

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Adaptability and Resiliency of Military Families During Reunification: Initial Results of a Longitudinal Study

McNulty, P. A. F. (2010). Adaptability and resiliency of military families during reunification: Initial results of a longitudinal study. *Federal Practitioner*, 30(8), 18-27. doi:NULL

SUMMARY: Survey data of Army Active Duty Service members and spouses of Army Reserve members were used to identify factors associated with family problems before and after post-deployment reunion. Many spouses reported that their families were at risk for poor adaptation and requested mental and physical health services for their families.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Respondents requested more help for Service members and family members, including education about living with a family member with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- Three months before reunion, approximately two-thirds of families were at risk for poor adaptation.
- After reunion, 54-60% of families appeared at risk for poor adaptation.
- The overall divorce rate for the couples was 8%.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer classes for military spouses on how to support a Service member who is living with PTSD
- Offer family days in which recently returned Service members and their families can enjoy socializing and mutual support
- Offer classes for Service members prior to homecoming, teaching skills in how to successfully re-enter family relationships at home

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support programs that address the unique challenges of Service members, their partners, and their children before and after deployment
- Encourage training for professionals who work with military families regarding the possible challenges associated with reintegration
- Promote reintegration programs that promote healthy family functioning for military families

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METHODS

- Army Active Duty spouses were approached through Family Readiness Group meetings in Hawaii.
- Army Reserve spouses were recruited through the U.S. Army Reserve website.
- Spouses completed mail surveys at three months before and three, six, and twelve months after reunification with their spouse after a deployment.
- Surveys assessed military variables, family resiliency and adaptability, communication skills, stressors, attachment, well-being, state-trait anxiety, and self-reliance.

PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 325 spouses of Army Active Duty Service members (99% female) and 130 spouses of Army Reserve members (94% female).
- Active Duty spouses included: 60% White, 14% Black, 11% Latino, 11% Asian American, and 4% Native American.
- Reserve spouses included: 85% White, 2% Black, 7% Asian American, and 6% Native American.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample was geographically limited and so results may not generalize to families in other areas.
- Those who chose to participate in the study may differ from those who did not in ways that could influence the results.
- Individuals who dropped out of the study may differ from those who completed the study in important ways that may impact findings.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Evaluate an intervention for military families at risk for poor adaptation during reintegration
- Follow these participants longitudinally to examine whether those predicted to adapt well or poorly actually follow that trajectory
- Obtain information from the Service member and his or her spouse to compare perspectives of both partners

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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