

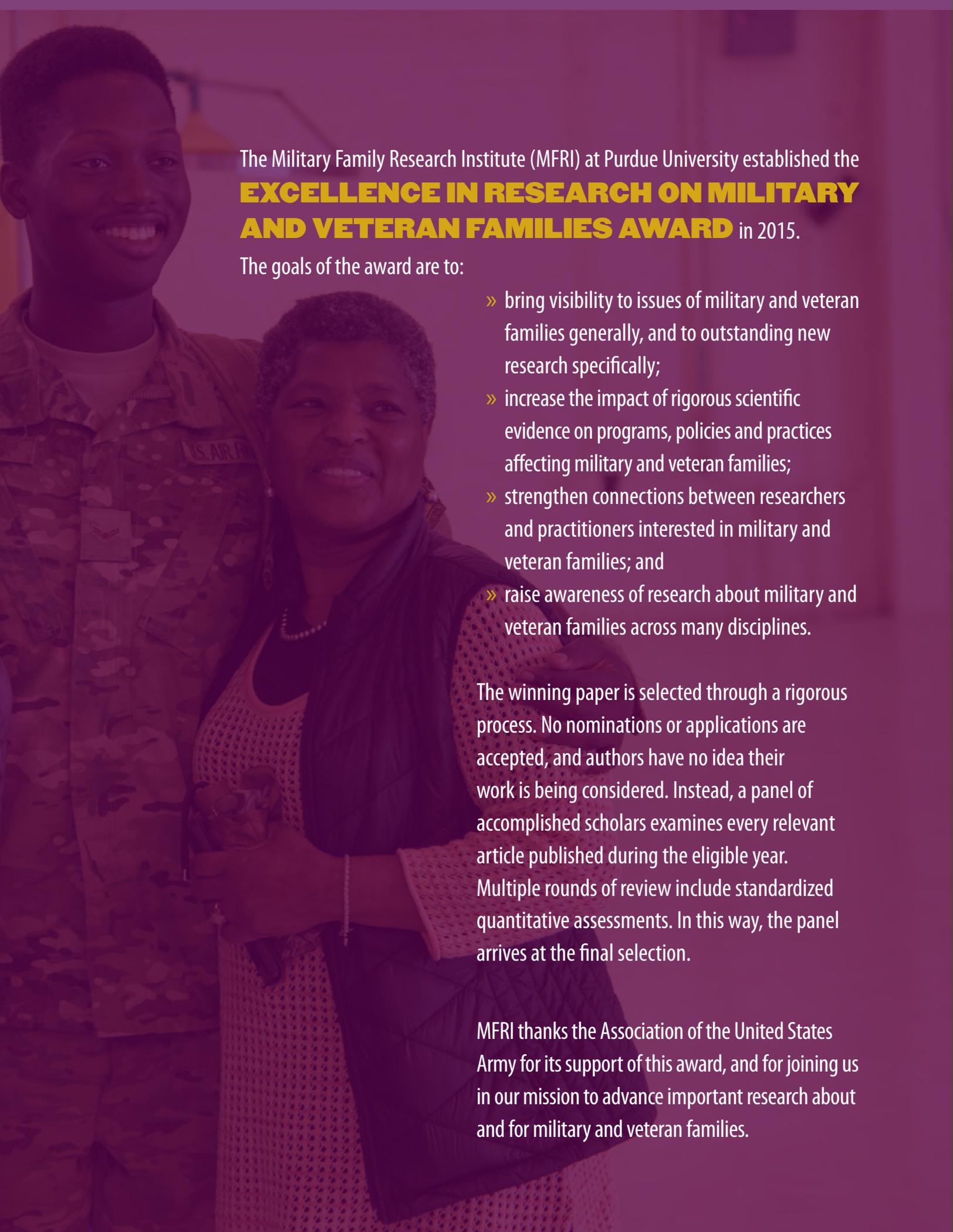


The Military Family Research Institute at Purdue University's

EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH ON MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES

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Military Family Research Institute



The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University established the **EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH ON MILITARY AND VETERAN FAMILIES AWARD** in 2015.

The goals of the award are to:

- » bring visibility to issues of military and veteran families generally, and to outstanding new research specifically;
- » increase the impact of rigorous scientific evidence on programs, policies and practices affecting military and veteran families;
- » strengthen connections between researchers and practitioners interested in military and veteran families; and
- » raise awareness of research about military and veteran families across many disciplines.

The winning paper is selected through a rigorous process. No nominations or applications are accepted, and authors have no idea their work is being considered. Instead, a panel of accomplished scholars examines every relevant article published during the eligible year. Multiple rounds of review include standardized quantitative assessments. In this way, the panel arrives at the final selection.

MFRI thanks the Association of the United States Army for its support of this award, and for joining us in our mission to advance important research about and for military and veteran families.

2017 RESEARCH AWARD

2017 winner

Kahn, J. R., Collinge, W., & Soltysik, R. (2016). Post-9/11 veterans and their partners improve mental health outcomes with a self-directed mobile and web-based wellness training program: A randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 18(9), e255. <http://doi.org/10.2196/jmir.5800>

Study takeaways

1

Post-9/11 veterans and their partners face long-lasting challenges to readjustment and reintegration, with increased risks to relationship and family stability. In an NIMH-sponsored randomized trial with 160 veteran/partner dyads, users of an online program teaching life-long wellness skills at home had significant improvements in measures of PTSD, depression, stress levels, resilience, self-compassion, irritability, anxiety and pain.

2

Many post-9/11 veterans have incurred multiple forms of injury including physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual. These can compound one another, such that treating a single problem rarely resolves global suffering. Mission Reconnect teaches 12 practices known to shift neurochemistry and ease pain. As a self-directed program, it allows users to focus on strategies they find most beneficial.

3

Veteran mental health services are often hampered by low levels of engagement and follow through. Mission Reconnect provides training in wellness practices for veterans and their partners to use individually and together at home. During a four-month clinical trial, users engaged one or more practices over twenty times per week, averaging over two hours of weekly program use.

Biographies

Janet Kahn Janet Kahn, Ph.D., LMT is a health policy analyst passionate about ensuring that people, no matter their income, have access to the building blocks of health and to the health care modalities and professionals they need and prefer. For the past 10 years much of her work has focused on individual and couple empowerment regarding one's own health. This work includes an award-winning multimedia program called Touch, Caring and Cancer, as well as Mission Reconnect, a program that offers instruction in mind-body techniques to veterans and their partners to support physical, mental and relationship well-being. In 2011 President Obama appointed her to the federal Advisory Board on Prevention, Health Promotion and Integrative and Public Health, where she served for the duration of the Obama administration.



William Collinge William Collinge, Ph.D., MPH, LCSW is a principal of Mission Reconnect LLC. He has served as a scientific review administrator for the United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program and the National Institutes of Health. He is president of Collinge and Associates, Inc., an independent research organization funded by the National Institute of Health to develop innovative approaches to benefit public health. Projects have included Mission Reconnect and others addressing health behavior, complementary therapies and palliative care. Based in Eugene, Oregon, he provides mental health services to veterans and their families through the Department of Veteran Affairs Veterans Choice Program.



Robert Soltysik Robert Soltysik is a statistician for Mission Reconnect LLC, and co-editor of the journal *Optimal Data Analysis* (ODA). He is a former senior research associate at Northwestern University, and scientific programmer for Feinberg School of Medicine and for the Department of Veterans Affairs Chicago Health Care System. He has served on numerous National Institute of Health sponsored studies including Mission Reconnect and other interactive intervention systems. He co-discovered the ODA paradigm of maximum accuracy statistics, and created the software systems including UniODA™, and CTA™. He is co-author of *Optimal Data Analysis: A Guidebook for Windows* (APA Press).



2018 RESEARCH AWARD

2018 winner

Arnold, A. L., Lucier-Greer, M., Mancini, J. A., Ford, J. L., & Wickrama, K. A. S. (2017). How family structures and processes interrelate: The case of adolescent mental health and academic success in military families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 38, 858-879. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X15616849>

Study takeaways

1

Military families serve as the primary and most stable influence for youth, while military-related transitions and stressors often put youth at-risk for depression and academic challenges.

2

New analyses of 995 military youth indicate family forms (specifically being part of a stepfamily or single-parent family) were associated with increased depressive symptoms and decreased academic performance.

3

However, when accounting for family support, parent-adolescent connection, and personal initiative, no differences were found across family structures. Military youth can thrive in diverse family forms in the presence of healthy family processes.

Biographies

Amy Laura Arnold Amy Laura Arnold, Ph.D., CFLE, is a technical specialist with ICF and serves as the evaluator for the National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families' programmatic efforts. Her program of research is broadly focused on family processes that promotes resilience and healthy relationships. Her work specifically focuses on the intersections of research and practice through evidence-based programs to enhance families' well-being. She has over 12 years of experience evaluating programs effectiveness in bettering the lives of couples, parents, middle-school youth, and military adolescents via funding by the United States Department of the Army, Department of Defense, Department of Health and Human Services and the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service. She has experience researching multiple facets of families, including couple relationships, parent-adolescent relationships and families in the context of communities.



Mallory Lucier-Greer Mallory Lucier-Greer, Ph.D. is an associate professor in Auburn University's Department of Human Development and Family Studies. She is an applied researcher with a background as a licensed marriage and family therapist and certified family life educator. Lucier-Greer's program of research focuses on identifying risk factors and resilient processes within vulnerable populations as a means to alleviate individual and family-level stress, particularly in military families. Her expertise is evidenced by her strong track record of publications and research funding. She is the principal investigator of Military REACH, a research and outreach project funded through the DOD-USDA Partnership for Military Families that strives to make research accessible to military families and those who work on behalf of military families.



Jay Mancini Jay Mancini is professor emeritus of human development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and Virginia Tech, and adjunct professor of human development and family science at the University of Georgia. His work has focused on lifespan human development, community systems, building community capacity, military family support systems, time-use and families, and psychological well-being. Throughout his career the focus has been on resilience and vulnerabilities of individuals, families, communities and their multiple intersections. Mancini's current theorizing and research focus is on families and communities. Active research projects include examination of the social relationships of youth and their implications for developmental outcomes, study of parents and their adolescents regarding family dynamics and youth developmental outcomes, and an international study of the intersections of resilience and vulnerabilities among homeless veterans.



James Ford James Ford retired as program coordinator from the Athens Georgia Veterans Treatment Court in June 2017. He worked with Chief Judge Patrick Haggard to establish the veterans treatment court program and clarify its mission. Prior to working in the veterans treatment court space, he was a graduate course instructor in the department of human development and family science at the University of Georgia Athens (UGA) and research project coordinator in UGA's family and community resilience laboratory where he conducted extensive data collection and analysis of active duty U.S. Army family members adaptation to military life in time of war. Ford is a U.S. Air Force veteran and received the Vietnam Service Medal with one bronze campaign star.

K.A.S. Wickrama Kandauda (K. A. S) Wickrama is a quantitative social epidemiologist. His research investigates how socioeconomic, family, work, marital, racial/ethnic and biological factors influence health behaviors, mental health, and physical health outcomes leading to social inequalities of health, broadly defined.

2017 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Cozza, S. J., Fisher, J. E., Mauro, C., Zhou J., Ortiz, C. D., Skritskaya, N., Wall, M. M., Fullerton, C. S., Ursano, R. J., & Shear, M. K. (2016). Performance of DSM-5 persistent complex bereavement disorder criteria in a community sample of bereaved military family members. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 173, 919-929. doi: 10.1176/appi.ajp.2016.15111442.

Study takeaways

- 1** A disorder of clinically impairing grief must recognize those with unrelenting symptoms of disordered grief and its associated functional impairment.
- 2** DSM-5's proposed definition of persistent, complex bereavement disorder excludes many who continue to struggle with such a condition.
- 3** Workable diagnostic criteria should require one or two grief-related symptoms, as well as associated impairment in order to identify those who would benefit from grief-related interventions.
- 4** Diagnostic requirements that are more restrictive exclude many who could benefit from evidence based interventions.

Saltzman, W. R., Lester, P., Milburn, N., Woodward, K., & Stein, J. (2016). Pathways of risk and resilience: Impact of a family resilience program on active-duty military parents. *Family Process*, 55, 633-646. doi: 10.1111/famp.12238.

Study takeaways

- 1** Research has shown that by targeting and improving specific ways in which military families communicate and support each other that levels of distress among the parents can be significantly reduced.
- 2** By utilizing structural equation modeling tools we are able to show ways in which distress reverberates across military families and key determinants of whether and how long a family will participate in treatment.

Taylor, C. M., Ross, M. E., Wood, J. N., Griffis, H. M., Harb, G. C., Mi, L., Song, L., Strane, D., Lynch, K. G., & Rubin, D. M. (2016). Differential child maltreatment risk across deployment periods of U.S. Army soldiers. *American Journal of Public Health*, 106, 153-8. doi: 10.2105/AJPH.2015.302874.

Study takeaways

- 1** Children under the age of two may be at heightened risk of abuse and neglect in the six months immediately following a parent's return from deployment.
- 2** Services to support soldier re-integration into family life should be appropriately timed and available at sufficient scale in order to prevent child abuse.
- 3** Child abuse prevention efforts need to account for the different needs of military families, including families of female service members and those with mental illness, in order to provide the necessary services at the right times.





2018 HONORABLE MENTIONS

Karney, B. R., & Trail, T. E. (2017). Associations between prior deployments and marital satisfaction among Army couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 79*, 147-160. doi:10.1111/jomf.12329

Study takeaways

- 1** Military couples who have experienced prior deployments are on average significantly less satisfied with their marriages than couples who have not experienced prior deployments.
- 2** A first deployment and the early months of deployment are associated with significantly lower marital satisfaction for military couples, but subsequent deployments and additional months of deployment have no additional effects.
- 3** The negative associations between prior deployments and lower marital satisfaction in military couples are mostly explained by the greater exposure to traumatic events and the higher likelihood of PTSD symptoms among service members who have been deployed.

Trail, T. E., Meadows, S. O., Miles, J. N., & Karney, B. R. (2017). Patterns of vulnerabilities and resources in U.S. military families. *Journal of Family Issues, 38*, 2128-2149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X15592660>

Study takeaways

- 1** Across multiple stressors that place military families at risk for negative outcomes (e.g., poor mental health) and multiple sources of resilience that help them cope with stressors (e.g., social support), most service members and spouses are at low-risk, but an important minority of service members and spouses are at higher risk across multiple health, well-being, and family domains.
- 2** Almost 40% of married military couples are at higher risk for negative outcomes across multiple health, well-being, and family domains, with 28% having one spouse at high risk and one spouse at lower risk, and 11% having both spouses at higher risk for negative outcomes.
- 3** These findings suggest that programs designed to help specific individual-level problems (e.g., stress management, PTSD) should take a more holistic approach to treating the individual-family system rather than individual symptoms.

Vogt, D., Smith, B. N., Fox, A. B., Amoroso, T., Taverna, E., & Schnurr, P. P. (2017). Consequences of PTSD for the work and family quality of life of female and male U.S. Afghanistan and Iraq War veterans. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 52*, 341-352. doi: 10.1007/s00127-016-1321-5. Epub 2016 Dec 31.

- 1** Findings based on a national survey of post-9/11 veterans revealed that the majority of veterans report relatively high family and work quality of life after they leave military service. Although few differences were observed in family and work outcomes for male and female post-9/11 veterans, women were slightly more likely to report unemployment than men.
- 2** Although veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms reported poorer functioning and less satisfaction with respect to both their family quality of life and to a lesser extent work outcomes, PTSD did not appear to erode veterans' involvement in intimate relationships or parenting roles, or their participation in the workforce.
- 3** While these findings speak to the resilience of our veterans as a whole, they also support the need for interventions that can mitigate the negative effect of PTSD on veterans' family and work quality of life and that can address female veterans' unique challenges in the workplace.

PAST EXEMPLARY RESEARCH

2016 research award recipients

Larsen, M., McCarthy, F., Moulton, T., Page, J., & Patel, J. (2015). War and marriage: Assortative mating and the World War II GI Bill. *Demography*, *52*(5), 1431-1461.

The WWII GI Bill had important spillover effects beyond the initial impact on men's educational attainment, in that it allowed veterans to marry women with significantly more education. Thus, the WWII GI Bill increased the human capital not only among veterans themselves but also among the families they eventually formed.

2016 honorable mentions

Fischer, E. P., Sherman, M. D., McSweeney, J. C., Pyne, J. M., Owen, R. R., & Dixon, L. B. (2015). Perspectives of family and veterans on family programs to support reintegration of returning veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder. *Psychological Services*, *12*(3), 187-198. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000033>

Tsai, J., Rosenheck, R. A., Kaspro, W. J., & Kane, V. (2015). Characteristics and use of services among literally homeless and unstably housed U.S. veterans with custody of minor children. *Psychiatric Services*, *66*(10), 1083-1090. <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.ps.201400300>

2015 research award recipients

Lundquist, J., & Xu, Z. (2014). Reinstitutionalizing families: Life course policy and marriage in the military. *Journal of Marriage and Family* *76*(5), 1063-1081.

The authors argue that structural conditions of modern military service — including deployment, frequent moves and overarching characteristics of military employment — shape marriage relationships. Bringing together life course literatures on turning points, the welfare state, and linked lives, the study shows how military policies are part of an overarching institutional culture that directly and indirectly promotes marriage.

2015 honorable mentions

Gewirtz, A. H., McMorris, B. J., Hanson, S., & Davis, L. (2014). Family adjustment of deployed and nondeployed mothers in families with a parent deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *45*(6), 465-477.

Renshaw, K. D., Campbell, S. B., Meis, L., Erbes, C. (2014). Gender differences in associations of PTSD symptom clusters with relationship distress in U.S. Vietnam veterans and their partners. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *27*(3), 283-290.

Foran, H. M., Heyman, R. E., & Slep, A. M. S. (2014). Emotional abuse and its unique ecological correlates among military personnel and spouses. *Psychology of Violence*, *4*(2), 128-142. doi: 10.1037/a0034536

Theiss, J. A., & Knobloch, L. K. (2014). Relational turbulence and the post-deployment transition: Self, partner, and relationship focused turbulence. *Communication Research*, *4*(1), 27-51.



ABOUT MFRI

The Military Family Research Institute (MFRI) at Purdue University conducts research on issues that affect military and veteran families and works to shape policies, programs and practices that improve their well-being. Founded in 2000, MFRI envisions a diverse support community that understands the most pressing needs of military and veteran families. To achieve this, MFRI collaborates to create meaningful solutions for them. This internationally-recognized organization is located at Purdue University's College of Health and Human Sciences, in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies.



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ABOUT AUSA

The Association of the United States Army (AUSA) is the only private, nonprofit professional organization serving all components of America's Total Army and its supporters. Since 1950, AUSA has provided a voice for the Army and vital services for Soldiers, Army civilians, and their families to advance the security of our nation. If you have a connection with the Army—professionally or personally—AUSA is your resource for exclusive access to scholarships and grants, business opportunities, educational resources, philanthropy initiatives, family programs, influential representation, and genuine relationships with a supportive Army community. Join us today at www.ausa.org/join.

The Military Family Research Institute thanks the Armed Forces Services Corp for its generous support of the Excellence in Research on Military and Veteran Families award.



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