

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Multiple
Branches

Doing More with Less: Women's Leisure During Their Partners' Military Deployment

Werner, T. L., & Shannon, C. S. (2013). Doing more with less: Women's leisure during their partners' military deployment *Leisure Sciences: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 35(1), 63-80. doi:10.1080/01490400.2013.739897

SUMMARY: Canadian women with a partner who was deployed at least six months completed semi-structured interviews about their experiences with stress and leisure activities during their partners' deployment. Two key themes emerged: the participants' experiences of becoming a quasi-single parent, and the emotional burden of having a partner in a dangerous combat zone.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Women reported a loss of personal leisure during partner deployment, while increasing family leisure activities as a coping mechanism.
- Participants expressed increased stress about their partners' well-being and their children's safety and well-being in the absence of their father.
- Women felt pressure managing their daily routines in the absence of their partner's support with household tasks and childcare responsibilities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide workshops to help deployed military members' spouses learn about available supportive services to handle increased household responsibilities
- Modify military leisure programs to include parent-child activities that focus on partners of deployed Service members to foster social support and wellness among military spouses
- Offer support groups to Service members and their partners during reintegration to help them with the transition back into their roles and responsibilities

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend partnerships among military-based and community-based programs to help military families feel more comfortable participating in leisure activities that are not on installations
- Support the development of structured leisure activities for military families at installations
- Urge the training of professionals to better identify military spouses who have difficulties managing roles and responsibilities during deployment

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- The sample was recruited from a Canadian Forces Base in Atlantic Canada by email and recruitment posters.
- Participants completed semi-structured interviews in their homes about their leisure experiences during their spouses' deployment.
- Based on the interviews, the authors determined themes and patterns of the responses and, after compilation, were shared with participants to ensure validity.

PARTICIPANTS

- Ten women (age range 23-40 years) who were married or engaged to a deployed military member who had been gone for at least 6 months completed semi-structured interviews.
- All women worked (70% full time, 30% part time), and had at least one child (range 1-3 children), with children ages ranging from 12 months - 13 years.
- The race of the sample was predominately White (n = 9), and one participant was multiracial.

LIMITATIONS

- The sample of spouses were employed, which may have created a sample with more resources to participate in leisure activities and their experiences may not be applicable to unemployed spouses.
- The sample was exclusively Canadian and, therefore, the experiences may not generalize to American military families.
- There was no standard definition of "leisure activities" which made it difficult to compare participants' answers among each other.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Explore how Service members' return from deployment impacts their spouses' leisure activities
- Examine spouses' leisure activities during deployment in a U.S. military population
- Conduct studies on the impact of peer support groups to help increase spouses' leisure activities during their partners' deployment

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>