



# Family Reintegration Following Guard Deployment

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# Specific Aims

- To describe veterans and families perceptions of:
  - ◎ **Aim 1.** Their experience with family reintegration and the challenges reintegration presents;
  - ◎ **Aim 2.** Resources and strategies that would assist them with the reintegration process.



# Background

## ● Historical Context of Family Wartime Separation and Reintegration

- ◎ Hill (1949) described a roller coaster pattern of family adjustment to wartime separation in which the family initially goes into a state of crisis or disorganization, it then reorganizes and goes into a state of recovery, and finally settles in to a new level of organization.
- ◎ Readjustment after reunion was dependent upon the emotional and social accommodations made by the spouses during separation.

# Background

## ● **Special Risk Factors for Problems with Family Reintegration Among Global War on Terror Veterans**

### ◎ **PTSD**

◎ Classified as one of the anxiety disorders, PTSD is a syndrome of responses to extremely disturbing, often life-threatening events—combat, natural disaster, torture, or rape—that fall outside of usual experience.

◎ Hoge et al., 2004 examined the mental health impact of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

- the estimated risk for PTSD from service in the Iraq War was much higher than from service in the Afghanistan mission (18% vs. 11%, respectively).
- In both contexts, reports of combat exposure were highly associated with the risk of PTSD.



# Background

- **Special Risk Factors for Problems with Family Reintegration Among Global War on Terror Veterans**

- **Substance Abuse & PTSD**

- ◎ The dual diagnosis of substance abuse and PTSD is surprisingly common. The rate of PTSD among patients in substance abuse treatment is 12%-34%; for women it is 30%-59%.
- ◎ Becoming abstinent from substances does not resolve PTSD; indeed, some PTSD symptoms become worse with abstinence
- ◎ People with both disorders suffer higher rates of a variety of interpersonal and medical problems, including domestic violence

# Background

- **Special Risk Factors for Problems with Family Reintegration Among Global War on Terror Veterans**

- Intimate Partner Violence & PTSD

- Orcutt et al. (2003) examined the impact of early-life stressors, war-zone stressors, and PTSD symptom severity on partner's reports of recent male-perpetrated intimate partner violence (IPV) among 376 Vietnam veteran couples. Results indicated that several variables demonstrated direct relationships with IPV, including relationship quality with mother, war-zone stressor variables, and PTSD symptom severity.

- Experiencing PTSD symptoms as a result of previous trauma appears to increase an individual's risk for perpetrating IPV





# **PRELIMINARY STUDIES: FAMILY STRESS ASSOCIATED WITH WARTIME SEPARATION**

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# SPECIFIC AIMS

- To describe the families' perceptions of their experience during the recall of the guardsmen or reservist.
- To describe the families' perceptions of their coping processes before, during and after the separation.
- To describe the families' perceptions of the outcomes of the separation on family functioning and individual family member's growth and development.



# Sample

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## Demographics

## Range or Number of Participants

Age

2 under 18 years old

1 thirties

9 forties

4 fifties

Gender

11 females (includes daughters)

5 males

# Sample (cont)

Relationship to Member

9 wives  
5 husbands  
2 daughters

Current Marital Status

13 married  
1 divorced

Years Married at Time of  
Separation

1 < 5 years  
3 > 5 < 10 years  
6 > 10 < 25 years  
4 > 25 years



# Sample (cont)

## Families with Children

7 with children at home  
(16 children total)  
3 with grown children  
4 with no children

## Education of Adult Participants

2 > 12 years  
5 = 16 years  
7 > 16 years

# Sample (cont)

Branch of Service and Status of Member

8 Air Force Guard  
1 Air Force Guard Volunteer  
1 Air Force IRR  
4 Army Reserve

Location Deployed

10 Continental United States  
2 Saudi Arabia  
1 Germany  
1 Italy

Ethnicity

14 caucasion families



# Method

- Grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987) was used to address the aims of the study
- The method is designed to primarily generate theory from empirical data rather than to validate existing theory and is especially useful in areas where there are limited research data
- Social phenomena are studied from the perspective of symbolic interactionism (Blummer, 1969)


# Data collection

- Data collection was done primarily done by initial face-to-face interviews supplemented by repeat telephone interviews.
- Interviews were conducted according to the families' preference with the either the family as a whole or with individual spouse participants.
- Fourteen families were interviewed once, two were interviewed twice, and one was interviewed three times for a total of 17 interviews.



# Findings

- A core variable, Uncertainty, evolved from the categories, linked the categories, and theoretically explained a family's coming to terms with or struggling with the separation.



# Making Sense of the Separation

- Families progression through their experiences of coming to terms with the separation is initiated by the process of making sense of the separation. During this process the family figures out what the activation means for the departing member and those left behind.



# Uncertainty

- The level of uncertainty is determined by this assessment which is influenced by intervening conditions such as
  - ⊙ the level of commitment to the relationship,
  - ⊙ the duration of the separation,
  - ⊙ quality of communication with the departing member,
  - ⊙ financial strain and
  - ⊙ past biographical experiences with separation.

# Uncertainty

- Low uncertainty is experienced when minimum preparation for the separation is required due to the limited or nonexistent need to take on new roles or responsibilities.



# Uncertainty

- Initial high uncertainty is experienced when more extensive need for preparation prior to the separation is required, due to the demands of taking on significant or troublesome roles or responsibilities.
- After deployment, the family generally struggles for a period of time as they come to grips with the new demands and employ various strategies to try to make adjustments that will work for them.

# Uncertainty

- Persistent high uncertainty is generated when the need for preparation is more extensive, but, the family is in some way thwarted in their attempts to get ready.
- This often occurs due to circumstances beyond their control, for example:
  - ⊙ financial devastation is imminent,
  - ⊙ needed information from military officials can not be obtained,
  - ⊙ or the preparation is done in isolation by the soon to be left behind family member.



# Contextual Patterns of Social Support Influencing Process

- The first pattern of social support is a complementary and mutually reinforcing network of formal supports with one's own informal networks of friends, family, work and church affiliations.
- In the second pattern of social support, individuals reported very strong informal supports consisting of networks of friends, family and community resources that were apart from contacts in the military system.

# Contextual Patterns of Social Support Influencing Process

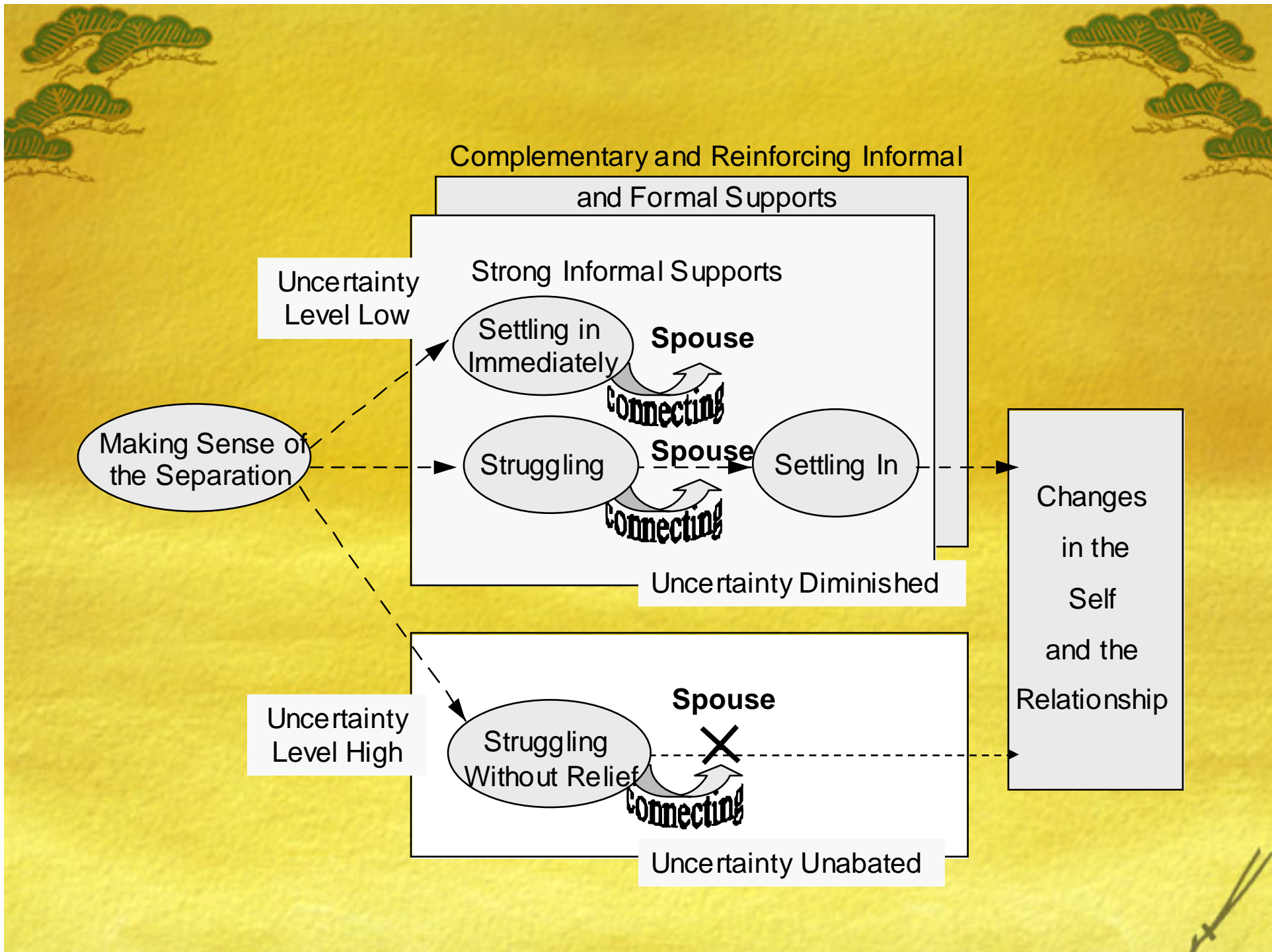
- In the third pattern of social support, individuals reported difficulties with access to or isolation from their informal support networks. In some cases this was due to newly relocating to a new geographic area, or a reluctance to ask for help from others due to feelings of embarrassment. This was combined with a failure of formal supports to provide adequate assistance.





# Making sense of the separation

- finding out
- hitting reality
- figuring it out by:
  - comparing to previous life experiences
  - evaluating against value system
  - evaluating against expectations
  - apprising how much work will have to be done to cover absence
  - meaning assigned to separation e.g. abandonment, purposeful







# Settling in immediately

- establishing a routine
- securing predictability



# Struggling followed by settling in

- taking on
- adjusting demands
- letting go
- innovating





# Struggling without relief

- panicking
- taking on with difficulty
- feeling vulnerable
- being angry
- feeling helpless

# Conclusion

- Reservist's families need to be aware that the separation experience may generate changes in the self and the family relationships, making the return to pre-war family functioning difficult to achieve





# POST-DEPLOYMENT REINTEGRATION



## OREGON NATIONAL GUARD

# Co-investigators

## ● □ Family Counseling Co-Investigator

### © Dr. James Sardo, PhD (Co-Investigator)

brings extensive expertise providing clinical PTSD family counseling and services as licensed therapist in the state of Oregon.

Drawing on his experience in providing PTSD counseling in the Veterans Administration system, he will be a great clinical asset to the research team should referral for services be needed for families.



# Co-investigators

- **Intimate Partner Violence Co-Investigator**
- **Dr. Nancy Glass, PhD, MPH, RN (Co-Investigator)** brings extensive research and clinical experience in the area of IPV. During the past ten years, Dr. Glass has collaborated on four federally funded research studies on IPV and health.



# Co-investigators

- **Methodological Collaborator**
- **Dr. Housanneh-Phillips, PhD, ANP (Co-Investigator)** is our qualitative research consultant. She conducts a practice and program of research focused on IPV in diverse and marginalized populations. She has extensive experience conducting qualitative research and has consulted on several grants funded by the National Institute of Health.



# Method

- Data collection will be done with separate focus groups with Guard members and their families
  - ⊙ Respondents will include six groups of **5 to 6** ORNG deployed members (n = **36**), and six groups of **5 to 6** family members (n = **36**) of the deployed guardsmen.
  - ⊙ For those that wish to be interviewed in private either because they don't want to discuss personal issues in the group, or for those who wish to discuss further an issue raised during the group discussion, an individual semi-structured, face-to-face interview will be conducted



# Stumbling Blocks Encountered

- Confusion re: IRB jurisdiction for studies involving the Guard & Reserve
- Recruitment issues around protecting identity – making it safe for participants and ensuring confidentiality



# Analysis

- Analysis of the data will begin after the first interview is verified and will proceed iteratively (Miles & Huberman, 1994).
- Nvivo 7.0, a qualitative data management program will be used to number and code, line-by-line, the transcribed interviews.
- Text and memos will be kept in an organized database