

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

The Recipe for Being a Good Military Wife: How Military Wives Managed OIF/OEF Deployment

Aducci, C. J., Baptist, J. A., George, J., Barros, P. M., & Nelson Goff, B. S. (2011). The recipe for being a good military wife: How military wives managed OIF/OEF deployment. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 23(4-Mar), 231-249. doi:10.1080/08952833.2011.604526

SUMMARY: Interview data of Army wives were utilized in an effort to capture the nature of their experiences and to obtain a deeper understanding of the military, deployment, and separation from their unique viewpoint. Two main themes emerged: the recipe for being a good military wife and managing split loyalties.

KEY FINDINGS:

- The experiences described by military wives reflected a disenfranchised existence; their stress was intensified by the reality that the marital relationship had a third participant – the military – in addition to the self and spouse, and that they must bear this challenge in silence.
- Through their experiences, wives also displayed strength and resiliency in support of their Service member.
- The recipe for being a good military wife, included managing things alone, responding to changes post-deployment, providing support for husbands and the military, and building strength through new opportunities during deployment.
- Managing split loyalties included managing loyalties to marriage and military and learning about painful experiences of their Service members through second-hand sources.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer support groups to military wives who may feel split loyalties to their Service member and the military
- Provide training for service providers working with military couples regarding the events related to military life that have a major influence and presence in marriages
- Engage Service members and their intimate partners in post-deployment workshops focused on helping couples reconnect

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support military spouses during deployment to benefit military couples, families, the overall military mission, and combat readiness
- Recommend professional training for service providers working with military spouses regarding the common issues military spouses experience throughout their spouses' military career
- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that promote resilience in Service members, their partners, and their children

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METHODS

- Interview data of military wives were analyzed in an effort to obtain a deeper understanding of their unique experiences.
- Army wives were recruited via publicly posted flyers and newspaper announcements, from Family Readiness Groups, chaplains, and other local military sources from two small cities in the Midwest that neighbor Army posts.
- This study focused on wives of recently deployed Army personnel.

PARTICIPANTS

- This study included Army wives (N = 25) between the ages of 19 and 48 years (M = 32.36, SD = 8.06).
- In terms of ethnicity the sample was 76% White, 16% Native American, 4% Latino/Latina, and 4% other.
- Average length of Service members' deployment was 9.8 months for first deployment and 3.1 months for second deployment.

LIMITATIONS

- Selected participants (i.e., Army wives living off of the military installation) may differ from nonparticipants in ways that were not measured but affected the outcome. For example, those living on the military installation may have more and/or different types of resources and support available to them.
- Only Army wives were included in the sample and results may not generalize to wives of Service members in other branches of the military.
- Prior mental and physical health issues were not assessed and could influence the experiences of wives more than military service itself.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore the strengths and resiliencies of military wives
- Replicate the current study with a more ethnically diverse sample that includes wives of Service members from all branches of the military
- Investigate whether spouses of deployed female Service members have similar experiences

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