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14. ABSTRACT The Military Family Coping Project has been designed to examine the stress and adjustment issues surrounding deployments for Soldiers, Spouses and Parents of Soldiers. This project has the luxury of seeing soldiers in the context of their nuclear families. Both military personnel and families are impacted by deployments, yet little is known about the nature of family stress in relationship to that of the soldier. This project has been designed to fill this gap. In this study we are seeking 500 soldiers, 175 spouses and 175 parents of soldiers to fill out a survey style instrument that address such topics as prior stress to entering the military, family relationships, Previous combat stress exposure, mental health issues such as personality type, alcohol and tobacco use, coping and social support/resilience, and quality of life indicators. With the end of the War in Iraq and the cut backs in deployments we have obtained 31.6% of our soldier sample, 5% of spouses and 7% of parents of soldiers. We have learned a great deal this past year as to how to recruit family members. By the end of October we will be approaching a large group of soldiers about to deploy from Ft. Hood. In preparation for this we are involving Family Support Groups that correspond to this larger Soldier group in an effort to energize family members about the project and thus increase our sample. It is our belief that we will have obtained our sample and be able to move on to data analysis in the next few months.					
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Table of Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction.....	3
Body.....	3
Key Research Accomplishments.....	5
Reportable Outcomes.....	5
Conclusion.....	5

Introduction

The Military Family Coping Project is a systematic line of research aimed at empirically informing clinical and programmatic interventions to aid the development of family resilience and functional coping related to deployments. This proposal represents Phase II of the program, in which we aim to investigate the interactive influence of risk and resilience factors in predicting functioning of Soldiers, ISOs, and parents during the pre-deployment preparation process. This study is unique in terms of its emphasis on deployment preparation, as well as the inclusion of parents, who are also impacted by deployments and provide a family context in which Soldiers readjust following deployment. It is anticipated that this project will provide valuable insight into familial risk and resilience factors among service members, ISOs, and parents, including an understanding of the exchange of generational coping mechanisms. These data will identify malleable risk factors that will empirically inform the development and improvement of early intervention and treatment programs aimed at promoting health and well-being of service members and their families. Understanding factors that influence the well-being of both service members and their families is important not only to reduce social, physical, health care, and public health costs, but also to improve the longevity of service members being deployed in terms of their ability to re-set for next tasks and missions.

Body

The research team of the Military Family Coping Project has worked diligently in this past year to obtain our sample and proceed with our project. LTC. (ret) Sharon Reese, Dr.PH (Co-Principal Investigator and Project Coordinator) has worked actively with appropriate unit commanders to arrange recruitment opportunities. With the end of the Iraq war and pending draw down in Afghanistan, fewer troops are leaving Fort Hood on deployment. To date we have briefed over 300 soldiers. Of these, we have enrolled 158 Soldiers, 9 spouses (ISOs) and 13 parents. Thus, we have obtained 31.6% (158/500) of our core sample of Soldiers (see demographics below). To further our recruitment efforts, a point of contact (POC) identified by the III Corps Surgeon Office continues to work with us to identify other units scheduled for deployment. Our next briefing has been scheduled at Ft. Hood on 25 October 2012. This is a sizable unit (over 500 Soldiers) and could complete our sample needs. A second large unit (several thousand Soldiers) will be leaving in the early spring if needed. For this next sample opportunity, we are also working with the associated Family Readiness Groups (FRGs) in order to reach out to spouses to enhance our spouse and family groups.

As part of study initiation and data management efforts we have trained several new staff, including graduate students who have expressed interest in working with military populations. We believe these training opportunities are critical to raise the next generation of researchers and clinicians who will continue to work with military personnel and their families.

Data Analysis

Under the direction of Dr. James Ellor (Principal Investigator) and Dr. Sandra Morissette (Co-PI), all study databases for the three groups have been constructed, and data have been entered and cleaned. Codebooks for databases have been constructed. The research team has begun to run preliminary statistics in an effort to develop procedures and trouble-shoot any challenges when working with the data in SPSS. Databases are constructed with an eye toward extending the study to be longitudinal.

Table 1. Recruitment and Demographics

	Soldiers	Intimate Significant Others	Parents
Total Recruited	158	9	13
Average Age	Mean 27.7 (SD)	Mean 31.13	Mean (55.15)
Average Years Education	Mean 14.07 (SD)	Mean 14.25 (SD)	Mean 14.5
Gender	Male: 103 Female: 54	Male: 2 Female: 6	Male: 3 Female: 10
Average number of deployments	Mean 0.77 (range: 0-5) 68 soldiers have previously deployed at least once	3 ISO's have deployed	2 parents have deployed

Maintaining Contact for a Post-deployment Survey

A future aim of this line of research (Phase III) is to follow service members and their families over time to determine factors that contribute to personal and familial resilience. The current study will lay the ground-work for such a prospective longitudinal study of the influence of risk and resilience factors on the functioning of service members and their families across their military careers. Notably, the first Soldiers from our original briefings will be returning starting in November 2012. The Military Family Coping Project has requested funding for a second survey to capture post-deployment functioning to follow these Soldiers and their family members. Should additional funding be granted, it is critical to be poised to immediately conduct these post-deployment assessments. Procedures are in place to determine when a Soldier has returned and to ensure accurate contact information (e.g., address forwarding information will be requested when mailing information to Soldiers' addresses). We have also developed a Military Family Coping Project newsletter in an effort to maintain contact with the soldiers, ISOs and parents. The newsletter is one effort to stay connected with and supports the troops and their family members during deployments, and was recently e-mailed to each participant who has stated that they are willing to continue to be contacted for this purpose. Such strategies are

critical to ensure the feasibility of a longitudinal trial. Our experience with longitudinal trials has given us important strategies to successfully follow them over time (current retention rates in other longitudinal studies are 85% or higher over a 1-year follow-up period). These strategies are actively being implemented to ensure the likelihood of our participants completing the post-deployment assessment point (and beyond). Understanding of pre/post-deployment family functioning is critical to the Department of Defense's mission to ensure that Soldiers are successfully deploying, redeploying, and resetting for future missions. With the drawn down, every effort to continue following existing participants in our sample is critical so that we can learn how to better help Soldiers and their family members with all phases of deployment both now and in the future.

Key Research Accomplishments

1. 31.6% of our core Soldier sample is complete. A POC is established with III Corps Surgeon Office and additional recruitments have been scheduled.
2. Paper and Poster Presentations at National Conferences since the start of the Award

Ellor, J. W., Crow, J., Dolan, S., Morissette, S., Myers, D., Reese, S., Rivers, F. (2011). *Walking Along Side Military Families: Military Family Coping Project*. Paper presented at the NASW-Texas, Dallas, TX.

Ellor, J. W., Myers, D., Dolan, S., Crow, J., Morissette, S., Reese, S., Rivers, F. (2011). *Walking Along Side Military Families: Military Family Coping Project*. Paper presented at the Council for Social Work Education, Atlanta, GA.

Ellor, J. W., Crow, J., Dolan, S., Myers, D., Reese, S., & Morissette, S. (2011, April). *Intergenerational Coping In Times of Military Trauma: The Military Family Coping Project*. Poster presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Society on Aging, San Francisco, CA.

3. Public Education and Media Involvement

Fogleman, Lori (Media Contact). (2012, February 17). "Baylor University Research Team Receives \$350,000 Grant to Fund Second Phase of Military Family Coping Research Project." Baylor University Media Communications, <http://www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=109624>.

Reportable Outcomes

None at this time.

Conclusion

This first year has reflected tremendous effort by our research team to obtain our sample. Staff is fully trained in conducting research with military personnel. Approximately one third of our sample goal has been obtained. We are eager to continue our recruitment efforts and have established relationships with Commanders to facilitate recruitment. Codebooks are established,

databases created, and data entry and cleaning is completed in real time. This will position study investigators for facile dissemination of research findings once data collection is complete.