Examining Intimate Partner Aggression Assessment among Returning Veterans and their Partners


Sixty-five male OIF/OEF combat Veterans and their female partners were interviewed to compare Veteran and partner-perpetrated intimate partner aggression and to examine intimate partner aggression reporting concordance and its correlates. Partners of OIF/OEF Veterans perpetrated more physical intimate partner aggression than did the Veterans. Agreement between veterans and partners’ reports of violence perpetration was low to moderate.

Key Findings:
- Partners of OIF/OEF Veterans perpetrated more physical intimate partner aggression than did the Veterans themselves.
- There were moderate to low levels of agreement between Veterans and their partners on the perpetration of physical and psychological intimate partner aggression; agreement was lower on the Veterans’ physical intimate partner aggression compared to partners’ physical intimate partner aggression.
- Partners’ own PTSD symptoms were associated with reporting more of the Veterans’ and their own intimate partner aggression.

Implications for Programs:
- Programs could routinely screen for physical and psychological intimate partner aggression perpetration and victimization in both partners in a couple.
- Programs could be aware that male Veterans and their partners may give differing reports of intimate partner aggression necessitating careful, perhaps individual assessment.

Implications for Policies:
- Continued support for programs targeting assessment and treatment of intimate partner aggression in military families could be beneficial.
- Resources could be allocated for the development and evaluation of programs to address mutually violent couples to help make families a safe environment.

Avenues for Future Research:
- Additional research could focus on intimate partner aggression perpetrated by Veterans’ partners.
- Future research could be conducted with female Veterans and their partners to examine the nature of intimate partner aggression in those relationships.

Prepared by the Military REACH Team.
For additional information, please visit reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu
Developed in collaboration with the Department of Defense’s Office of Family Policy, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture under The University of Minnesota Award No. 2013-48710-21515.
Methodology:
- Participants were drawn from a larger study focusing on social information processing deficits and intimate partner aggression. They were recruited via flyers, a central database and mailings.
- Male Veterans exposed to combat during deployment who experienced a life threatening event and who were married or living with a partner for a minimum of 6 months were eligible.
- Veterans and their partners were interviewed via telephone about conflict tactics, relationship satisfaction, and PTSD.

Participants:
- 65 male OIF/OEF combat Veterans and their female partners.
- Veteran characteristics: 85% Caucasian, 6% African American; M age=39.98 years (SD=9.14); 60% Army, 17% Marines, 12% Navy, 11% Air Force.
- Female partner characteristics: 86% Caucasian, 5% African American; M age=38.85 years (SD=10.12).
- 83% married and living together, 11% unmarried and living together, 6% married and separated.

Limitations:
- Data were collected via a phone survey which has inherent limitations (e.g., liability to discern level of focus on the questions of the participant).
- The low rates of concordance could be due to the measure employed.
- The sample consisted only of male Veterans (mostly Army) and their female partners; results may not apply to other couples.

Assessing Research that Works

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<th>Research Design and Sample</th>
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<th>Excellent (⭐⭐⭐)</th>
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<td>The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...</td>
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- Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications

Overall Quality Rating ⭐⭐⭐⭐⭐