

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Symptoms, Traumatic Reminders, and Partner Aggressive Tendencies Among Veterans

LaMotte, A. D., Taft, C. T., Weatherill, R. P., Scott, J. P., & Eckhardt, C. I. (2016). Posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, traumatic reminders, and partner aggressive tendencies among veterans. *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(4), 461-466. doi:10.1007/s10896-015-9776-9

SUMMARY: Exploration of the relationship between Veteran posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and intimate partner aggression was conducted. This study used scenarios with and without the inclusion of trauma to assess participants' physical intimate partner aggression (IPA) articulations (i.e., expressions of physically aggressive intentions toward the partner) and verbal IPA articulations (i.e., statements intended to insult or demean the partner) made during relationship anger-provoking scenarios.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Both conditions of the scenarios (with and without trauma) increased feelings of anger, but the trauma-cued condition was uniquely associated with increased feelings of fear.
- Trauma cue exposure triggered the relationship between Veterans' PTSD symptoms and physical IPA articulations.
- Trauma cue exposure did not have an effect on the relationship between PTSD symptoms and verbal IPA articulations.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop workshops for professionals working with Service members and their spouses around topics related to PTSD and IPA
- Provide support networks for specific groups of Service members and Veterans who have experienced life-threatening or traumatic events during deployment
- Develop online resources for parents and spouses of Service members and Veterans about trauma induced aggression

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage collaboration among Department of Defense programs, the Veterans Affairs (VA) system, and community-based organizations to support Service members post-deployment health and well-being
- Recommend education for professionals who work with military families around the possible effects of post-deployment on Service members' and their spouses
- Encourage the development and continuation of programs that can support Service members and their partners in dealing with life-threatening or traumatic events experienced during deployment

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METHODS

- Participants were recruited through flyers posted at the local VA and a recruitment database of Veterans that had consented to be contacted about ongoing research studies at the National Center for PTSD.
- Several measures were administered to participants including the Clinician Administered PTSD Scale, State Trait Anger Expression inventory, and the Emotion Rating form.
- Analysis included descriptive statistics as well as analysis to understand the relationship between Veterans' PTSD symptoms and physical and verbal IPA articulations.

PARTICIPANTS

- Criteria for study eligibility included exposure to combat during deployment, either had a life-threatening experience, or exposed to another intensely disturbing event during deployment; and must have been married or living with a partner for at least six months before data collection.
- Participants included 82 male OIF/OEF Veterans, with 63% from the Army, 16% Marines, 11% Navy, and 10% Air Force.
- Participants self-identified as White (81%), 10% as Black, 2% as Asian-American, 1% as Native American, 1% as Latino, and 5% as another race.

LIMITATIONS

- The responses to the simulations may differ from those observed during actual conflicts between partners.
- Participants were administered the scenarios under both non-trauma and trauma-cued conditions, participants may have reacted more strongly to the relationship anger-inducing scenarios after having already heard similar scenarios or less strongly.
- As all of the Veterans in the study are male, results may not generalize to female Veterans.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Investigate whether or not such physically aggressive intentions are enacted more often following reminders of the trauma
- Identify Service members' traumatic triggers and the role they play in instigating aggression towards intimate partners
- Develop a greater understanding of how PTSD symptoms may lead to aggressive tendencies

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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