



Military REACH's review of RESILIENT FAMILY PROCESSES, PERSONAL REINTEGRATION, AND SUBJECTIVE WELL-BEING OUTCOMES FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS

Clark, M. A., O'Neal, C. W., Conley, K. M., & Mancini, J. A. (2018). Resilient family processes, personal reintegration, and subjective well-being outcomes for military personnel and their family members. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 88, 99-111.
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BRIEF SUMMARY: In order to better understand how family processes (i.e., communication, household management) during deployment impact personal reintegration and well-being post-deployment, data from 273 Army families, including service members, partners, and adolescent children, were examined. Personal reintegration is understood as the degree to which a person feels like themselves after a transitional experience (e.g., deployment). While family processes during deployment did not have a uniform impact on all family members, findings indicated that reintegration is an important mechanism linking family processes during deployment to the subsequent well-being (e.g., anxiety, self-efficacy, parental guilt) of multiple family members (soldier, at-home spouse, and adolescent).

KEY FINDINGS

- More communication during deployment was related to better personal reintegration for returning soldiers and their adolescent children, but not for the at-home spouse. Conversely, household management during deployment was related to better personal reintegration for the at-home spouse and adolescent, but not for the returning soldier.
- Negative and positive personal reintegration experiences can occur *simultaneously* for the various members of the family. However, negative experiences appear to more strongly influence well-being than positive experiences.
- At-home spouses seem to be more affected by their partner's and child's reintegration experiences compared to deployed soldiers.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FAMILIES

- Reintegration experiences can be different for each family member, and it is normal to experience both positive and negative reintegration simultaneously.
- Adolescents will likely benefit from a combination of frequent communication with the deployed parent and strong organization and management of household tasks from the at-home spouse.
- Soldiers and at-home spouses may benefit from discussing the quality of their communication and making adjustments as needed throughout deployment.
- Maintaining strong household management during the service members' deployment may minimize negative reintegration experiences for the at-home spouse and adolescent.

IMPLICATIONS FOR HELPING PROFESSIONALS

- Be intentional in trying to understand how reintegration impacts each individual family member.
- Consider the multiple modifiable components of family life during deployment (i.e., communication and household management) that can impact subsequent stages of family life.
- Educate families on metacommunication and household management during deployment and how these experiences can benefit various family members during the reintegration process.

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY MAKERS

- Ensuring the availability of frequent communication between service member and their at-home family may promote well-being for service members and their families.
- During deployment, both education initiatives and programs focused on at-home spouse's household management may reduce risk and increase resilience for military families during reintegration.

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

- ✓ Military families (N = 273)
- ✓ Army
- ✓ Deployment; family processes and well-being
- ✓ Cross-sectional data on service members, their romantic partners, and adolescent children

METHODOLOGY

- The families had to have at least one active duty parent and at least one child between the ages of 11-18 years old.
- The majority of at-home spouses were female (83.9%). The adolescents were male and female (54% female) and most were between the ages of 11-14 years old (67.3%).
- Each family was required to concurrently fill out a survey with measures regarding family processes during deployment, personal reintegration experiences, and measures of well-being (e.g., anxiety, satisfaction).
- An actor-partner interdependence path analysis model examined how family communication during deployment and at-home spouses' household management was related to the positive and negative personal reintegration for all family members (soldier, at-home spouse, and adolescent child). In turn, the model examined the link between personal reintegration and various indicators of well-being (e.g., anxiety, self-efficacy) for each family member.

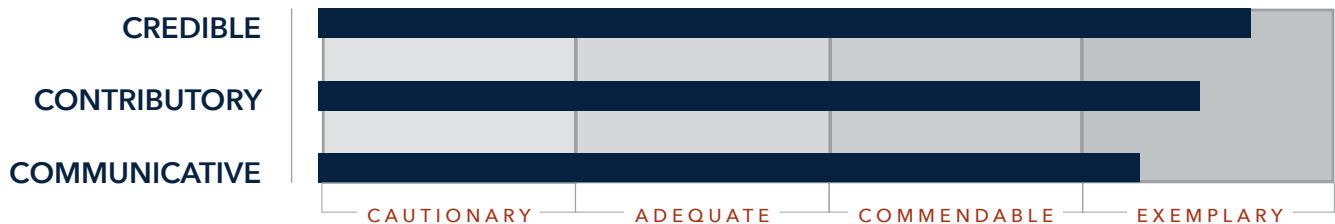
ARTICLE STRENGTHS

- The study has a strong theoretical foundation, which provides clear implications for military family members and furthers theoretical understanding of military family experiences.
- Gathering information from multiple respondents in the family provided helpful information about reintegration experiences from the perspective of multiple family members.
- The actor partner interdependence model is ideal for this kind of study as it allows the researchers to examine the relationships between family members while accounting for the shared nature of the data.

LIMITATIONS

- The use of cross-sectional data to examine variables retrospectively from multiple time points in the deployment process may lead to a memory, or recall, bias.
- Several variables had lower reliability coefficients than preferred, which limits the credibility of the findings.
- Personal reintegration was vaguely defined in the introduction, which led to some difficulty interpreting the significance of the findings.

ASSESSMENT OF THE STUDY



DIMENSIONS OF ASSESSMENT

- CREDIBLE: Research that is rigorous, transparent, consistent, and generalizable. This dimension reflects an evaluation of the study's scientific methodology.
 - CONTRIBUTORY: Research that is original, applicable, and has the potential to enhance the well-being of military families. This dimension examines the impact of the study.
 - COMMUNICATIVE: Research that is coherent, understandable, and readable. This dimension assesses how effectively the authors convey the content of the study.
- * These dimensions are adapted from the work of Mårtensson et al. (2016). For more information on the REACH evaluation framework and rubric visit: militaryREACH.org

PARTNERSHIP

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