

*In honor of
Colonel & Mrs.
Douglas C. Riggs*



Welcome Home: Reintegration of Veterans & Families

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UNT Speaks Out: Conversations with Faculty



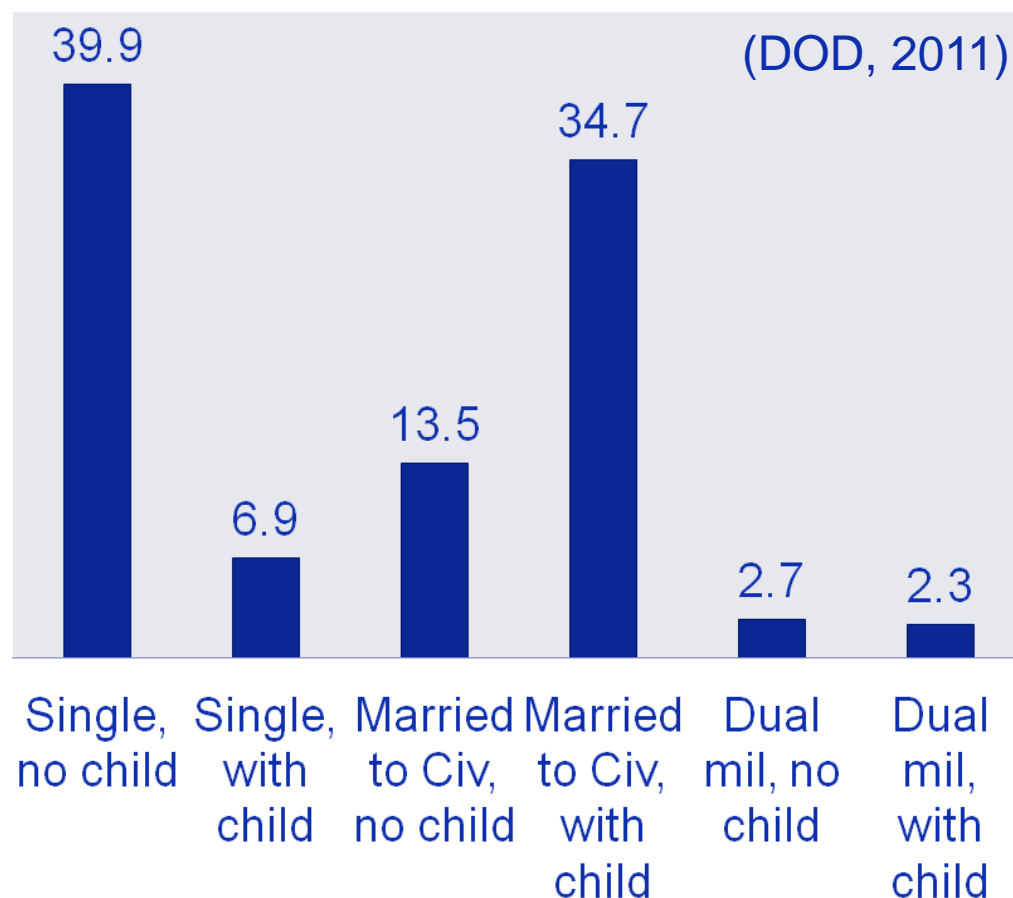
Changes in U.S. Military Force

- Jan 1973 – became an all volunteer force
- RAND (2006) – “change for the better”
 - **Service members**
 - Recruits – higher IQ, 92% have HS degree
 - Officers - 95% have BA, 38% advanced degrees
 - Representative of U.S. racial distribution
 - **Professional force**
 - Increased number of career personnel
 - Greater proficiency at tasks

Changes in U.S. Military Force

2011 Total Force Military Personnel & Family Members (N=5,390,167)

- Historically, military force mostly made up of single men without families
- Today's military force
 - 15% of active duty force are women
 - More family members (58.1%) than military personnel (41.9%)
 - 43.9% of total force has children



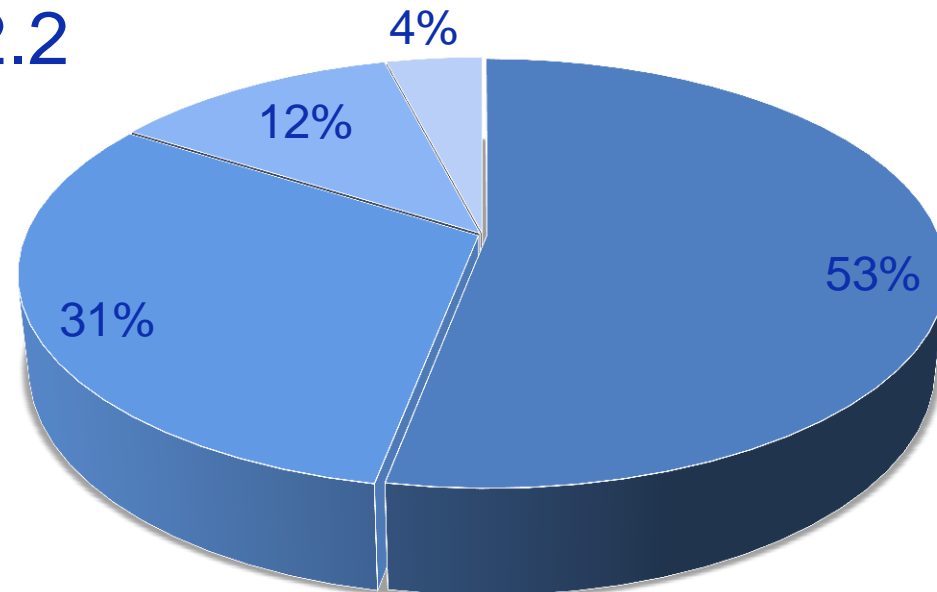
Stats

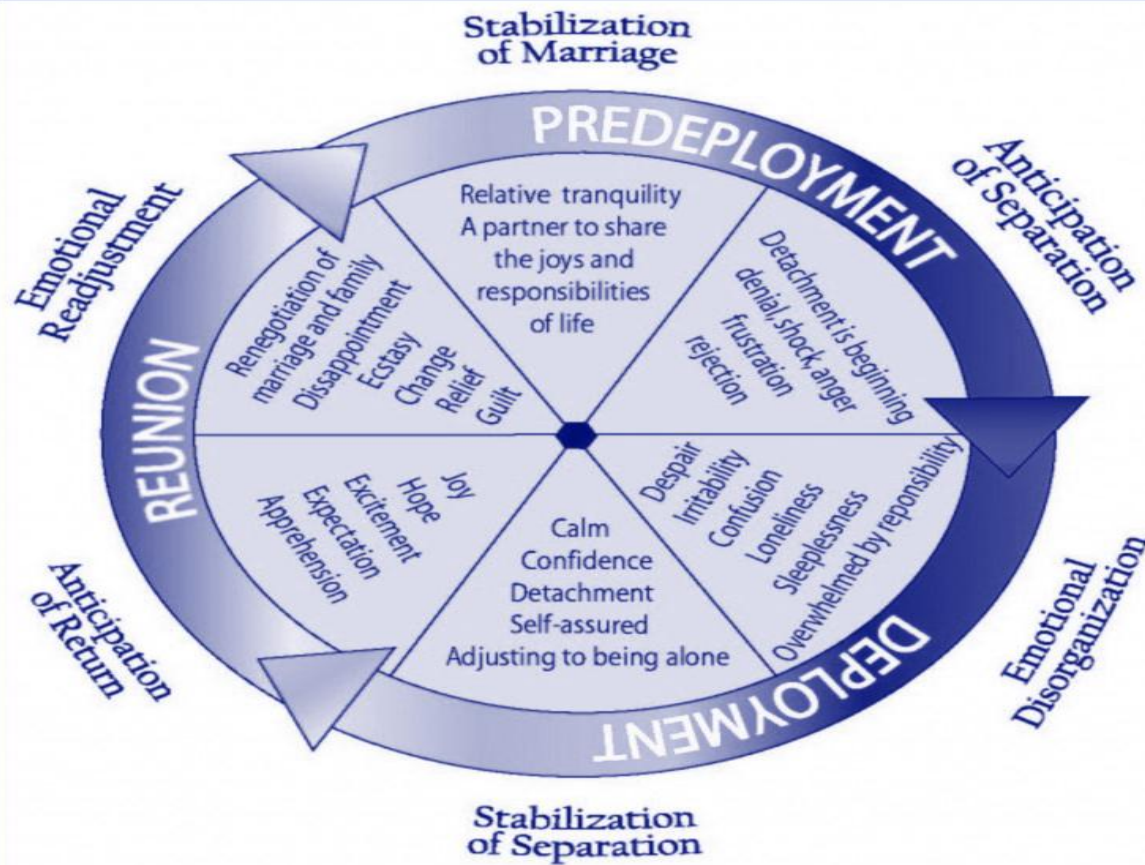
Changes in U.S. Military Practice

- Greater reliance on National Guard and Reserve forces
- Combat Deployments
 - Higher frequency, $M=2.2$
 - Extended duration to 15+ months
 - Less time between
 - 9-12 months
 - Less 3 months pre-deployment training

U.S. Army Deployments

■ One ■ Two ■ Three ■ Four





The Deployment Cycle



Deployment Cycle: Military Families

Fit-for-Duty

- Strong leadership
- Maintain bonds
- Adaptive coping
- Flexible roles – able to shift to redistribute or reintegrate military parent
- Open Communication
- Secure family base

Closed Ranks

- Authoritarian
- Disengagement
- Avoidant coping
- Rigid roles –
 - Unable to accommodate exits & entries
 - Resent return & intrusion of military parent
- Poor, closed communication

Open Ranks

- Disorganization
- Overly dependent
- Chaotic coping
- Uncertain roles; weak boundaries
 - Ambiguous loss
 - Interferes with tasks, decisions
 - Parent-child role-reversal
- Inappropriate communication

(Riggs & Riggs, 2011)



Post-deployment: Service Members

- Change, resilience and growth is the norm.
- BUT, some experience reintegration difficulties
 - Physical injuries and rehabilitation
 - Psychological distress (PTSD, depression) – 20%
 - Traumatic brain injury (TBI) – 19%
 - Substance abuse (alcohol, prescription meds)
 - Suicide rate “epidemic”; ages 17-24 = 4X civilian rate
- Marital, parenting and/or family problems
 - Abilities adaptive to combat environment create numerous problems in the family home.
 - Increasing divorce rate since 2001



Post-deployment: Family Experiences

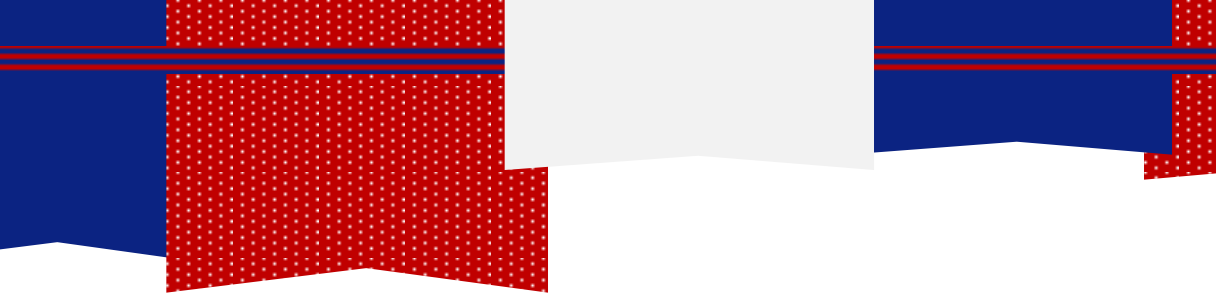
Military member: *"I feel like a guest in my own home."*

Spouses: *"You left me." "I don't know you" "I did OK without you."*

Children and Teens: *"There's a stranger in my house." "I don't need you."*

- Fit-for duty families reorganize & adapt well
- Closed & open ranks families may struggle to adapt
 - Closed ranks families permanently reassigned roles, do not allow reentry of military spouse/parent
- Veteran symptoms: Possible family experiences
 - Ambiguous loss: physically present, psychologically absent
 - "Pursuer-distancer" marital pattern
 - May frighten spouse & children
 - Secondary trauma in spouses and children
 - Domestic Violence





Reintegration Challenges

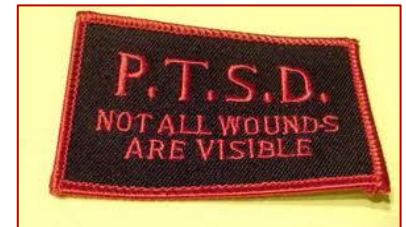
- Reconnecting with family and friends
- Occupational or academic decisions
- Civil-Military Cultural Gap
 - All voluntary force allows most Americans to become detached from military issues.
 - Military vs. Civilian Identity – conflicting values
- **Veteran's interview themes** (Demers, 2011)
 - Time travelers
 - “No one understands us”
 - Crisis of identity





Student Veterans

- Post 9/11 GI Bill ➡ More veterans on campus
- Transition from military to academic community
 - Maturity and discipline may be beneficial in studies
 - Challenges
 - Competing demands: family, work
 - Fitting in: Little in common & impatient with younger, inexperienced classmates: *“I’m not here to party.”*
 - Anti-military biases
 - Physical disabilities
 - Up to 1/3 struggle with “invisible wounds” (e.g., TBI, PTSD, etc.) affecting schoolwork
 - 2010 Survey: 46% students veterans had contemplated suicide, compared to 6% of nonmilitary students





VETS: Veterans' Experience Transitioning to Students

- Purpose of study:
 - To examine the relational, academic & psychological functioning of college student veterans.
 - To determine how coping strategies, social support, and family attachment relationships may help or interfere with success in these areas.
- Results will inform college programming, facilitate transition from combat to college



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*In war, there are no
unwounded soldiers.*

~José Narosky