

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Army

Worried, Concerned and Untroubled: Antecedents and Consequences of Youth Worry

O'Neal, C. W., Mallette, J. K., Lanier, A. R., Mancini, J. A., & Huebner, A. J. (2016). Worried, concerned and untroubled: Antecedents and consequences of youth worry. *Child & Family Social Work*, 22, 801-812. doi:10.1111/cfs.12298

SUMMARY: Different aspects of military life, including parental deployment, may lead youth to experience higher levels of worry. Three distinct patterns or profiles of worrying were identified in a sample of military youth. Worry profiles were then compared based on various individual characteristics, military family factors, and markers of overall well-being. Youth in the most worried profile displayed more negative outcomes than those in the middle and low worry profiles.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Three profiles of youth worry emerged: those that scored high on all the indicators of worry (the worried profile), those who scored low on all the indicators (the untroubled profile), and those with scores between the high and low classes (the concerned profile).
- Youth were more likely to be part of the untroubled profile than the concerned or worried profile if their civilian parent engaged in better coping strategies.
- Youth in the untroubled class indicated they had more positive parent-child interactions with their Active Duty parent than those in the worried profile.
- Youth in the untroubled and concerned profiles had lower levels of depressive symptoms and difficulty adjusting to a parent's deployment than those in the worried profile, as well as higher scores on the self-efficacy and well-being scales.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide education to military parents about the importance of self-care in maintaining a positive parent-child relationship
- Disseminate information to youth about the detrimental effects of too much worry, as well as coping strategies for managing worry.
- Engage Service members and their spouses in classes that emphasize the importance of focusing on a positive parent-child relationship after deployment

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the training of professionals and parents to better identify problematic levels of worrying among military youth
- Continue to provide support for programs that work to increase positive parent-child relationships
- Continue to support programs that address the unique challenges faced by military youth

This product is the result of a partnership funded by the Department of Defense between the Office of Military Community and Family Policy and the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture through a grant/cooperative agreement with The University of Minnesota.



Putting Research to Work for Military Families



METHODS

- Participants were recruited from an Active Duty Army installation in the US.
- To be eligible, families had to have at least one Active Duty Service member and at least one adolescent between 11-18 years old.
- Youth participants completed a survey assessing their demographics, worry, depressive symptoms, well-being, academic performance, military family context, and deployment adjustment.
- A person-centered approach to data analysis was taken where individuals were assigned to their most likely profile based on their responses to the eight questions about how much they worried. This resulted in a 3-group model of youth worry.

PARTICIPANTS

- A total of 273 military families participated in the study.
- The mean age of youth in the sample was 13.64 years (SD = 2.08), and 52% of the sample was female.
- Approximately 88% of the sample had a parent who was enlisted, 38.5% who deployed within the past year.

LIMITATIONS

- This study used cross-sectional data, therefore no conclusions can be made about changes in participants over time.
- Because the majority of families participating had a father who was deployed, conclusions cannot be drawn about other types of military families, including dual-military families and families where the mother was the one who was deployed.
- Without race and ethnicity data, it is difficult to determine if this study would generalize to the larger military.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Utilize longitudinal data in order to explore the order of changes over time
- Target other types of military families, including dual-military and families where the mother deployed
- Collect race and ethnicity information in order to show how well a sample generalizes to other populations

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>