

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Privacy Management in the Military Family During Deployment: Adolescents' Perspectives

Owlett, J. S., Richards, K. A. R., Wilson, S. R., DeFreese, J. D., & Roberts, F. (2015). Privacy management in the military family during deployment: Adolescents' perspectives *Journal of Family Communication*, 15(2), 141-158.
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SUMMARY: This study sought to explore adolescents' perspectives of how private information within their family was managed during their parents' military deployment. Adolescents described three rules on how private information was revealed or concealed among the deployed parent, at-home parent, and other children in the home.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Adolescents discussed that some events or topics should be protected from the deployed parent as these events can cause additional stress or worry.
- Participants believed there should be caution taken in how much to share with their deployed parent about the deployment itself; masking emotions of fear or sadness.
- Adolescents believed that some deployment related information should be filtered in communicating to children as it may add additional worry, sadness, or fear.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Develop activities that allow adolescents and their parents to openly discuss and develop their own set of rules for communicating private information during deployment
- Educate military families on strategies to effectively communicate emotions within the family across the deployment cycle
- Train professionals to become aware of the various ways that military families communicate to better understand the dynamics of information sharing in military life

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Support peer mentoring for adolescents to be able to connect with their families more regularly during deployment to help build resilience and manage mental health symptoms
- Encourage awareness campaigns on and off installations regarding the importance of a healthy work-life balance and effective communication within military families
- Encourage collaboration between military family services and community-based family support providers to form partnerships to care for families throughout the deployment cycle

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METHODS

- Adolescents who attended a weeklong camp during the summers of 2011 and 2012 were recruited to participate in this study.
- Participants who were between the ages of 12 and 17 years, and had experienced or were currently experiencing a parental deployment were invited to participate.
- Semi-structured interviews lasting between 30 and 60 minutes were conducted to explore how families managed private information across the deployment cycle.

PARTICIPANTS

- Interviews were collected from 38 adolescents (19 male, 19 female) between the ages of 12 and 17 years old (M=13.68 years).
- All adolescents had experienced at least one parental deployment (M=3.1 deployments), while 10 adolescents' parents were currently deployed at the time of the interview.
- Adolescents' parents served in a variety of military branches: 21 Army, eight Air Force, three National Guard, three Navy, one Air Force Reserve, one Marines, and one Marine Reserves.

LIMITATIONS

- Interviews were collected at one point in time, which limits the ability to generalize the study's findings across the deployment cycle.
- Various methods for analyzing the interview data were used, thus limiting the reliability of the study's findings.
- Only adolescents who attended the weeklong camp were invited to participate, thus limiting the generalizability to other military adolescents who did not attend the camp.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Extend this study by interviewing adolescents on the role of emotions in managing private information within the family during deployment
- Explore how power may impact family members' decisions to share or conceal private information
- Interview both parents and adolescents to explore if they share similar perceptions of what information is interpreted as private during deployment

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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