

Research on Army Marriages

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Funding and Acknowledgements

- Research presented by Scott Stanley & Howard Markman, today, supported in part by a grant from NICHD (1-R01-HD048780-01)

- Principal Investigators
 - Scott Stanley
 - Howard Markman
 - Elizabeth Allen

- Elizabeth Allen has conducted many of the analyses we present today.



Impact of Deployment

- “Military deployments have a way of chewing up marriages” (New York Times, 2006)

- “Military Families have experienced the emotional trauma of deployment on an unprecedented scale since the end of the Gulf War” (hooah4health.com)

Impact of Deployment

- Military couples report
 - deployment is a source of stress in marriage
 - significant drops in marital satisfaction due to deployment (Karney & Crown, 2007)
- Depression observed in wives of deployed servicemen (Busuttil & Busuttil, 2001)

Overall Sample

- 480 couples participating in The Army Marriage Project (AMP)
 - AMP is a study of PREP for Strong Bonds
 - All couples willing to be assigned to intervention
 - All couples married with at least one active duty Army spouse



(AMP) Infidelity

- Overall sample
 - 34% report temptation since married
 - 15% report extramarital sexual contact
- Sample with recent deployment history only slightly higher
 - 18% report extramarital sexual contact

(AMP) How stressful have the following been for you in the last year? 1 to 7 scale (data from the new study)

□ Combat (your own or your spouse's)	4.97
□ General fears about reintegration (making the transitions leaving and returning)	4.16
□ Loneliness	4.33
□ Sexual frustration	4.08
□ Fear of self or spouse dying	4.50
□ Fear of self or spouse getting physically injured	4.63
□ Fear of self or spouse developing psychological problems or being a "changed person"	4.40
□ Effects on the children	4.41

(AMP) How are couples staying in touch during deployment?

- 41% emailing daily
- 41% instant messaging daily
- 32% calling daily

- 54% writing letters 1-2 times per month
- 72% sending care packages 1-2 times per month

- Most (64%) say that they each initiate these contacts equally

Impact of Deployment

- Karney and Crown (2007)
 - Little evidence that serving or being deployed is associated with higher rates of divorce
 - Evidence that deployment leads to marital problems is “weak and inconsistent”

Combat and PTSD

- Combat exposure related to increased risk for divorce

- Military related PTSD associated with marital distress, hostility, domestic violence, partner distress

(AMP) Rates of Deployment and Combat

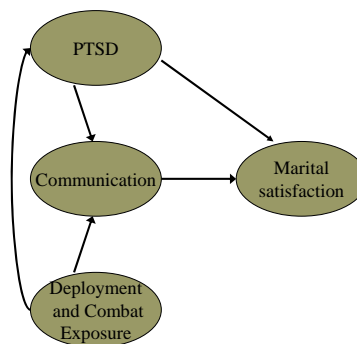
- Have you been deployed within the last year?
 - 71% yes
- Have you been exposed to combat or similar situations of risk of harm in the past year?
 - 77.3% yes

 - 70.4% of men report at least one PTSD symptom attributable to own military experience
 - 31.6% of wives report at least one PTSD symptom attributable to husbands' military experience

(AMP) Deployment and Combat Exposure

- ❑ No direct effects on relationship functioning
- ❑ Does predict PTSD
 - Males who were deployed significantly higher on PTSD than men who were not deployed
 - Combat exposure significantly associated with his PTSD
- ❑ It may be that deployment—especially combat—has deleterious effects on marriages via the development of PTSD symptoms.

Karney and Crown (2007) Framework



(AMP) PTSD and Marital Functioning

- ❑ About 15% of all active duty soldiers are at or over midrange on PTSD measure
- ❑ Across entire sample, level of PTSD correlated with worse marital functioning
 - Communication danger signs .36**
 - Marital satisfaction -.37**
 - Marital confidence -.33**

** significant at .01 level (two tailed)

- ❑ Impacts of military life are not only on the couples.

(AMP) PTSD and Family Functioning

- Across entire sample, level of PTSD correlated with worse family functioning
 - Parenting alliance -.27**
 - Child internalizing problems .19**
 - Child externalizing problems .18**

** significant at .01 level (two tailed)

- Presentation on overall Army Chaplain Led Efforts by Lt. Col. Michael Strohm goes here.

New Findings on Large Scale Study of PREP as used by Army Chaplains

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Army use of marriage education

- Currently, providing PREP based marriage education is part of an Army family support program called Strong Bonds
- Goal of empirically evaluating PREP for Strong Bonds emerged
- In collaboration with the Chief of Chaplains office in the Pentagon, Stanley et al. conducted a preliminary evaluation of the program:
 - Stanley, S. M., Allen, E. S., Markman, H. J., Saiz, C. C., Bloomstrom, G., Thomas, R., Schumm, W. R., & Bailey, A. E. (2005). Dissemination and evaluation of marriage education in the Army. *Family Process*, 44, 187-201

Preliminary Evaluation

- Pre, post, 30 day follow up
- Participants rated PREP for Strong Bonds highly
- Generally positive effects seen from pre to post
 - Communication, satisfaction, confidence improved
 - Couple functioning related to Army life typically improved
 - No interaction effects for gender, income group, or racial/ethnic group
 - Gains maintained or improved at follow up

The Army Marriage Project



www.armymarriageproject.com

The Army Marriage Project

- Couples randomly assigned to PREP for Strong Bonds or control group
- Couples assessed
 - time 1 (baseline)
 - time 2 (after intervention)
 - every six months for 3-4 years



The Army Marriage Project

- Intervention delivered by Army chaplains
- Couples assessed pre, post, and every six months for four years
- Wide range of outcomes assessed
- Ample staffing and payment to reduce attrition



Study Sites

- Fort Campbell (478 couples)
 - Findings presented today are from the Campbell Sample
- Fort Benning (184 couples)
- Except for two very large, ongoing federal trials, this is the largest study in history of marriage/relationship education with high methodological rigor.

Fort Campbell



"The Screaming Eagles"

- Home of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault).



Overall Sample

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Results of Outcome Analyses, To Date

Self-report analyses are Pre to Post.
Follow-ups (and analyses) will occur up to a few years following training.

Analyze as Randomized

The most conservative analytic strategy possible.

Divorce Outcomes by Intervention and Control Groups

	Intervention	Control
Divorced or Filed	5 (2.14%)	14 (6.57%)
Married (not separated)	229	199

Chi-Square = 4.36, $p < .05$.
Evaluated using Yates Correction.
Separated couples are not entered in the table.

PSB Effects on Marriage: Positive and Significant

- Communication Skills

- Positive Bonding

PSB Effects on Marriage: Trends and Nonsignificant

- Trends
 - Confidence
 - Sacrifice

- Nonsignificant
 - Commitment
 - Marital Satisfaction
 - Communication Danger Signs

- There were NO variables which showed negative effects of PSB on marriage

Analyze as Attended

A less conservative analytic strategy but one that focuses on who actually got the intervention and who did not.

The Sample

For RM analyses, pre post 362 couples

- 238 couples who did not get any PSB
- 124 couples who attended all of PSB
- (Many other couples attended part of PSB. They are left out of these analyses.)

In general, . . . compared to PSB couples who did not attend or attend completely . . .

- Attenders tended to report higher levels of commitment.

- Attenders tended to rate their marriages a little less positively in terms of current functioning.

PSB Effects: Positive and Significant

- Communication Skills
- Confidence
- Positive Bonding
- Commitment
- Marital Satisfaction
- Satisfaction with Sacrifice
- Connection with other Army couples

Summary and Implications

- Divorce reduction findings are strongest in the history of this field in a study when using the most rigorous methods possible.

- Significant, short term findings in most rigorous analyses on limited number of variables. Many other variables clearly trend in same direction.

Complete Attender Analyses

- Strong impacts as reflected by significant differences across many variables

- Those who were assigned to the PSB group, and who made it in and through all the training, are those couples who
 - tended to report not doing quite as well as T1
 - tended to be higher in commitment

- This is different from common belief that those who need such services least are most likely to attend.

Summary and Implications

- ❑ These couples from both Ft. Campbell and Ft. Benning are being followed by our team for a number of years.
- ❑ Future analyses will examine long-term impacts.
- ❑ Future analyses will examine effects of deployments, PTSD, and other key factors as they impact Army couples.

Acknowledgements

Supported in part by a grant from NICHD
(1-R01-HD048780-01)

Over the history of the research project, thanks to:

Pete Frederich	Donnella Prentice
Jocelyn Petrella	Glen Bloomstrom
Tom Waynick	Tamara Williams
Ron Thomas	LeeAnne Walker
Deb McCranie	

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- ❑ For more information on the Army Marriage Research Project, contact Scott Stanley (sstanley@du.edu)
 - ❑ For more information on PREP: www.PREPinc.com