

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Army

## Resilient Family Processes, Personal Reintegration, and Subjective Well-Being Outcomes for Military Personnel and Their Family Members

Clark, M. A., O'Neal, C. W., Conley, K. M., & Mancini, J. A. (2017). Resilient family processes, personal reintegration, and subjective well-being outcomes for military personnel and their family members. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. doi:10.1037/ort0000278

**SUMMARY:** Little is known about how family processes during a deployment (i.e. household routines and rituals, communication) affect the Service member and each family member during reintegration. This study examined how communication and household management during a deployment impacted post-deployment well-being as well as positive and negative reintegration experiences for each military family member. Results indicated that different factors impacted the reintegration experience for each family member, and that some reintegration experiences were related among family members.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Communication during deployment was found to be important for the reintegration experience of Service members, while household management was important for at-home partners' reintegration experience.
- Both communication during deployment and household management were found to be important in the reintegration experience for youth.
- Service members' positive reintegration experience was significantly related to at-home parents' level of satisfaction with military life, while youths' negative reintegration experience was significantly related to multiple facets of only their non-deployed parents' well-being.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops to help deployed Service members' partners and their youth learn about available supportive services to handle increased household responsibilities
- Disseminate information regarding the importance of communication during deployment and its potential impact on the reintegration experience
- Provide classes designed to enhance coping skills and well-being for the partners of deployed Service members

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that promote the well-being of at-home partners and children during deployments
- Recommend education of professionals who work with families during and after deployments on the potential effects family members can have on one another's well-being and reintegration experience
- Continue to support programs that encourage frequent and positive communication between family members and Service members during deployments

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## METHODS

- A total of 273 families from an Active Duty Army installation participated in the study.
- Families were recruited through print and radio ads and through flyers at nearby youth centers.
- To be eligible, families had at least one Active Duty Service member, at least one youth between 11-18 years old, and the ability for all family members to take the survey concurrently.
- Frequency of deployment communication, household management during deployment, positive and negative reintegration experiences, and various indicators of well-being (i.e. anxiety, parental guilt) were assessed among family members to determine how family members' experiences impacted one another.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Approximately 84% of Service members and 71% of partners were between 31-45 years old, and 67% of adolescents were between 11-14 years old (M = 14.29, SD = 2.07).
- The majority of the Service members who participated were enlisted (88%) and reported having deployed one to five times since 2001 (with 56% deployed two to three times).
- Service members were mostly male (86%) and partners were mostly female (84%).

## LIMITATIONS

- A non-random, convenience sample means conclusions may not generalize to the larger Army or military population.
- No data on race/ethnicity were included; therefore, no conclusions can be drawn about if these results extend to all racial/ethnic groups.
- Data were only collected at one time point; therefore, it is not possible to determine causation or the direction of effects.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recruit a randomly selected sample to ensure that findings can be generalized
- Recruit a racially diverse population and report in future manuscripts
- Collect multiple waves of data in order to determine the direction of effects and if there are any causal relationships

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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