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

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Resilience and Vulnerability Among Adolescents in Military Families: Theoretical and Research Perspectives

Jay A. Mancini, The University of Georgia
Catherine Walker O’Neal, The University of Georgia
The Complexity of Intersections
Layers and Levels of Human Development and Contexts (Lerner)
Resilience and Vulnerability

- **Resilience**
  - Process of successfully overcoming adversity
  - Capacity to adapt
  - Return to baseline + thriving

- **Vulnerability**
  - Experiences, situations, or characteristics that expose a person to additional negative experiences and results
  - Risk
  - Increase odds of poor results
  - Internal and external elements
  - Chronic and acute
Core Questions

• What should we know about vulnerability and resilience?
• How are outcomes affected by them?
Survey

• Personal and family demographics
• Military characteristics (e.g., parental rank)
• Program Involvement
• Social Networks
  – Social provisions
  – Relationship quality: peers, family, and community
• Adolescent Well-being
  – Academic functioning and school enjoyment
  – Emotional well-being
  – Problem-solving and coping strategies
  – Personal efficacy
Survey Screenshot: Child Anxiety

Your Worries

These questions ask how much you worry. Please click the circle that best fits how you felt over the past two weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Like Me</th>
<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I worry about others not liking me.</td>
<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am nervous.</td>
<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry about being as good as other kids.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry about things working out for me.</td>
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<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>People tell me I worry too much.</td>
<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry about the future.</td>
<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry about how well I do things.</td>
<td>[ ] [ ] [ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>I worry about things that happened in the past.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CONTINUE
Survey Screenshot: Child Self-Efficacy

About You

This section asks how you feel about yourself and your abilities over the past two weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How true do you feel these statements are about you personally?</th>
<th>Not Like Me</th>
<th>A Little Like Me</th>
<th>A Lot Like Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If something looks too complicated, I will not even bother to try it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I avoid trying to learn new things when they look too difficult.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When trying something new, I soon give up if I am not at first successful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I have something unpleasant to do, I stick to it until I finish it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I decide to do something, I go right to work on it.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Failure just makes me try harder.</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I set important goals for myself, I rarely achieve them.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I do not seem to be capable of dealing with most problems that come up in my life.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unexpected problems occur, I don't handle them very well.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel insecure (not sure) about my ability to do things.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Demographics ($N = 1,036$)

- 50.3% female participants
- Racially diverse sample

- European American (38.7%)
- African American (18.8%)
- Hispanic/Latino (11.7%)
- Indian/AK or HI Native (5.5%)
- Multiracial (15.5%)
- Other (9.8%)
Age

- Mean age: 13.39 years
  - 72.4% were 11 to 14 years old
  - 27.6% were 15 to 18 years old

- Grade
  - 5th (10.7%)
  - 6th (22.0%)
  - 7th (20.3%)
  - 8th (14.7%)
  - 9th (12.2%)
  - 10th (8.7%)
  - 11th (5.4%)
  - 12th (5.9%)
School Background

• School Type
  – Public school off post (62.5%)
  – Public school on post (16.9%)
  – Department of Defense school (11.6%)
  – Home school (5.9%)
  – Private school off post (3.1%)

• School Transitions in Past 5 years
  – 64.3% changed schools 2+ times
  – Average of 2.4 transitions in the past 5 years
Family Environment

• Family Structure (who they live with)
  – Both their mother & father (67.3%)
  – Single parent (10.9%)
  – Stepfamily (17.3%)
  – Another relative (1.1%)
  – Other type of family structure (3.4%)

• 95.7% had a sibling
Military Context

• Parental Rank
  – 72.4% Enlisted
  – 27.6% Officer

• 8.1% - More than one parent in the military

• 18% - Parent currently deployed to a combat zone