



Supporting  
Military Families  
Through Research  
and Outreach

# PUTTING RESEARCH TO WORK FOR MILITARY FAMILIES

## Spouse Abuse and Child Abuse by Army Soldier

Martin, S., Gibbs, D., Johnson, R., Rentz, E., Clinton-Sherrod, M., & Hardison, J. (2007). *Journal of Family Violence*, 22(7), 587-595.

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/104903/?MUD=MP>



*In this study, researchers examined the patterns of spouse abuse and child abuse perpetrated within a five year period (2000–2004) in a sample of 10,864 Active Duty Army Soldiers who had substantiated cases of family violence offenses. Three groups were compared to the general population of 465,100 Active Duty Army soldiers: (1) those who perpetrated spouse offenses only; (2) those who perpetrated child offenses only; and (3) those who perpetrated both spouse and child offenses.*

### Key Findings:

- The majority of substantiated family violence cases were spouse abuse only (61%), followed by child abuse only (27%); least common were those who committed both spouse and child offenses (12%). While females are 25% of the general Active Duty population, they comprise only 5% of the perpetrators who committed partner and child abuse.
- Neglect was the most common form of child abuse accounting for approximately half of the substantiated cases.
- In the sample of substantiated cases, compared to all Active Duty Army Soldiers, a higher percentage of the family violence offenders were male (89% of substantiated cases vs. 84% in the general Active Duty population), enlisted personnel (97% of substantiated cases vs. 86% in the general Active Duty population), in pay grades E4 or higher (77% of substantiated cases vs. 71% in the Active Duty general population), and married (96% of substantiated cases versus 51% in the general Active Duty population).
- Compared to all Army Soldiers, those identified as family violence offenders had a higher percentage of individuals who reported their race/ethnicity as Black (42% vs. 27% in the general Active Duty population), fewer who reported their race/ethnicity as White (44% vs. 58% in the general Active Duty population), and approximately the same who reported their race/ethnicity as Hispanic or another racial/ethnic group (14% vs. 15% in the general Active Duty population). These comparisons did not adjust for background, education, or pay grade differences.

### Implications for Programs:

- Community-based and other programs that work to prevent abuse may focus on neglect as it was the most common form of abuse in substantiated cases of child abuse.
- Differences in the offender demographics and patterns of abuse may demonstrate the need for targeted evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies.

### Implications for Policies:

- Support should be available and accessible to Service members and their families, through providing additional funding to existing programs/services or working with community programs and services to increase the network of available resources.
- Policies should be put in place to identify families at risk for family violence prior to circumstances that may increase family stress (e.g., deployment or other transitions).

### Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research should explore how deployment or other transitions affect patterns of family violence and how various forms of treatment influence the commission of later violent acts.
- Future research should also be sure the data or analysis accounts for diverse family-types (e.g., non-married partnerships, children raised by relatives or caregivers, and single parents).
- The current results should be replicated in other military branches and components.

Prepared by Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit <http://reachmilitaryfamilies.arizona.edu>



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## Background Information

### Methodology:

- This quantitative study used cross-sectional data collected by the U.S. Army's Family Advocacy Program, the group primarily responsible for family violence prevention, identification, evaluation, treatment, and follow-up on Army installations. Patterns of spouse abuse and child abuse perpetrated within a five year period (2000–2004) were examined in a sample of 10,864 Army Soldiers who were substantiated for family violence offenses.
- This study focused on Active Duty Service members in the Army.

### Participants:

- Of the 10,864 participants included, most were males (89%) and enlisted personnel (97%). The average age was 27.9 years.
- The Race/ethnicity of the sample was composed of 44% White, 42% Black, 14% Hispanic/other.

### Limitations:

- Many incidents of spouse abuse and child abuse go undetected and unreported. Hence, the estimates provided in this study, based on substantiated abuse incidents recorded in the Army Central Registry, might be underestimates of the actual occurrence of family violence in Army families.
- Given that the sample was exclusively Active Duty Army Service members, the results may not generalize to Service members in other military branches or components.

## Assessing Research that Works

| Research Design and Sample   |   |  |   | Quality Rating:                                   | ★★★★  |
|--|---|--|---|---|-------|
|  | Excellent<br>(★★★★)                         | Appropriate<br>(★★★)                       | Limited<br>(★★)                           | Questionable<br>(★)                               |       |
| The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was.... | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>         | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                          |       |
| Research Methods   |   |  |   | Quality Rating:                                   | ★★★☆☆ |
|  | Excellent<br>(★★★★)                         | Appropriate<br>(★★★)                       | Limited<br>(★★)                           | Questionable<br>(★)                               |       |
| The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>        | <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                          |       |
| Limitations  |   |  |   | Quality Rating:                                   | ★★★☆☆ |
|  | Excellent<br>Minor<br>Limitations<br>(★★★★) | Appropriate<br>Few<br>Limitations<br>(★★★) | Limited<br>Several<br>Limitations<br>(★★) | Questionable<br>Many/Severe<br>Limitations<br>(★) |       |
| The limitations of this study are...   | <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>        | <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                          |       |
| Implications   |   |  |   | Quality Rating:                                   | N/A   |
|  | Excellent<br>(★★★★)                         | Appropriate<br>(★★★)                       | Limited<br>(★★)                           | Questionable<br>(★)                               |       |
| The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...             | <input type="checkbox"/>                    | <input type="checkbox"/>                   | <input type="checkbox"/>                  | <input type="checkbox"/>                          |       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications                   |   |  |   |   |       |
|  |   |  |   | Overall Quality Rating                            | ★★★★  |

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