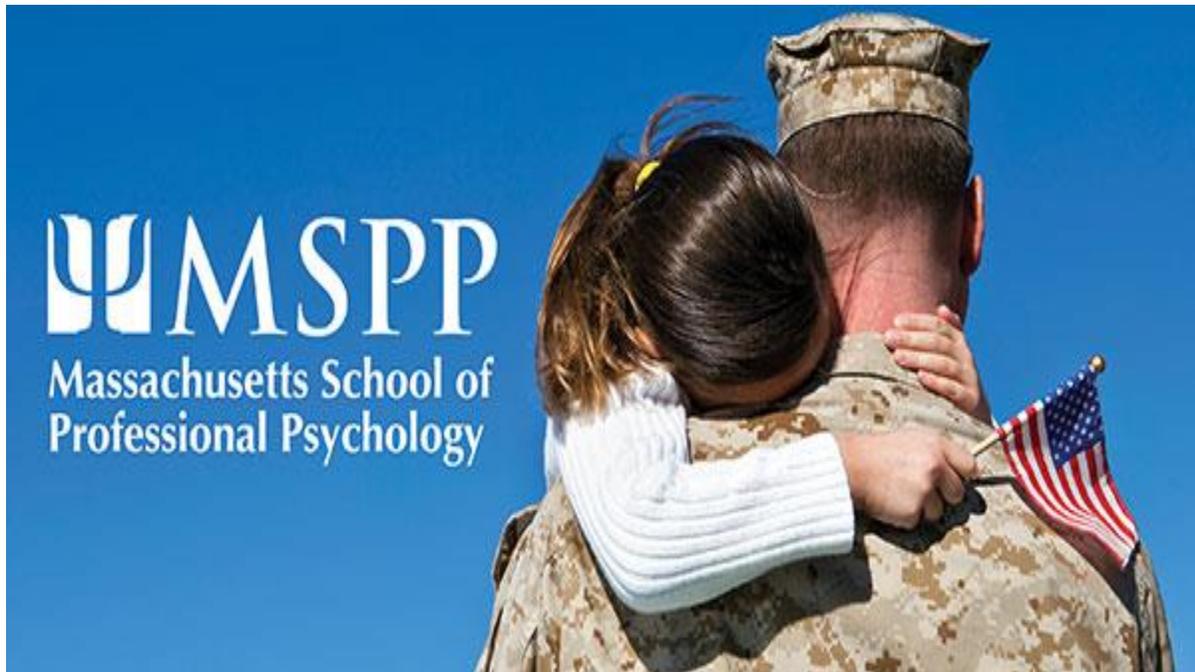


Women Veterans Outreach Report

March 29th, 2014



Office of Research

Sonia Suri, Ph. D

Senior Research and Evaluation Specialist

This report is a result of the collaborative efforts of the following: Jordan Lawson (Research Assistant), MSPP's graduate students – Hillary Scudder, Arthur Serino, and Renée Marchant - and our Summer Intern Annelise Cohen.

Introduction

The Women Veteran's Outreach was co-sponsored by the Military and Veteran Psychology program at the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (MSPP) and the Women Veteran's Network, with funding support from the Department of Veterans Services. The objectives of this event were to give women veterans¹ and their families the opportunity to connect with a larger community, to give them a safe space where they could have fun building relationships, and for them to learn about the various statewide resources. Besides educating women veterans about benefits, the aim was to make women veterans aware of MSPP as a mental health resource. In all, 55 veterans (48 women and 7 men) and 30 children attended this event. The welcoming remarks were made by MSPP's President, Dr. Nicholas Covino, and by Secretary Coleman Nee of the MA Department of Veterans Services. This was the first event of its kind to welcome women veterans, their children, and their extended families to participate.

This report describes and interprets the results of a survey that was handed to attendees towards the end of the event. A copy of the survey and detailed results are available on request. For the sake of brevity, they have not been included in the actual report. A total of 33 participants (31 women and 2 men) responded to the outreach evaluation survey. In addition to data from the survey, the introduction includes observations of participating students and faculty.

Faculty and staff interviewed during the event noticed wonderful energy, synergy, and comfortable interaction. There was an eagerness to socialize, and people were comfortable in their family groups. Cheryl Poppe of the MA Department of Veterans Services remarked that this was the first time she had seen an event where the children were made to feel welcome. Even when outdoor activity hour switched from kickball to generator jailbreak (the ball broke), our kid-friendly veterans and the kids themselves adapted and cheerfully improvised their own fun. The children played exceptionally well together, and their parents seemed comfortable and happy that their children were in good hands during the day's activities, which all enjoyed.

This event gave women veterans an opportunity to connect, learn, and enjoy being recognized for their service. This special day also offered mothers a chance to connect with their children within the context of their former military lifestyle. Some veterans have the tendency to become isolated after service, necessitating the importance of forming peer connections and nurturing family support. The day's events, and the MSPP students and faculty who staffed it, cultivated a sense of community and belonging, while creating awareness of the Military and Veteran Psychology (MVP) and Train Vets To Treat Vets (T VTV) programs, educational opportunities, and scholarships available to veterans.

¹ A significant number of the women veterans who took part in this event continue to live in homeless shelters and other stressful situations

Section I: Event Participant Profile

This section contains detailed participant profile information, providing an overview of respondent history and background. All the responses are depicted in pie charts that report the percentage for each section of the pie.

1. Military Status

Participants involved in the military ranged from veterans (46%) to active duty members (12%). There was also a steady presence of military family members (12%) and retired service individuals (9%). Also noteworthy is the attendance of participants with no military involvement (12%). See Figure 1 below for a more detailed breakdown of participant military involvement.

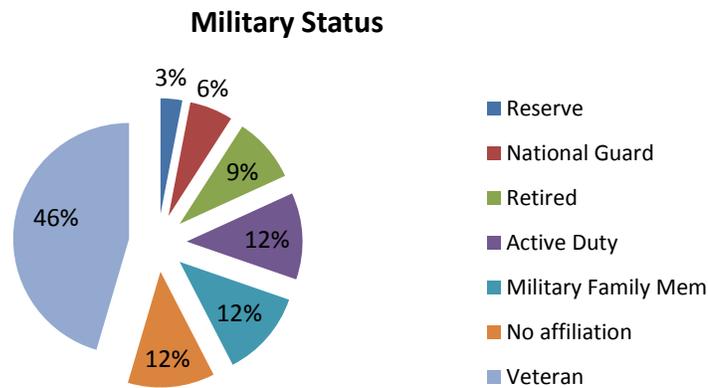


Figure 1: Military Status of Participants (N=33)

2. Marital Status

As depicted in Figure 2 below, there was a relatively equal distribution of single (34%), married (30%) and divorced (24%) individuals attending the event.

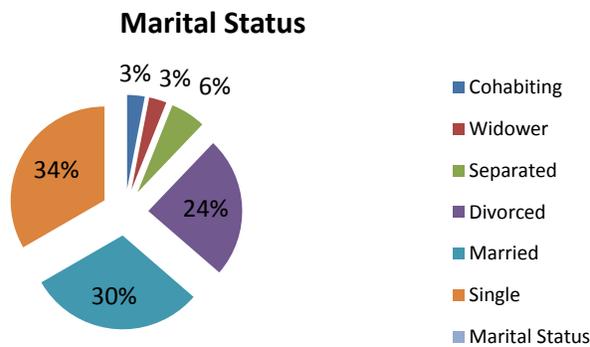


Figure 2: Marital Status of Participants (N=33)

3. Race/Ethnicity of Participants

As shown in Figure 3 below, the event attracted a diverse group of individuals. Although the majority of participants (55%) were of European descent, African-Americans and those of Hispanic descent were very well represented, with the groups accounting for a combined 36% of participants.

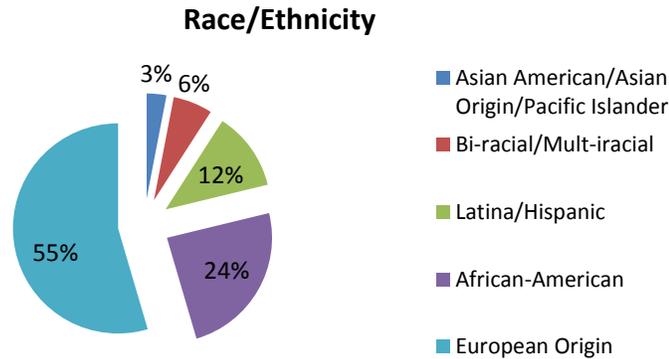


Figure 3: Race/Ethnicity of Participants (N=33)

4. Participant Education Level

Figure 4 gives a breakdown of participants' education level. As evidenced by the figure below, there was a fairly equal distribution among participants. Most of the participants at the event indicated that they had completed some college (25%) or received an associate degree (25%). Furthermore, a significant percentage of participants completed college either at the undergraduate or graduate level (31%).

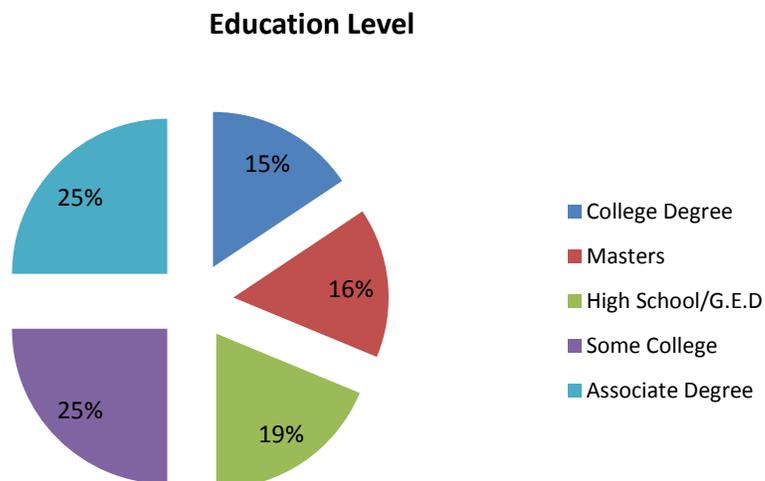


Figure 4: Highest Education Level of Participants (N=33)

Section II: Event Evaluation

1. Overall Rating of Event

Participants rated all aspects of the event very favorably, with each criterion scoring a mean of 4.7 or higher. This positive attitude toward the event is further reflected in the large percentage of high scores across all categories. Please see Table 1 below for a more detailed breakdown.

Table 1

Overall Rating of Event

Categories	N	Mean	Very Poor	Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good
Facilitators	32	4.8	0%	0%	3%	16%	81%
Event	33	4.7	0%	0%	8%	16%	76%
Facilities	33	4.7	0%	0%	3%	21%	76%
Volunteers	33	4.9	0%	0%	0%	12%	88%
Overall Experience	33	4.7	0%	0%	3%	21%	76%

2. Overall Experience

As indicated in Table 2 below, the mean score for each category was above 4.6, signifying a high level of satisfaction with the event and its delivery. The majority of respondents indicated that they plan to return to the event, and to bring family and others with them.

Table 2

Event Feedback and Impression

Categories	N	Mean	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Will you attend in the future	33	4.8	0%	0%	0%	24%	76%
Will you have your family back	33	4.7	0%	0%	0%	27%	73%
Would you encourage others to attend	33	4.8	0%	0%	0%	18%	82%
Did you feel welcomed	32	4.8	0%	0%	3%	13%	84%
Help improve community connection	33	4.7	0%	0%	3%	27%	70%

3. Most Helpful Aspect

When attendees were asked to list the most helpful aspect of the event, responses fell into five general categories. These categories along with the corresponding percentage of respondents are listed in Figure 5 below. Many participants listed the creative activities, such as arts and crafts and yoga, as the most helpful aspect of the event. The opportunity to interact, and converse with fellow service members

and veterans was also held in high regard by many respondents (21%). The high level of satisfaction with the event was evident from comments listing helpful aspects such as: *“I liked the fact that children were welcome with activity specific events,”* and *“Talking to other veterans about their experience.”*

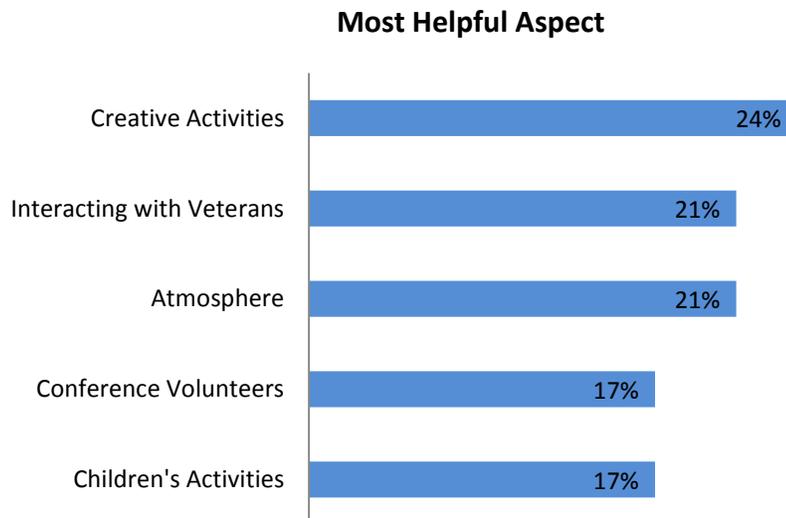


Figure 5: Most Helpful Aspects of the Women Veteran’s Event

2. Least Helpful Aspect

When asked to report on the least helpful aspect of the event, only a small number of participants voiced any concerns. All of the responses given indicated a need for more outreach and information, indicating a lack of awareness with comments such as, *“Not a lot of info about the event prior to the event,”* and *“lack of information about the event prior.”* This indicates a preference for more advanced planning and detailed invitations providing information about the event. Overall, concerns regarding the event and its delivery seemed to be minimal, as most participants reported that they enjoyed participating in the event.

Section IV: Conclusions

The survey results indicate that the event was well received by women veterans and their families. We would like to highlight our successes and opportunities for growth moving forward.

1. Successes

The results from the event survey and participant observation indicate that participants enjoyed themselves, and that there was a general feeling of wellbeing surrounding the experience. Participants greatly appreciated the pre-arranged activities that helped foster a sense of connection between participants and their families. Additionally, the opportunity to interact with fellow veterans was also highly appreciated, highlighting the desire of many veterans to socialize with others who have had shared similar experiences. These results are extremely encouraging given that the purpose of this event was to connect women veterans to each other in hopes of forging support systems and community involvement. The congenial atmosphere indicated that hosting this event was a step in the right direction to developing and enhancing veteran connections. Many participants also indicated that they would be likely to recommend this event to others. It is also important to note that this event attracted a diverse group of participants, with many respondents coming from varying backgrounds and military branches. This suggests that Women Veterans Network's (WVN) outreach efforts were fairly successful in drawing people to this event.

2. Opportunities for Growth

A very small subset of participants voiced concerns about the event; these included a desire for more detailed information about the event and better outreach. The respondents indicated that there was some confusion surrounding the scheduling of the event and the venue. Moving forward, MSPP should remain cognizant of outreach efforts and also make sure to allot sufficient time to send out necessary information to the desired audience.

3. Conclusion

In takeaway, the conference was very well received. The majority of respondents indicated that they not only enjoyed the experience, but would also recommend the event to others. A welcoming environment in which people can connect and engage was vital to this event's success.

In closing we would like to point out that this event was a great success thanks to the tireless outreach and planning efforts made by the WVN, under the leadership of Viviana Marcotte, and TVTV and the MSPP military community, led by Jenny D' Olympia. We would also like to extend our thanks to the faculty and students at MSPP who helped with event planning and execution.