

# Well-being of Adolescents in Military Families: Examining the Intersections of Resilience and Vulnerability

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# Family Structure Effects on Adolescent Well-Being

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# Theoretical Underpinnings

- Levels of systems
- Process-Person-Context-Time model
- “Linked Lives”
  - Parents’ relationship formations and children’s adjustment intersect (Elder, 1998)
  - Major life events seen as “turning points” (Langenkamp & Krisco, 2008)



# Family Structure

- Parental relationship context (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010)
- Proxies resources that shape parents' interactions with their children (Crosnoe & Cavanagh, 2010)
- Family disruptions and current family environment influence youth well-being (e.g., Cavanagh et al., 2006; Fomby & Sennott, 2013; Teachman et al., 2001)



# Parents & Youth

- Parent-youth relationships → adolescents adjustment (e.g., Conger, Ge, Elder, Lorenz, & Simons, 1994; Crosnoe et al., 2003; Lamb, 2012; Melby et al., 2009; Steinberg, 2001; Whitbeck et al., 1997)
- Youth Self-efficacy: Cognitive perceptions of self (Hughes, Galbraith, & White, 2010)
  - Academic performance enhanced by greater self-efficacy (Zimmerman, Bandura, Martinez—Pons, 1992)
  - Eroded sense of self fosters depressive symptoms (Wickrama, Surjadi, Lorenz, Conger, & O'Neal, 2012)



# Present Study

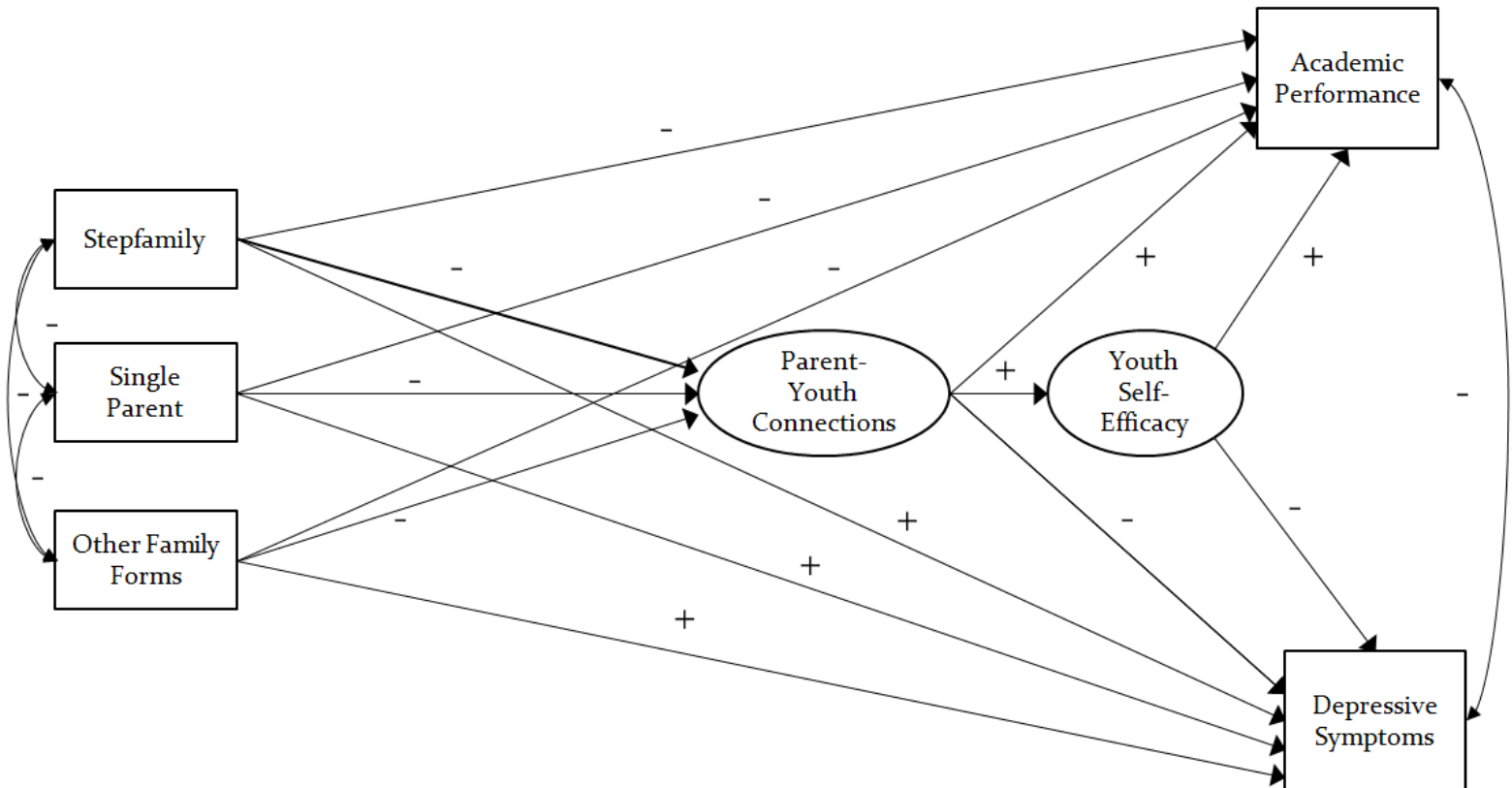
Few studies have:

- Made theoretical claims (Cavanagh, 2008)
- Examined parent-youth connections as processes linking family structure to youth functioning
  - Influence of youths' cognitive traits
- Examined sub-population of military youth
  - Little known about various family structures within military context (Adler-Baeder, Pittman, & Taylor, 2008)



# Research Hypotheses

Effects of family structure traced through two paths:



# Measures

- Family Structure

- Categorized by two biological parents (reference category), stepfamily, single parent, and “other family form” (Cavanagh, 2008; Mokrue et al., 2011)

- Biological mother & father (67.3%)
    - Stepfamily (17.3% )
    - Single parent (10.9%)
    - Other family form (4.4%)

- Parent-Youth Connections

- Latent factor indicated by four items from Adolescent Coping Scale (ACOPE; Patterson & McCubbin, 1987;  $\alpha = .73$ )





# Measures

- Initiative
  - Latent factor indicated by three items from General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE; Bosscher & Smit, 1998;  $\alpha = .71$ )
- Depressive symptoms:
  - Total sum score (20 items) from Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC; Faulstich et al., 1986;  $\alpha = .90$ )
- Academic performance
  - Self-reported grades
- Controls: gender, age, race



# Methods

- Analyses
  - Descriptives
  - Zero-order correlations
  - Structural equation modeling
    - Amos 20
    - Full-Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML)
    - Incremental nested model
    - Fit indices (Kline, 2005)
      - Chi-square test statistic
      - Comparative fit index
      - Root Mean Square Error of Approximation



# Findings

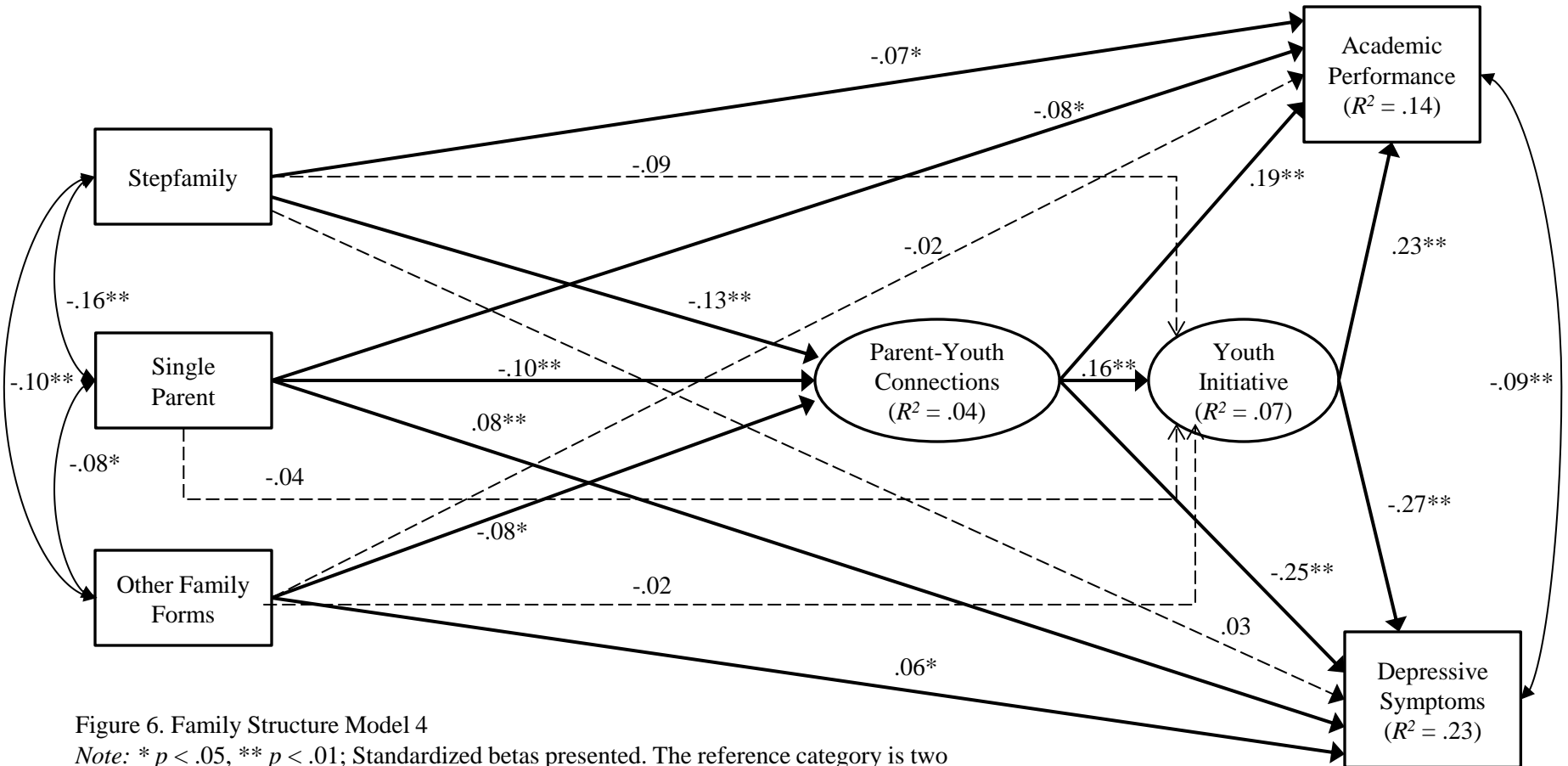


Figure 6. Family Structure Model 4

Note:  $* p < .05$ ,  $** p < .01$ ; Standardized betas presented. The reference category is two biological parents, and models controlled for gender, age, and race. Factor loadings ranged from .57-.75.

$\chi^2 = 149.27$  ( $df = 53$ ),  $p < .01$   
 $\chi^2/df = 2.82$   
 CFI = .95  
 RMSEA = .04

# Model Comparisons

**Table 2. Family Structure Model Comparisons**

	Model Fit Index <sup>a</sup>			$\Delta\chi^2(df)^b$
	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	RMSEA	
<b>Model 1 (Baseline model)</b>	388.88*** (69)	.84	.07	
<b>Model 2 (Parent-youth connections included)</b>	262.74*** (61)	.90	.06	126.14 (8)
<b>Model 3 (Theoretical model)</b>	150.71*** (56)	.95	.04	112.03 (5)
<b>Model 4 (Fully Recursive)</b>	149.27*** (53)	.95	.04	1.44 (3)

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> Values for each model. <sup>b</sup> Critical value of  $\chi^2(3) = 7.82$ ;  $\chi^2(5) = 11.07$ ;  $\chi^2(8) = 15.51$



# Summary of Findings

- Full or partial support for hypotheses
  - H1: Living in step- and single family → lower academic performance and single and other-family → higher levels of depressive symptoms.
  - H1a: Parent-youth connections partially mediates relationship between family structure and outcomes
  - H2: Greater parent-youth connections → higher levels of youths' self-efficacy, which in turn → academic performance and depressive symptoms

