

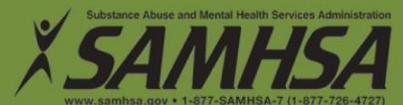


2010

Understanding the Military: The Institution, the Culture, and the People



*Information for
Behavioral Healthcare
Specialists Working
with Veterans and
Service Members*



Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
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Working Draft

Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Pam Woll of Human Priorities for her invaluable assistance in the creation of this document, and specifically for the development of the list of clinical implications found in the appendix.

Disclaimer

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Introduction

The U.S. Armed Forces are highly trained and ready to respond at a moment's notice to natural or human-made disasters anywhere in the country or the world. Yet many Americans' knowledge about the military is limited to what they have acquired from movies, books, and news reports. Few outside the military understand the culture, the values, or the people who make up the most powerful military force on earth.

What do people see in the U.S. Armed Forces that makes them dedicate their lives, and their families' lives, to military service? What is the U.S. military and who are the people who fill its ranks? How have the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan affected today's Armed Forces? What does this mean for the helping professionals who would serve them after they return from deployment? This paper is designed to answer some of these questions by providing an overview of the military as an institution, the service members and their families who are the backbone of the institution, and how current military conflicts have affected service members, their families, and the future of military service.

The information contained herein is not an exhaustive overview of military culture but provides civilians, specifically behavioral healthcare specialists working with military personnel, with a basic understanding of the unique life and culture that is the military.

U.S. Armed Forces: The Institution

Like any large organization with a well-established history, the U.S. Armed Forces has its own culture, language, and ways of conducting business. For civilians with little or no personal exposure to the military culture, the Armed Forces may seem overwhelming, incomprehensible, esoteric, or even anachronistic. However, to understand, work with, and help those who serve in the Armed Forces, it is necessary to have a general understanding of the institution.

The Structure

The U.S. military is civilian controlled, and the ultimate authority is the President of the United States, who serves as the Armed Forces' Commander in Chief, in a civilian rather than a military capacity. This power is vested in him or her through Article II of the U.S. Constitution; Article I of the Constitution, however, gives the U.S. Congress the power to declare war. This is a purposeful separation of powers instituted by the Founding Fathers that underscored a fear of large standing armies and their potential to impede a free and democratic society.

The U.S. military is an agency of the U.S. Government, whose role it is to implement the policies set by Congress and the Commander in Chief. The Secretary of Defense (SecDef), a cabinet-level position, "is the principal defense policy advisor to the President and is responsible for the

formulation of general defense policy and policy related to all matters of direct and primary concern to the DoD [Department of Defense] and for the execution of approved policy. Under the direction of the President, the Secretary exercises authority, direction, and control over the Department of Defense.”¹ The DoD is the primary tenant agency inside the Pentagon and “is responsible for providing the military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of the United States.”² The SecDef serves as second in command of the Armed Forces under the President. Next in the chain of command are the combatant commanders, of which there are 10 around the globe, each responsible for either a geographic area or specialized mission. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Service Chiefs of Staff are responsible for the readiness of the five branches of the Armed Forces and serve as the President’s military advisors but do not serve in any military chain of command.

Budget

The United States has the largest defense budget in the world. In 2010, more than \$550 billion was appropriated for the Department of Defense, more than a 75 percent increase over 2001 appropriations. The large increase in defense appropriations is due primarily to the cost of manning, training, and equipping two fighting forces—one in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. An additional \$130 billion was appropriated for Overseas Contingency Operations. An average of an additional \$200 billion was appropriated for other defense-related spending that includes funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs, Homeland Security, and the State Department.³

Branches of Service

There are five branches of the military—the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard—under three primary military departments: the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of the Air Force. The Marine Corps is permanently within the Department of the Navy, while the Coast Guard falls under the authority of the Department of the Navy in wartime and under the Department of Homeland Security in times of peace. However, the Coast Guard is always considered one of the five branches of military service.

Components

Within the five services are two distinct components: the reserve component and the active component.

The Active Component

The active component is composed of full-time service members. These are the individuals who wear the uniform every day and are stationed all over the world, in both combat and

¹ <http://odam.defense.gov/omp/pubs/GuideBook/DoD.htm>.

² Ibid.

³ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/us_armed_forces#budget.

noncombat situations. Active component service members and their families live on or near military posts or bases and are essentially transient, expecting to move every three to five years, a circumstance virtually unheard of in the civilian workforce. Duty locations are determined by the needs of the Armed Forces and the military qualifications of the service member. When they are not in combat, active component service members spend their days training for combat. Training takes place at their home station or at any number of training locations around the world. It is not unusual for an active component member to spend only one or two weeks at home out of every six to eight weeks. Training cycles are determined by their unit's deployment cycle and deployment schedule.

At most duty stations, active component service members and their families exist within a self-contained community. Military bases have their own grocery stores (commissary), shopping centers (base exchange [BX] or post exchange [PX]), food courts and other restaurants, dry cleaners, barber shops, hair salons, daycare centers, schools, and other daily amenities. For some military members it is possible to live life on a base or post and never interact with the "outside world." Active military families generally stick together, drawn to one another by shared experiences and lifestyles.

The Reserves

The term "reserve component" collectively refers to two organizations—the Reserves and the National Guard. The Reserves is a Federal reserve force that augments the active component as personnel requirements dictate. Each of the five services has a reserve force. As of September 2009, there were approximately 1.2 million individuals serving in the reserve component in all five services.

Members of the Reserves serve in a part-time capacity—generally one weekend a month and two weeks a year—unless mobilized to serve in a full-time capacity. However, within all five reserve services, there is a force of full-time support personnel who manage and maintain daily operations.

The Reserve force is controlled by the President and can be mobilized to meet the Federal needs of the nation. According to Federal law, the purpose of the Reserves is "to provide trained units and qualified persons available for active duty in the armed forces, in time of war or national emergency, and at such other times as the national security may require, to fill the needs of the armed forces whenever more units and persons are needed than are in the regular components."⁴

Reserve members generally train with units in their own communities, selecting units based on their proximity to where they live. However, based on job availability, it is not unheard of for Reservists to travel several hours to their training locations. Unlike the active component,

⁴ 10 U.S.C. § 10102: Purpose of reserve components.

Reservists are not expected to move their families every three to five years and can remain in one unit as long as there is opportunity for advancement.

National Guard

Similar to the Reserves, National Guard members serve in a part-time capacity—one weekend a month and two weeks a year for training. As of 2009, approximately 500,000 individuals served in the National Guard, in either the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard. Each State, territory, and the District of Columbia has its own National Guard, as provided in the U.S. Constitution. A full-time force in each State provides daily management support for National Guard units.

Guard units exist in communities across the country and are integral to community life. National Guard armories are used for community events; Guard members are included in community activities such as parades and sporting events. Local Guard units are composed of people who live and work in the community, and many communities take great pride in and ownership of their service members. This has been especially true during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, when large ceremonies have seen deploying service members off and welcomed them home. Because of these close ties, the communities have also been greatly affected by the deaths of service members from their communities. It is not uncommon for members to remain with the same Guard unit for most of their careers. People select units that are close to where they live and work, though, like Reservists, it may be necessary for an individual to travel some distance to a unit where there is a position that fits his or her job specialty or rank.

Unlike the Reserves, the National Guard has two missions—a Federal mission and a State mission. The Guard’s primary mission is to support the States in times of natural and human-made disasters. Guard units in each state can be mobilized by the Governor to provide support within the state or, under certain conditions, across state lines. This occurs when the Governor declares a state of emergency following civil unrest or natural disaster. California activated Guard members to help fight forest fires during the spring and summer of 2009. Illinois activated Guard members in 1993, 1994, and 1995 to support local law enforcement following the riots that took place in Chicago following the Chicago Bulls’ NBA Championship wins. In 2004 thousands of National Guard troops from all over the country were activated and deployed throughout the Gulf Coast region to help in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The Guard responds to all types of emergencies, including snowstorms, tornados, fires, and floods, and trains regularly to support local officials in times of flu epidemics, and chemical, nuclear, or biological attacks or accidents.

While the U.S. Constitution places control of the National Guard firmly in the hands of the Governors of each state, there are legal provisions that allow the President to mobilize National Guard units for Federal service. The National Guard can be mobilized in whole or in part to support the nation in times of emergency, in response to national disasters, or in times of war. This

activation can occur on American soil or overseas, though the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 forbids the use of U.S. Armed Forces for law enforcement purposes on U.S. soil, except for the purpose of putting down rebellions or enforcing constitutional rights if state authorities fail to do so. In this instance, the President can invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807 and go above a Governor's head to activate troops. This has been done only a few times in the last several decades, including the school desegregation in 1957 following the *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision, and again in 1992 during the riots in Los Angeles following the acquittal of police officers charged with beating Rodney King. In addition to their activations in support of combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, Guard units have taken on what were formerly active component missions in Kosovo, Bosnia, and other theaters. These are generally one-year deployments that, while not as dangerous in most cases as deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, still require a Guard member to put his or her life on hold and deploy overseas for an extended period of time.

While it is important for civilians in the behavioral health community working with National Guard members to have an understanding of the combat experiences affecting the mental health or substance use of current and former Guard members, it is also critical to gain an understanding of any time they may have spent activated in support of natural or human-made disasters as part of their State missions. Domestic operations may be equally traumatic and psychologically damaging for service members.

The Reserves and National Guard in OIF and OEF

The National Guard and Reserves have played a role in every major U.S. armed conflict since the Revolutionary War. However, since the inception of U.S. involvement in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) (Afghanistan) in 2001 and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003, the National Guard and Reserves have been deployed at a rate and in numbers not seen since World War II. Between 2001 and 2007, more than 250,000 Guard members and more than 200,000 Reservists were deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, while 1.2 million active service members served in the two combat theaters. At one point, January 2, 2008, the National Guard made up 7 percent of the total force in Iraq, while the Reserves comprised 4 percent of American forces in Iraq. At the same point, the National Guard and Reserves made up 15 percent and 6 percent, respectively, of the total force in Afghanistan.⁵

Additionally, the role of the Army Reserve and Army National Guard has changed in OIF and OEF. Historically the Reserve forces have served in a strategic reserve capacity, defined as a "force in waiting, which does not expect to deploy unless and until there is a conflict."⁶ However, because the operational and personnel requirements of OIF and OEF have dramatically increased the

⁵ "National Guard Deployments: Fact Sheet," *CRS Report for Congress*, January 17, 2008, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RS22451.pdf>.

⁶ U.S. Army, *Stand-To*, June 30, 2009, <http://www.army.mil/standto/archive/2009/06/30/>.

demand for troops and equipment in the two combat theaters, the U.S. Army⁷ has transitioned its strategic reserve forces to operational forces. As an operational force, the Army Reserve and Army National Guard are now fully integrated into the deployment cycle.

This change from a strategic reserve to an operational force has multiple implications for reserve component soldiers. Whereas many enlisted in the Guard and Reserve to serve their country but not to serve in a full-time capacity, the increase in the deployment tempo poses significant challenges for service members and families as they attempt to deal with the long-term separation. Employers of Guard and Reserve members are also forced to overcome a year or more without an employee. While Federal law prohibits termination of a serving member of the Armed Forces and provides other employment protections for Guard and Reserve members, multiple deployments places great strain on employers of service members. Additionally, multiple deployments increase the likelihood that service members will develop mental health issues, use alcohol or other drugs, engage in increased high-risk activities, and report chronic physical pain and other health challenges. The fact that reserve component service members and their families live in the civilian community, separate from daily contact with the military culture, structure, and support, adds a degree of isolation that can exacerbate both service members' and families' psychological challenges.

Military Ranks and Chain of Command

Military rank is about leadership and responsibility. As an individual is promoted through the military ranks, he or she assumes additional responsibility for more personnel, equipment, resources, and missions/operations. Military ranks are divided into three categories: enlisted, officer, and warrant officer. Enlisted rank includes the ranks of private, corporal, sergeant, seaman, petty officer, etc. (See "Insignia of the United States Armed Forces—Enlisted" in the Appendix.) Officers are lieutenants, captains, majors, colonels, general officers, etc. (See "Insignia of the United States Armed Forces—Officers" in the Appendix.) Rank is identified administratively by pay grade. Enlisted pay grades are E-1 through E-9 ("E" for enlisted). Officer pay grades are O-1 through O-10 ("O" for officer). Warrant officers are W-1 through W-5 ("W" for warrant). There are several instances in the services in which the pay grade for a position may represent two different ranks, one with greater responsibility than the other. For example, in the U.S. Army, at the pay grade of E-4, a soldier can be either a specialist or a corporal. The rank of corporal exists primarily in combat units and denotes an individual with more responsibility than that of a specialist. In the Marine Corps at the pay grade of E-8, a Marine might be either a master sergeant or a first sergeant. A first sergeant has significantly more responsibility for personnel and is usually the senior ranking enlisted soldier in a company.

⁷ The Army is the only service component that made this change from a strategic reserve to an operational force.

Enlisted service members comprise the “workforce” of the services. They are the men and women patrolling the streets, fixing equipment, cooking meals, processing the paperwork, and performing the thousands of tasks that keep the military functioning. Enlisted service members promoted beyond the pay grade of E-4 become noncommissioned officers (NCOs). NCOs are in charge or in control (as opposed to in command) of their units and have significant responsibility for the health and well-being of the people in a unit. It is the NCO’s responsibility to ensure that service members are being fed, equipped, and trained, that they are getting enough sleep, and that they are ready to perform their mission.

Officers are commissioned by and ultimately derive their authority from the President and are confirmed by the U.S. Senate. Officers command units and are the ultimate authority and responsible party in any military unit. While they leave maintenance of troops to their NCOs, they are responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling their troops in the accomplishment of an assigned mission or operation.

Warrant officers are also considered commissioned officers and hold warrants from their service authority. Warrant officers are generally considered technical experts in a specific area. They do not hold any command authority, nor are they responsible for personnel. They are experts in maintenance, computers, aircraft, personnel functions, and other areas. The Air Force is the only service that does not have the rank of warrant officer. The Army and the Marine Corps have the rank of warrant officer one through five, while in the Navy and the Coast Guard, warrant ranks are one through four.

The Chain of Command

Each military unit from the largest (combatant commands) to the smallest (teams composed of four to five service members) has a very clear chain of command. The chain of command is based solely on the rank of the individual and there is one assigned officer in charge (the commander) and/or one enlisted or NCO at each level who bear all responsibility for the unit. As an individual meets certain benchmarks, including time in service, time at the current rank, and military education requirements, he or she is promoted up the chain of command. With each promotion up through the ranks comes additional responsibilities and greater pay. Additional responsibilities usually include oversight of a greater number of lower-ranking service members and more equipment. Regardless of rank and the number of individuals for whom a higher-ranking service member is responsible, it is the job of the man or woman in charge to ensure that his or her service members are adequately trained in their jobs, have the necessary equipment to do their jobs, are getting the necessary sleep and food to remain at peak performance, and are following the rules and regulations that dictate military performance on and off the job. If the service members are not getting what they need to

perform their jobs properly, it is the commander and/or the senior ranking enlisted member or NCO who must ensure that these requirements are met.

In the civilian sector, seldom will someone under the age of 25 be placed in charge of large numbers of personnel and equipment. However, it is commonplace for newly minted second lieutenants, fresh out of college Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) or other commissioning sources, to be placed in charge of 50 or more service members and thousands—or in some cases millions—of dollars' worth of equipment. They are responsible for the lives and safety of those who work for them. In a garrison (noncombat) environment, this poses little stress and minimal risk of the loss of life or property. But in a combat environment, the stress level increases exponentially and these young officers quickly lose their greenness as they are hardened by combat, death, and loss.

Each unit is clearly structured and organized based on accepted doctrine that is ingrained from the instant an individual first puts on the uniform. Individuals are immediately trained to operate within the chain of command. Each service member has a specific individual he or she reports to and who is responsible for addressing that individual's concerns or problems. "Jumping the chain of command" in most situations is strictly forbidden and may result in formal or informal disciplinary action. Going above an immediate supervisor's head is acceptable only in situations in which the lower-ranking member does not believe his or her concerns are being addressed, or in cases where the problem is with the immediate supervisor. In both instances, however, the lower-ranking member is expected to have made serious attempts to resolve the issue at the lowest level. In cases in which an immediate supervisor is believed to be abusing his or her authority, sexually assaulting or harassing subordinates, or engaging in other illegal or inappropriate behavior, junior service members are expected to report the abuses immediately to the next highest individual responsible.

Orders are issued from the top of the chain of command to the lowest-ranking members of the unit. The commander may encourage dialogue, may review recommendations for different courses of action from his or her subordinates, and may weigh various inputs in making his or her final decision; but once an order is issued, the decision is considered final. The order is executed without question. Service members who hesitate in executing an order or who publicly question an order run the risk of at least being formally or informally disciplined and at worst risking the lives of their fellow service members.

The exception the military makes for not following a direct order occurs when the order is believed to be unethical, immoral, or illegal. If an immoral or illegal order is issued, service members are bound by duty and ethical responsibility not to follow that order and to report it to the appropriate authorities.

The legitimacy of the chain of command is one of the most important characteristics of the military culture. Maintaining the integrity of the chain of command is critical to the effective functioning and mission success of the military unit. It is also designed to identify clear lines of authority and responsibility and to eliminate any confusion in the decision-making process. Living and working within the constraints of the unit chain of command dictate how an individual functions within the organization as well as how the unit functions as a whole. Those service members who are unable to work within the chain of command, who have problems with authority, or are incapable of following orders from superiors do not last long in military service and often find their time in service to be miserable and fraught with disciplinary actions.

Military Values

Honor and integrity are the core values of military service. In addition, each service has its own specific values that are taught to new recruits from the beginning of their time in service.

The Army values are:

Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage

Navy and Marine Corps values are:

Honor, Courage, and Commitment

Air Force values are:

Integrity First, Service Before Self, and Excellence in All We Do

Coast Guard values are:

Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty

The values of each of the services are more than a list of terms that young recruits must learn and repeat on command; these values define how each service member lives his or her life, approaches every duty, and succeeds at every mission. The military value system guides how each decision is made and how every operation is executed. The military value system sets the U.S. military apart from its counterparts in the civilian sector and clearly distinguishes the United States from the enemies it fights.

Leave No One Behind

In line with the military value system is the mantra that every service member knows and understands without question—“Leave no one behind.” No soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine will be left on the field of battle. This means that with little regard for their own safety, service members will do everything in their power to retrieve the remains of fallen comrades, in order to ensure that they are returned to their families for burial befitting an honorably serving military member.

Military Culture

The military culture is ingrained in military personnel from the start of their careers. Everyone begins life in the military, whether active or reserve component, with some type of initial training. The majority begin by enlisting and attending their service’s basic or initial entry training or, for the Coast Guard, Navy, and the Marines—boot camp. Basic training lasts anywhere from 8 to 13 weeks depending on the service. Others enter the service through officer commissioning sources, including ROTC, one of the service academies (West Point, the Naval Academy, or the Air Force Academy), Officer Candidate School (OCS) (Army), Officer Training School (OTS) (Air Force), or by direct appointment (common in the medical professions).

Regardless of how someone enters the service, service members spend their time at initial training immersed in the military lifestyle and culture. They learn about the history of their service, military customs and courtesies, proper wear of the uniform, military bearing, military values and ethics, and other information that is critical to their success in the service, including how to listen to and follow orders and how to function within the military chain of command. Initial training teaches discipline, focus, and control. Service members are expected to be disciplined in their actions and words and to maintain control of their emotions and their physical selves at all times. Along with discipline and control comes focus. Focus is important to mission success, and the services teach young recruits how to focus in challenging situations—situations where they are lacking sleep, are physically exhausted, or are under unaccustomed and extreme stress. Learning to stay focused, in control, and disciplined in all situations are skills that service members will use throughout their military careers as they are faced with uncertain and often dangerous situations.

Another important aspect of initial training is learning to fire a weapon and protect themselves and their comrades. While the Coast Guard and the Navy focus less on warrior skills than the other three services, service members are still reminded that they may at some point be called upon to fire a weapon and possibly kill someone. The Air Force, Army, and Marines focus largely on “warrior training,” or training members on skills that may be necessary in combat. These include weapons skills—use and maintenance, hand-to-hand combat skills, and combat life-saving skills. Warrior training for young recruits underscores the fact that their first mission as soldiers, Marines, or airmen is to fight and possibly wound or kill an enemy. This training is repeated throughout a service member’s career, though more in some occupational specialties than in others. However, regardless of job function, any one in uniform may be ordered to “pull security” on a convoy or perform another mission in a combat environment in which they must be prepared to respond with deadly skill, should the need arise. These are times when all of the skills that have been ingrained in service members throughout their career are brought to bear and tested.

Service members’ first introduction to military service during initial training is also where they learn that there is no greater bond than the one they share with the people “to their left and their right.” For many, this bond of brotherhood/sisterhood lasts throughout their military career and beyond. This bond is highly valued, nurtured, and protected. In life-or-death situations, the people who will help pull the service members through, or who will come for them if they are wounded or killed in combat, are the people who are fighting right by their side.

Armed Forces: The People

As important as it is to understand the institutional underpinnings of the Armed Forces, it is perhaps even more important to understand the people who comprise the institution. Its members, while demographically, geographically, and ethnically diverse, share a common set of values and beliefs that today underscore their voluntary service to the nation. The U.S. Armed Forces is an all-volunteer force. The final draft took place in December 1972, just prior to the end of the Vietnam War, following a 1971 study by the Gates Commission that supported the idea that the Armed Forces could maintain troop strength with an all-volunteer force. Since that time, although recruiting numbers have fluctuated, the U.S. military has been able to maintain a standing and ready volunteer force.

Personnel Numbers and Stationing

As of February 28, 2009, there were just over 1.4 million members serving in the Armed Forces. A breakdown by service, including the number of women as of September 2008, is listed below:

Service ⁸	Officers	Enlisted	Cadets/ Midshipman	Women ⁹ (9/30/08)	Total (2/28/09)	Total (11/30/09)
Army	88,093	456,651	44,009	73,902	549,153	556,682
Navy	51,093	276,276	4,399	50,008	331,768	330,071
Marines	20,588	180,443	0	12,290	201,031	204,292
Air Force	64,370	261,193	4,417	64,137	329,980	334,054
Force Total					1,411,932	1,425,059
Coast Guard						43,480

⁸ Department of Defense, Statistical Information Analysis Division, Personnel and Military Casualty Statistics, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MMIDHOME.HTM>. Department of Defense, Statistical Information Analysis Division,

⁹ Department of Defense, Statistical Information Analysis Division, *Personnel and Military Casualty Statistics*, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MMIDHOME.HTM>.

As of September 30, 2009, just over 1.1 million service members were stationed in the continental United States (CONUS) and its territories, and 262,793 service members were stationed in more than 150 countries on six continents. More than 164,000 service members were stationed in Iraq, and 66,400 were serving in Afghanistan. Deployment numbers for Iraq and Afghanistan include active component, Reserve, and National Guard service members.¹⁰

Women in the Military

Women make up about 16 percent of the Armed Forces, significantly less than their civilian workforce counterparts at 48 percent. A total of 15 percent of the active component and 17 percent of the reserve component are females. The Marine Corps has the lowest representation of women at 5 percent, and the Air Force Reserve (23 percent) and the Army Reserve (24 percent) have the highest representation.¹¹ The low representation of women in the military is largely due to Federal policy that restricts women from holding certain military occupational specialties (MOS). Women are barred from serving in combat units and specialty units like the Special Forces. This exclusion policy bars women from an estimated 15–20 percent of all military occupations.¹² The National Defense Authorization Acts of fiscal years 1992, 1993, and 1994 enabled women to be permanently assigned to combat aircraft and combatant ships. Since 1994, women have been allowed to work in any unit above the brigade level. They are still barred from serving in units below the brigade level whose primary mission is direct combat operations.

Despite the prohibition against women serving in combat units, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have drastically changed the role of women in the military. Because most units are based in outposts spread throughout Iraq and Afghanistan, many in the middle of cities or villages, there is no clear “front line,” placing women in the same daily danger as their male counterparts. Additionally, women are serving in noncombat positions traditionally held by men, like gunners in convoys where they are sitting in the turrets of military vehicles behind machine guns, “pulling security.” American women have also been trained to search Iraqi women at checkpoints, exposing to them to potential enemy attacks. As a result, according to DoD statistics as of April 3, 2010, 108 women have lost their lives in Iraq and 20 in Afghanistan, while 620 women have been wounded in Iraq and 55 in Afghanistan.¹³

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan “have cultivated a new generation of women with a warrior’s ethos—and combat experience—that for millennia was almost exclusively the preserve of men. This change has occurred without the disruption of discipline and unit cohesion that some

¹⁰ Department of Defense, Statistical Information Analysis Division, *Personnel and Military Casualty Statistics*, <http://siadapp.dmdc.osd.mil/personnel/MILITARY/history/hst1009.pdf>.

¹¹ *Military Personnel: Reporting Additional Servicemember Demographics Could Enhance Congressional Oversight* (GAO Report to Congressional Requestors), September 2005, <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05952.pdf>.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <http://www.defense.gov/landing/questions.aspx>.

feared would unfold. ...”¹⁴ As a result of the changing role of women in the Armed Forces, the military has had to make adjustments in privacy, living arrangements, and medical care in ways never considered before 2001. U.S. men and women are co-located on bases throughout both combat theaters and, despite the initial fear that order and discipline would be compromised by males and females living in such close proximity to each other, most service members have remained professional and focused on the mission.¹⁵ In some commands, married couples are even allowed to live together, something that was unheard of just 10 years ago.

Sexual Harassment/Assault

As women play an increasing role in the U.S. military, a role that places them in almost constant close proximity to male service members, the number of reported cases of sexual harassment and sexual assaults has increased. The DoD released a report in March 2010 that found that in 2008 female service members reported 2,923 cases of sexual assault and harassment, an approximate 7 percent increase over 2007. Of the number of incidents reported, 22 occurred in Afghanistan and 141 occurred in Iraq. Some experts estimate that the number of reported assaults and incidents of harassment are underreported. The DoD has a strict no tolerance policy related to sexual harassment and assaults, yet many incidents go unreported because the victim does not want to cause trouble, may fear retaliation from the perpetrator or the perpetrator’s friends, is uncomfortable about reporting the incident, just wants it to go away, or believes that nothing will be done about the incident if it is reported.

Sexual assault and harassment of military members by others in the military violates the values and ethics upon which service in the military is based. The psychological and emotional effects are multiplied when the perpetrator is someone in the individual’s chain of command and is someone upon whom he or she must rely for their safety and well-being. Men and women who suffer sexual trauma are more likely to develop emotional and psychological problems and in many cases suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Demographics

The DoD publishes an annual report on social representation in the U.S. Armed Forces. The report, titled *Population Representation in the Military Services*, from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, provides data on demographic, educational, and aptitude characteristics of applicants, recruits, and enlisted and officer numbers in the reserve and active components. The following statistics have all been drawn from the DoD FY 2005 report.¹⁶

¹⁴ Steven L. Meyers, “Women at Arms: Living and Fighting Alongside Men, and Fitting In,” *New York Times*, August 16, 2009.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, *Population Representation in the Military Services*, Fiscal Year 2005, <http://prhome.defense.gov/poprep2005/contents/contents.html>.

Age

The most recent report from FY 2005 found that the active component (AC) and reserve component (RC) service members were younger than their civilian counterparts. A total of 88 percent of AC recruits were between 18 and 24, compared to the civilian workforce at 37 percent. The mean age of AC recruits is 20. The reserve component data also showed a more youthful population than the civilian sector.

Race/Ethnicity

In the enlisted force in 2005, African Americans were proportionately represented in non-prior service (NPS) accessions at 13 percent as compared to their representation of 14 percent in the civilian population 18 to 24 years old. Other minorities, classified as American Indians, Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, or individuals of two or more races, were represented at 8 percent, equal to their representation in the civilian population. Hispanics continue to be underrepresented in the Armed Forces, at 14 percent of NPS accessions compared to 18 percent of the comparable civilian population.

In the AC officer corps in 2005, minorities are proportionately represented, though African Americans make up a much smaller proportion of officers at 9 percent than they do in the enlisted ranks at 20 percent. However, in comparison to college graduates in the civilian sector (8 percent), African Americans are equitably represented. American Indians and Alaskan Natives, a very small proportion of the officer corps, are also equitably represented in comparison to the comparable civilian population of college graduates 21 to 49 years old. Hispanic officers, at 5 percent, are slightly underrepresented in the officer corps compared to their civilian counterparts at 7 percent. Asian American officers are significantly underrepresented in the officer corps at 3 percent, while their civilian counterparts ages 21 to 49 in the workforce are represented at 9 percent.

The ethnic and racial makeup of the RC is similar to that of the AC for officers and enlisted.

Education Level

The military places strong emphasis on both military and civilian education. This emphasis was apparent in the fact that in 2005 nearly all (99 percent) NPS AC and RC enlisted accessions had a high school diploma or equivalent. This is significantly higher than the comparable civilian youth population at 80 percent of youth 18 to 24 years old. In the officer corps 94 percent of officer accessions and 96 percent of the officer corps held a bachelor's degree, while approximately 15 and 38 percent, respectively, held advanced degrees. Similarly, 75 percent of the RC officer accessions and 89 percent of the total RC officer corps held a bachelor's degree, while 19 and 34 percent, respectively, held advanced degrees. The officer statistics are not surprising given the military's requirement that all officers hold at least a bachelor's degree upon or soon after commissioning.

Socioeconomic Status

The DoD has not collected socioeconomic data from recruits since 1999, though recent research conducted by the DoD has used recruits' ZIP code to attempt to categorize socioeconomic status. Using ZIP code data, DoD has found that the average socioeconomic status of recruits is similar to the civilian population.¹⁷

Marital Status

There had been steady increase in the number of married service members from 1973 (40 percent) to 1994 (57 percent); but that number decreased over the following 10 years to a rate of 49 percent in 2003. In 2005, the number of marriages in the service increased to 52 percent. In general, DoD found that males in the services were more likely to be married than their female counterparts. Officers are more likely to be married (69 percent AC and 73 percent RC) than their enlisted counterparts, a difference resulting from the fact that officers are generally older and more financially secure than many of the enlisted service members.

The Military Family

"Patriotism is not a short and frenzied outburst of emotion but the tranquil and steady dedication of a lifetime."

—Adlai E. Stevenson, Jr.

An understanding of the military family is as important to the understanding of the service member as the other aspects already described. The military family is often asked to make sacrifices well beyond any expected of their civilian counterparts. For active component family members, the military is a daily part of who they are, and the family is as much a part of the military as is the actively serving military member. Active component family members are expected to move, or PCS (permanent change of station), every three to five years. While the military is attempting to lengthen the time period in which service members and their families remain at one duty location, the reality is that the needs of the services come first, and personnel change duty locations at the pleasure of the military. With each move, family members are expected to start over—a new school, new friends, a new job, a new home, a new neighborhood, and new experiences. Pets may even have to be left behind, if the next duty station is overseas or is in a location where pets are impractical or not allowed. Housing on some bases is substandard, well below what many in the civilian community would consider acceptable, though the military is working to improve post/base housing for all ranks. For some, the normal stress of a major move is exacerbated by a parent's or a spouse's deployment soon after the PCS. In some cases spouses may move their families across the country or across the

¹⁷ "Military Personnel: Reporting Additional Servicemember Demographics Could Enhance Congressional Oversight", Report to Congressional Requesters, September 2005. <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05952.pdf>

world while the service member is deployed, setting up a new home alone and without the benefit of the service member's assistance. For active service military families, the only certainty is the uncertainty they live with every day.

While military life poses many challenges for family members, how the family approaches its challenges is critical to minimizing long-term effects and building resiliency in both children and spouses. Many families view the changes not as potential negatives, but as new opportunities to be undertaken with great anticipation and excitement. Overseas moves can be looked at as opportunities to broaden horizons and expand the family's knowledge of other parts of the world. These can be wonderful experiences that few young children—and even few adults—have the chance to enjoy.

Deployments

"Army families are the most brittle part of the force [They] are sacrificing too much, and we can no longer ask them to just make the best of it."

—Sheila Casey, wife of Gen. George Casey, Army Chief of Staff, testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee, June 2009

Day-to-day military life for family members poses many challenges. However, today's military family is dealing with the additional challenges of the deployment of one or both parents. While extended absences have long been a part of military life for family members, the current operational tempo of today's military forces has resulted in longer and more frequent deployments. Some active component family members have waited for family members to return from a third, fourth, or fifth deployment in nine years.

At a 2009 meeting of the Third Family Forum of the Association of the United States Army, Col. Kris Peterson, Army psychiatrist in charge of the Military Child and Adolescent Center of Excellence at Madigan Army Medical Center, Fort Lewis, Washington, told Army spouses and support group leaders that "...years of repeated, lengthy deployments have resulted in higher rates of anxiety and depression among Army children, as well as misbehavior in school...yearly mental health visits for children under the age of 15 have increased from 800,000 in 2003 to 1.6 million in 2008. One out of three school-age children are at risk for psychological problems and about 30 percent of children have significantly increased anxiety."¹⁸

While recent media attention has forced the services to take a closer look at the suicide rates of service members, the studies currently being conducted by each of the services do not include suicides and mental health issues of their families. However, there has been an increase in the

¹⁸ Elizabeth M. Collins, "Kids Affected With Repeat Deployments," *Military.com*, October 13, 2009, <http://www.military.com/news/article/army-news/kids-affected-with-repeat-deployments.html?col=1186032369115>.

number of military spouses experiencing multiple deployments who have committed suicide and who are experiencing increased depression and anxiety.¹⁹ Despite knowing that it will only increase their anxiety, military spouses find themselves drawn to the 24-hour news reports, searching for information about their loved ones. Instant communication and Internet access allow family members at home to monitor the situation overseas almost by the minute, leaving family members virtually paralyzed with worry, yet they must also deal with the daily stressors of raising children, working, paying bills, and other responsibilities.²⁰ There are many related secondary effects of multiple deployments that manifest in the spouses and children of service members, and the increase in mental health needs of family members has led to a severe shortage of mental health care facilities and personnel trained to address the needs of military families, both on and off post/base. Military facilities are filled to capacity with military members, leaving family members searching for desperately needed assistance.²¹

To help address these issues, there are many supports that can help family members successfully navigate the challenges of deployments. There are multiple Web sites that offer assistance and recommendations for managing the deployment-related stresses. In addition, a National Military Family Association 2005 study recommended the following to best assist active and reserve component families through deployments:²²

- 1) Address return and reunion challenges throughout the deployment cycle, not just at the end of the deployment. From the minute a service member departs, family members are imagining his or her return and reunion. Not knowing what to expect at the reunion or how to handle the reintegration increases the overall stress level.
- 2) Direct more resources to support family volunteers. This recommendation also included a call for additional trained counselors available through family support channels.
- 3) Recognize that family time is important for reintegration with family members. For active component service members especially, there is little time following deployment for them to spend quality time with their families and work on reintegration and reconnection with their families after the long separation.

¹⁹ Seth Robson, "Some Seek Mental Health Checks for Spouses of Multiple-Deployed Soldiers," *Stars and Stripes, European Edition*, July 5, 2009.

²⁰ "War's Silent Stress: The Family at Home," *Blue Star Voices* blog post, August 19, 2009, <http://bluestarfamilies.wordpress.com/2009/08/19/wars-silent-stress-the-family-at-home/>.

²¹ Collins, 2009.

²² *Report on the Cycles of Deployment: An Analysis of Survey Responses from April Through September, 2005*. Survey conducted by and report compiled by the National Military Family Association. <http://www.alaskapta.org/NMFACyclesofDeployment9.pdf>. The Cycles of Deployment survey was completed by 1,592 active and reserve component service members from six of the seven uniformed services—Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Public Health Services. Seventy percent of the respondents offered comments and personal stories.

- 4) Expand program and information outreach, and help military family members feel more connected to what is going on within the unit. While many family members actively connect with the unit command and the unit's Family Readiness Group (FRG), there are still some who remain outside the existing support structure. It is important to reach out to those who are not connected and make attempts to help them connect with the unit support system.
- 5) Assist family members in setting realistic expectations for themselves, their service members, and the military unit, and then meet the expectations. Many family members expect the FRG to help them with the most mundane of tasks during the deployment, something that is not the responsibility of the FRG or of other family members. Some are afraid to ask for help for fear that it reflects poorly on themselves or on their deployed family member. It is important that the spouses and families who remain at home understand that the FRG and the military unit are there to assist them in locating the resources they need to address their needs. Family members are also entitled to many benefits and programs, of which they may not be aware. The FRG and the unit can help family members identify and apply for those benefits and programs, and help them make connections with other resources that will help them meet the many challenges associated with deployment.
- 6) Never assume families know what they need to know, even in situations in which the majority of family members have "done this before." This minimizes the challenges faced by family members, challenges that sometimes increase with subsequent deployments. It also discounts the number of family members who are new to the unit and who may never have experienced a deployment before.

National Guard and Reserve families face several unique challenges during a deployment that their active component counterparts do not face. Reserve component family members are unaccustomed to full-time military life and are often disconnected from the support systems that the active component has access to through their base or post. Reservists' families may be geographically separated from the unit or from the location where the FRG typically meets. If the FRG leadership does not consciously reach out to those who are not physically in attendance at meetings and activities, family members remain virtually in the dark, with little information and support to assist them in managing the stresses that are unique to having a deployed family member—stresses they are unprepared for and perhaps incapable of managing. While there may be civilian friends and family who serve as support networks, this is not the same as having fellow military family members to rely on for support. Military families have a unique understanding of the challenges and can relate in ways that civilian support systems cannot.

The Experience of War

“War is God’s way of teaching Americans geography.”

—Ambrose Bierce

War’s effects are permanent and long lasting, resulting in death and destruction that can take years or decades to overcome. War also has long-term effects on the men and women who fight and on the civilian population directly and indirectly involved in them. Everyone experiences war differently, but military service members experience many commonalities.

Physical Aspects of War

The combat zone is an intense place where things can move very quickly one moment and drag painfully slowly the next. “Hurry up and wait” is not just a phrase, but is a reality of life in a war zone. Service members move quickly to prepare for a mission and find themselves waiting for minutes or hours as plans change, intelligence is gathered, and leaders adjust decisions. Adrenaline pumps as service members gear up, load their weapons, and mount their vehicles, and then, without warning, they are told to stand down. This constant feeling of having one foot on the gas and one foot on the brake is exhausting and physically demanding, especially for troops who operate on minimum levels of sleep.

Troops are under constant physical strain that is exacerbated by unfamiliar locations, extreme heat or cold, and the 60–80 pounds of gear they are responsible for transporting, either in and out of vehicles or on their backs. Just to conduct missions in the streets or through the mountains, troops are outfitted in their protective equipment, including interceptor body armor (IBA), helmet, extra ammunition, water, weapon(s), and in some cases food. Coupled with an almost constant sense of sleep deprivation, these physical demands increase stress levels and can have a significant impact on the mental and emotional functioning of troops in combat.

Mental and Emotional Aspects of War

The physical strain is not the only thing that affects the ability of troops to function in a combat zone. There is a constant tactical awareness that keeps service members on edge and hyper-vigilant at all times. On the modern battlefield there is no front line past which the battle ensues and behind which personnel are safe. In World War I and World War II, there were clear demarcation lines indicating how far forward personnel could go before they were involved in direct combat. Rear areas were safe and out of reach of enemy guns and cannons. Thousands of support personnel remained behind the front lines and conducted their mission in support of the combat troops on the front lines. On today’s battlefield, there are no clear front lines and no one—from combat troops to the support personnel—is exempt from the effects of war. Military personnel live and work on bases in the middle of a territory that might one minute be peaceful and the next erupt in a hail of gunfire. All personnel in-country are at

risk of harm or death from mortars that are launched over operating base walls, sniper fire, or improvised explosive device (IED) attacks on convoys. Though it may feel safe to the troops living and working there, it is not. The environment can change without warning, forcing troops to maintain a perpetual state of vigilance and tactical awareness. Constant tactical awareness requires troops to make split-second decisions that may mean the life or death of their fellow service members. Young troops—many not older than 22 or 23 and some as young as 18—are expected to instantly read a situation, make a decision, and live with the consequences. The consequences can be life or death.

Troops in combat are faced with multiple losses, grief, and guilt that many are unprepared to deal with; and few have time to adequately process before they are back out on the next mission. In combat situations, troops may be asked to make decisions that can damage their spiritual and moral fiber, decisions that in the civilian world would have clear black-or-white answers but in the fog of war show up in hundreds of shades of grey. A service member might be forced to choose between one option that may mean the death of a (possibly) innocent civilian and another that might put his or her entire unit in jeopardy. The act of killing itself, even when it is justified and necessary, can have spiritual or moral effects at levels deeper than those decisions determined by logic or military training. Daily life is filled with uncertainty, confusion, fear, and disruption that for many are beyond their limited coping or resilience skills. This reality continues for 6, 9, 12, or 18 months.

Reunion and Reintegration

The reunion and period of reintegration that follows can be perhaps the most challenging time of a deployment. Many spouses eagerly anticipating their first moments of reunion set high expectations for what will happen. They may envision romantic evenings and a rekindling of the sexual relationship with their partner, or they may envision a spouse who returns home to help around the house and take some of the burden from their shoulders. Regardless of the high expectations, there is a strong likelihood that those expectations will be dashed, adding disappointment to the already stressful situation. Many service members return home exhausted and needing space and time to themselves. They are often withdrawn and uninterested in or incapable of physical intimacy. Some spouses return home and face their own anxieties and uncertainties. Others bring the horrors of war home with them, struggling with PTSD, nightmares, and depression. Still others may have suffered injuries, may have lost limbs, or may be suffering with traumatic brain injury (TBI) that affects their moods, personalities, cognitive abilities, and physical functioning. If infidelity was an issue during the deployment, the marriage may be failing just when the support of a loving family is most needed.

If there are children, the deployed family member is attempting to reconnect with them and to determine where he or she fits in the parental unit. Returning service members struggle with the family dynamic and what role they play in the family structure. They may have been away for more than a year, and while they may have held a specific role in the family structure before the deployment, the family member who remained at home was forced to fill this role. In some cases, the waiting family member may not be ready to relinquish this role to the returning family member, and a power struggle ensues. For example, the husband may have been in charge of managing the household finances before he deployed for a year to Iraq. Out of necessity, his wife was forced to take over this household function. She learned to manage the finances, pay the bills, and even save a little extra money while her husband was gone. The husband now wants to assume his role as family financial manager but finds his wife is unwilling to relinquish this new role. In another example, when the service member deployed, his son was an infant and barely walking and talking. When he returns, he finds a toddler with a mind and a personality of his own who needs guidance, a loving hand, and boundaries. Throughout the deployment, his wife has been raising their son. When dad returns, he not only needs to figure out how to relate to the new little being in the household, but also how to parent a toddler in partnership with his wife, while she needs to learn how to co-parent with her husband for the first time. Both these examples and countless others require adjustment to the new dynamic by both parties. If the marriage was not strong to begin with or was not nurtured by communication, honesty, and fidelity during the deployment, there is a greater likelihood of increased stress, which can lead to divorce or abuse.

During fiscal year 2009, the Department of Defense reported that the overall divorce rate for all five services increased from 3.4 percent to 3.6 percent. (The civilian divorce rate for the same time period was 3.4 percent.) Enlisted airmen reported a 4.3 percent divorce rate, the highest of all five services. However, the Army reported an increase in the divorce rate of its enlisted personnel for the seventh straight year, making it the only service to report a steady increase over that length of time. The DoD study reported the Army's divorce rate increased from 3.4 percent to 3.6 percent. The Marine divorce rate remained steady at 4 percent from 2008 to 2009. Divorce affects young enlisted members more significantly than older NCOs and officers. However, the 2009 findings reported a growing number of senior NCOs with marital problems. Army researchers have continued to study the effects of deployment on marriages, focusing efforts on troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. They have found that soldiers with greater access to electronic means of communication that allow them to interact with their family members at home are more likely to have marital problems. Researchers theorize that the more a deployed member is able to interact with his or her family, the greater the chance of becoming involved

in family issues and arguments that are best left to the parent at home, or that cannot be resolved with any clarity through electronic communication.²³

The reserve components experience reintegration differently than the active component. Whereas active service members return home to their full-time jobs as soldiers, sailors, Marines, or airmen, and to families and communities that are familiar with deployment and reintegration, the reserve components return to the civilian world and to civilian families. This poses some very unique challenges for these service members and, by extension, their families. A Guard or Reserve member still has the family reintegration challenges identified previously, but these challenges are compounded by trying to find a way to fit back into the civilian world where his or her friends and family have little direct experience with the military and little understanding of what the service member has been through. Reserve component members may be excited to return to friends who are anxious to hear about their experiences, but the initial excitement quickly wears off as a sense that everything has changed permeates relationships and other personal interactions. In fact, people have changed; the friends and family members who remained behind are different a year later, and the service member has been changed by his or her own experiences—experiences that are no longer shared with those around him or her. Once the reunion excitement has worn off, there is a desire on the part of friends and family to have things return to “normal,” or as they were before the deployment. They want that person back and do not understand that the experience he or she has gone through has in many cases irrevocably changed that person. Even if the service members desperately want to “get back to normal,” they no longer feel “normal” and wonder if they will ever fit in with civilian friends and family again. Many have a sense of needing to reconnect with fellow service members they served with overseas but, because of the way the Guard and Reserve are structured, they may not see their fellow service members until they return to training in 30 days or more. Guard and Reserve members may also feel a loss of mission and purpose, often returning home to roles that require less skill and authority than they exercised in their deployment roles. In-country, service members were making life or death decisions. Back home, what others see as critical pale in comparison to their combat experiences and what was important overseas. This may leave them feeling isolated and disconnected. Overseas, life had a certain intensity, routine, and pace. Yet back home, out of the military culture, that structure and routine is gone—they no longer have an operational schedule that tells individuals when to eat, when to sleep, and when they will have time to shower. What’s more, combat is intense, with soldiers experiencing an almost constant adrenaline rush as they prepare for each mission. When service members return home, they feel as if their world has gone from moving from 180 miles per hour, to a dead stop.

²³ Gregg Zoroya, “Military Divorces Edge Up as War Takes Its Toll,” *USA Today*, November 27, 2009.

Active component members take a couple of weeks' leave and return to life in uniform and to working side by side with the men and women they served with overseas. Reserve component members take a couple of weeks' leave, if their civilian employer is not demanding their immediate return to work, and go to work side by side with people who are untouched by combat and what is happening several thousand miles away in a distant country. In addition, reserve component members may have had positions of responsibility in their units—they were decision makers and responsible for the health and well-being of others. In their civilian employment, they may have little or no responsibility, no authority, and thus no feeling of self-worth compared to how they felt in their military position.

Access to medical care may also be a challenge for Reserve and Guard members. While the active component has access to medical and behavioral healthcare services on base or on post where they are stationed, Reservists may be geographically separated from any military healthcare facility by several hours. Now faced with redeployment issues, e.g., substance use, mental health issues, marital and family difficulties, the Reserve requires service members to attend mandatory training every 30, 60, and 90 days following redeployment. Additionally, service members are assessed to monitor how they are adjusting. Family members also undergo training and are able to connect with professionals who can help them or answer questions.

Clinical Implications

Due to improvements in protective equipment and battlefield medical care, fewer troops are dying from combat-related injuries. As a result, service members, who in previous conflicts would not have survived, are returning home wounded,²⁴ suffering with severe physical injuries like blindness, amputations, and burns, and also with debilitating psychological and emotional wounds. Some are even faced with “poly-trauma” in which they are suffering from multiple and complex combinations of injuries. Service members are able to access services through the Veterans Administration but many, particularly National Guard and Reserve members, are accessing primary and behavioral health services in the civilian sector.

In order to effectively treat service members who walk through their doors, civilian providers need to understand the implications of military service and combat experiences. Included in the Appendix is a matrix of experiences/conditions and the clinical implications that can be used by behavioral healthcare providers to assist service members seeking services. This list is not exhaustive but is a starting place for clinicians to begin their work with veterans and service members.

²⁴ As of March 30, 2010, 37,155 men and women have been injured, as compared to 5,411 deaths. Weekly casualty totals as reported by the Department of Defense, <http://www.defense.gov/news/casualty.pdf>.

Conclusion

We are seeing unprecedented numbers of service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan in need of behavioral healthcare services. While the Veterans Administration (VA) provides high-quality services, many service members do not go to the VA for help but instead seek assistance through the civilian sector. Because of the numbers of military men and women entering the civilian sector, civilian behavioral healthcare specialists need to have a basic understanding of this population. This paper has provided an overview of the military, its culture, and its people and can be used as one resource to build the knowledge base of individuals not familiar with the military. Additional resources are available from a variety of sources, including the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration.

Appendix

Challenges and Implications for Behavioral Healthcare Services

Difficulties with access and reimbursement

Challenges related to military service

1. Difficulties with access, understanding what services are available, and reimbursement for service members and families

Implications for behavioral health services

1. Provide education, outreach, case management, and expanded services to assist service members and families in accessing needed services.

Physical (neurological, somatic, etc.) effects of life in a war zone

Challenges related to military service

1. Endocrinological and neurochemical effects of war, e.g., sleep deprivation, constant tactical awareness, etc.
2. Effects of physical strain on musculoskeletal, gastrointestinal, immune functioning, somatic experience of tension, etc.
3. Implications of the war experience and its aftermath for substance use, abuse, and addiction include:
 - The widespread use of enormous amounts of caffeine
 - Increased vulnerability to opioid addiction from pain medication
 - The temptation to use alcohol and drugs as substitutes for psychotropic medications
4. Service members and veterans are often unaware that they have experienced mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI) because they were some distance from the blast; however, they may still experience concussion and post-concussion syndrome
5. MTBI and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms can be hard to distinguish, making differential diagnosis difficult

Implications for behavioral health services

1. Teach and practice skills in managing stress before attempting to address deeper memories or psychological issues or maintain abstinence from alcohol and other drugs.

2. Provide or encourage a holistic approach that includes physical relaxation activities such as yoga, exercise, dancing, walking, etc.
3. Identify the chemical excesses or deficiencies that service members and veterans are attempting to balance (or, in the case of caffeine and the adrenaline rush, prolong) with chemicals, and address those excesses and deficiencies. Educate about the effects of caffeine on sleep cycles. Explore alternative pain management techniques for people addicted to pain medications. Monitor the effects of and interactions among medications, and work with prescribers to find acceptable solutions.
4. Ask questions about their proximity to blasts, and help them understand the effects of blasts even on people who are several feet away.
5. Assess for both conditions and, when in doubt, treat both conditions. Treat the whole human being, and treat according to symptom clusters.

Psychological effects of life in a war zone

Challenges related to military service

1. Effects of multiple losses, in traumatic circumstances, with inadequate time for grieving
2. The psychological effects of killing and harming others, although within the call of duty, and guilt caused by lives they were unable to save
3. The fact that some service members' and veterans' moral and tactical decision-making processes may have been affected by sleep deprivation and the effects of combat stress, resulting later in increased levels of confusion, guilt, and mistrust of self
4. Effects of military sexual trauma (sexual harassment and aggression), exacerbated by the insularity of the unit culture and the betrayal of trust by comrades or commanders whose fidelity was so closely linked to emotional and physical survival

Implications for behavioral health services

1. Create an atmosphere that is safe and comfortable for grieving when the service member is ready.
2. Let service members or veterans decide when to bring up issues related to harming others or guilt, rather than directing them toward them (through questions, comments, etc.). Help them see their own responsibility for what happened in context and perspective, and to separate responsibility from guilt. Help them both separate grief from guilt and understand the ways in which these experiences can complicate one

another. When they are ready, help them find ways of making amends that fit their own experiences and value systems.

3. Help service members and veterans understand and accept some of the normal ways in which sleep deprivation and combat stress may affect people's thoughts, decisions, and emotions. Help them see the physical (neurochemical) roots of these effects.
4. In addressing sexual trauma issues, keep in mind the intensity of the bond between service members, the profound effects of betrayal, the effects of rank differential on these experiences, and the fact that service members are often isolated within their units.

Issues related to military rank and authority

Challenges related to military service

1. Promotion in rank and decision-making responsibilities at young ages (sometimes when individuals' executive functions are not fully developed)
2. Severity of disciplinary measures that veterans and service members may have encountered in military service

Implications for behavioral health services

1. If service members or veterans are experiencing stress and anxiety with the effects of early responsibilities, help them see their decisions in the context of their youth and levels of experience at the time.
2. If veterans or service members are suffering from the effects of disciplinary measures, help them distinguish between appropriate discipline and abuse of authority and address those issues separately.

Other issues that can impede help seeking and therapeutic processes

Challenges related to military service

1. Still-widespread military (and societal) stigma toward combat/operational stress effects, including PTSD, substance use disorders, and psychiatric disorders in general, and toward the idea of receiving help or therapy
2. Military emphasis on discipline and control, and the reluctance to experience normal emotional reactions and the emotional risks involved in the healing process

Implications for behavioral health services

1. Help service members, veterans, families, communities, and the public in general understand that these are normal reactions to life in the war zone, by helping them understand the physical (e.g., neurochemical, endocrinological) roots of post-deployment stress effects. Frame services in terms of training rather than therapy, helping service members and veterans learn to manage their stress systems so they can be more effective within the civilian world. Present a performance-optimization model compatible with the military culture.
2. Establish a partnership in which service members and veterans have control over the planning and decisions that occur throughout the therapeutic process. Teach skills in managing thoughts and emotions to increase their sense of control and mastery.

Issues related to families and family reintegration

Challenges related to military service

1. The importance of families' well-being to service members, and the effects of worrying about family members
2. Need for marriage (partner) and family support and/or therapy during the reintegration period
3. The importance of providing prevention, intervention, and treatment for family members, and the effects of many conditions (worry, loss, absence, isolation, disruption, etc.) on families

Implications for behavioral health services

1. Provide or recommend services to family members. Understand that, even if a service member or veteran is experiencing severe problems, assisting family members may be of equal or greater priority to the service member before he or she can accept help.
2. Communicate the fact that reintegration is difficult and it is normal to need support. Help veterans, service members, and families develop support networks. Provide marriage or family therapy or make appropriate and supportive referrals.
3. Provide assistance to families before, during, and after deployment, and throughout the reintegration period, or find and make appropriate referrals. Promote community support for families of reserve component service members by engaging in community education and organizing efforts.

Issues related to reintegration into civilian culture

Challenges related to military service

1. Loss of the clarity and comfort provided by the military structure, chain of command, and routine
2. Alienation from civilian culture and difficulty trusting civilians, resulting in the loss of potential support structures
3. Sense and/or appearance of being “shut down,” emotionally numb or “dead,” and closed off from their own emotions and from communication with civilians
4. Loss of the intense sense of mission and purpose that many experienced during deployment, often exacerbated by coming home to unemployment or employment in roles that require far less skill and authority than they exercised in their deployment roles

Implications for behavioral health services

1. Help veterans or service members find or build clarity and structure, and learn to manage their discomfort with greater uncertainty and lack of structure.
2. Take great care to establish, earn, and keep service members’ and veterans’ trust in therapeutic relationships (including relationships with staff at all levels of the organization). Help service members and veterans understand that their sense of alienation and mistrust is normal and is not caused by deficiencies in them or in their loved ones. Help them identify those people who do deserve and will not betray their trust, deepen those relationships gradually, and manage their relationships with people whom they have reason not to trust. Encourage them to make or keep connections with other service members and veterans.
3. Understand modes of “resistance” as important forms of psychological protection. Let veterans or service members progress at their own pace through the process of opening up in therapy. Help them understand the physiological factors (e.g., excesses of parasympathetic chemicals, depletion of sympathetic chemicals) that may be contributing to their feelings of being shut down, numb, or dead.
4. Respect the sense of mission and purpose that service members or veterans experienced, whether or not it fits with the counselor’s or therapist’s own sense of mission and purpose. Help them explore ways of building and exercising mission and purpose back home. Connect the service member or veteran with career development resources that will help them find more meaningful work.

Using military values to increase motivation within the therapeutic process

- **Loyalty** - Loyalty to themselves and their families can be a good motivator to enter and make progress in therapeutic processes.
- **Respect** - Many of the symptoms of untreated combat stress and substance use disorders result in behavior that is disrespectful to the service member or veteran, the family, the military, and society as a whole. Working on these conditions and reducing their symptoms can enhance respect.
- **Selfless service** - The symptoms of untreated disorders can impair people's ability to be of service. Accepting help will improve service members' and veterans' ability to be of service.
- **Honor and integrity** - The symptoms of untreated disorders can often influence people to act in dishonorable and dishonest ways. Progress in overcoming these disorders can strengthen one's honor and integrity.
- **Excellence and commitment** - People with a commitment to excellence can use that commitment to approach the work of stress management, growth, and healing.
- **Personal courage** - The process of admitting, confronting, and learning to manage the effects of combat and operational stress requires great personal courage. Any step in this direction is a sign of courage.
- **Devotion to duty** - Service members and veterans function as individuals, family members, community members, and citizens. They have a duty to operate responsively and appropriately.

Military Ranks

Insignia of the United States Armed Forces – Officers

O-1	O-2	O-3	O-4	O-5	O-6	O-7	O-8	O-9	O-10	SPECIAL
ARMY										
 Second Lieutenant (2LT)	 First Lieutenant (1LT)	 Captain (CPT)	 Major (MAJ)	 Lieutenant Colonel (LTC)	 Colonel (COL)	 Brigadier General (BG)	 Major General (MG)	 Lieutenant General (LTG)	 General (GEN)	 General of the Army (GA)
MARINES										
 Second Lieutenant (2ndLT)	 First Lieutenant (1stLT)	 Captain (Capt)	 Major (Maj)	 Lieutenant Colonel (LTCol)	 Colonel (Col)	 Brigadier General (BGen)	 Major General (MajGen)	 Lieutenant General (LtGen)	 General (Gen)	
NAVY										
 Ensign (ENS)	 Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)	 Lieutenant (LT)	 Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	 Commander (CDR)	 Captain (CAPT)	 Rear Admiral Lower Half (RADM)(L)	 Rear Admiral Upper Half (RADM)(U)	 Vice Admiral (VADM)	 Admiral (ADM)	 Fleet Admiral (FADM)
AIR FORCE										
 Second Lieutenant (2d Lt)	 First Lieutenant (1st Lt)	 Captain (Capt)	 Major (Maj)	 Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col)	 Colonel (Col)	 Brigadier General (Brig Gen)	 Major General (Maj Gen)	 Lieutenant General (Lt Gen)	 General (Gen)	
COAST GUARD										
 Ensign (ENS)	 Lieutenant Junior Grade (LTJG)	 Lieutenant (LT)	 Lieutenant Commander (LCDR)	 Commander (CDR)	 Captain (CAPT)	 Rear Admiral Lower Half (RADM)(L)	 Rear Admiral Upper Half (RADM)(U)	 Vice Admiral (VADM)	 Admiral (ADM)	

Insignia of the United States Armed Forces – Enlisted

E-1 E-2 E-3 E-4 E-5 E-6 E-7 E-8 E-9 SEMI-ENLISTED ADVISORS

ARMY

no insignia											
Private E-1 (PV1)	Private E-2 (PV2)	Private First Class (PFC)	Corporal (CPL) Specialist (SPC)	Sergeant (SGT)	Staff Sergeant (SSG)	Sergeant First Class (SFC)	Master Sergeant (MSG)	First Sergeant (1SG)	Sergeant Major (SGM)	Command Sergeant Major (CSM)	Sergeant Major of the Army (SMA)

MARINES

no insignia											
Private (Pvt)	Private First (PFC)	Lance Corporal (LCpl)	Corporal (Cpl)	Sergeant (Sgt)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	Gunnery Sergeant (GySgt)	Master Sergeant (MSGt)	First Sergeant (1stSGt)	Master Gunnery Sergeant (MGySgt)	Sergeant Major (SgtMaj)	Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (SgtMajMC)

NAVY

no insignia										
Seaman Recruit (SR)	Seaman Apprentice (SA)	Seaman (SN)	Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)	Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)	Petty Officer First Class (PO1)	Chief Petty Officer (CPO)	Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)	Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPD)	Force or Fleet Command Master Chief Petty Officer (FORMC) (FLTMC)	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy (MCPON)

AIR FORCE

no insignia													
Airman Basic (AB)	Airman (Amn)	Airman First Class (A1C)	Senior Airman (SrA)	Staff Sergeant (SSgt)	Technical Sergeant (TSgt)	Master Sergeant (MSGt)	First Sergeant (E-7)	Senior Master Sergeant (SMSgt)	First Sergeant (E-8)	Chief Master Sergeant (CMSgt)	First Sergeant (E-9)	Command Chief Sergeant (CCM)	Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force (CMSAF)

COAST GUARD

Seaman Recruit (SR)	Seaman Apprentice (SA)	Seaman (SN)	Petty Officer Third Class (PO3)	Petty Officer Second Class (PO2)	Petty Officer First Class (PO1)	Chief Petty Officer (CPO)	Senior Chief Petty Officer (SCPO)	Master Chief Petty Officer (MCPD)	Command Master Chief (CMC)	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard (MCPD-CG)

Warrant

ARMY

Warrant Officer (WO1)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW2)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW3)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW4)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW5)

NAVY

Chief Warrant Officer (CW02)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW03)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW04)

MARINES

Warrant Officer (WO)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW02)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW03)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW04)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW05)

COAST GUARD

Chief Warrant Officer (CW02)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW03)	Chief Warrant Officer (CW04)