



Waiting Wives: Separation and Reunion Among Army Wives

Wood, S., Scarville, J. & Gravino, K.S. (1995). Waiting wives: Separation and reunion among Army wives. *Armed Forces & Security*, 21, 217-236.



42 wives of Army members were interviewed to examine how wives fared as their husbands were deployed to the Sinai Peninsula in 1987. Deployment produced significant strain on the wives and families; some wives adjusted more quickly and effectively than others.

Key Findings:

- Wives reported that their primary support systems were their families and friends, but they also relied fairly heavily on other women in the unit.
- The family support groups were promoted strongly with this battalion, and appear to have been significantly effective in accomplishing the objective of providing support while Service members were deployed.
- In the immediate aftermath of Service member departure, an acute period of loneliness set in for most of the women.
- The women who adjusted most quickly were those who stayed busy and involved in work, community activities, family, and church.
- Telephoning and writing helped wives' relationships with their husbands.

Implications for Programs:

- Programs could incorporate information in family classes that spouses of deployed Service members adjust more effectively if they stay busy and remain connected to support systems during deployments.
- Programs could provide informal support groups for the spouses of deployed Service members.
- Programs could reach out to spouses via the Internet and social media as a way of bolstering support and informing them of resources during deployment.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies could allocate funding to support additional services for the families of deployed Service members.
- Policies could structure deployed military personnel's working hours to allow them time to talk with their partners/wives at home as a means of providing emotional support.
- Policies could continue to support family readiness groups on installations.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could use rigorous qualitative methods and validated quantitative measures to improve the quality of the study.
- Additional studies could attempt to replicate these findings using more recently deployed Service members and partners.
- Future research could examine the experience of male partners of female Service members.



Background Information

Methodology:

- Army wives from one battalion were interviewed before and during deployment, immediately prior to reunion, and 6-8 weeks after reunion.
- 83% of the wives completed all four interviews.
- Unstructured interviews lasted 60-90 minutes.
- The researchers interviewed command leadership, the chaplain, and mental health workers.
- Transcripts of all interviews were produced and coded according to whether the respondents were adjusting well.

Participants:

- 42 participants completed the initial interview (100% female).
- 62% were married to those with ranks of specialist/corporal and below, 12% to sergeants, and 26% to staff sergeants.
- At the beginning of the deployment, 21% of the wives had no children, 43% had one child, 33% had two or three children.
- Average wife age was 22 years old for junior enlisted wives and 27 years old for wives of noncommissioned officers.

Limitations:

- Recruitment methods and rates were not specified.
- Non-standardized and unvalidated measures were used.
- No clear method of qualitative analysis was explained, and these results may be biased.
- The sample was small and is unlikely to be representative of other service branches and members.

Assessing Research that Works

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