

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Survival-Recovery Effect: Military Wives With Soldier-Husbands Deployed to the Operation Iraqi Freedom Conflict.

Chambers, J. E. (2013). Survival-recovery effect: Military wives with soldier-husbands deployed to the Operation Iraqi Freedom conflict. *Journal of Psychological Issues in Organizational Culture*, 4(1), 29-49. doi:10.1002/jpoc.21088

SUMMARY: Individual interviews were conducted with military wives to examine the effects of Iraq war deployment on military wives. Seven major themes emerged in the interviews that reflect common experiences of military wives during deployment, reflecting their anxiety, communication difficulties, and stress.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Finding a new normal and completing daily tasks was difficult for wives.
- Wives experienced grief and loss during their separation, dealt with a variety of negative emotions, and expressed fear of the unknown and for the Service members safety.
- Communication issues (e.g., time difference, restricted conversations) during deployment were a source of frustration and relationship strain.
- Wives reported positives associated with deployment separation such as increased confidence in themselves, feelings of empowerment, and resilience.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer classes for military wives during deployment, teaching skills for coping with the stressors of their husbands' deployment
- Provide workshops for couples prior to deployment, helping them create plans for communication and problem-solving during deployment
- Offer support groups for military spouses during deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to offer programs and service to military spouses throughout the deployment cycle
- Continue to support services that allow Service members to stay connected with their families throughout the deployment cycle
- Recommend trainings for service providers working with military spouses regarding the common issues reported by spouses coping with deployment

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Participants were recruited via a study advertisement posted on the Operation Homefront website. Interested wives called researchers to express their interests and necessary forms (including screening questions) were mailed to participants.
- Participants had to be married (between 1-10 years) to an Active Duty Service members who had deployed to Iraq, between the ages of 21 and 35 years, and graduated high school.
- The first 10 women who met inclusion criteria were recruited into the study.
- One-on-one interviews ranged from 45-60 minutes and took place in the participant's home.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 10 military wives, age 25-33 years; one Marine and one Navy wife failed to complete follow-up procedures and were dropped from the study.
- Participants were four Army wives, three Marine wives, and three Navy wives.
- The majority of wives in the sample were married to enlisted Service members (n = 8).

LIMITATIONS

- This was a small, unrepresentative sample that self-selected into the study; therefore, results may not be generalizable to all military wives.
- Interviews and data analysis were completed by one researcher, which may bias the results.
- Participants had to self-select to be in the study and may differ from wives who did not choose to participate (e.g., be functioning better), which could influence the results.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore the extent to which programs designed to improve spousal well-being during deployment translates into increased Service member retention
- Examine the experience of female Service members and their non-deployed husbands
- Investigate whether similar issues are faced by spouse of deployed Female Service members

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>