolina to ODS	87 caregiver parents from Reserve/Guard families who attended family support meetings	Range NR, *M* = 11, report on all children; 53 % female	Quant	Caregiver parent–child relationship quality (CPR Questionnaire)
Pfefferbaum et al. (2011)	Father; Oklahoma to Iraq (OIF)	18 children (10 families) and 13 caregiver parents from National Guard families	6–17, *M* = NR; 61 % male	Quant	Worry about family members (YR and CPR Questionnaires)
Zeff et al. (1997)	75 % father; Southeastern U.S. to Somalia	8 Army families (12 children)	Range NR, *M* = 9.8; 58 % female	Quant; assessed pre- and post- (CPR also	Parenting behavior (PR and CPR Questionnaire)

Authors	Parent gender; location	Sample	Child age; gender	Design	Family process constructs assessed (modality and reporter)
				every month during)	

CPR caregiver–parent report, *CR* caregiver report, *FR* other family member report, *NR* not reported, *ODS* operation desert storm/gulf war, *OEF/OIF* operation enduring freedom/operation Iraqi freedom, *Obs* observer rated, *PR* absent parent report, *Qual* qualitative, *Quant* quantitative, *SM* military service member, *TR* teacher/school official report, *YR* youth report

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Table 2

Summary of results

Theme	Incarceration	Migration	Deployment
Communication			
Contact	• Loper and Clarke (2013)—placement of child with parent's mother was associated with more frequent contact/visitation if the quality of mother–caregiver relationship was positive during mother's childhood • Dallaire et al. (2012)—frequency of contact positively associated with role reversal in family drawings • Folk et al. (2012)—contact with parent not associated with child outcomes or quality of—or child responses to—parent messages • Foster (2012)—lack of contact linked to with parent perceptions that youth are maturing fast relative to peers • Hissel et al. (2011)—families report difficulty maintaining parent–child contact[*] • Poehlmann et al. (2008b)—incarcerated mothers with more risk factors had less frequent child visitation; children and mothers had more contact when mother–caregiver relationships were positive • Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010)—contact associated with less child anger and alienation from parent; contact not associated with child problems; some children ambivalent about desires for contact[*] • Bernhard et al. (2009)—caregivers limit parent–child contact when the caregiver–parent relationship is discordant or when they perceive contact upsets children[*] • Loper et al. (2009)—contact frequency negatively associated with mothers' parenting competence stress • Nesmith and Ruhland (2008)—caregivers attempt	• Echegoyen-Nava (2013)—contact initiated by absent parent[*] • Harper and Martin (2013)—frequency of phone contact and visitation negatively associated with youth internalizing and externalizing • Graham et al. (2012)—Indonesian youth with <weekly contact with migrant mothers significantly less happy; Filipino youth with <weekly contact with migrant fathers significantly less support-seeking • Hoang and Yeoh (2012)—youth refuse parent calls[*]; mothers with more inflexible work arrangements had lowest rates of contact[*] • Nobles (2011)—contact not associated with educational aspirations or attainment • Pantea (2011)—youth limit contact with parents to increase their own relationship power[*] • Bernhard et al. (2009)—breakdown of contact leads to diminished parental authority[*] • Dreby (2007)—youth limit parental contact to diminish parental authority[*] • Dreby (2006)—contact jeopardized by migrant parent guilt about failing to provide financially (particularly fathers) or emotionally (particularly mothers)[*] • Lee and Koo (2006)—most contact initiated by the absent parent[*] • Parrenas (2001)—over time, contact decreases in intimacy and begins to primarily involve negotiating financial remittances and gifts[*]	• Houston et al. (2013)—youth contact with parent by phone decreased significantly from pre- to mid-deployment, and contact by email increased marginally from pre- to mid-deployment

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Theme	Incarceration	Migration	Deployment
	to protect children from their parent* • Poehlmann (2005a)—visitation with mother in past 2 months marginally associated with more secure child attachment representations of mother • Trice and Brewster (2004)—youth with low/no contact had elevated rates of school dropout/suspension		
Information regulation	• Hissel et al. (2011)—children concerned about stigma and others knowing about incarceration*; children report disclosing selectively to a few friends* • Bockneck et al. (2009)—children given little information about separation*; many children seemed comfortable with their limited knowledge* • Poehlmann (2005a, b)—caregiver honesty about incarceration marginally associated with more secure caregiver–youth attachment • Hagen and Myers (2003)—secrecy about incarceration protective against externalizing symptoms for youth with low social support	• Echegoyen-Nava (2013)—little information shared beyond the routine; female left-behind relatives (e.g., children, wives) less likely to share information that might worry male migrants; male vs. female migrants sought less information about home* • Pantea (2012)—youth protect parents by concealing their strains* • Pantea (2011)—youth desired more information about the migration decision* • Dreby (2009)—gossip/rumors about migrant parent involvement in extramarital affairs undermines parent–child relationship* • Horton (2009)—parents report difficulty explaining absence to children* • Schmalzbauer (2008)—parents do not share their life stresses in the receiving country, but are frustrated by having their sacrifices misunderstood* • Dreby (2006)—experienced migrants report leaving without informing their children* • Pottinger (2005)—20 % of youth not told about the migration decision	• Chandra et al. (2010b)—youth knowledge about deployment perceived to lead to increased anxiety* • Houston et al. (2013)—youth reported increased quality of communication with caregiver about deployment during deployment phase, and this was positively associated with parent-reported youth internalizing; quality of communication with parent decreased during deployment; frequency of email contact with parent associated with better communication about deployment; better communication with deployed parent positively associated with internalizing and school problems, anger, and loneliness
Parenting			
Support/ warmth	• Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010)—caregivers who reported more negative relationships with youth at intake reported higher youth externalizing • Poehlmann et al. (2008a)—caregiver responsivity negatively associated with youth externalizing	• Harper and Martin (2013)—caregiver–child warmth negatively associated with child internalizing • Robila (2011)—parental support positively associated with youth academic achievement and negatively associated with distress	• Zeff et al. (1997)—worst youth behavior coincided with caregiver's lowest level of intimate parenting behavior • Medway et al. (1995)—no unique effect of caregiver–youth relationship on youth problems

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Theme	Incarceration	Migration	Deployment
	• Mackintosh et al. (2006)—youth perceptions of caregiver acceptance negatively associated with internalizing and externalizing • Lawrence-Wills (2004)—parent–child relationship quality negatively associated with youth antisocial behavior	• Lee and Koo (2006)—parents report increased awareness of child activities following separation* • Parrenas (2001)—remittance replaces intimacy in parent–child relationships*	• Kelley (1994)—caregiver parent nurturance and family cohesion negatively associated with youth behavior problems
Discipline	• Dallaire et al. (2012)—youth perceptions of caregiver hostility positively associated with general insecurity in family drawings • Hissel et al. (2011)—youth report difficulty adapting to new caregiver parenting, particularly rules and discipline* • Mackintosh et al. (2006)—youth perceptions of caregiver rejection positively associated with caregiver-reported child problems		• Huebner et al. (2007)—youth report increased conflict at home and negative changes in caregiver–youth relationship* • Kelley (1994)—caregiver consistency negatively associated with youth problems during deployment; caregivers of boys report more yelling before and during than after deployment
Power and authority			
Parent–child relationships	• Nesmith and Ruhland (2008)—children report working around caregiver gatekeeping to contact parent*	• Hoang and Yeoh (2012)—youth refuse parent calls* • Pantea (2012)—parents use older children as proximal authority figures for younger children* • Pantea (2011)—youth disclose selectively to their parents to assert their own authority* • Bernhard et al. (2009)—youth autonomy and other caregivers diminish parent authority* • Moran-Taylor (2008)—caregivers lose authority over youth at adolescence* • Dreby (2007)—preadolescents name others as parents and defer to caregiver authority*; adolescents defy all authority or defer to more lenient parent/caregiver* • Schmalzbauer (2004)—parental authority “diffuse”* • Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997)—parents worry about youth rebellion during adolescence*	

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Theme	Incarceration	Migration	Deployment
Parent–caregiver relationships	• Loper and Clarke (2013)—placement of child with absent mother's mother associated with positive parent–caregiver alliance if the quality of that relationship was previously positive • Shlafer and Poehlmann (2010)—caregivers' efforts to protect/gatekeep undermined by others* • Loper et al. (2009)—parent–caregiver alliance negatively associated with fathers' parenting competence stress • Baker et al. (2010)—quality of coparenting negatively associated with youth externalizing • Nesmith and Ruhland (2008)—caregivers generally report restrictive gatekeeping* • Poehlmann et al. (2008b)—quality of parent–caregiver relationship positively associated with contact/visitation and care stability • Roy and Dyson (2005)—74 % described maternal support/facilitation of fathering and 48 % reported maternal restriction of fathering; restriction linked to logistical barriers or new partner gatekeeping, whereas support viewed as caregiver "getting" difficulty of incarceration*	• Bernhard, Landolt, and Goldring (2009)—youth autonomy and other caregivers diminish parent authority* • Coe (2008)—parents worry caregivers will spoil children* • Moran-Taylor (2008)—conflict or differing parenting styles undermine all parental authority* • Dreby (2006)—dual migrants concerned that caregivers will spoil children*; deterioration of parent–caregiver relationship associated with weakening of parent–child relationship* • Schmalzbauer (2004)—conflictual parent–caregiver relationships undermine all "parental" authority in the eyes of youth* • Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila (1997)—parents report empathy for caregivers due to the nature of their own work*; parents worry youth will begin to regard caregiver as parent*	
Role shifts			
Instrumental roles	• Nesmith and Ruhland (2008)—youth describe role reversal in the form of providing tangible care (e.g., sending food/clothing, providing physical care during illness) for parent*	• Pantea (2012)—youth provide care for siblings and caregiver parent* • Aguilera-Guzman et al. (2004)—migrant youth perceive role redistribution as a significant stressor	• Houston et al. (2009)—youth report new home responsibilities during deployment • Huebner et al. (2007)—youth report increased home responsibilities*
Emotional roles	• Hissel et al. (2011)—older youth report "role reversal" with parent* • Nesmith and Ruhland (2008)—youth report concerns for parent and caregiver well-being*	• Pantea (2012)—youth provide emotional care for migrant parent*	• Pfefferbaum et al. (2011)—youth worries about parents and the family's future positively associated with internalizing and externalizing symptoms • Chandra et al. (2010b)—youth perceived to take on parent/peer role, leading to increased burden

Theme	Incarceration	Migration	Deployment
			• Huebner et al. (2007)—youth worry about the deployed parent and the caregiver parent

*Described result(s) obtained through qualitative method

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