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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

EFFECTS OF DEPLOYMENT ON COMMITTED RELATIONSHIPS:
RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION OF PARTNERS OF REGULAR AND RESERVIST
ARMY SOLDIERS

A clinical dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Psychology

August, 2013

by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
DEDICATION	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
Chapter I. Effects of Deployment on Committed Relationships	1
Consequences of Combat Faced by Military Personnel and Their Families ...	3
Emotional consequences of military induced separation for family members	5
Partners	5
Children	6
Comparing Experiences of Deployed Reservist and Regular Military	7
Sources of Support for Military Personnel and Their Families	9
Marital Satisfaction and Deployment	9
Communication and Marital Satisfaction	11
Cultural Considerations as a Source of Support for Soldiers and Military Families	13
Research Questions	15
Summary	16
Chapter II. Methodology and Procedures	17
Participants	17
Instrumentation	19
Demographics	19
Deployment information	21
Deployment familial contact experience	21
Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS)	22
Procedures	23
Data Analysis	25
Chapter III. Results	30
Deployment Descriptions by Component	31
Military Status and Demographic Characteristics on Relational Satisfaction ..	34
Deployment Factors and Relational Satisfaction	49
Other Findings	57

	Page
Common Difficulties	57
Common Supports	60
Common Recommendations.	64
Personal Experience	69
Summary	70
Chapter IV. Discussion	71
Description of Deployment	71
Military Status and Demographic Characteristics on Relational Satisfaction . .	73
Deployment Factors and Relational Satisfaction	75
Other Findings	76
Implications and Contributions	78
Limitations	80
Future Directions	82
REFERENCES	85
APPENDIX A: Recruitment Text	93
APPENDIX B: Informed Consent Form	94
APPENDIX C: Questionnaire	96
APPENDIX D: Note of Appreciation to Participants.	100

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Number of Methods to Communicate During Deployment	32
Table 2. Contact Frequency During Deployment	33
Table 3. Quantity of Identified Available Resources During Deployment	33
Table 4. Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total RDAS Score Two-way ANOVA	35
Table 5. Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total Dyadic Consensus Score Two-way ANOVA	36
Table 6. Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total Dyadic Satisfaction Score Two-way ANOVA	37
Table 7. Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total Dyadic Cohesion Score Two-way ANOVA	39
Table 8. Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Total RDAS Score Two-way ANOVA	41
Table 9. Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Dyadic Consensus Score Two-way ANOVA	42
Table 10. Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Dyadic Satisfaction Score Two-way ANOVA	43
Table 11. Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Dyadic Cohesion Score Two-way ANOVA	44
Table 12. Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Total RDAS Score Two-way ANOVA	45
Table 13. Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Dyadic Consensus Score Two-way ANOVA	46
Table 14. Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Dyadic Satisfaction Score Two-way ANOVA	47

	Page
Table 15. Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Dyadic Cohesion Score Two-way ANOVA	48
Table 16. Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Total RDAS Scores	50
Table 17. Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Dyadic Consensus Scores	51
Table 18. Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Dyadic Satisfaction Scores	52
Table 19. Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Dyadic Cohesion Scores	53
Table 20. Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Total RDAS Scores	54
Table 21. Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Dyadic Consensus Scores	55
Table 22. Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Dyadic Satisfaction Scores	56
Table 23. Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Dyadic Cohesion Scores	57

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Quantity of Identified Available Resources by Partner's Affiliation During Deployment	34
Figure 2. Dyadic Satisfaction Score by Age and Partner's Military Affiliation	38
Figure 3. Dyadic Cohesion Score by Age and Partner's Military Affiliation	40
Figure 4. Participants Endorsing Common Difficulties by Partner's Military Affiliation	59
Figure 5. What has Helped the Most in Dealing with Partner's Deployment(s)	61
Figure 6. Type of Non-Familial Social Supports During Deployment	63
Figure 7. Recommendations to Assist in Dealing with Deployment	65
Figure 8. Suggested Social Support by Component	66

Dedication

To the soldiers who have fought for the freedoms granted by this blessed country and for their families who have endured the uncertainty of separation. To my wife who supported me and continually rose to each challenge that has been presented to her. To Kierscha, Breklyn, and Hudson, who provided countless hugs and laughs throughout my journey and unknowingly sacrificed time with their father to support his goals and dreams. To my parents who never doubted me and strove to support me any way they could. To Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis who would settle for nothing less than my best. She stoked my passion for psychology and opened my eyes to diverse meanings of trauma and recovery. To Dr. Jena Kravitz, who had total faith in my ability and gave me the confidence to pursue every ideal without hesitation. To Dr. Barbara (Sophie) Lee Eurich-Rascoe, for her gentle encouragement and positive outlook. To Dr. David Foy, who demonstrated what it means to honor the military. To Dr. Joy Asamen for spending countless hours at all times of day and night to answer questions, tutor, and provide valuable lessons and laughs through my stumbling and struggles. To Dr. Robert deMayo for graciously stepping in and serving when needed. I would not be the person I am today were it not for each of you. Finally, to my Lord and God for all that I have and am. I am forever indebted and am eternally grateful.

Abstract

Having a partner as a part of the military induces a level of great stress. There is an absence of literature focusing on the unique circumstances that Reservist and National Guard soldiers and their families face with deployment. This project aimed to explore the unique challenges of part-time military families, looking specifically into how partners of reservist military and regular military soldiers significantly differ in their description of the deployment experience and relational/marital satisfaction, as well as if deployment experience factors or certain demographic characteristics of partners of soldiers predict reported rates of marital satisfaction. A snowballing method to recruit participants was used in which participants accessed an internet-based survey, which consisted of demographics, deployment information, and contact during deployment, and the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). Dyadic adjustment of regular army and reservist partners revealed a minor difference of relational cohesion based on partner's military affiliation. Differences in reported marital satisfaction were also found to be influenced by age and the interaction of age and partner's military affiliation. Partners of regular army soldiers also indicated having a greater number of resources available for support during deployment and utilizing a greater number of methods to maintain contact during deployment. Qualitative analysis of participants' descriptions of challenges and recommendations suggested parenting and childcare to be the most common challenge among regular and reservist components. Partners of regular army soldiers also appeared to frequently specify the need for social supports to be military affiliated. Limitations and contributions of findings are also discussed.

Chapter I: Effects of Deployment on Committed Relationships

As of December 31, 2009, the military consisted of 2,269,668 members, of which 1,421,668 were active duty soldiers and 848,000 people were in the seven reserve components; of the reserve component troops, 510,616 were members of the National Guard (Department of Defense, 2009a, 2009b). In a population of over 307,000,000 people, there is less than 1% in the active or reserve components of the military (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The terms *regular army* and *active army* are commonly used to differentiate full-time army from their reserve and National Guard counterparts (Joint Education and Doctrine Division, J-7, Joint Staff, 2010). For the purposes of this study, the National Guard and Reserve organizations will be referred to collectively as reservists. This subset of the military population is faced with similar challenges as those of full-time military personnel, such as the omnipresent possibility of being separated from their residence and family in order to follow military command orders. Like their active counterparts, reservists are also sent into combat to defend the nation or support other nations in conflict; yet, they differ in how and where their time is spent outside of military activation.

Military families are generally aware that military-induced separation may be mandated, the timing of its occurrence is unpredictable, and the experience of such a separation is often a difficult one to navigate (Kelly, 1994; McLeland & Sutton, 2008; Pierce, Vinokur, & Buck, 1998; Solomon, Dekel, & Zerach, 2008; Vormbrock, 1993). Merritt (2010) reported that military spouses who undergo intermittent deployments, rather than traditional deployments, experience more psychological distress and higher anxiety. Wexler and McGrath (1991) and Renshaw, Rodrigues, and Jones (2008) found

families of deployed soldiers have to manage significant loneliness and anxiety during deployment. Despite the needs of these families, much of the research on military deployment has been focused on the soldiers themselves, to the neglect of the struggles of their families and family relationships (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Moreover, in the limited research that does exist on military families, there is a stronger emphasis on the needs of full-time active military over their reservist counterparts (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010).

A major difference between regular military organizations and the reservist organizations, which is directly relevant to this proposed dissertation, is the degree of association family members have with the military. For instance, regular-military families are more likely to have neighbors, friends, and community members who share the same military affiliation and unit. They have a greater number of activities at which wives, husbands, and children meet other wives, husbands, and children who have family members in the same unit (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Family members are able to connect with other military families from the same unit, which contributes to a sense of community (VanVranken, Jellen, Knudson, Marlowe, & Segal, 1984). When a regular military unit deploys, families are left surrounded with others who are experiencing similar challenges and therefore readily share and understand each other's experiences.

Reservist family members, on the other hand, do not typically have this same support network available to them (VanVranken et al., 1984). Instead of living on or near a large military installation, reservist members and their families can reside great distances from their home-base military unit; some of these families even live in a different state from their organization's facilities (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). This

separation leaves families of reservist soldiers separated and disconnected from the military organization.

The following discussion provides an overview of the bodies of literature relevant to understanding the challenges of reservist families, which include studies exploring: (a) the potential consequences of combat faced by military personnel and their families, (b) the experiences of deployed reservists in comparison to regular-army personnel and their families, (c) the sources of support for military personnel and their families, (d) how relational satisfaction may be related to deployment, (e) the role of communication with marital satisfaction, (f) and cultural considerations as a source of support for soldiers and military families.

Consequences of Combat Faced by Military Personnel and Their Families

There are a number of attributes that characterize the military lifestyle. Some of these attributes are shared by all branches of the military, while others are specific to particular branches or organizations. Some of the common aspects shared by most military organizations include the potential for deployment and separation from home and family at a moment's notice, with the threat of danger, including injury or death, as potential consequences (Cozza, Chun, & Polo, 2005). Other shared attributes include the masculine-dominated culture with traditional views of gender roles, long work hours, and having to be ready to deploy without prior notice (Rienerth, 1978). Although the reservists share these attributes, most reservist soldiers spend only a short time each month within the military community, while the rest of their time is spent as a civilian.

With warfare, the potential of injury or death is a reality that soldiers and their families face. Today, there has been an increase in mental health and cognitive problems

reported among troops returning from combat, which are likely due to extended deployments, higher rates of survivability from wounds, and more traumatic brain injuries (Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2008). With longer deployments and shorter rest periods between deployments, soldiers have been exposed to more frequent and prolonged stressors such as the danger of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombers (Hoge et al., 2004). Killing an enemy, seeing a fellow soldier and friend dead or injured, having to handle human remains, and the feelings of helplessness associated with not being able to stop violent situations are also prolonged stressors that soldiers endure throughout deployment (Hoge et al., 2004). The current conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq have the highest ratio of wounded to killed soldiers of any documented conflict (Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2008). Many soldiers who may have died from blood loss or other injuries in earlier conflicts are being saved due to advances in combat medicine and armor (Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2008). Of the large number of wounded soldiers returning home, many have experienced significant trauma, leaving emotional and cognitive injuries (Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2008). Traumatic brain injury (TBI) has been recorded in previous wars, but recent medical literature has highlighted the frequency of mild concussive injuries, which are common to blasts, motor vehicle accidents, falls, and any other sudden acceleration or deceleration of the brain (Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2008; Zillner, Spiers, & Culbertson, 2008). TBI is difficult to diagnose and distinguish from psychological co-morbid conditions, often leaving the injured with decreased levels of consciousness, amnesia, and other neurological abnormalities (Tanielian, & Jaycox, 2008).

Emotional consequences of military induced separation for family members.

The emotional consequences of separation are evidenced by the extended farewell ceremonies, lengthy displays of affection, and tears shed when a military unit departs its home station to begin deployment. Chambers (2009) described a number of major themes common to families that undergo military induced separation, such as grief, loss, fear of the unknown, as well as managing the impact on couple communication, dealing with the effects on family dynamics and functioning, finding and using new problem-focused coping strategies, and accepting the struggle. Research has identified negative consequences for couples as a result of military induced separation such as a greater likelihood of divorce, emotional distress, anxiety, and loneliness (Pavalko & Elder, 1990; Renshaw et al., 2008; Solomon et al., 2008; Wexler & McGrath, 1991). Pierce et al. (1998) identified the following six factors as correlated with poor mental health, two years following deployment: deployment to a theater of war (area of military conflict), job strain, financial strain, parental challenges, having a younger child, and ethnic identification as White. This last factor may be due, in part, to differences in the important role extended-family childcare plays in some cultures versus members of Euro-American cultures. For example, Euro-American cultures often value independence and self-sustainment, while the collectivistic nature of many other ethnic groups accommodate for a stronger extended-family support system, where it is common for grandparents, aunts, and uncles to be involved in child rearing (Anderson & Middleton, 2005; Paludi, 2002).

Partners. Pavalko and Elder (1990) found that veterans were more likely to divorce than nonveterans. War related trauma can complicate close relationships, which

normally serve as a protective factor against PTSD. Symptom clusters of PTSD, such as avoidance and numbing, are relatively more associated with intimate-relationship dissatisfaction and impaired intimacy (Lyons, 2003; Solomon, Dekel, & Mikulincer, 2008).

Children. Another important factor to keep in mind is how children may impact relationships, especially through deployment. Having children has been linked to decreased relational satisfaction (Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Wendorf, Lucas, Imamoglu, Weisfeld, & Weisfeld, 2011). Military couples with children share the burden of deployment with all other soldier families, yet those non-deployed partners with children are often left to face parenting issues on their own.

There has been some conflicting research regarding some of the difficulties families face during deployment in regards to child adjustment. By researching children's school records and teachers' perceptions, Ramirez (2008) found no indication of educational, emotional, and social difficulties as a result of their parent's military deployment. Yet others have found that some of the difficulties soldiers and their families experience with deployment include child adjustment problems. Pierce et al. (1998), for example, found parental difficulties providing care, changes in the child's life, the mother's deployment to a theater of war, family income, marital status, and the military component (i.e., reserve, regular military) potentially influenced a child's adjustment. Interestingly, mothers in the National Guard or Reserves reported greater difficulty providing care for their children, which in turn, increased children's adjustment problems (Pierce et al., 1998). Although Pierce et al. found that children whose mother deployed

experienced adjustment problems during and following the deployment, no long-standing effects (i.e., over 3 years) were found.

Comparing Experiences of Deployed Reservist and Regular Military

The National Guard makes up over 22% of all members of the military (Department of Defense, 2009a). Although the National Guard makes up a significant proportion of the military, most of the literature on the military experience focuses on active-duty personnel. Some of the attributes specific to the active military include frequent moves (average of once every 3 years), greater integration with a military community, and shorter contracts, meaning they stay in the military for shorter duration (Minear, 2007). In contrast, National Guard members generally move less, are more likely to live near their home of origin rather than a military community, are generally less involved in the military community while more integrated into the civilian community, have more responsibilities outside the military, like school or a career, have less experience with their military duties, and generally have longer contracts (Minear, 2007; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Rather than living on or near large military installations, National Guard members and their families are not relocated or placed near military facilities and can be found great distances from their home unit (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). While the National Guard has deployed units to all major conflicts, the majority of guard units were not sent overseas during the Vietnam conflict (National Guard Education Foundation, 2011). In fact, Minear (2007) reported that a typical Army National Guard soldier enlisted without the expectation of serving outside of the United States.

The financial impact of deployment varies greatly depending on what service to which a soldier belongs, (i.e., Regular Army, Reserve, etc.). Regular military soldiers are employed full-time by the military, hence, their earnings are not interrupted by deployment, and often, their pay increases. Reservist soldiers, on the other hand, may leave full time careers or businesses when deployed, which often means they leave their primary source of income. Employers are asked to keep the position open for reservist soldiers until their return, but reservists who own small businesses may have to close their doors while away. Therefore, some reservist families experience substantial financial strain as a direct result of deployment (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). While it is difficult to compare the average income of reservist soldiers to the earnings of regular military soldiers, in 2006, the Department of Defense initiated a program to supplement the income of reservist soldiers to compensate for the financial loss they sustained as a result of military deployment (Department of Defense, 2006).

Miliken, Aucheterlonie, and Hoge (2007) report that National Guard veterans experience higher emotional distress after returning from war when compared to their regular military counterparts. Gottman, Gottman, and Atkins (2011) report that National Guard and reservist families are at greater risk of emotional distress than the regular military due to isolation from their affiliated unit. Furthermore, reservists reported their children experienced greater adjustment problems (Pierce et al., 1998). These observations may be related to the number of life changes reservist families must undergo (e.g., change of residence, work, social supports, and school).

Sources of Support for Military Personnel and Their Families

Various protective factors have been identified as beneficial to soldiers and their families in regards to combat, separation, and reintegration. For example, Bartone (1999) found hardiness to be a protective factor against ill health effects from combat stress. Hardiness is a trait that is developed early in life and manifests by high commitment to life and work, being generally flexible, and viewing challenges as a natural part of life (Bartone, 1999). Others have found that instrumental support, such as childcare, financial assistance, and emotional support protect the wellbeing of children whose mothers are deployed (Pierce et al., 1998). A sense of community is often found among regular-military families, due to the amount of interaction and close proximity of their family life (VanVranken et al., 1984). Supportive military communities also provide protection from emotional difficulties to military families (Cozza et al., 2005). By having the close military community, regular Army families are able to experience deployment as a joint suffering, where their neighbors, friends, and community all share in the challenges and hardships together. Pierce et al. (1998) reported that some active-military members who participate in the war effort may relocate with their families if not sent to a theater of war, whereas the reservist component members sent to support the war effort will be separated from family, regardless of whether or not they serve in a theater of war (Pierce et al., 1998).

Marital Satisfaction and Deployment

Marital or relational satisfaction has been defined in varying ways using a multitude of different instruments (Busby, Christensen, Russell, & Larsen, 1995; Ward, Lundberg, Zabriskie, & Berrett, 2009). In this study, relational satisfaction will be

defined both in terms of the level of distress and positive emotional experiences within the relationship. Ward et al. (2009) also found that marital satisfaction is positively correlated with the absence of, or minimal levels of, distress; hence, this study will take both these elements into account.

Recent military conflicts have provided evidence to support the belief that there are relational challenges that couples face with military induced separations (Basham, 2009). For example, divorce rates among enlisted families increased 53% between 2000 and 2004 (Freshour, 2006). But RAND (2007) cautions that military statistics may be an underestimation of the actual rate of divorce since their accounting does not take into account couples who divorce after leaving the military. Moreover, McLeland and Sutton (2008) report that soldiers anticipating deployment and recently returned from deployment experience lower marital satisfaction.

What is the emotional process experienced by couples who are anticipating deployment or are deployed? In their work, Pincus, House, Christenson, and Adler (2001) described the emotions associated with each stage of deployment. Prior to deployment, the soldier typically spends less time at home as he or she prepares for deployment, which engenders a feeling of emotional distancing for the spouse (Kotlowski, 2009; Pincus et al., 2001). During initial deployment, the spouse may report mixed emotions (Pincus et al., 2001). On one hand, the spouse may experience a sense of loss due to the soldier's absence. On the other hand, he or she might also experience a feeling of relief since there is no longer the anticipation of deployment. Furthermore, now that the separation has occurred, attention can shift to the time when the soldier returns home and the family is reunited (Pincus et al., 2001). Later in the deployment phase, the spouse

gains more control and independence over his or her life as he or she adjusts to life without the deployed partner; as the end of the deployment nears, partners report excitement over the anticipated reunification (Pincus et al., 2001). Upon return, the couple undergoes a period of reintegration, which is often described by couples as a honeymoon period filled with joy, while at the same time, roles are being renegotiated, including a loss of independence and freedom to which the spouse may have become accustomed (Basham, 2009; Pincus et al., 2001).

Although the lives of reservist and regular-military families differ in regards to proximity to and support from a military community, it is unclear if the emotional experience of these two groups of soldiers and their families differs substantially prior to, during, and after return from deployment.

Communication and Marital Satisfaction

In wars of past, communication between a deployed soldier and her/his stateside partner were limited to written letters, but with the infusion of newer technology into the military and general society, soldiers are able to converse with loved ones at home on a more regular basis via such tools as phone, webcam, Skype, and web chat. Although this constant communication can facilitate a feeling of closeness between separated partners, it brings with it a new set of challenges (Gottman, Gottman, & Atkins, 2011). The soldiers' day-to-day reality is far removed from the dealings of family life at home.

While the soldier is faced with life and death situations on a regular basis, issues that may have ordinarily been disconcerting at home, such as relational issues with friends, take on less importance. The realities experienced by each party are vastly different; therefore, communicating between them can be disconcerting or overwhelming to couples

(Gottman et al., 2011). While a partner at home may desire empathy for the difficulty he or she faces, the soldier may find it difficult to provide such understanding while seeing a much harsher reality in the theater of war. This discrepancy in communicating may lead to distancing and emotional withdrawal as a way for couples to cope with the guilt and exhaustion experienced during these exchanges (Gottman et al., 2011).

A number of behaviors exhibited by couples when communicating with one another may indicate distress in the relationship. For example, when compared to non-distressed couples, distressed couples report more interruptions, criticisms, and complaining, as well as fewer positive suggestions and self-disclosures, while problem-solving together (Fichten & Wright, 1983; Fincham, 2004; Schaap, Bunnk, & Kerkstra, 1988). Distressed couples also display less humor, smiling, and laughter than happy couples (Birchler, Weiss, & Vincent, 1975; Gottman & Silver, 1999). One common pattern of communication that indicates distress is that of an escalating cycle of negative communication (Burman, John, & Margolin, 1992; Gottman & Silver, 1999).

The quality of the communication between geographically separated partners can greatly influence the emotional health and wellbeing of partners. For example, the Mental Health Advisory Team V (2008) found that the signature critical incident that precedes suicidal and homicidal ideation in those deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan is a stressful and emotional relationship related event (Mental Health Advisory Team V, 2008), such as an argument over the phone, a communication that leaves partners feeling abandoned or alone, or unsupportive conversations (Gottman et al., 2011).

Cultural Considerations as a Source of Support for Soldiers and Military Families

The American Psychological Association (APA; 2002) delineates the ethical guidelines for addressing multicultural issues in conducting psychological research. Race, ethnicity, language, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and other sociocultural dimensions should be taken into account in the conceptualization and design of the investigation (APA, 2002). In the proposed study, a number of multicultural considerations arise, including the military as a cultural entity unique from civilian culture, the male-dominated nature of the military, and the potential protective influence collectivistic values for families coping with the deployment of loved ones may have (Anderson & Middleton, 2005; Paludi, 2002).

The military is a distinct culture with its own set of values, traditions, language, and practices. Some of the cultural attributes include the chain of command, an emphasis on unit cohesion, the close proximity of the military community, the life-and-death nature of the work soldiers do, and valuing physical strength and emotional restraint (Wright et al., 2009). Although these attributes create strong cultural ties among its members, they may also prevent members of the group from seeking psychological support for their concerns (Wright et al., 2009). For example, if a soldier or his or her partner seeks professional support for emotional difficulties, there is often a fear that the chain of command or other members of the unit may question their fitness and express concern with serving with him or her, given the life-and-death risks associated with their work. In other words, there exists a fear that the soldier may not be psychologically strong enough to effectively serve. Wright et al. (2009) observed that those soldiers who are the most in

need of psychological support are the least likely to obtain the support they need, due to the stigma associated with help-seeking.

While regular military personnel are completely immersed in the military culture, reservist soldiers spend the majority of their time as a civilian; hence, reservists live a *bicultural* existence with one foot in the military culture and the other foot in civilian life. Just as the reservist soldier must balance both civilian and military cultures, so must their families balance the dual contexts, and their ability to achieve this balance may become particularly acute if their loved one is deployed.

Within the context of the military culture are the unique cultures each member of the military brings to the experience, such as one's ethnic, religious, or familial cultural values, values that may be particularly important in helping families cope when a loved one is deployed. For example, in Asian cultures, the concept of filial piety (Yeh, 2003) or in Latino cultures, the concept of Familismo (Bracero, 1998), provide the basis for family cohesiveness, interdependence, and loyalty, which may be particularly important in mitigating the distress associated with military-induced separation. In fact, Behnke, MadDermid, Anderson, and Weiss (2010) found that U.S. military members of an ethnic minority group are more affected by their family resources. They also found that a soldier's intent to leave the military is partially mediated by his or her rating of family resources (Behnke, MadDermid, Anderson & Weiss, 2010). Maxfield (2005) reported that African Americans are overly represented in both the officer and enlisted corps of the Army. Maxfield (2005) also found that Hispanics are underrepresented in the military, but ascensions of Hispanic soldiers have increased dramatically from the year 2000. This

ethnic diversity highlights the need to identify culturally congruent ways to support the mental health of all soldiers and their families.

Finally, it is important to note the gender imbalance among military personnel (Kelly, Herzog-Simmer, & Harris, 1994; Monson et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2009). In this dissertation, the likelihood of reservists soldiers recruited for the study being primarily male is a reflection of this imbalance. Furthermore, the majority of their partners will likely be female due to the heterosexual bias of the military and policies such as the *Don't Ask Don't Tell* policy by which the military has abided by for the past 17 years (United States Code, 1993).

Research Questions

Given the obvious challenges faced by reservist family members when a loved one is deployed, the intent of the investigator was to further explore the subjective wellbeing of these military families and explore their challenges, sources of resilience, and communication strategies for coping with deployment. This study examined and explored differences in marital satisfaction/relational distress reported by military couples in the Army Reserves, Army National Guard, and those in the regular Army, following deployment. It was hoped that by assessing for a variety of protective factors against deployment stress, the military organization and service providers could work to emplace protective supports to keep families from experiencing excessive difficulties in preparation for, during, and following deployment (Bartone, 1999). It was also hoped that by gaining a better sense of the challenges faced by reservist families, clinicians and service providers could better prepare to meet these needs. Millions of dollars are spent each year to fulfill the needs of returning veterans (VanVranken et al., 1984). Further

understanding of soldiers and their families would allow these services to be better directed to meet their needs.

Hence, this dissertation proposed to explore the following research questions: (a) Do partners of reservist military and regular military soldiers significantly differ in their description of the deployment experience, i.e., how they keep in contact with one another, the frequency of contact, and resources and support available to them? (b) When taking into account the military status of soldiers (reserve vs. regular) and demographic characteristics of partners (age, gender, ethnicity, education level, children/no children), is there a difference in the partner's reported quality of the relational/marital relationship? (c) Do deployment experience factors (number of deployments, total length of deployment time) and certain characteristics (age, level education, number of children) of partners of active or reservist military soldiers significantly predict reported rates of relational/marital satisfaction?

Summary

Much of the research on military deployment has been focused on regular military organizations, with little attention paid to the potentially unique issues found among the reservist counterparts. The aim of this dissertation was to look at some of the challenges and potential sources of resilience specific to the families of reservist soldiers.

In summary, being a part of the military induces a level of great stress on soldiers and their families. Much research has gone into the specific challenges that arise from deployment and how these challenges can be mitigated. There is an absence of literature focusing on the unique circumstances that reservist soldiers and their families face with deployment. The goal of the current research project was to gain further understanding of

reservists' unique challenges in order to enable military policy to better support these families before, during, and following deployment.

Chapter II: Methodology and Procedures

Participants

All participants were partners of army soldiers who have undergone deployment in the last 11 years. Soldiers or partners who have not experienced deployment in the last 11 years were excluded from participation as a means of focusing on the experience of soldiers' and military partners' recent experience and reduce the effect of time on their memory of related experiences. The aim of this study was to include at least 20-30 participants in each of the two groups of study: partners of reservist army soldiers and partners of regular army soldiers. Participants were required to have rudimentary English fluency as the questionnaire was only in English. Age, education, relationship status, and number of children in the household were queried and analyzed as possible covariates, but not used as an exclusionary criterion.

Participants were recruited through a snowball sampling method which began with convenience sampling of soldiers and families of soldiers who are socially connected to the primary researcher through electronic social media. Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling method, often used when the sample participants are difficult to locate (Castillo, 2009). It also offered the benefits of cost efficiency as well as minimal work hours required for data collection (Castillo, 2009). The process began with the primary researcher sharing the link to the assessment through email and the social networking website, Facebook. Along with the link was a short explanation and request to share the link in order to gather more data.

The short explanation and request used on the social networking site read as follows:

Are you the partner of a member of the military who has been deployed in the last 11 years? Click this link to take a brief confidential survey for a chance to win a \$50 gift card. This is a voluntary opportunity to share a vital part of your experience! A friend of mine is conducting a research inquiry on deployment and committed relationships. It takes 10-20 minutes to complete. Even if you are not military affiliated, please “share” this link, “like” this post, and send it to all of your military affiliated friends to give them the opportunity to share their experience, and win a \$50 gift card.

The short explanation and request used via email reads as follows:

Are you the partner of a member of the military who has been deployed in the last 11 years? Click this link to take a brief confidential survey for a chance to win a \$50 gift card. A friend of mine is conducting research in an effort to better understand the needs of the partners of soldiers. It takes about 10-20 minutes to complete the questionnaire. This is a voluntary opportunity to share a vital part of your experience! If you are not military affiliated, please forward this to everyone you know that is, and give them the opportunity to share their military experience and win a \$50 gift card.

The provided link directed the participant to an introductory page that stated the voluntary nature of the study as well as the purpose. The introductory page also had a statement of informed consent, which participants were asked to

agree to in order to complete the survey. Once the survey was completed, the participants were directed to a thank you note, a list of referrals and given the option to sign up for the raffle.

The study included 181 participants who agreed to the informed consent and initiated the questionnaire; however, 30 of them were disqualified on the first question which asked if they had been in a committed relationship with someone during a deployment over 59 days, leaving 151 participants who completed the survey. The RDAS required participants to answer all questions to get accurate scores, and 29 of the 151 participants who were eligible to complete the survey did not respond to many of the RDAS questions. Therefore, 122 qualified participants adequately responded to the marital satisfaction portion of the survey, and five of those who adequately responded to the marital satisfaction portion, left out certain demographic information and thus, could not be included in all analysis.

Instrumentation

The Internet based survey consisted of the following four parts: (a) demographics, (b) deployment information, (c) family contact during deployment, and (d) Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). Below is a description of each part of the survey. See Appendix C for the complete survey.

Demographics. Participant demographic characteristics were gathered by including demographic items in the survey. Demographics gathered included age, gender, ethnicity, religious or spiritual affiliation, education level, relational/marital status, and number of children. By gathering the demographic information of the sample, some of these characteristics were assessed as possible covariates. For instance, the number of

children was thought to possibly increase for those who have been in the military longer, and therefore had greater number of deployments, which may have been a factor in the deployment experience reported by partners of reservist and active soldiers. Due to the limitations of the snowballing technique, it was important to assess sociocultural variables during the data collection and analysis process to ensure the results are appropriately generalized to only those populations which have adequate representation within the study. Understanding the characteristics of the sample has guided generalization of results.

Demographic information was collected with the research data, but no identifying information such as name, date of birth or contact information was collected other than an email address for those participants who opted to enter in a drawing for a \$50 dollar gift certificate. The email address provided was not stored with individual data.

Of the 118 participants, the vast majority identified as female (97%). Over four fifths (84%) identified as white/Caucasian, 9% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 3% identified as multiracial, 2% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% identified as African American, and 1% identified as American Indian. The mean age of participants was 32.42-years-old, and the median age was 31. Ages ranged from 20 to 54 years old. The majority of respondents were enlisted soldiers (62%), over a fourth of respondents were commissioned officers (27%), and 7% of respondents were warrant officers. Most of the participants had over 12 years of education (71%), and were married or in a committed relationship (96%). One fourth of participants reported having had no children (25%). The mean number of children of each respondent was 2.78 and responses ranged from 0-6 children.

Deployment information. In order to account for the possible effects that deployment has on dyadic adjustment and relational/marital satisfaction, the number of deployments and the total length of time separated due to deployment were queried via the survey. The various geographical areas that soldiers were deployed were also queried in order to account for location of deployment as a possible covariate, where certain areas were thought to possibly increase the likelihood of relational difficulties and others may not. The period of the last 11 years was used because of the increase in frequency and duration of deployments since September of 2001, and to gather information from those with more accurate memory of their experience.

Deployment familial contact experience. This section of the survey asked participants to recall specific aspects of their experience during and shortly after deployment, and general aspects of challenges and supports they had through deployment. The specific aspects queried included what method they used and how often they stayed in touch with their partner as well as how they characterized the amount of contact they had with their partner on a 1-5 scale, one being not enough, five being just right, and ten being too much. These questions were included for comparison of methods of contact used between groups and to account for satisfaction with contact frequency as a possible covariate to relational/marital satisfaction.

This section also asked participants about communication resources they had available to them during the deployment, and to who they could turn to for support during that time. These two questions were included as a means to explore what resources have been used or are known to partners of reservist soldiers in comparison to those known by partners of active soldiers. Relational resources were also compared between groups.

Following contact resource items, participants were asked three open ended questions where they could describe what was most challenging and helpful in managing past deployments, as well as recommendations they had for other partners facing similar challenges.

Items included in the *deployment information* and *family contact during deployment* sections of the survey were created by the primary researcher through a process of participatory action, where the researcher attended multiple army sponsored trainings and meetings which discussed military relationship challenges, as well as discussed the challenges faced by individual soldiers.

Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). The Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) is a self-report measure of marital or relationship adjustment, intended for use with married or cohabiting couples (Spanier, 1976). It has been widely used in the field of marriage and family research, and has been shown to reliably distinguish between distressed and nondistressed samples (Crane, Allgood, Larson, & Griffin, 1990). Busby, Christensen, Russell and Larson (1995) revised the DAS, which has 32 items, into a shorter and more parsimonious measurement that is now called the RDAS, which consists of 14 items. Busby, Christensen, Russell and Larsen (1995) examined RDAS results of 484 individuals and found the RDAS to have acceptable levels of construct validity and to be highly correlated with other measures of marital satisfaction. The correlation coefficient between the DAS and the RDAS was .97 ($p < .01$), and both measures correctly classified a high percentage (81%) of cases in the original study (Busby et al., 1995).

The RDAS asked participants to indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement they have with their partner in topics like religion, affection, decision making, sex, career and conventionality (Busby et al., 1995). It also asked how often certain topics are discussed, the partners quarrel, or they feel bothered by their partner (Busby et al., 1995). It asked about activities and sources of enjoyment found between the partners, as well as if they regret living together with their partner (Busby et al., 1995).

Although the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS) did not inquire directly about an individual's contentment and satisfaction with his or her relationship, it has been shown to measure marital satisfaction and includes three subscales: (a) consensus (b) satisfaction and (c) cohesion (Busby et al., 1995). Although the DAS and RDAS were primarily studied using participants of Caucasian American ethnicity, and failed to account for other diversity factors such as age, ability and sexuality, there have been multiple studies which have suggested that the DAS is useful with Chinese Americans, and other ethnic minority persons (Balsam & Szymanski, 2005; Casas & Ortiz, 1985; Lim & Ivey, 2000).

Procedures

After obtaining the approval of the Pepperdine University Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board, an email invitation that included the link to the survey was forwarded to friends, acquaintances, and family members of the primary investigator with a request to forward to all those who may have contact with partners of soldiers who may fit the requirements of the study. A link to the survey was posted on the author's Facebook, and Gmail accounts with a request for all contacts to *like* the post and for anyone who may fit the study requirements to click on the link and

take the survey (see Appendix A). The survey was hosted on a separate website that specializes in confidential survey research.

Upon clicking the link to the survey, the first window was an informed consent statement that highlighted the key considerations to help the potential participant decide on whether she/he wished to participate in the survey (see Appendix B). As participants were directly or indirectly socially connected to the primary researcher, the informed consent emphasized the voluntary and confidential nature of participation to mitigate the possibility of participants feeling coerced (i.e. the researcher had no way of knowing who does and does not complete the survey). The option to either accept or decline the terms of study participation was offered. If individuals were under 18 years old, did not have a spouse in the military, had not experienced military induced separation due to deployment longer than 59 days or if they declined the terms of study participation, a new window appeared that thanked the individual for considering participating (see Appendix D). If the individual agreed to the terms of the study, elected to accept the invitation to participate, and met the exclusionary criteria, she/he was routed to the survey.

Survey Monkey was the service used to manage the survey (www.surveymonkey.com). Survey Monkey's privacy policy stated that the data collected is kept private and confidential. Data was encrypted (using 128-bit SSL encryption technology) and password protected through the online survey site to protect the privacy of participants. The database that stored the data could only be accessed by the investigator using a user name and password and was not accessible by employees of Survey Monkey. Servers that stored the data were kept in a locked cage, requiring pass card and biometric recognition for access. The network was updated every 5 minutes and

used a firewall to restrict access to all ports except 80 (http) and 443 (https). QualysGuard network provided security audits weekly and hacker-safe scans daily. IP addresses and cookies were not included in the data collection, thereby further ensuring the privacy of study participants. Data was backed up and overwritten weekly.

Following completion of data collection, the data was downloaded onto the investigator's password protected computer without identifying information. The data was securely maintained, and will continue to be securely maintained for the required 5 years after the research concluded and destroyed at the end of these 5 years or when the data is no longer required for research purposes.

A link to the summary of the study findings was emailed to the same friends, family members and acquaintances that the original email was sent to with a thank you to all who supported the efforts of the study, and a request to forward it to all those that they forwarded the original message. A link to the summary of findings was also posted to the author's Facebook page with a similar thank you and request to click *like*, which makes the statement visible to their friends who also may have participated.

Data Analysis

Initial data analysis consisted of organization of data, followed by summarizing of data, and finally comparison in relation to the different groups. Organization of the data included the scoring of each individual RDAS and entering the results in a data matrix table. A frequency distribution along with measures of central tendency and variability were used to summarize the data. Data was further analyzed through comparison groups of scores on the RDAS between the regular army and reservist army partners.

Correlational coefficient was calculated between potential covariate factors including number of deployments, total months of deployment, age, level of education and number of children. Factoring in any identified covariate, one way ANOVA or ANCOVA analysis was used to compare relational/marital satisfaction between the reservist and the active military affiliated partners.

The two groups (reservist and active affiliated partners) were also compared on the categorical variables of deployment locations, type of contact, frequency of contact, subjective rating of impact of deployment through chi square analysis to identify possible inter dependence between the categorical factors and relational/marital satisfaction.

A multiple regression analysis followed, in which multiple variables, including number of deployment experiences, total length of deployment time, and certain demographic features (age, and number of children) were each compared to corresponding RDAS scores to determine if a functional relationship existed between relational adjustment/marital satisfaction and the other variables.

Responses of all participants to three open ended questions, inquiring specifically about challenges/difficulties of deployment, supports/helps, and recommendations for others facing deployment in the future were qualitatively analyzed. Phenomenological analysis includes a process of bracketing, reduction, clustering and extracting general and unique themes from participant responses (Groenewald, 2004). Responses were reviewed phenomenologically, to identify clusters of meaning and compare common themes found between partners of reservist soldiers and partners of regular army soldiers.

Phenomenological bracketing refers to the understanding of the researcher's personal experience and acknowledging that responses are viewed in light of personal

meaning of respondent as well as the researcher (Hycner, 1999). The researcher is tasked with the responsibility to bracket their experience and attempt to bracket personal presuppositions in order to avoid inappropriate subjective judgments (Groenewald, 2004). A brief description of the researcher's personal experience will provide context for the discussion of participant responses. (Hycner, 1999; Moustakas, 1994). Furthermore, processes of reduction, clustering, and extracting themes were reviewed by a second party and definitions were compared with correspondent literature.

The first open ended question for phenomenological evaluation asked about the greatest challenge of deployment. Responses clustered around nine themes which included loneliness, communication, worry, child rearing, change, daily living tasks, exhaustion, organizational problems, and isolation. Each response was given at least one code, for terms related to the above mentioned themes. The responses coded as loneliness included the following terms, *loneliness, lonely, feeling disconnected, being alone, him/her not being there, absence of partner, and being apart*. Terms that were coded as communication responses included, *communication, misinformation, miscommunication, conversation, misunderstanding, talk, e-mail, and hear his/her voice*. Terms that were coded as worry responses included, *wondering, not/never knowing, return or not, worry, possible death/injury, unsure, questioning, fear, unknown, anxiety, and waiting with heart in your throat*. Terms that were coded as child rearing responses included, *kids, child/children, parenting, and single mother*. Terms that were coded as change responses included, *injury, change, readjustment, aftereffect, after returning, reintegration, redeployment, and coming back*. Terms that were coded as daily living tasks responses included, *house, household, responsibilities, finances, self-reliance, and practical things*.

Terms that were coded as exhaustion responses included, *exhausted, no rest, overspent, overwhelmed, tired, need a break, worn out, no time to relax and low energy*. Terms that were coded as organizational problems responses included, *administrative, lack of funding, command, military, government, organization, and unit*. Terms that were coded as isolation responses included, *No friends, isolate, and limited support*.

The second open ended question for phenomenological evaluation asked about the greatest source of help/support of deployment. Responses clustered around six themes which included non-familial social support, familial social support, individual interests, communication, faith/spirituality, and resiliency. Resiliency, as used in this article, is specific to the individual assets that support the process of not only enduring hardship, but also creating and sustaining meaningful lives (Bowen & Martin, 2011; Van Hook, 2008). Each response was given at least one code, for terms related to the above mentioned themes. Terms that were coded as non-familial social support responses included, *Friends, others, church, community, social network, social support, and neighbors*. Non-familial social support responses were categorized as either military affiliated or unspecified. Responses deemed as military affiliated included reference to social supports, friends, neighbors or community as being in the same situation, having gone through similar circumstance or directly as military affiliated. Terms that were coded as familial social support responses included, *family*, or a specific familial relationship such as, *mother, daughter, or brother*. Terms that were coded as individual interests responses included, *personal goals, focusing in personal education or career, staying busy, getting out, doing stuff, going to the gym, doing yoga, taking time to rest and relax, traveling, getting into a routine, and personal hobbies*. Terms that were coded

as communication responses included, *communicate, phone calls, e-mail, internet, letters, video chat, talk, call, packages, informed, knowing, and connected*. Terms that were coded as faith/spirituality responses included, *faith, God, religion, spirituality, church, beliefs, and prayer*. Responses that were coded as resiliency were related to positive thinking and emotional or characterological development and included terms such as, *making him happy made me happy, endure, realized I am human, self-reliance, stay positive, patriotism, honor, duty, not thinking about it, and attitude*.

The last open ended question for phenomenological evaluation asked about the recommendations for others facing the challenges of deployment. Responses clustered around eleven themes which included social support, being busy or involved, self-care, communication with partner, positive thinking, faith/spirituality, seeking help, foster personal characteristics and attributes, acknowledge hardship, use military resources, and don't add stress to partner. Each response was given at least one code, for terms related to the above mentioned themes. Terms that were coded as social support responses included, *support network, a group, friend, people, someone, others, and military spouses*. Terms that were coded as busy or involved responses included, *busy, involved, occupied, active, preoccupied, productive, serve, fill... hours and don't stay in the house*. Terms that were coded as self-care responses included, *care for yourself, set goals to better self, take breaks, don't overdo it, give yourself time, indulge, breath, treat yourself, and make time for yourself*. Items that were coded as communication with partner responses included, *stay in contact with spouse, partner, communicate with deployed partner, send packages, emails, or letters to deployed partner, be honest with partner, and Have open communication*. Terms that were coded as positive thinking responses

included, *positive attitude, stay positive, expect the best, hang in there, it won't last forever, smile, believe in yourself, and Don't worry*. Terms that were coded as faith/spirituality responses included, *faith, religion, spirituality, God, church, prayer, meditation*, and reference to specific religious groups. Terms that were coded as seeking help responses included, *ask for help, seek help/assistance, let others help, find help to rely on, find support and get help*. Terms that were coded as foster personal characteristics and attributes responses included, *be strong, resilient, independent, flexible, compassionate, forgiving, determined, committed, loving, willing, accepting, patient, and forgiving*. Terms that were coded as acknowledge hardship responses included, *It's not going to be easy, accept the challenge, know it is difficulty, accept how little control you have, it is hard, it will get worse, it sucks*, and reference to deployment being a struggle. Terms that were coded as use military resources responses included, *Available counseling, resources, family readiness group, communication classes, parents' night out, spouse's night out, sponsored date nights, marriage retreats, military services, organized groups, and organizations*. Terms that were coded as don't add stress to partner responses included, *he has it worse, be considerate of his situation, don't stress them out, don't add stress, don't complain about day to day difficulties, and don't waste time on the phone complaining about problems at home*.

Chapter III: Results

The objective of this study can be distilled to answering the three research questions discussed above. The following sections focus on each of the three research questions, and utilize distinctly separate analyses of the data.

Deployment Descriptions by Component

The first research objective of this study consisted of the question, *Do partners of reservist military and regular military soldiers significantly differ in their description of the deployment experience (i.e., how they keep in contact with one another, the frequency of contact, and resources and support available to them)?* Analyses were conducted to compare the two groups: those whose partner was deployed as a Reservist soldier and those whose partner deployed as a Regular Army Soldier, on each of the above mentioned variables. Three χ^2 tests were conducted, one for each suggested possible difference between the two groups.

A χ^2 test was used to determine if there is a relationship between the partner's military affiliation (Reservist or Regular Army) and the number of methods used to keep in contact during deployment (1-2, 3, or 4). The participants selected from eight response options, which included an *other* option where participants were able to identify any other method of communication not already offered as an option. The other seven options included: (a) email, (b) phone, (c) live chat, (d) video chat, (e) written letter, (f) blog, and (g) other Internet sources. From these eight options, the types of methods were further reduced to the following four categories, which were entered into the χ^2 analysis: (a) phone, (b) postal service (letters, packages), (c) email, and (d) other Internet sources (social networking sites, blog, live chat). See table 1 for details. The χ^2 findings revealed a relationship between partner's military affiliation and the number of methods used to keep in contact during deployment ($\chi^2_{\text{critical } (.05, 2)}: 5.9915$, $\chi^2_{\text{observed}}: 6.88951731$). Specifically, partners of Regular Army soldiers endorsed using a greater

number of methods to stay in contact during deployment than partners of Reservist soldiers.

Table 1

Number of Methods to Communicate During Deployment

Partner's Military Affiliation	Number of methods used		
	1-2	3	4
Reservist	10	12	11
Regular Army	14	32	41

Note. Number of methods used refers to the number of methods used to communicate during deployment.

Participants were asked how frequently they were in contact with their deployed partner during their most recent deployment. A χ^2 test was used to determine if there was a relationship between the partner's military affiliation and the reported frequency of contact between partners. Eight options of contact frequency were offered, ranging from more than once a day to less than once a month. From these eight options, contact frequency was further reduced to the following three categories, which were entered into the χ^2 analysis: (a) one or more times per day, (b) two to six times per week, or (c) five time or less per month. See table 2 for details. The results of a χ^2 test indicated no significant relationship between the partner's military affiliation and the frequency of contact during the latest deployment ($\chi^2_{\text{critical } (.05, 2)}: 5.9915$, $\chi^2_{\text{observed}}: 5.661781787$).

Participants were asked to identify what resources and sources of support were available to them during deployment, and given examples such as family, military organizations, community, and church or faith group. A χ^2 test was used to determine if

there was a relationship between the partner's military affiliation and the reported number of available resources or sources of support during deployment.

Table 2

Contact Frequency During Deployment

Partner's Military Affiliation	Contact Frequency		
	1x/day or more	2-6x/wk	5x/mo or less
Reservist	14	11	8
Regular Army	39	36	12

Note. x = times; wk = week; mo = month.

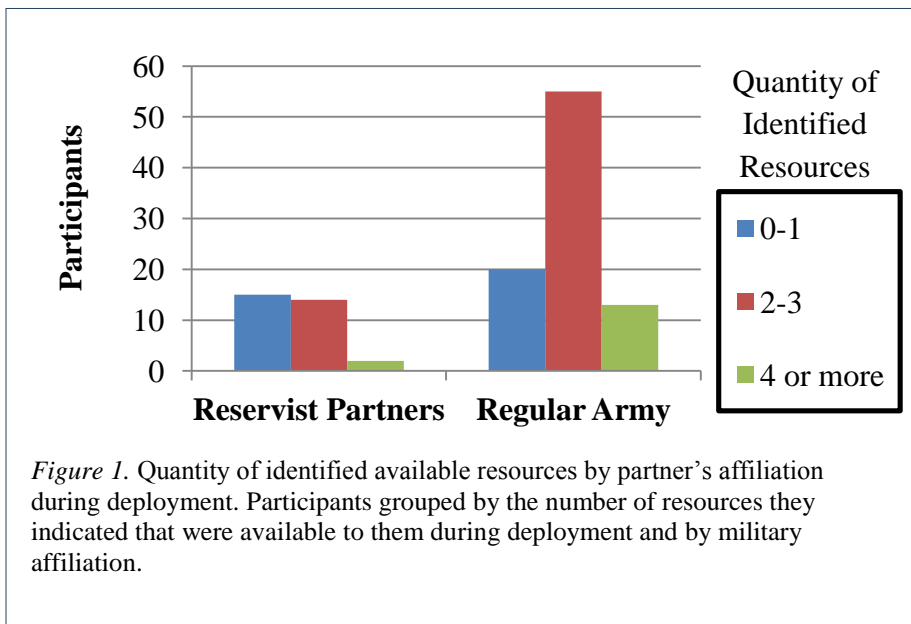
Participants were grouped according to how many resources they identified as being available to them during deployment into three categories. The three categories were as follows: (a) 0-1 resource, (b) 2-3 resources, and (c) 4 or more resources. See table 3 for details. Of note, only two participants identified more than four resources available during deployment. The results of a χ^2 test revealed a significant relationship between the partner's military affiliation and the number of reported resources and sources of support during deployment ($\chi^2_{\text{critical}}: 5.9915$, $\chi^2_{\text{observed}}: 10.15647851$).

Table 3

Quantity of Identified Available Resources During Deployment

Partner's Military Affiliation	Quantity of Identified Resources		
	0-1	2-3	4 or more
Reservist	15	14	2
Regular Army	19	55	13

Specifically, partners of regular army soldiers tend to report a greater number of sources of support. They were more likely to report having 2-3 sources of support as compared to the partners of reservist soldiers. Partners of reservist soldiers were more likely to report 0-1 source of support. Figure 1 illustrates the discrepancy found between the groups.



Military Status and Demographic Characteristics on Relational Satisfaction

Another research question is as stated, *When taking into account the military status of soldiers (reserve vs. regular) and demographic characteristics of partners (age, gender, ethnicity, education level, children/no children), is there a difference in the partner's reported quality of the relational/marital relationship.* A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to investigate whether significant main or interaction effects exist for partner's military affiliation and/or age cohort relative to RDAS total scores. No significant main effects were found for partner's marital affiliation ($F[1, 109] = .667, p <$

0.416) or age cohort ($F[2, 109] = 1.74, p < 0.18$); no significant interaction effect was found either ($F[2, 109] = 1.24, p < 0.295$). A summary of the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total RDAS Score Two-way ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	288.682	5	57.736	0.854	0.514	0.038
Intercept	184290.456	1	184290.456	2726.893	0.00	0.962
Military Affiliation	45.05	1	45.05	0.667	0.416	0.006
Age	235.307	2	117.653	1.741	0.18	0.031
Military Affiliation *Age	167.089	2	83.545	1.236	0.295	0.022
Error	7366.5	109	67.583			
Total	309633	115				
Corrected Total	7655.183	114				

Note. R Squared = 0.038 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.006)

Two-way analyses of variance were also conducted to investigate whether main or interaction effects exist for age and/or partner's military affiliation, relative to the three subscales of the RDAS. The two-way analysis conducted to determine a possible main or interaction of age and partner's military association on participant's dyadic consensus subscale score found no significant main effect of age ($F(1,109) = 1.128, p < 0.291$), partner's military affiliation ($F(2,109) = 0.357, p < 0.701$) or interaction effect ($F(2,42) = 0.375, p < 0.688$). A summary of results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

*Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total Dyadic Consensus Score Two-way**ANOVA*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	86.976	5	17.395	0.816	0.541	0.036
Intercept	40905.283	1	40905.283	1919.269	0.00	0.946
Military Affiliation	24.034	1	24.034	1.128	0.291	0.01
Age	15.204	2	7.602	0.357	0.701	0.007
Military Affiliation *Age	15.967	2	7.983	0.375	0.688	0.007
Error	2323.111	109	21.313			
Total	66744	115				
Corrected Total	2410.087	114				

Note. R Squared = 0.036 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.008)

A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to investigate whether significant main or interaction effects exist for partner's military affiliation and/or age cohort relative to Dyadic Satisfaction scores. Although no significant main effects was found for partners' marital affiliation ($F [1, 109] = .16$), a significant main effect was found for the age cohort ($F[2, 109] = 4.94, p < .009$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$). The main effect for age was especially notable between the 30-39 and the 40 and up age cohorts, in which dyadic adjustment was higher for the younger cohort. The interaction of partner's military status and age cohort was also significant ($F [2, 109] = 6.44, p < 0.002$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.11$),

with an ordinal interaction exhibited for Reservist and Regular Army in the 20-29 and 30-39 age cohorts. Specifically, Regular Army in the 20-29 age cohort and the Reservist in the 30-39 age cohort showed significantly higher dyadic satisfaction when compared to their respective counterparts in the other age cohort. A summary of the results are presented in Table 6 and illustrated in Figure 2.

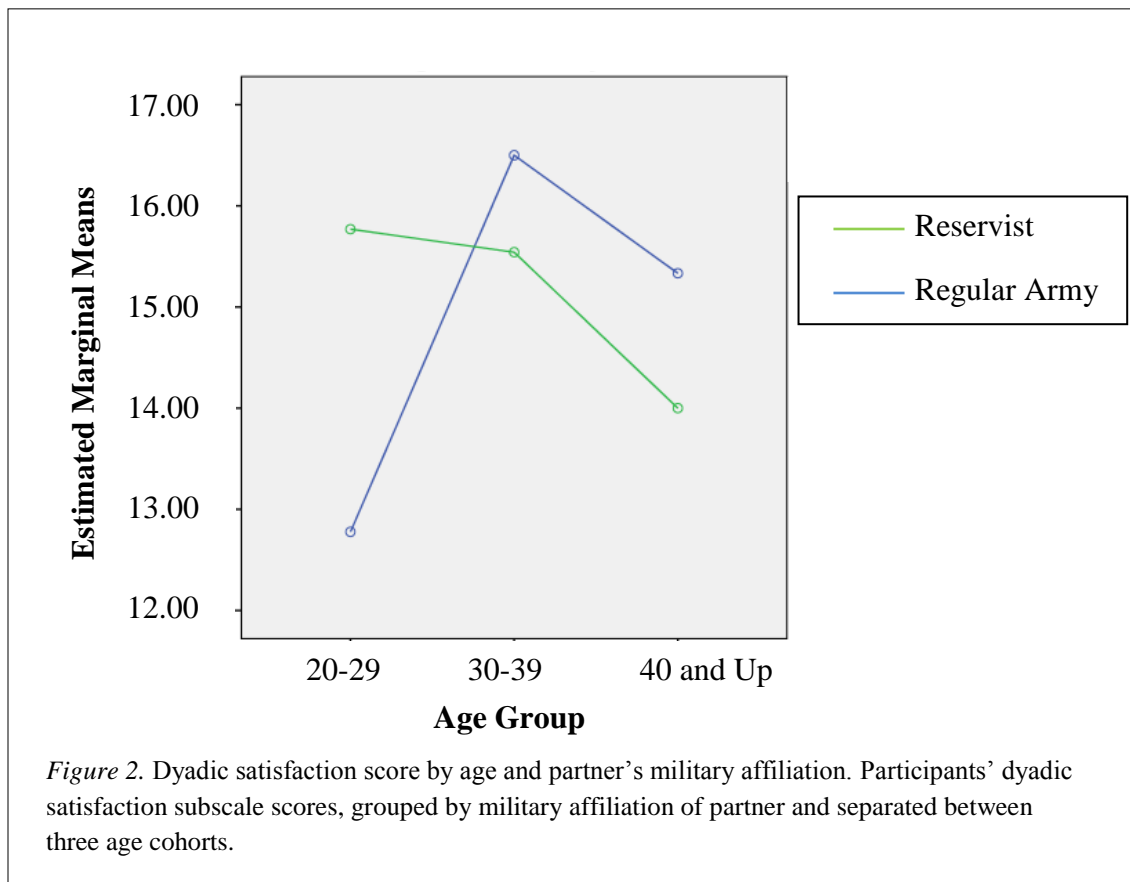
Table 6

Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total Dyadic Satisfaction Score Two-way

ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	105.24	5	21.048	3.522	0.005	0.139
Intercept	16185.769	1	16185.769	2708.308	0.00	0.961
Military Affiliation	0.98	1	0.98	0.164	0.686	0.02
Age	59.075	2	29.537	4.942	0.009	0.083
Military Affiliation *Age	76.971	2	38.485	6.44	0.002	0.106
Error	651.421	109	5.976			
Total	27907	115				
Corrected Total	756.661	114				

Note. R Squared = 0.139 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.1)



A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to investigate whether significant main or interaction effects exist for partner's military affiliation and/or age cohort relative to Dyadic Cohesion scores. Although no significant main effect was found for age cohort ($F [2, 109] = .209$) or the interaction of the partner's military affiliation and age cohort ($F[2, 109] = 2.495$), a significant main effect was found for the partner's military affiliation ($F[1, 109] = 8.001, p < 0.006, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.068$). A summary of the results are presented in Table 7, and illustrated in Figure 3.

Table 7

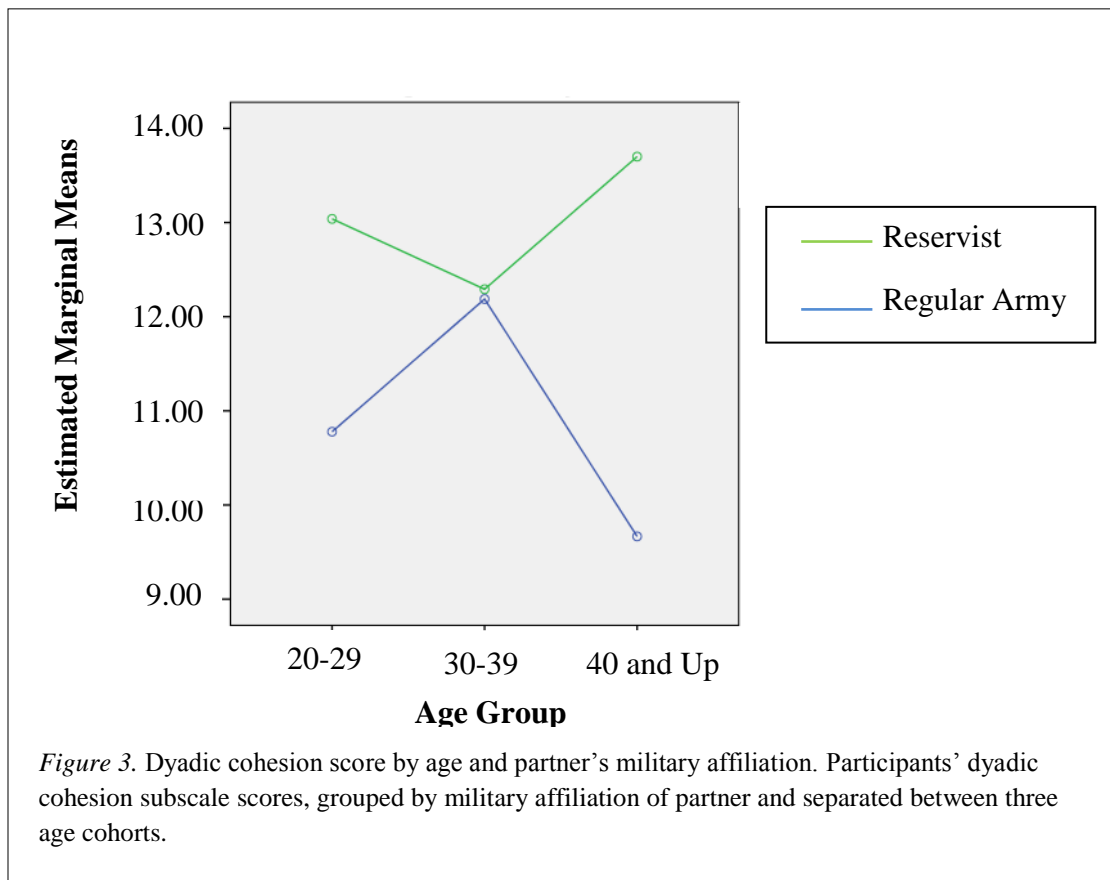
Partner's Military Affiliation and Age on Total Dyadic Cohesion Score Two-way ANOVA

ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	96.426	5	19.285	1.883	0.103	0.08
Intercept	10279.691	1	10279.691	1003.746	0.00	0.902
Military Affiliation	81.944	1	81.944	8.001	0.006	0.068
Age	4.28	2	2.14	0.209	0.802	0.004
Military Affiliation *Age	51.107	2	25.553	2.495	0.087	0.044
Error	1116.305	109	10.241			
Total	18648	115				
Corrected Total	1212.73	114				

Note. R Squared = 0.08 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.037)

Participants were asked how many years of schooling or formal education they have completed. Participants were grouped by those who completed 12 years of education or less and those with 13 or more years of education. A two-way analysis of variance was conducted to investigate total RDAS score differences by education and military component affiliation of partner; a summary of results are presented in Table 8.



Main effect results revealed that RDAS scores did not significantly differ based on partner's military affiliation and education ($F(1, 113) = 0.245, p < 0.622$; $F(1, 113) = 0.103, p < 0.749$). Results also revealed no significant interaction effect on total RDAS scores with education and partner's military affiliation ($F(1, 113) = 3.597, p < 0.060$). Results revealed that neither education level, partner's military affiliation, nor the interaction between the two, were shown to have a significant relationship with total RDAS score.

Table 8

*Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Total RDAS Score Two-way ANOVA**ANOVA*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	279.272	3	93.091	1.424	0.24	0.036
Intercept	187193.087	1	187193.087	2862.923	0.00	0.962
Military Affiliation	16.011	1	16.011	0.245	0.622	0.002
Education	6.734	1	6.734	0.103	0.749	0.001
Military Affiliation * Education	235.175	1	235.175	3.597	0.06	0.031
Error	7388.54	113	65.385			
Total	314950	117				
Corrected Total	7667.812	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.036 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.011)

Two-way analyses of variance were also conducted to investigate whether main or interaction effects exist for educational attainment and/or partner's military affiliation, relative to the three subscales of the RDAS. The two-way analysis of the possible association of education, partner's military affiliation and the interaction between the two factors on the dyadic consensus subscale score revealed no significant main effect on dyadic consensus subscale relative to partner's military affiliation ($F(1, 113) = 3.512, p < 0.064$) or participant's education attainment ($F(1, 113) = 0.053, p < 0.818$). The interaction of partner's military affiliation and participant's education attainment was also

not found to have a significant association to dyadic consensus score ($F(1, 113) = 2.545$, $p < 0.113$). A summary of results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Dyadic Consensus Score Two-way

ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	112.640	3	37.547	1.846	0.143	0.047
Intercept	40649.355	1	40649.355	1998.865	0.00	0.946
Military Affiliation	71.417	1	71.417	3.512	0.064	0.030
Education	1.085	1	1.085	0.053	0.818	0.000
Military Affiliation * Education	51.759	1	51.759	2.545	0.113	0.022
Error	2297.992	113	20.336			
Total	67849	117				
Corrected Total	2410.632	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.047 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.021)

A two-way analysis was conducted to assess for the possible association of education, partner's military affiliation and the interaction between the two factors on the dyadic satisfaction subscale score; a summary of results are presented in Table 10. Main effect results revealed that dyadic consensus subscale scores did not differ based on partner's military affiliation ($F(1, 113) = 0.032$, $p < 0.858$) or education ($F(1, 113) = 0.032$, $p < 0.858$). The factorial analysis also revealed no significant interaction between

education and partner's military affiliation on dyadic satisfaction subscale score ($F(1,113) = 1.75, p < 0.189$).

Table 10

Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Dyadic Satisfaction Score Two-way

ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	15.130	3	5.043	0.761	0.518	0.020
Intercept	16801.663	1	16801.663	2536.313	0.00	0.957
Military Affiliation	0.214	1	0.214	0.032	0.858	0.000
Education	0.214	1	0.214	0.032	0.858	0.000
Military Affiliation * Education	11.593	1	11.593	1.750	0.189	0.015
Error	748.562	113	6.624			
Total	28456	117				
Corrected Total	763.692	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.020 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.006)

A two-way analysis was conducted to assess for the possible association of education, partner's military affiliation and the interaction between the two factors on the dyadic cohesion subscale score; a summary of results are presented in Table 11. Main effect results revealed that dyadic consensus subscale scores did not differ based on partner's military affiliation, ($F(1, 113) = 1.593, p < 0.209$) or education ($F(1, 113) = 0.516, p < 0.474$). The factorial analysis also revealed no significant interaction between

education and partner's military affiliation on dyadic cohesion subscale score ($F(1,113) = 1.457, p < 0.23$).

Table 11

Partner's Military Affiliation and Education on Dyadic Cohesion Score Two-way

ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	60.759	3	20.253	1.984	0.120	0.050
Intercept	10465.091	1	10465.091	1024.948	0.00	0.901
Military Affiliation	16.266	1	16.266	1.593	0.209	0.014
Education	5.269	1	5.269	0.516	0.474	0.005
Military Affiliation * Education	14.879	2	14.879	1.457	0.230	0.013
Error	1153.771	113	10.210			
Total	18913	117				
Corrected Total	1214.530	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.050 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.025)

Participants were asked how many children they have and were grouped into two groups: those with children and those who do not have children. Two-way analyses were used to determine possible associations between having children and partner's military affiliation and reported RDAS scores, including the three RDAS subscales. The two-way analysis that was conducted to determine possible association of having had children and partner's military affiliation on total RDAS score revealed no significant main effect related to partner's military affiliation ($F(1, 113) = 0.139, p < 0.710$) or whether or not

participants endorsed having children ($F(1, 113) = 0.030, p < 0.863$). Results also revealed no significant interaction between having children and partner's military affiliation on total RDAS score ($F(1, 113) = 0.027, p < 0.869$). A summary of results are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Total RDAS Score Two-way ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	16.842	3	5.614	0.083	0.969	0.002
Intercept	202084.776	1	202084.776	2984.665	0.00	0.964
Military Affiliation	9.382	1	9.382	0.139	0.710	0.001
Children	2.030	1	2.030	0.030	0.863	0.000
Military Affiliation * Children	1.850	1	1.850	0.027	0.869	0.000
Error	7650.970	113	67.708			
Total	314950	117				
Corrected Total	7667.812	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.002 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.024)

The two-way analysis conducted to determine a possible association and interaction of having children and partner's military association on participant's dyadic consensus subscale score found no significant main effect based on partner's military affiliation ($F(1, 113) = 1.904, p < .170$) or whether or not partners have children ($F(1, 113) = 0.001, p < 0.977$). Results also indicated no significant interaction between

having children and partner's military affiliation on the consensus subscale score ($F(1,113) = 0.243, p < 0.623$). A summary of results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Dyadic Consensus Score Two-way

ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	40.019	3	13.340	0.636	0.593	0.017
Intercept	44081.171	1	44081.171	2101.216	0.000	0.949
Military Affiliation	39.943	1	39.943	1.904	0.170	0.017
Children	0.018	1	0.018	0.001	0.977	0.000
Military Affiliation *Children	5.103	1	5.103	0.243	0.623	0.002
Error	2370.614	113	20.979			
Total	67849	117				
Corrected Total	2410.632	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.017 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.010)

A two-way analysis was also conducted to determine a possible association and interaction of having children and partner's military association on participant's dyadic satisfaction subscale score; a summary of results are presented in Table 14. Results indicated no significant main effect due to partner's military affiliation ($F(1,113) = 0.668, p < 0.91416$) or having children ($F(1,113) = 0.543, p < 0.463$). Results also found no significant interaction of having children and partner's military affiliation on the satisfaction subscale score ($F(1,113) = 1.295, p < 0.258$). Results revealed that having

children, partner's military affiliation, nor the interaction of the two variables were significantly associated with dyadic satisfaction subscale score.

Table 14

*Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Dyadic Satisfaction Score Two-way**ANOVA*

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	11.539	3	3.846	0.578	0.631	0.015
Intercept	18081.563	1	18081.563	2716.491	0.000	0.960
Military Affiliation	4.444	1	4.444	0.668	0.416	0.006
Children	3.615	1	3.615	0.543	0.463	0.005
Military Affiliation *Children	8.619	1	8.619	1.295	0.258	0.011
Error	752.153	113	6.656			
Total	28456	117				
Corrected Total	763.692	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.015 (Adjusted R Squared = -0.011)

The two-way analysis conducted to determine a possible association and interaction of having children and partner's military affiliation on participant's dyadic cohesion subscale score revealed no main effect based on partner's military affiliation ($F(1,113) = 3.705, p < 0.057$) or having children ($F(1,113) = 0.541, p < 0.463$). Results also indicated no significant interaction effect between having children and partner's military affiliation on the cohesion subscale score ($F(1,113) = 0.085, p < 0.771$). A summary of results are presented in Table 15. Results revealed that neither having children or not,

partner's military affiliation, nor the interaction of the two variables are significantly associated with dyadic cohesion subscale score.

Table 15

Partner's Military Affiliation and Children on Dyadic Cohesion Score Two-way ANOVA

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	51.280	3	17.093	1.660	0.180	0.042
Intercept	11281.598	1	11281.598	1095.913	0.000	0.907
Military Affiliation	38.139	1	38.139	3.705	0.057	0.032
Children	5.571	1	5.571	0.541	0.463	0.005
Military Affiliation *Children	0.879	1	0.879	0.085	0.771	0.001
Error	1163.250	113	10.294			
Total	18913	117				
Corrected Total	1214.530	116				

Note. R Squared = 0.042 (Adjusted R Squared = 0.017)

The number of participants who identified as male and female is inversely similar to the ratio of deployed personnel, as 10% of deployed personnel identified as female in 2009, and only 4 out of the 115 participants (partners of soldiers) identified as male (DOD, 2009). A significant difference between genders on relational satisfaction (Total RDAS score or any of the subscales) was not feasible due to the limited number of male participants.

The vast majority of participants, identified ethnically as White/Caucasian, with less than 10% Hispanic/Latino. Ethnic minorities were not well represented among

participants for this study, and thus interpretation of possible relational differences based on ethnic identification was not possible.

Deployment Factors and Relational Satisfaction

The final research question looks to determine if marital satisfaction can be predicted by differing deployment experiences and demographic information.

Specifically, it stated, *Do deployment experience factors (number of deployments, total length of deployment time) and certain characteristics (age, number of children) of partners of active or reservist military soldiers significantly predict reported rates of relational/marital satisfaction?*

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the total RDAS score among partners of regular army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the total RDAS consensus subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Total RDAS Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	42.865	9.197		4.661	0.000
Age	0.282	0.311	0.212	0.904	0.375
Number of children	-0.724	1.472	-0.113	-0.492	0.627
Number of Deployments	-0.025	1.996	-0.003	-0.013	0.990
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	0.063	0.195	-0.080	0.321	0.751

Note. Dependent Variable: Dyadic Consensus Subscale

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS consensus subscale score among partners of regular army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS consensus subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Dyadic Consensus Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	21.333	2.588		8.244	0.000
Age	0.059	0.081	0.088	0.725	0.471
Number of children	-0.211	0.416	-0.061	-0.507	0.613
Number of Deployments	0.735	0.661	0.190	1.112	0.269
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	-0.048	0.060	-0.133	-0.797	0.428

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the total RDAS satisfaction subscale score among partners of regular army soldiers.

Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS satisfaction subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Dyadic Satisfaction Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	17.977	1.293		13.904	0.000
Age	-0.055	0.040	-0.156	-1.349	0.181
Number of children	-0.383	0.208	-0.212	-1.844	0.069
Number of Deployments	-0.268	0.330	-0.133	-0.811	0.420
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	0.039	0.030	0.205	1.282	0.204

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS cohesion subscale score among partners of regular army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS cohesion subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 19.

Table 19

Regression Analysis of Partners of Regular Army Soldiers Dyadic Cohesion Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	13.087	1.787		7.324	0.000
Age	-0.010	0.056	-0.022	-0.184	0.855
Number of children	-0.175	0.287	-0.073	-0.609	0.545
Number of Deployments	-0.305	0.456	-0.114	-0.668	0.506
How many months deployed in last 11 years	0.046	0.042	0.185	1.109	0.271

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the total RDAS score among partners of reservist army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the total RDAS score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 20.

Table 20

Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Total RDAS Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	50.702	7.420		6.833	0.000
Age	0.007	0.214	0.007	0.034	0.973
Number of children	0.694	1.024	0.131	0.678	0.504
Number of Deployments	-2.467	1.920	-0.352	-1.285	0.210
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	0.137	0.167	0.233	0.823	0.418

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS consensus subscale score among partners of reservist army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS consensus subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 21.

Table 21

Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Dyadic Consensus Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	25.176	3.871		6.504	0.000
Age	-0.020	0.112	-0.038	-0.183	0.856
Number of children	0.192	0.534	0.072	0.359	0.723
Number of Deployments	-0.192	1.001	-0.055	-0.192	0.849
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	-0.001	0.087	-0.002	-0.007	0.994

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS satisfaction subscale score among partners of reservist army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS satisfaction subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 22.

Table 22

Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Dyadic Satisfaction Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	11.293	2.385		4.736	0.000
Age	0.082	0.069	0.216	1.191	0.244
Number of children	0.580	0.329	0.306	1.761	0.090
Number of Deployments	-0.869	0.617	-0.347	-1.409	0.171
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	0.065	0.054	0.309	1.213	0.236

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine which independent variables (number of months deployed in last 11 years, number of children, age, or number of deployments) were the predictors of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS cohesion subscale score among partners of reservist army soldiers. Regression results indicated that the number of months deployed in the last 11 years, number of children, age, and number of deployments in last 11 years were not found to be predictive of relational satisfaction as measured by the RDAS cohesion subscale score. A summary of the regression model data is presented in Table 23.

Table 23

Regression Analysis of Partners of Reservist Army Soldiers Dyadic Cohesion Scores

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	13.511	2.831		4.773	0.000
Age	-0.077	0.082	-0.195	-0.943	0.355
Number of children	0.040	0.391	0.020	0.102	0.919
Number of Deployments	-0.339	0.732	-0.130	-0.463	0.647
Number of months deployed in last 11 years	0.040	0.064	0.181	0.625	0.538

Other Findings

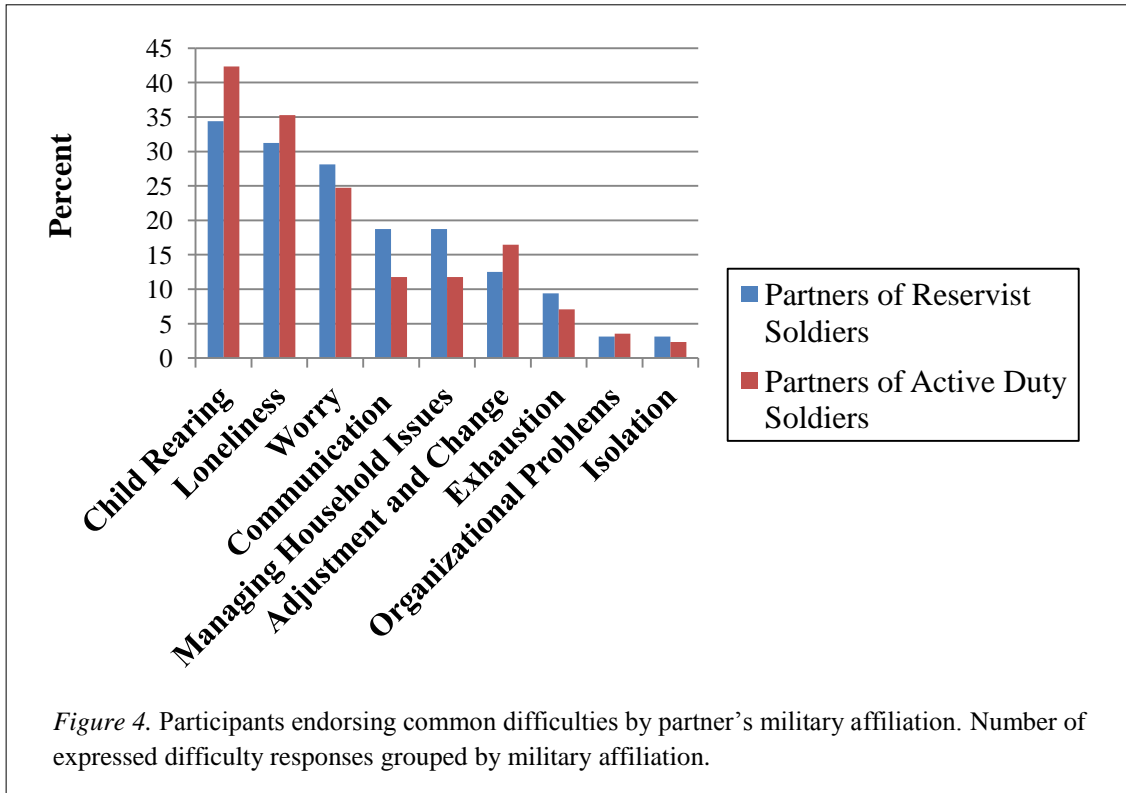
Phenomenological analysis of participant's responses to three open ended questions follows. The initial question inquired specifically about challenges and difficulties of deployment, and read *What has been the hardest part about dealing with your partner's deployment or deployments?* The second question aimed at identifying what participants found to be most helpful in managing deployment, and read, *What has helped you the most in dealing with your partner's deployment or deployments?* The third question asked participant to make suggestions for partners of soldiers who are facing upcoming deployments and read, *What recommendations do you have about how to help people cope when their partners have been deployed?*

Common Difficulties. Phenomenological review of responses to the first question, regarding partners' difficulties and challenges related to deployment resulted in

a variety of themes. Responses clustered among nine major themes which include loneliness, communication, worry, child rearing, change, daily living tasks, exhaustion, organizational problems, and isolation. The most common theme among both components was difficulties related to child rearing, followed by issues regarding loneliness, and worry for partner's safety. Communication problems, managing household issues such as paying bills and completing chores, adjusting to change, exhaustion, military systems difficulties, and feelings of isolation were also identified as challenges for partners of soldiers during deployment. See Figure 4 for details. Each component appeared to have identified similar challenges, at similar rates. This was also true when accounting for the number of participants with children and comparing the number of participants who identified child rearing concerns, as approximately 46% of partners of reservist soldiers with children identified childrearing issues as one of the hardest things about dealing with deployment, and 48% of partners of regular army soldiers with children made similar remarks. The following paragraphs include direct quotations from participant responses.

Partners of both components indicated difficulties regarding child rearing, with comments such as, "Being alone and trying to raise the kids by myself," "Playing both roles at home," "Children's emotions to situation," "Learning how to be a single mother," and "His not being there for our children's lives." Some participants referenced difficulty related to the resources offered to assist in childcare or support the family in special childcare situations. One participant wrote, "Being a single mother of two very young children in a very small post where free childcare was scary." Another participant stated, "Being a high risk pregnancy and Red Cross and hospital physicians requested spouse

return home closer to due date of birth. His Command Group said he was needed more at war than at home. Mine and our son's lives were almost lost. My husband finally came home four weeks later.”



The next most common theme of difficulty dealing with deployment was related to loneliness, missing the partner, and difficulty with the relational separation. Participants referenced this struggle in various ways, such as “Feeling lonely, feeling disconnected from my partner,” “Being alone,” “Him not being there,” “The absence of my partner,” “I miss him,” “Being physically separated from my best friend for 12 months,” “Not physically holding and seeing them every day,” and “Losing bond with him.” Some participants indicated that their loneliness was more than missing the partner,

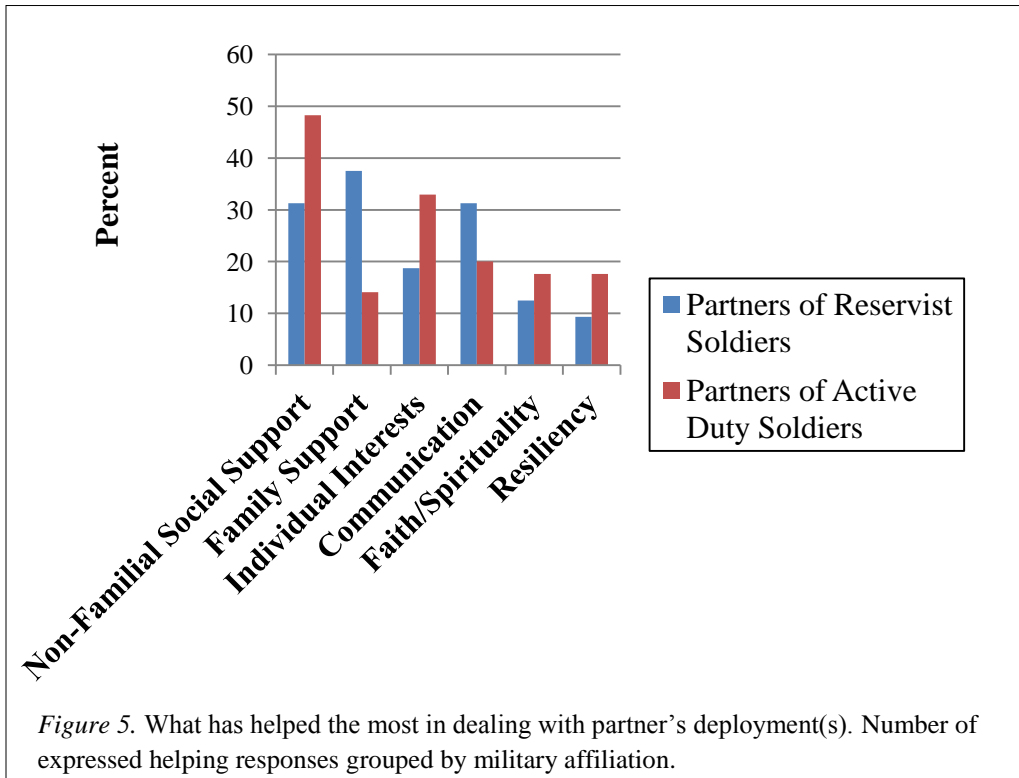
but also included the lack of nearby support, and made statements such as “Being alone in a foreign country.”

Communication difficulties and managing household responsibilities were also common themes of difficulty during deployment. Participants indicated communication difficulties with statements such as, “Lack of communication due to work conditions of deployed spouse,” “Not enough time in his day to contact us,” “Not being able to hear his voice on a regular basis” “The lack of reliable internet for live communication has also been distressing,” and “Just never knowing when we'd get a chance to talk.” Some participants related communication problems following deployment and reported, “Partner's disinterest in communicating emotions upon return from deployment and frequent miscommunications.”

Managing household responsibilities was a common theme of deployment difficulty among both components, with participants making statements, such as, “learning to do things that were normally his responsibility at home,” “Being responsible for everything,” “It took our family some time to establish a new routine while my husband was deployed,” “Having only yourself to rely on and not counting on anyone,” and “Being without my partner to tackle experiences that were not the usual day to day routine.”

Common Supports. Phenomenological review of responses to the second question, regarding supports and resources that partners of soldiers identify as helpful in managing deployment, resulted in six common themes. Common themes of helps included: communication with deployed partner, family support, faith and spirituality, non-familial social support, individual interests, and resiliency. See Figure 5 for details.

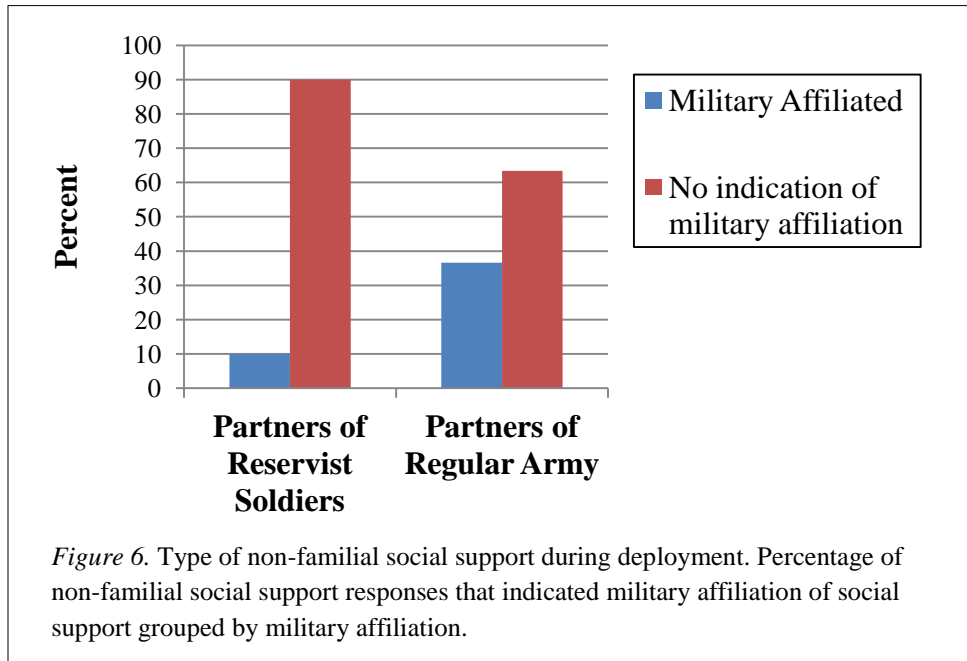
Each component appeared to have identified similar challenges, however the rate of endorsement of different supports appeared to differ slightly based on partner's military affiliation. This was particularly true for the rate of endorsement of family support, and non-familial support. Partners of reservist soldiers seemed to be more likely to respond with family support than their regular army counterparts, whereas the partners of regular army soldiers identified non-familial support more frequently than their reservist counterparts.



The most common theme identified among participants as a whole is that of non-familial support. Participants described friends and other military spouses and unofficial support groups to be a significant source of support during deployment, making statements such as, "having social interaction with other adults on a regular basis, support

from friends in the same situation, talking to friends, time with other military spouses and friends, letting others help when needed,” and “helpful neighbors.”

Many participants specifically indicated that non-familial social supports involving people who are going through the same thing, or are affiliated with the military, are uniquely qualified to be a source of support during deployment, with the following kinds of statements, “My neighbor's husband was deployed in the same unit as my husband. We became best friends, and that is what got me through the deployment.” Other participants made similar remarks, such as, “being connected with other spouses going through the same thing, talking to friends that have shared similar experiences, other military spouses dealing with the same situation, other military wives that are neighbors and there in the same situation living on base,” and “Living around other families going through long separations.” Interestingly, partners of regular army soldiers appeared to be more likely to specifically identify military affiliated social support than their reservist counterparts, where only one in ten reservist soldiers designated military affiliated social support. Ten percent of reservist soldiers indicated their non-familial social support to be military affiliated, while 37 percent of partners of regular army soldiers specifically indicated the non-familial social support to be military related. See Figure 6 for illustration.



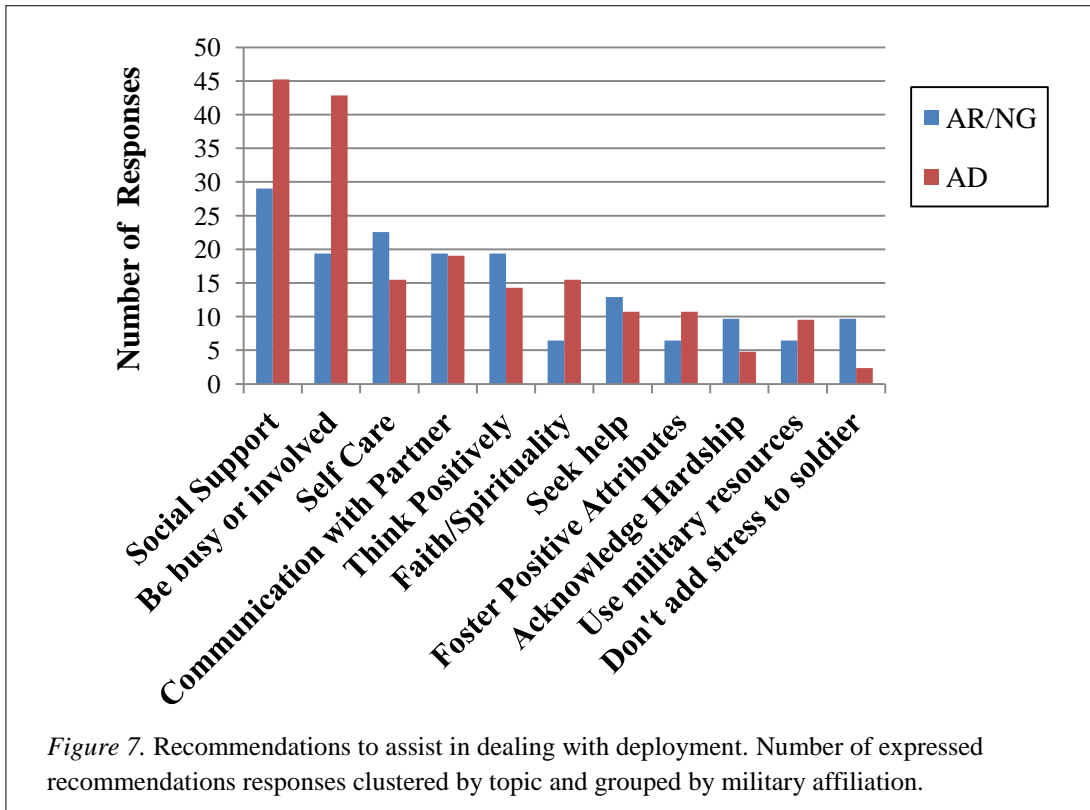
Participants also commonly indicated that family, individual interests, and communication as sources of support during deployment, and stated, “Being around family, family in area, support of loved ones, my mother, my daughter,” and “my wonderful children.”

Participants identified individual interests as helpful in staying busy and taking care of self, making comments such as, “Getting out and doing stuff, going to the gym, staying active, traveling, having something fun to look forward to, volunteer in community,” and “Staying busy or occupied.” Communication was also identified as a common theme of support during deployment, as participants stated, “Video chat which allows me to see that he is actually alright, Availability of internet, getting to talk to my husband daily, having him communicate with the children as much as possible,” and “intensive talks when we had the chance, letters, emails.” One partner of a reservist soldier stated, “My husband helped me the most to deal with the deployment. He called

as often as possible. It helped me by sending him care packages every week. Making him happy made me happy which made the deployment a lot better.”

Faith and spirituality as well as general resiliency factors and internal strengths were identified as sources of support during deployment as well, with statements such as, “Prayer, knowing that he was serving honorably, as a medic saving lives, and generally trying to do the right thing in every situation, religion, spiritual music, church attendance,” and “My faith in God!” A partner of a regular army soldier stated, “Knowing that 1. He loves me ceaselessly and that will never change. 2. He is committed to the mission of his Army and I am proud of him for it, and 3. There will be time later when we will be together w/o the Army and its commitment and I can wait for that.”

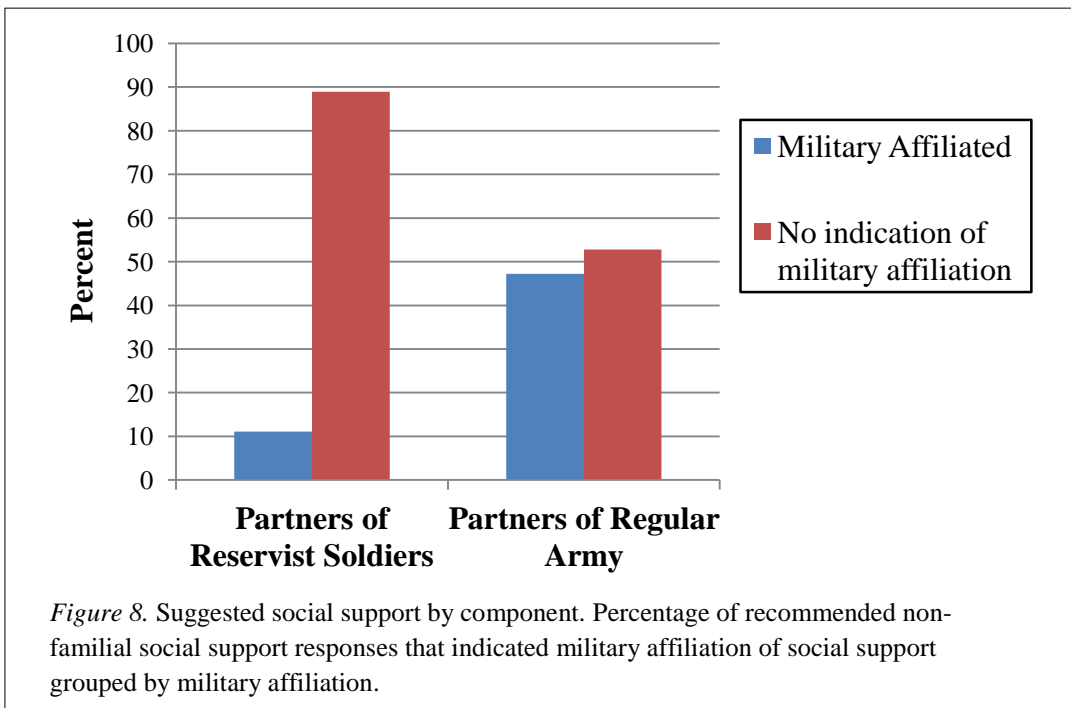
Common Recommendations. The final question that was reviewed phenomenologically regarded recommendations that participants had for those who face similar challenges. Responses to this question differed dramatically, and resulted in twelve general themes. Two of the themes appeared to be much more common than the rest. The two themes that were most common were to stay busy and affiliate with strong social supports. Other themes included self-care, communicate with deployed partner, think positively, faith and spirituality, seek help, foster helpful personal characteristics, acknowledge hardship, use military provided resources, and don't add stress to deployed soldier. See Figure 7 for details.



While no major differences were found between recommendations between partners of reservist and regular army soldier's on most common themes, partners of regular army soldiers seemed to be more likely to suggest involvement in a strong social support system, and being busy or involved as ways to assist in managing the difficulties of deployment. Almost half (45%) of the partners of regular army soldiers suggested involvement in a strong social support network, while only 29 percent of their reservist counterparts made similar suggestions. Partners of regular army soldiers also suggested staying busy and involved at a rate of 43 percent, while only 19 percent of reservist counterparts made similar suggestions.

The most common theme of recommendations for dealing with deployment was to be socially active and connected. Participants suggested this in various ways, such as

“Have a stable and consistent support network, find a group to talk with, keep friends close and talk about your frustrations so you don't take it out on your family, build relationships and make a point of getting involved, make other connections with other spouses, surround yourself with people who are trying to remain positive and uplifted, go out of the house whenever possible even if u don't think u feel like it,” and “don't isolate.”



Of note, partners of regular army soldiers referenced finding and maintaining military affiliated social support more frequently than partners of reservist soldiers, and made comments such as, “Find someone who is in your EXACT circumstance, talk to other military spouses that are already your friends, definitely have some sort of support group who understands what you're going through, have a deployment friend you can call any time,” and “connect with others who are going through deployment as well.” Only 11 percent of respondents affiliated with the reservist components suggested the social support be military affiliated, while 47% of respondents affiliated with the regular army

specifically indicated that the social support be military affiliated. See Figure 8 for illustration.

The next most common theme of recommendations to assist in dealing with deployment was to be busy and involved in activities such as work, school, or hobbies. Participants made this suggestion by making statements such as, “stay busy to make time go by faster and so you'll have lots to talk about when you can talk, Volunteering is also a good way to pass time and be productive at the same time, Don't stay in the house, get out and do things, find a new hobby to fill all those endless hours you would have otherwise spent with your partner, Keep yourself busy and find way to serve others,” and “Get involved in hobbies, stay busy, don't worry too much (just enough), go to school, get things accomplished that you may not otherwise while spouse is home.”

Other common themes include attending to self-care, communicating with deployed partner, thinking positively and utilizing faith and spirituality. Participants suggested attending to self-care with statements such as, “Do yoga and get massages to help relax and relinquish control, practice self-care, treat the deployment as an opportunity to focus on oneself and one's own personal growth, take time to indulge [yourself] and do something [you] have always wanted to do,” and “set goals to better yourself while you are alone.” Participants recommended communicating with the deployed partner by stating, “Write letters, and or e-mails to your spouses,” “Send cards on special occasions, and pictures, send care packages, and send items that will remind your spouse about home and the family that is waiting for him or her,” “Try to keep communicating with your partner,” “Communicate with your partner and try to be understanding of what he/she is going through,” “Both sides need to understand what the

other is going through,” and “Make sure to send lots of care packages with pictures.” Multiple partners referenced common difficulties in communication and made comments such as, “Keep talking,” “Once the lines of communication are closed it is so hard to open them up again... don't take things they say personally,” and “They go through unbelievable things while they are gone just give it time.” Thinking positively was indicated as participants made comments like, “Hang in there it will end,” “Smile... and don't spend the time complaining,” “Remember no news is good news,” and simply “Stay positive.” Faith and spirituality was another area of common reference, as participants wrote statements such as, “Stay faithful,” “Keep faith,” “Pray every day for their safe return and stay strong,” “Whatever your spiritual beliefs are should be able to give your soul comfort,” and “Pray always, if that is important in your life...even if you are called from sleep to pray, do so. It may mean your spouse is truly in need or his unit is at that moment.”

Seeking help, fostering positive personal attributes, acknowledge the hardship, use military resources and don't add stress to deployed partner were less common themes of recommendations for managing deployment. Participants referenced seeking helps with comments such as, “Ask for help when needed, don't be afraid to ask for help, accept help, if you feel depressed talk to someone,” and “Get help.” Fostering positive attributes was indicated through comments such as, “Be strong, and independent,” and “Be flexible, determined and committed.” Participants also suggested acknowledging the hardship of deployment, with comments such as, “Accept how little you have control over, it's not going to be easy,” and “Acknowledge that it sucks.” Using military resources was suggested with remarks such as, “Take advantage of chaplain/Army

sponsored marriage support groups or retreats--communication classes, parents' night out, spouse's night out (during deployment), sponsored date nights, and marriage retreats," and "Know the resources that are there to help." Lastly, five participants also suggested being sure to avoid adding undue stress to the deployed partner, and wrote, "Do what you can to help your partner get through it, don't stress them out and keep them happy and you yourself will be happier, the soldiers don't need stress about home, they need a break and know that we are here waiting for them, when you do talk to your spouse try not to give them added stress or other things to worry about, they already have enough on their plate and whatever is going on stateside is out of their hands," and "Realize that while you may have it bad, he probably has it worse over there and be considerate of that."

Personal Experience. The following is a brief first person description of the researcher's personal experience, provided to add context to the discussion of participant responses. I enlisted in the Army National Guard in January of 2000 and am currently a staff sergeant in a military intelligence company. I was deployed for 16 months to Afghanistan in 2004-2005. I was married, with no children, during my deployment, and considered my work to be satisfying and worthwhile. I felt bolstered by the other soldiers in my team and felt a sense of honor, patriotism, and joint suffering. Due to the serious nature of my work and the distance, my concern for the everyday stresses of my wife decreased. While I enjoyed communicating with her regularly, I noticed some strain to our relationship and communications because of this discrepancy. I was also surprised to learn how difficult she found the separation to be. She explained that while I left the life I knew, a new one had been given to me. I formed a completely new routine, in new surroundings, with people who not only understood what was happening, but were also

experiencing it personally. Yet, her life was not completely new, and simply had a gaping hole where I once was. I felt as though her response was much more profound than my own and signaled a significant struggle that may have been overlooked not only by me, but by the military and national government as whole.

While deployed, I experienced many dynamics of deployment, and was witness to many soldiers' relational difficulties. Some of my fellow soldiers were faced with worries and rumors regarding unfaithful spouses, while others dealt with the dissolution of relationships and divorce, along with custody battles and legal issues. It seemed clear that deployment is a challenge to relationships, and may play a role in magnifying relational problems. During my personal study of this phenomenon, it became clear to me that the unique challenges faced by partners of reservist and National Guard soldiers had not received much attention. This realization motivated my decision to explore this topic in an effort to shed light on possible difficulties faced by this subset of military partners.

Summary. A significant relationship was found between the number of methods used to keep in contact during deployment and partner's military affiliation, where partners of regular army soldiers were more likely to indicate having used a greater number of methods to stay in contact during deployment than their reservist counterparts. Results also revealed a relationship between the partner's military affiliation and the number of reported resources and sources of support during deployment, indicating that partners of regular army soldiers utilized a greater number of resources and social supports during deployment. A significant main effect was found between age and relational satisfaction, based on the RDAS Satisfaction subscale score, in which dyadic adjustment was higher for 30-39 years olds vs. those 40 and up. There was also a

significant interaction found between age and partner's military affiliation on the dyadic satisfaction subscale score, in which 20-29 year-old partners of regular army soldiers and 30-39 year-old partners of reservist army soldiers indicated significantly higher relational satisfaction on RDAS Satisfaction subscale scores. Partner's military affiliation was also found to have a relationship with relational cohesion as measured by the RDAS Cohesion subscale, in which partners of regular army soldiers were found to generally have higher relational cohesion than their reservist army counterparts. Age, having children, number of deployments and the amount of time spent separated due to deployment did not predict relational/marital satisfaction for partners of regular army soldiers or partners of reservist soldiers.

Phenomenological analysis resulted with a number of common themes regarding what was the hardest part about dealing with a partner's deployment or deployments, what helped the most in dealing with a partner's deployment or deployments, and recommendations for people in coping with a partner's deployment. Common themes were discussed for each area with few differences found between responses of partners of reservist soldiers and responses of partners of regular army soldiers. However, partners of regular army soldiers were more inclined to indicate the helpfulness of military affiliated social supports, than their reservist counterparts.

Chapter IV: Discussion

Description of Deployment

The first research question of this study stated, *Do partners of reservist military and regular military soldiers significantly differ in their description of the deployment*

experience, (i.e., how they keep in contact with one another, the frequency of contact, and resources and support available to them)? The response of partners of reservist soldiers and regular army soldiers were compared and partners of regular army soldiers endorsed using a greater number of methods to stay in contact during deployment, and available resources for support, than partners of Reservist soldiers. However, the two groups were not found to differ in the frequency of their contact during deployment.

It is not surprising to find that partners of regular army soldiers indicated having more supportive resources available, and a greater number of methods to stay in contact during deployment. Minear (2007) reported that regular army soldiers and families are more integrated with a military community. Military organizations often provide added methods of communication and encourage diverse communication methods, such as organizing and scheduling video conferences with soldiers that may not normally have access to video conferencing capabilities. Close affiliation with organized groups and other partners experiencing deployment may also provide an information sharing community, where various methods of communication are discussed. Partners of reservist soldiers often live farther away from military installations, and are thus less able to rely on military provided communication methods (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Another possible explanation for the differing methods of communication may be the differing financial impact deployment has on the family. Some reservist families experience substantial financial strain as a direct result of deployment (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). Thus, they may not have had the means to support the use of a wide variety of communication methods or travel to military installations to utilize military provided resources. Although, some reservist families may experience financial strain during

deployment, results indicate that this stressor did not impact the frequency of contact experienced with deployed partners.

Military Status and Demographic Characteristics on Relational Satisfaction

The second research question stated, *When taking into account the military status of soldiers (reserve vs. regular) and demographic characteristics of partners (age, gender, ethnicity, education level, children/no children), is there a difference in the partner's reported quality of the relational/marital relationship?* Results revealed that overall relational/marital satisfaction was not found to significantly differ between partners of reservist soldiers and partners of regular army soldiers. However, dyadic cohesion, as measured by the dyadic cohesion subscale of the RDAS, was found to be higher in partners of regular army soldiers, compared with their reservist counterparts. While a significant difference was found, the strength of the relationship was low, and should not be overstated.

The dyadic cohesion subscale includes items that involve couples spending time together, engaged in joint activities or in conversation (Busby et al., 1995). There are a number of factors that may play a role in this difference. As partners of regular army soldiers are generally more integrated into a military community, they are also generally more fluent with military terminology and have a better understanding of military culture than their reservist counterparts (Burrell, Durand, & Fortado, 2003; Minear, 2007; Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). As some reservist families experience substantial financial strain (Wheeler & Torres-Stone); this stressor may lead to a greater amount of time dealing with financial issues, rather than participating in activities with their partners or in conversation. National Guard veterans returning from war reported higher emotional

stress (Miliken, Aucheterlonie, & Hoge, 2007) which also may be related to greater discord and less time spent in quality discussion.

Age was also found to have a significant, but low strength, association with marital satisfaction, as measured by the dyadic relational satisfaction subscale of the RDAS. In other words, participants ages 30-39 were found to have slightly greater relational satisfaction than those ages 40 and up. Additionally, the interaction between age and affiliation also had a significant, but weak, association with relational satisfaction, in which partners of reservists 20-29 years-old were found to have lower relational/marital satisfaction than partners of regular army soldiers. Yet, partners of reservist soldiers 30-39 years old and 40 years old and up endorsed higher satisfaction than partners of regular army soldiers.

Financial stability, especially for partners 20-29 years old and 40 and up, may be a factor that explains some of the significant but small difference found between partners of reservist and regular army soldiers. A meta-analysis of causes and associated features of divorce reported economic and financial problems as one leading causes of divorce in general (Lowenstein, 2008). A career in the regular military provides financial stability, while service in the reservist component is more likely to be characterized by soldiers who are full time students or with less stable incomes. This may also be a key factor later in life, as regular army service also provides substantial pension and retirement benefits, while reservist soldiers are more likely to rely on personal retirement plans and benefits from civilian careers, which have been reported to be less substantial than military comparisons (Palleschi, 2012).

Reservist soldiers and their families are at higher risk of experiencing emotional distress after returning to war (Gottman et al., 2011; Milliken et al., 2007). Reservist families also indicated that their children experienced greater adjustment problems (Peirce et al., 1998). Thus, their lower cohesion and satisfaction scores may be related to their higher incidence of emotional distress and difficulty managing child adjustment challenges. However, this finding was a weak association, and thus while there is a difference between the two groups, it is small, and should not be overstated. Researchers have identified instrumental support such as child care and financial support, and supportive military communities, to be protective factors for military families (Pierce et al., 1998; Cozza et al., 2005). Partners of regular army soldiers appeared to more readily identify military affiliated sources of social support. Military affiliated social support and instrumental sources of support are more available to military families who are integrated into a military community, and who live close or on a military installation (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010).

Deployment Factors and Relational Satisfaction

The final research question stated, *Do deployment experience factors (number of deployments, total length of deployment time) and certain characteristics (age, number of children) of partners of active or reservist military soldiers significantly predict reported rates of relational satisfaction?* Results found that none of the suspected factors identified in this question predict relational/marital satisfaction as measured by the RDAS or its subscales. Thus, while deployment is fraught with various stressors and hardship, neither the number of deployments or total time deployed were found to be associated

with decreased relational satisfaction. Age of participants and numbers of children were also found to have no association to participants' decreased relational satisfaction.

Having children has been found to add stress to marital relationships (Guttman, & Lazar, 2004; Lawrence, Cobb, Rothman, & Bradbury, 2008). This seems especially true during military separation, as participants reported that the primary challenge during deployment involved children and parenting. However, the added stress does not appear to predict long-term relational satisfaction. While research has identified various negative consequences for couples as a result of deployment such as divorce, emotional distress, loneliness and child adjustment difficulties, relational/marital satisfaction did not appear to suffer long-term consequences from multiple deployments, extended deployments, age or having children (Pavalko & Elder, 1990; Pierce et al., 1998; Renshaw et al., 2008; Solomon et al., 2008; Wexler & McGrath, 1991). Some negative consequences of deployment may be temporary and subtle declines in marital satisfaction may recover with time. Thus, number of deployments and extended deployments may have an effect on relational/marital satisfaction, but not to the extent that they would predict relational/marital satisfaction over an extended amount of time.

Other Findings

The most common theme of challenges during deployment was related to child rearing difficulties, which was surprising considering that almost 25% of participants reported not having children. Parenting difficulties and military component have been noted by prior researchers as potential issues involved in child adjustment (Pierce et al., 1998). Interestingly, while mothers in the National Guard or army reserve components have been found to endorse greater difficulty providing care for their children (Pierce et

al., 1998), child rearing difficulties were the most common theme among both components.

Another interesting finding regards the difference of suggested social supports when responding to an open ended question about what helped the most during deployment. Both partners of regular army and reservist soldiers commented on the importance of non-familial social support, yet 48% of partners of regular army members made such comments, while only 31% of partners of reservist soldiers included non-familial support in their responses. A notable discrepancy was found in the ratio of partners of each component indicating family support as a primary help during deployment as well, with 38% of partners of reservist soldiers indicating family as a primary help and only 14% of partners of regular army partners making similar comments. These discrepancies may be due to the living situation of each group, and proximity to family support. Regular army families are often stationed away from their home of origin and thus a significant distance away from familial support, while reservist families are more likely to be in close proximity to their home of origin and extended familial supports (Wheeler & Torres-Stone, 2010). This difference in living circumstances may also have led to the notable difference in the ratio of participants who spontaneously indicated that the non-familial social support was also military affiliated. Partners of regular army soldiers were likely more inclined to suggest military affiliated social support as a key source of help during deployment, as they are more likely to be integrated in a military community and have greater affiliation with other military families.

A similar finding was noted among participants' responses to an open ended question regarding recommendations for other partners facing deployment in the future. Involvement with and connection to a social support system was the most commonly suggested recommendation from participants affiliated with both components. However, only 11% of respondents affiliated with the reservist components indicated any importance that one's social support be military affiliated, while 47% of respondents affiliated with the regular army specifically indicated preference for the social support to be military affiliated. In fact, one partner of a regular army soldier was adamant against moving to be close to non-military affiliated social supports and stated, "Don't move back home during a deployment. Nobody back home will understand what you're going through. When you're friends say that he or she will be ok, you won't realize how much it makes you angry until you hear it for the first time."

Implications and Contributions

The most significant implication from this study is that while partners of reservist and regular military soldiers differ in various aspects of life, their overall relational/marital satisfaction is generally comparable following military induced separation. While regular army families are more integrated with military affiliated communities and connected to military provided resources, and reservist families are closer to family support, neither of these situations appears to have a differing outcome on relational/marital satisfaction. Thus, these findings do not suggest a dire need for specific policy or procedural change to improve relational/marital satisfaction for either component.

However, the weak association found between regular army affiliation and higher cohesion scores suggests that organizational differences have some relationship to relational/marital satisfaction. Increasing the integration of reservist partners within a military community or other reservist partners may increase understanding of military culture and terminology to promote more opportunities for couples to share their experiences. Supplementing the resources offered to partners of reservist soldiers to address financial difficulties and emotional stress, may also improve relational/marital cohesion among reservist families.

A low strength association was found between age and dyadic marital satisfaction. The interaction of age and military affiliation was also found to have a weak association with relational satisfaction. The possible explanations for these findings are unclear; however, financial stability may play a role in the difference of reported relational/marital satisfaction between age groups, as younger families in the regular army are provided a steady income and have general living expenses covered, such as housing and insurance. Yet, young families in the reservist components are much more likely to have a more variable income, and do not have insurance or housing allowances. It is also notable that satisfaction appears to be similar for those partners between 30 and 39 years old, yet significantly different among those 40 and up. The reasons that those over 40 have differing scores are not clear, but may be due to financial differences. Ensuring that reservist couples are financially prepared and have adequate financial resources for retirement may improve satisfaction for this age cohort. However, these relationships, while significant, are weak and there are likely many other factors that are involved in the differences in scores.

These differences may also be due to the discrepancy of number of resources or methods of communication available through deployment. Providing more options and resources for reservist families during deployment, such as child care, military partner socials, and opportunities to participate in individual interests may improve relational satisfaction during deployment and reduce the discrepancy found between partners of soldiers, based on component.

It was clear from participant responses that deployment posed a significant challenge and hardship for partners of army soldiers, with many of them recommending an acceptance of the difficult nature of the separation. Their other recommendations for those facing similar challenges suggest ways in which institutions and organizations may support partners of soldiers through deployment, such as organizing social events specific to military partners, providing activities and programs that partners may become active in and learn or explore new hobbies and skills, and provide accessible childcare resources for partners to access as a means of regular self-care.

Limitations

One of the primary limitations of this study was the convenience snowball sampling method used to reach participants and collect data. The random sample would likely provide proportional representation of demographic groups such as gender, ethnicity, and educational attainment. A random sample of soldiers and partners of soldiers would be preferable to a convenience sample or a snowball approach to sampling, but snowball sampling is occasionally necessary, given the parameters of the population of interest. The sample was not collected in a randomized fashion for a number of reasons: (a) access to soldiers and their families is often limited to

governmental agencies and government supported research institutions such as the Veterans Affairs medical institution (D. D. Keller, personal communication, October 1, 2010), (b) the sample are spread over a large geographical area, and (c) identifying information required to locate and contact participants is kept private and is not available for access.

While participants were found to be located in diverse geographical locations, they were contacted in a non-random method via social media and email. Sampling bias is also a consideration in this study, due to the nature of participant recruitment (Castillo, 2009). Most participants were not directly contacted by the researcher or had any relationship with the researcher. However, many were likely connected to the researcher through interconnections of relationships. Initial participants were likely those that were closely affiliated with the researcher in some way, and those that the invitation to participate is forwarded to may share similar traits and interests. For instance, the researcher's military affiliated social connections likely forwarded the recruitment information to other possible qualified participants, which in turn forwarded the message to other possible qualified participants. Thus, participants are not a representative sample of the population, and are more likely to share similar traits and interests than those who would have responded had the sample been random. Therefore, results cannot be generalized to the population as whole with certainty. The request to forward the invitation to participate was meant to direct individuals to forward to all those who may participate or those that may know others who could participate, which was meant to reduce the sampling bias effect. The sample size of this study was a limiting factor as well; hence it is important to consider this to be a preliminary investigation.

Given the complexity of factors that can impact scores on the RDAS, statistically significant differences between groups were not readily found. Quantitative analyses of results revealed significant, yet weak associations, likely due to the many variables that have been shown to influence relationships and are included in the RDAS measure. A more specific variable and precise instrument may have found more quantitatively significant results.

It is also important to note that the qualitative analysis of the open ended questions is conducted by an individual with personal experiences, perspectives, and biases. Qualitative findings give possible insight into the participant's experience, yet are highly susceptible to individual bias and interpretation. Phenomenological review identified common clusters, yet significance is not determined statistically. Thus, the qualitative review provided a description of individual experiences, yet was not meant to determine significant differences between partners of reservist and regular army soldiers.

Although the *Don't ask don't tell policy* has recently been dissolved, the study did not include inquiry of sexual orientation. The issue of sexuality in the military has yet to be free from serious consequence and the inquiry of sexual diversity among participants may have led to greater anxiety over completing the survey and defensiveness in other responses. Furthermore, participants overwhelmingly identified as White/Caucasian, female with a minimum of 12 years of education. Thus, results cannot be reliably generalized to the public as a whole.

Future Directions

Differing military affiliation appeared to have a weak association with relational cohesion. This finding suggests that certain differences of partners' experience through deployment and military life has a significant impact on their relationships. Further study of differences between the challenges, stressors, supports and lives of reservist and regular army families may more specifically identify what factors may pose as obstacles to relational/marital cohesion and what factors may increase cohesion in military couples. Future study of differences found in age cohorts in the military may also provide more specific factors that can be addressed to either supplement or counter these effects in an effort to increase relational/marital satisfaction among military couples.

Implementation and outcome studies of military partner support programs will also further the understanding of military partners' needs during and following deployment. These programs can target suggested areas of need by participants' description of challenges during deployment and recommendations for others facing deployment. Some of the suggested areas to address would be increasing social support, specifically military affiliated social support, providing opportunities for military partners to participate in self-care activities as well as other hobbies and learning opportunities. Child rearing was identified as the most common challenge among military partners, and addressing child-rearing needs by providing accessible and appropriate child care and support is another possible support program that may significantly reduce the strain of deployment and enhance relational satisfaction and cohesion.

In summary, it is clear that partners of deployed soldiers face a variety of challenges and have found support and assistance in various ways. Soldiers' military affiliation with regular army rather than a reservist component has a slight association

with partners' reported relational satisfaction. While the cause of such differences is unclear, differing social support, financial situations and communication methods were found to be possible explanations. These findings indicate a need for further understanding of military partners' experiences to support our deployed troops who are burdened with subsequent relational challenges as a result of military induced separation.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Text

A social media post and a link that directs participants to the informed consent and questionnaire will be accompanied by the following text:

Are you the partner of a member of the Army who has been deployed in the last 11 years? Click this link to take a brief confidential survey and for a chance to win a \$50 gift card. This is a voluntary opportunity to share a vital part of your experience! SGT Nathan Moon of Army National Guard is a doctoral student in clinical psychology at Pepperdine University and is conducting a research inquiry on the effects of deployment on committed relationships to meet dissertation requirements for his degree. It takes 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions or want to find out more information, please contact the primary researcher Nathan Moon at nathan.moon@pepperdine.edu or the dissertation chair, Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis at thema.s.bryant-davis@pepperdine.edu. Even if you have not been affiliated with the Army, please “share” this link, “like” this post, and send it to all of your Army affiliated friends to give them the opportunity to share their experience, and enter a drawing to win one of two \$50 gift cards.

An email with a link to the informed consent and questionnaire will include the following subject and text:

Subject: Research on soldiers’ partners

Text: Are you the partner of a member of the Army who has been deployed in the last 11 years? Click this link to take a brief confidential survey and for a chance to win a \$50 gift card. This is a voluntary opportunity to share a vital part of your experience! SGT Nathan Moon of Army National Guard is a doctoral student in clinical psychology at Pepperdine University and is conducting a research inquiry on the effects of deployment on committed relationships to meet dissertation requirements for his degree. It takes 15-20 minutes to complete. If you have any questions or want to find out more information, please contact the primary researcher Nathan Moon at nathan.moon@pepperdine.edu or the dissertation chair, Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis at thema.s.bryant-davis@pepperdine.edu. Even if you have not been affiliated with the Army, please “share” this link, “like” this post, and send it to all of your Army affiliated friends to give them the opportunity to share their experience, and enter a drawing to win one of two \$50 gift cards.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

- I. I agree to participate in a research study being conducted by Nathan Moon, M.A., Doctoral Candidate in Clinical Psychology at Pepperdine University in Los Angeles, California to fulfill dissertation requirements, under the supervision of Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, Associate Professor of Psychology.
- II. I understand that participation in this study is completely voluntary and that there will be no negative consequences if I choose not to participate. In addition, I understand I may choose to stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, and there will be no adverse consequences to me.
- III. I understand the purpose and nature of the research study is to explore the differences between the experience of the partners of Army Reservist/National Guard soldiers and active duty soldiers in regards to military deployment and the impact on their romantic relationships.
- IV. My participation in this study will consist of completing one questionnaire that will ask about the following areas: demographic information (age, occupation, education, marital status, etc.); general partner deployment information; family contact during deployment; and relational dynamics.
- V. I understand that participation in this study will be confidential. I will not be asked to divulge any personally identifying information on any of the research forms or questionnaire. Any findings from this study that are published in professional journals or shared with other researchers will only involve group data with no personally identifying information included.
- VI. My participation in this study will take approximately 15 to 20 minutes. I understand that the materials are written in English. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to enter a drawing for one of two \$50.00 gift certificates. If I choose to enter the drawing, I understand I will be asked to provide an email address, mailing address and preference of one of five national retailers I would like the gift certificate for. I understand that if I choose to participate in the raffle, my contact information will be stored separately from my questionnaire responses and will be destroyed as soon as the two prizes have been awarded. Following the data collection period, the drawing will be conducted and I will be notified if I win via the contact information I provide. Winners will receive the gift certificate via mail. I understand that following the completion of the study, results will be available and provided to all participants who endorse a desire to receive a summary of the results and submit an email address.

- VII. I understand that there is no direct benefit to me for my participation in this research, apart from the chance to win a \$50.00 gift certificate. However, I may feel a sense of satisfaction from contributing to a research study of military partners. The results of this study may contribute to increased knowledge about the effects of separation on reservist and active Army families. This information may be used to direct further research and allocation of resources to support ways of promoting relationship satisfaction during deployment.
- VIII. I understand that participation in this study involves no more than minimal risk. Such risk is similar to what is encountered in daily life or during the completion of routine psychological questionnaires. It is possible that I may experience some emotional discomfort in responding to certain questions about my experience with deployment and relationship challenges. I understand that I am free to not answer any questions that I do not want to answer. I also understand that I may contact Nathan Moon at nathan.moon@pepperdine.edu or the dissertation chair, Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis at thema.s.bryant-davis@pepperdine.edu should I have any concerns that I wish to discuss further. Military support contact information will be provided following the questionnaire, whether or not it is completed, to assist with any distress which may arise.
- IX. In the event that I have any questions regarding participation in this research project. I understand that I may contact Dr. Doug Leigh, Chairperson of the Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB), Pepperdine University, 6100 Center Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90045, or by telephone at 310-568-2389.
- X. I understand the information regarding participation in this research project. All of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read this informed consent document and I have understood it. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above.

Agree
 Disagree

Appendix C

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is broken up into the following four parts: (a) demographics, (b) deployment information, (c) family contact during deployment, and (d) a relationship questionnaire called the Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale (RDAS). The entire process will likely take 15-20 minutes, but take all the time you need. There is no time limit.

Part I: Demographics: Please respond to the following questions for yourself unless it specifically asks about your partner.

Have you been in a committed relationship with someone during his or her deployment over 59 days?

(If the preceding item is answered in the negative, the participant will be asked to discontinue, as they do not meet the criteria for participation)

Age:

Gender: (a) Male, (b) Female, (c) other.

Ethnicity (please indicate all that apply): (a) Black/African American, (b) Caucasian, (c) Hispanic/Latino, (d) Asian/Pacific Islander, (e) American Indian/Alaska Native (f) other.

Grade/Rank of partner (e.g., E-3, Sergeant, Captain, etc. Leave blank if unknown):

Please indicate how many years of schooling or formal education you have: (a) 0 years, (b) 1-5 years, (c) 6-11 years, (d) 12 years, (e) 13-15 years, (f) 16 years, (g) over 16 years.

What is your relationship with your partner who is in the Army, Army Reserve or National Guard: (a) Committed Relationship, (b) Engaged, (c) Married, (d) Married but separated/contemplating divorce, (e) divorced

Length of marriage or committed relationship: (a) Less than 1 year, (b) 1-3 years, (c) 4-6 years, (d) 7-10 years, (e) 11-20 years, (f) over 20 years.

Number of children: (a) 0, (b) 1, (c) 2, (d) 3, (e) 4, (f) 5, (g) over 5.

Religious or Spiritual Affiliation:

Please note the following acronyms: National Guard (NG), Army Reserve (AR), Active Duty/Regular Army (AD)

Partner's current Army Affiliation:

NG – AR – AD – Other

Please indicate if your partner has deployed while under a different affiliation/status than his/her current affiliation/status:

Partner's initial affiliation:

NG – AR – AD – Other

Partner's affiliation during 1st deployment:

NG – AR – AD – Other

Has partner ever deployed while serving in another affiliation: (a) yes, (b) no If yes please indicate which affiliation:

NG – AR – AD – Other

Has partner ever deployed while serving in yet another affiliation: (a) yes, (b) no If yes please indicate which affiliation:

NG – AR – AD – Other

If you have been in the Army since 2001, please answer these questions again with regard to yourself. If you have not been in the Army since 2001, please go to Part II of the Questionnaire.

Personal current Army Affiliation: NG – AR – AD – Other
 Please indicate if you have deployed while under a different affiliation/status than your current affiliation/status:
 Personal initial affiliation: NG – AR – AD – Other
 Personal affiliation during 1st deployment: NG – AR – AD – Other
 Have you ever deployed while serving in another affiliation: (a) yes, (b) no If yes please indicate which affiliation: NG – AR – AD – Other
 Have you ever deployed while serving in yet another affiliation: (a) yes, (b) no If yes please indicate which affiliation: NG – AR – AD – Other

Part II: Deployment Information

How many deployments has your partner experienced in the last 11 years?
 In the last 11 years, what is the total length of deployment time (please specify in months)?
 To what continents/countries was your partner deployed in the last 11 years?
 When was the most recent deployment?

Part III: Deployment Familial Contact Experience

Think back to your experience when your partner was last deployed:

How did you stay in touch with your partner? (Check all that apply)

- Email Phone Live Chat Video Chat Written Letter
 Blog Other Internet Sources Other:

How often did you stay in communication with your partner?

More than

Less than

1/day

1/day

4-6/wk

2-3/wk

1/wk

2-3/mo

1/mo.

1/mo.

How would you characterize the amount of contact you had with your partner?

Not enough

Just right

Too much

1

2

3

4

5

What factors contributed to the frequency of contact?

- Time restriction/availability of deployed partner Time zone differences
 Time restriction/availability of at home partner Emotional difficulties
 Availability of communication medium Relational difficulties
 Other:

What resources or types of support were available while your partner was deployed? (e.g., immediate family, military organizations, community, church or faith group, etc.)

Were there people to whom you could go for support while your partner was deployed?

If so, who?

What has been the hardest part about dealing with your partner's deployment or deployments?

What has helped you the most in dealing with your partner's deployment or deployments?

What recommendations do you have about how to help people cope when their partners have been deployed?

Part IV: The Revised Dyadic Adjustment Scale

Please answer the following questions for your current state.

Most persons have disagreements in their relationships. Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner for each item on the following list.

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occa- sionally Agree	Fre- quently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Religious matters	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Sex relations	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Conventionality (correct or proper behavior)	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Career decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0

	All The time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
7. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation, or terminating your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5
8. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	0	1	2	3	4	5
9. Do you ever regret that you married (or lived together)?	0	1	2	3	4	5
10. How often do you and your mate "get on each other's nerves?"	0	1	2	3	4	5

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occa- sionally	Rarely	Never
11. Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?	4	3	2	1	0

How often would you say the following events occur between you and your mate?

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
12. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
13. Work together on a project	0	1	2	3	4	5
14. Calmly discuss something	0	1	2	3	4	5

Part V: Impact of Deployment

How did your partner's most recent deployment impact your life in each of the following areas? Please rate the impact experienced **during** the latest deployment?

	Very positive impact	Positive impact	Neutral impact	Negative impact	Very negative impact
Partner Relationship:	1	2	3	4	5
Your Stress Level	1	2	3	4	5
Your Finances:	1	2	3	4	5

Compared to what happened during your partner's most recent deployment, how did matters change for the better or worse during the 12 months after your partner returned from the most recent deployment?

	Much better	Better	No Change	Worse	Much worse
Partner Relationship:	1	2	3	4	5
Your Stress Level:	1	2	3	4	5
Your Finances:	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D

Note of Appreciation to Participants

Thank you for your consideration in completing this survey.

There are many resources available to soldiers and their families in dealing with the traumatic nature of deployment and military life. Please seek assistance if you or your family member faces any of the following challenges.

- Job related stress
- Substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Suicidal or Homicidal Ideation
- Family of origin issues
- Marital and relationship conflicts
- Sexual orientation issues
- Depression
- Anger management
- Multicultural issues

Military one source (www.militaryonesource.com): A website that specializes in linking many different resources for soldiers, including face to face and online counseling, information on relocation, education, military benefits, job searching, and more.

Vet Centers (www.vetcenter.va.gov): If you have served in any combat zone, Vet Centers are in your community to help you and your family with readjustment counseling and outreach services.

Vet Center Call Centers, 1-800-WAR VETS: An around the clock confidential call center where combat Veterans and their families can call to talk about their military experience or any other issue they are facing in their readjustment to civilian life.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Your friends and other military affiliated acquaintances that have deployed may appreciate having an opportunity to share their experience and participate in this survey. Please feel free to forward this link to them. They may also want to be eligible to enter the raffle to have a chance to win a \$50 gift certificate.