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

Chairs: Jay A. Mancini, Mallory Lucier-Greer, & Amy Laura Arnold

Discussant: Angela Huebner

National Council on Family Relations
Annual Conference
San Antonio, TX
November 6, 2013

Data were drawn from a project funded by NIFA Award No. 2009-48680-06069, Jay A. Mancini, Principal Investigator.
Modeling the Contributions of Extracurricular Activity and Social Support to the Well-being of Youth from Military Families

Brittany D. Linde, University of Tennessee Health Science Center
Jay A. Mancini, University of Georgia
Douglas A. Kleiber, University of Georgia
Hypotheses

1. Participation in extracurricular programs is positively associated with adolescents’ perceived level of social support.

2. Participation in extracurricular programs is associated with positive well-being.
   - A) Participation (Y/N) → Positive Well-being

3. Social support mediates the relationships in Hypothesis 2.
Theory

- The Relationship Functions Framework
  - stems from Weiss’ (1974) social provisions
  - emphasizes the connection between social interaction and psychological well-being (Mancini & Blieszner, 1992)
  - encompasses both the functions of social networks as well as the consequences of relational deficits as people experience change and transition
  - resonates with adolescents from military families who frequently experience change in close relationships within a mobile military family unit
Measures

Participation

• Measured dichotomously (Y/N); Did you participate in any program or activity on- or off-post?

• Measured again, but as to whether the participant participated in certain types of activities (e.g. Fine Arts, Sports & Health, Life Skills and Citizenship, or Academic)

Well-being

• Depression (CES-D): “I was bothered by things that usually don’t bother me.” (Weissman et al., 1980)

• Anxiety (SCARED-R): “I worry about being as good as other kids.” (Sherer et al., 1982)

• Self-efficacy (G-SES): “If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.” (Muris et al., 1999)
A Other people do not think I am good at what I do.
B I do not think other people respect my skills and abilities.
C There are people who recognize my skills and abilities.
D There is no one that likes the things I do.

E There are people who enjoy the same social activities I do.
F I feel part of a group of people who share my attitudes and beliefs.
G There is no one who shares my interests and concerns.
H I have relationships where my abilities and skills are recognized.
Findings: The Overall Attendance Model

Model Fit Indices
$$\chi^2 = 156.56 \ (df = 44), \ p < .001$$
CFI = .95
RMSEA = .05

Overall Attendance

Social Support

Depression

Anxiety

Self-Efficacy

$$.14^{**}$$

$.04$$

$$.04^{(10^{**})}$$

$.04$$

$$.05$$

$$.48$$

$$.42^{**}$$

$$.40^{**}$$

$$.16^{**}$$

$.20$$

$.28$$
Findings: The Stratified Attendance Model

Model Fit Indices
\( \chi^2 = 197.24 \) (df = 65), \( p < .001 \)
CFI = .95
RMSEA = .05

(Correlation coefficients for exogenous indicators ranged from .13-.20)
Discussion

• Is ECA associated with Social Support?

  – Overall, ECA participation was related to higher perceived social support, but...

  – Sports & Health programs were the only type related to higher social support.
    ➢ Partially mediated the pathway between ECA and Sports & Health
    ➢ Bolsters extent research on physical activity and social support (e.g. Chaoqun et al., 2012; Hayashi, 1998; Kleiber & Roberts, 1987; O’Connor & Jose, 2012)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hypothesis</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Support for Hypotheses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 1:</strong></td>
<td>Participation in extracurricular activities positively influences military adolescents’ perceived level of social support</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 2:</strong></td>
<td>Participation in extracurricular activities positively influences military adolescents’ well-being, conceptualized in this study as levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and self-efficacy.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2a:</strong></td>
<td>Youth who participate in at least one program will have higher self-efficacy and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who do not participate in at least one activity.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2b:</strong></td>
<td>Youth who participate in Fine Arts, Life Skills and Citizenship, Sports and Health, and/or Academic programs will have higher self-efficacy and fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety than those who do not.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis 3:</strong></td>
<td>Participation in extracurricular programs indirectly positively influences military adolescents’ well-being through the mediating effect of social support.</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

• Is ECA related to Well-being?
  – Attendance in programs → Higher efficacy
  – Only Sports & Health programs → Positive Well-being
    • Supports extant research on protective effects of sports participation against depression and anxiety (Babiss & Gangwisch, 2009; Johnson & Taliaferro, 2011; Strong et al., 2005) and to aid in promoting efficacy (Larson, 2000).
  – Life Skills & Citizenship and Academic participation → Higher anxiety and depression
    • “Play-like” (Kleiber & Roberts, 1978) vs. work-like activities

• Does Social Support Contribute?
  – One pathway fully mediated (Overall Attendance & Efficacy)
  – One pathway partially mediated (Sports & Health Attendance & Efficacy)

***Missing link(s) between ECA and WB

– Without the indirect influence of social support, well-being may have even been reduced by participation, perhaps revealing relative incompetence within the activity.
Symposium Summary

• All vulnerabilities are not equal
• Resist equating change with decline
• Going against the grain
  – Counter-intuitive interactive effects
• Risk leads to poor outcomes but can be altered by social relationships
• Family structure as a vulnerability
• The influence of formal programs on child outcomes appears to operate through the provision of social support
Future Considerations

• Measurement
  – Conceptualizing how youth spend their time

• Practical points of intervention
  – Family support
  – Ties or connection to others outside the home
  – Involvement in programs and engagement in community activities