



Adolescent Reports of Parental Spousal Violence in Military and Civilian Families

Cronin, C. (1995). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 10(1), 117-122.
<http://jiv.sagepub.com/>



This study provides a descriptive analysis of college students from military and civilian families (employed by the U.S. Department of Defense) residing overseas regarding their observations of their parents engaging in parental spousal violence. To collect these data, the author used a questionnaire that measured how frequently the students had observed one or both parents expressing any of nine specific aggressive behaviors toward one another.

Key Findings:

- Students in military families reported higher levels of spousal violence compared to civilian families.
- There were no significant differences between Whites and African Americans for spousal violence. When comparing the responses of military to civilian students within same ethnic groups, White students of military families reported a higher percentage of parental violence compared to civilians but there was no difference between military and civilian families within the African American sample.

Implications for Programs:

- Military and civilian families stationed overseas may benefit from programs that teach adaptive conflict management and coping strategies.
- Military and civilian dependents stationed overseas might benefit from programs designed to help them cope with having been exposed to spousal violence in an effort to prevent perpetuating a cycle of violence.

Implications for Policies:

- Policies that focus on prevention and intervention of spousal violence should include on all family members; although all family members may not be directly involved in the violence they do report witnessing the violence and may experience vicarious trauma as a result.
- Policies may be put in place that permit children who witness spousal violence to report anonymously and receive support.
- Support should continue for existing programs and resources that offer violence/abuse prevention and intervention.

Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research should include representative samples, equal group sizes for planned comparisons, standardized measures, and measures of spousal violence prior to being stationed overseas.
- Future research would benefit from including multiple informants (between siblings, or children and parents) of spousal violence in an effort to analyze the degree of agreement between informants.

Prepared by Military REACH Team.

For additional information, please visit <http://reachmilitaryfamilies.arizona.edu>



Background Information

Methodology:

- Frequencies, percentages, and chi square analyses were used to describe and compare students' reported observations of their parents' spousal violence in military and civilian families stationed overseas. Data were collected using an anonymous questionnaire based on Laner (1985), asking participants to indicate how frequently they observed their parents expressing specific aggressive behaviors toward each other.
- Participants were selected by approaching individuals in residence halls (i.e., a convenience sample). Only 202 of 683 (29.6%) of those approached completed the survey.
- This study focused on college students of military and civilian families stationed overseas.

Participants:

- Participants were college students (38% male) of military (n = 116) and civilian (n = 86) families stationed overseas. Civilian families were overseas as U.S. Department of Defense Employees.
- Ethnicity was reported as: 79% White; 16% African American; 4% Asian American.

Limitations:

- Participants may differ from non-participants in a way that is not measured, but affected the outcome variables for example, those who participated may have experienced less violence between their parents and be more willing to participate.
- The distinction between military and civilian families is ambiguous and not clearly described by the author. While there may be differences in family background the civilian families are also stationed overseas as DoD employees.
- Conclusions based on a small convenience sample may not be appropriate for the larger population.
- Reported frequencies of observed violent behaviors were based on retrospective reports with no reported timeframe; therefore, it is unclear if the observed violence is unique to being stationed overseas.

Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample				Quality Rating:	★☆☆
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★☆)	Limited (★☆☆)	Questionable (☆☆☆)	
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Research Methods				Quality Rating:	★☆☆
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★☆)	Limited (★☆☆)	Questionable (☆☆☆)	
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Limitations				Quality Rating:	★☆☆
	Excellent <i>Minor Limitations</i> (★★★)	Appropriate <i>Few Limitations</i> (★★☆)	Limited <i>Several Limitations</i> (★☆☆)	Questionable <i>Many/Severe Limitations</i> (☆☆☆)	
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Implications				Quality Rating:	N/A
	Excellent (★★★)	Appropriate (★★☆)	Limited (★☆☆)	Questionable (☆☆☆)	
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications					
				Overall Quality Rating	★☆☆

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