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Healthy Reintegration: The Effectiveness of Military Teen Adventure Camp Participation on Adolescent Perceptions of Self-Efficacy

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HEALTHY REINTEGRATION: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY TEEN
ADVENTURE CAMP PARTICIPATION ON ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF
SELF-EFFICACY

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Science in College of Agriculture, Food and Environment at the University of Kentucky

By

Cortnie S. Baity

Lexington, Kentucky

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Lexington, Kentucky

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

HEALTHY REINTEGRATION: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MILITARY TEEN ADVENTURE CAMP PARTICIPATION ON ADOLESCENT PERCEPTIONS OF SELF-EFFICACY

Perceived self-efficacy plays a key role in healthy reintegration post-deployment. Reintegration is characterized as the final stage in the deployment cycle, including returning home from combat and reassuming home-front roles and responsibilities. The objective of this study is to describe a program, specifically the Military Teen Adventure Camp (MTAC), and evaluate the program's effectiveness in increasing perceptions of self-efficacy among adolescents who have experienced the deployment of at least one parent. The findings suggest participating in Military Teen Adventure Camps have a positive effect on adolescent perceptions of self-efficacy, which could decrease family distress during reintegration.

KEYWORDS: self-efficacy, deployment cycle, reintegration phase

Cornie Baity

May 8, 2016

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Chapter One

Introduction

Approximately fifty percent of military service members have children (Marek et al., 2013). Consequently, nearly two million children in the United States grow up in homes with at least one military parent (Marek et al., 2013). Increased parental military enlistment can be attributed to the attacks of September 11, 2011, the war in Afghanistan, the on-going war on terrorism, and the crisis in the Middle-East, all resulting in increasingly more families being impacted by deployment (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003; Griffith, 2009; O'Hanlon, 2011). Despite deployment being labeled by some researchers (Gewirtz, Erbes, Polusny, Forgatch, & DeGarmo, 2011) as a catastrophic stressor on the family, it is a routine occurrence in military life and culture. In the last ten years, over three million family members, including children, spouses, partners, and adult dependents of service members have been affected by deployment (Marek et al., 2013). In the past decade, the number of families that have experienced the deployment of a parent and subsequent challenges of reintegration has increased substantially (Marek et al., 2013). Many military families continue to face similar challenges.

Perceived self-efficacy can play a key role in healthy reintegration post-deployment (Bandura, 1994). Reintegration is often characterized as the final stage in the deployment cycle, including returning home from combat and reassuming home-front roles and responsibilities (Pincus, 2001). Current literature underlines the effect deployment has on military service members and their families, with emphasis on the reintegration phase (Drummet et al., 2003; Gewirtz et al., 2011; Lester et al., 2010; Pincus, 2001). Such literature is valuable in that it provides knowledge about what

military families experience during the deployment cycle. However, research is maximized when it not only provides knowledge but is applied in real-world context in an effort to bring about positive change. This study utilizes data from a program developed to strengthen military parent-child relationships that are anticipating deployment or already have faced deployment. By addressing unique stressors experienced by military parents and their teen children, families may be less susceptible to family transition difficulties. There is a paucity of research studies and programs that emphasize family-based support services, especially for military populations, which enhance self-efficacy and help families navigate deployment cycle transitions. By catalyzing perceived self-efficacy among teens, support service programs may be able to better aid families in reestablishing bonds between military parent-adolescent dyads, which could be conducive to the overall reintegration phase. The main objective of this study is to describe the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Military Teen Adventure Camp (MTAC) program and evaluate one of its objectives: increasing the perception of self-efficacy among teens, who have experienced the deployment of at least one parent, by camp participation.

Need for the Study

Military family camps aim to help service members and their families navigate the many transitions associated with deployment, especially reintegration. In order to facilitate healthy reintegration for these families, there must be an understanding of the factors contributing to the family's ability to navigate change, adapt to novel challenges, and carry-out healthy interaction patterns after a family member is deployed. Previous research examining military youth and deployment suggests that:

Cognitive appraisals of a stressor mediate the effects of stress and influence choice of coping strategies. If youth lack confidence in their ability to cope with stress and perceive parental support to be unsatisfactory, stressors such as those associated with the deployment cycle may be appraised as harmful to their well-being, and emotional and behavioral health problems may result. Therefore, efficacious interventions will need to include the youth and their non-deployed parent to foster perceptions of support as well as adaptive coping skills and parenting skills. (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011, pp.9-10)

Exploring self-efficacy perceptions among military teens will help inform program developers on what should be included in military family support curriculums that will best aid families with healthy transitions.

Statement of the Problem

Given that military service members are increasingly experiencing deployment, researchers must address deployment as a pivotal event for both the service member and his or her family. Furthermore, families that have adolescent children could be susceptible to increased parent-teen relationship strain, which can be harmful to the reintegration process.

For the scope of this study, adolescent perception of self-efficacy is defined as the military teen's belief that he or she can overcome new challenges, viewing a challenge such as deployment as a navigable opportunity for growth instead of a threat. Recent research (Ashurst et al., 2014) has found positive military teen adventure camp participant outcomes, such as parents spending time with children, interacting with other military families, sharing stories and opportunities for establishing new friendships to be especially meaningful to the reintegration stage.

Hypothesis

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of military teen camp participation on military adolescents' perceptions of self-efficacy (see appendix A for key terms). This study addressed the following hypotheses:

1. *Self-efficacy* will be affected after participating in a military teen adventure camp. More specifically, adolescents who complete the camp will report increased perceptions of self-efficacy compared to reports of self-efficacy perceptions at the beginning of the camp.

2. The mean reported self-efficacy perceptions of teens pre-camp will differ by the number of deployments experienced.

3. The mean reported self-efficacy perceptions of teens post-camp will differ by the number of deployments experienced.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

In order to provide effective reintegration support programs for parent-teen pairs, it is key that researchers and clinicians understand unique stressors accompanying the deployment cycle, implications of deployment, and how they influence the parent-teen relationship. It is also important to be informed about possible difficulties experienced by teens during the reintegration phase.

Deployment Cycle

Today's United States military is composed of over two million volunteer service members. Sixty percent of these individuals have received deployment orders, which have directly affected their families (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011). Repetitive relocating, numerous separations and reunions, and consequential restructuring of the family imposes risk for military families. The ever-present possibility of deployment and its accompanied obligation to create new norms affects every member of the family system (Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011).

The deployment cycle includes five phases. The first phase is recognized as pre-deployment. Following the receiving of deployment orders, families may experience denial of the upcoming deployment. It is common for families to begin anticipating the loss of the service member from the home. In addition to the family's psychological preparations during this stage of the deployment cycle, service members are commonly preoccupied with taking care of home-front affairs prior to departure, undergoing long hours of mobilization training, and potentially resolving family disputes surrounding the upcoming family transition (Pincus, 2001). The second phase is deployment, the actual

period of mobilization. Service members often experience possible insomnia and ambivalent emotions (Pincus, 2001). Following deployment is the sustainment phase. Sustainment involves establishing new routines and often brings with it a gained sense of confidence to endure mobilization (Pincus, 2001). The final two stages of the deployment cycle are re-deployment and post deployment. Re-deployment is marked by anticipation and excitement about returning home and sometimes trouble with personal, financial, and professional decision making. Lastly, reintegration is characterized by honeymoon periods, new routines, and reintegrating into the family system (Pincus, 2001).

Overall, the deployment cycle encompasses a variety of emotions. Feelings of pride, happiness, and family cohesion are positive characteristics of the deployment cycle (Ashurst et al., 2014). However, this process is also recognized as a time of heightened stress and commotion. Planning for abrupt transitions may cause stress and disorganization. Thorough preparation is key for family cohesion and survival during the deployment phase. Adjusting to extended periods of separation from loved ones and the implementation of new routines can put stress on family relations (Pincus, 2001). Although each phase affects the family system, deployment and reintegration may have the greatest impact on relationships (Pincus, 2001).

Deployment. While service members are deployed, family members left behind make daily adjustments and sacrifices as an effort to maintain family togetherness in absence of their missing loved one (Ashurst et al., 2014). Emotional and psychological adjustments can be difficult and impact all dynamics of the family system, especially parent-child relationships. A constant ebb and flow of mixed emotions coupled with disorganization, reorganization, and anxiety stemming from obligatory physical and

emotional distance can make preserving parent-child bonds challenging (Pincus, 2001; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011). Families are commonly plagued with worries about their loved one's safety and whether he or she will return home. Feelings of hopelessness, abandonment, sadness, and numbness can ensue during the deployment phase putting parent-child relationships at risk. Negative emotions commonly manifest as sudden changes in children's moods and behaviors (Gewirtz et al., 2011; Esposito-Smythers et al., 2011).

Reintegration. Upon return from deployment families are faced with reintegration and reconnecting, which the literature refers to as a critical period of the deployment cycle (Marek et al., 2013). It can be an experience of significant growth and change, requiring families to re-learn how to co-exist with one another. Re-establishing new norms after several months of separation and change can be a trying time for both the service member and their family, especially for families who lack support with navigating this process. Having access to adequate resources can often be the difference between healthy and unhealthy reintegration (Ashurst et al., 2014).

It is key for researchers and clinicians to review the literature on reintegration and be cognizant of the unique challenges of children and adolescents who are a part of the military population. It is vital to use this knowledge to keep watch for possible warning signs of reintegration difficulty. In order to be most effective in helping families navigate the home coming of service members, those providing support services need to be informed about reintegration trouble spots.

Impact of Deployment: Children and Adolescence

A substantial population of military families face annual duty-associated separations. Over 33% experience separation periods enduring for a total of 17 weeks or longer (Drummet et al., 2003). The deployed family member may be absent for a significant percentage of their child's developmental stages—time periods where evolution of the child's behavior, interests, and needs is continuous. Symptoms of children coping with deployed parents may include sleep disruptions, behavioral problems, phobias, and increased physical infirmities (Drummet et al., 2003). Such symptoms, however, do not always develop among all children experiencing parental deployment. A child's response to deployment is largely influenced by the at-home parent's ability to adjust once the deployed parent is no longer present (Drummet et al., 2003). Also, children's mood differences may be attributed to constant change in their perception of home (Jensen et al., 1995; Marchant & Medway, 1987). A common concern for a family after deployment is the possibility of parent rejection upon return, which can make for a more stressful reintegration process (Drummet et al., 2003). Indicators of developed emotional distance may include a child's display of anxiety in the presence of the returned parent or complete dismissal of the parent's presence (Drummet et al., 2003).

The specific impacts of deployment on children greatly depend on the individual child's stage of development (Pincus, 2001). Given our knowledge of deployment's influence on the entire family system, it is reasonable to assume that sudden, negative behavioral and mood fluctuations in children may be linked to parental deployment. Teenagers may participate in acts of rebellion, attention-seeking, isolation, and

aggression. They may show a decreased interest in school, peers, and the extra-curricular activities they enjoyed prior to deployment (Lincoln, Swift, & Shorteno-Fraser, 2008; Pincus, 2001). Increased probability for risky behaviors such as promiscuity and substance misuse may arise as well (Pincus, 2001). The teenager may deny worries, stresses, and changes in mood and behavior due to the experience of parental deployment, but it is important for the at-home parent to remain engaged and informed. Providing normal structure and expecting him or her to carry out certain familial duties, such as helping with chores and assisting younger siblings with bed-time routines, helps the teen combat feelings of abandonment, loneliness, and the need for attention (Pincus, 2001).

Reconnecting Families

Despite research supporting the ability of military children and adolescents to display high levels of resilience, they still face difficulties unique to the reintegration phase (Lester et al., 2010; Sayers, Farrow, Ross, & Oslin, 2009). A common worry upon the rejoining of the deployed parent may include how to process ambivalent emotions about their parent's return (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Burns, & Griffin, 2011). Among other worries, adolescents may experience stressors associated with achieving successful reconnection within the parent-child relationship. It is also common with the return of the parent for children to find it difficult to make decisions about whom they should seek out for advice and support. Other challenges include concerns about how both parents interact as a couple and parent system. Teens may find it difficult to adjust and learn to co-exist with the returned parent's mood variations. Of additional concern may be the fear of possible future deployments, and how they can aid the deployed parent in fitting

back into home-life roles and routines (Chandra, Lara-Cinisomo, Burns, & Griffin, 2011). In the sudden advent of many sources of worry and stress, adolescents may struggle with several psychosocial problems, depression, and maladjustments (Gewirtz et al., 2011).

Healthy communication within the family positively correlates to resilience in military children despite the presence of strain (Chandra et al., 2011). Reintegration can take many shapes and forms, and the child's gender and age can greatly impact the process. Female children often face more challenges with reintegration than male children. The longer the military parent is deployed, the more likely it is that female children will struggle to reconnect with the parent upon return (Lester et al., 2010). Male children commonly experience reintegration difficulties related to decreased autonomy and increased structure upon the rejoining of the deployed parent (Lester et al., 2010). Variations in reaction among males and females is further outlined in the literature, revealing that under stressful conditions male children will commonly take part in externalized behaviors, whereas girls typically engage in internalizing behaviors (Lester et al., 2010). In addition to gender considerations, it is critical to note that older children typically experienced higher levels of maladjustment during this phase compared to younger children (Lester et al., 2010). With this knowledge it is pertinent to provide specialized support services to meet the needs of military families with older children.

Theoretical Framework

Family Systems Theory. Dr. Murray Bowen introduced fundamental concepts of Family Systems Theory. His ideas are rooted in ideas proposed by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy's general systems theory, who suggested all systems are embedded in larger systems (Nichols, 2013; Von Bertalanffy, 1969). Therefore there is a network of

influence. Von Bertalanffy (1969) also proposed the idea that a system is more than the sum of its parts. For example, when things are organized in a system, something else emerges, the way a cake emerges from the interaction of ingredients in a recipe. Building on this concept, theorists posed the idea that systems are open and continually interact with their environment (Nichols, 2013; Von Bertalanffy, 1969). This theory supports why a teenager's perception of self-efficacy plays a significant role in the success of the family's reintegration phase. The adolescent's beliefs about self and other family members, as well as attitudes and behaviors, all have potential to be the difference between a successful or difficult reintegration. Teenagers who approach reintegration with lower perceptions of self-efficacy have potential to influence other members of the family system. For example, having negative expectations and doubtful views can derail reintegration morale and create new stressors. Enhancing the teenager's perceptions of self-efficacy encourages cooperative, adaptable, and positive behaviors. This in due course can produce an elevated sense of confidence to overcome novel challenges. This in-turn can lead to positive influence on the family system and ultimately a healthier reintegration phase.

Cybernetics. Although cybernetics closely resembles Von Bertalanffy's systems theory, it is unique. Cybernetics is an extended concept of general systems theory. It concentrates on the idea that "the study of feedback mechanisms in self-regulating systems, [suggests that] systems have a tendency to maintain stability" (Nichols, 2013, p. 55). Feedback can be categorized as either negative or positive. To further explain, positive feedback is a mechanism used to restore the system's natural balance, whereas negative feedback reinforces the direction of a system which can lead to the preservation

of a certain action or behavior. Self-fulfilling prophecies exemplify negative feedback loops (Nichols, 2013). For example, when a child is told he or she is ‘dumb’ and ‘simply cannot learn’, the child begins to internalize those beliefs, manifesting into actual learning deficiencies. This concept can be applied to how self-efficacy perceptions influence positive and negative feedback loops within the family, throughout the military reintegration phase. For example, Johnny, with a lower perception of self-efficacy, may view the returning service member, Dad, as a threat. Johnny recognizes now that Dad has returned, he is no longer the man of the house. As a result, he will have to relinquish some of the control and responsibility he was once given upon Dad’s mobilization. Johnny, resentful about adapting to the role shift, refuses to re-establish a relationship with Dad. Consequently, Johnny responds by disconnecting with the family system and spending more time with his best friend’s family. The negative feedback loop described in this scenario is Johnny’s parents accepting his detachment from the family system. Reinforcing such behavior preserves the teenager’s pessimistic perception of the returned service member, reducing the likelihood of reconnection. Theoretically, self-efficacy is a key medium to facilitating healthy reintegration (Bandura, 1994; Marek et al., 2013). Psychologist Albert Bandura (1994) defined self-efficacy as encompassing an individual’s belief in his ability to produce a desirable effect in his life. Perceptions of self-efficacy influence how individuals think, feel, and motivate themselves.

Theoretical Application to Military Teen Adventure Camp Development.

Family Systems theory and Cybernetics models were used as a premise for Military Teen Adventure Camp (MTAC) development (K. Ashurst, personal communication,

September 14, 2015). The MTAC programs aimed to incorporate activities that invited opportunities for reconnection among parent and teen pairs, such as creating family art projects, team-working their way through high- and low-ropes challenge courses, and gathering around one another during camp fire activities. Additionally, these camps focused on enhancing perceptions of self-efficacy. This innovative program provided parents that recently returned or were anticipating deployment and their teenage children with a unique chance to reacquaint themselves with one another, create memories, and build meaningful connections to last a life time.

In addition, this support program allowed potentially at-risk families an opportunity to face a novel challenge, such as canoeing, which requires co-dependence on your partner (parent or child) and work as a team in order to conquer a difficult task. The hope was that, in the completion of a novel challenge, parents and teens would gain a heightened sense of confidence in their ability to overcome an unexpected challenge (self-efficacy/resilience skill building), resulting in a stronger parent-child bond.

Canoeing requires several hours of spending quality time, which allowed the opportunity for one-on-one interactions without outside interruptions (i.e. technology). Canoeing takes place in an isolated setting, which invites communication and bonding from a unique approach.

The reintegration phase involves balance within the family system. If one part of the system (family member or dyadic relationship) is out of balance, it can make for a difficult reintegration phase. Based on family systems theory, the relationship between parent-teen pairs is a critical component to healthy reintegration of the overall family. The relationship between the deployed parent and each family member collectively

creates the climate and likelihood for a successful reintegration phase. In worst case scenarios, deployed parents and teens remain aloof post-deployment, which can lead to increased risky behavior among teens and poor home-life integration for the deployed parent (Drummet et al., 2003; Lester et al., 2010; Pincus, 2001).

As a means to minimize relational disconnect among parent-teen pairs after deployment, teenage children can participate in MTAC with their parent(s). These camps work to increase perceptions of self-efficacy, encouraging families to view novel challenges and difficult tasks, which occur within the re-integration phase, such as role shift and re-creation of home routines, in an optimistic light. In addition, elevated teenage perceptions of self-efficacy can help break cycles of negative feedback loops (Nichols, 2013) not conducive to healthy reintegration—restoring the family to its natural balanced state. For example, let us consider Johnny. It is hypothesized that if Johnny participates in MTAC, his perception of self-efficacy will be elevated. As a result, he will no longer see the reintegration phase as a threat but as an opportunity to embark upon a new chapter in his life and a chance to reconnect with Dad. Upon arrival at the camp, the negative feedback loop, Johnny spending time with his friend’s family, stops. Consequently, the positive feedback loop—providing an opportunity to reconnect with Dad and enhancing perceptions of self-efficacy—begins. With the teenagers’ modified perceptions, additional family stressors decrease and efforts to reconnect increase. The family can now operate on one accord, making for a reintegration phase that is healthier overall.

Military Teen Adventure Camps

Program Description

Aiding families in healthy reintegration served as the overarching positive outcome goal for Military Teen Adventure Camps. As a derivative of that goal, two sub-objectives emerged. The first was to create a space and opportunity for teenage children and their parents who were anticipating deployment, or for teenage children and their parents who recently returned from deployment, to spend time together and reconnect. Providing such an opportunity fostered rejoining and encouraged rekindling of the parent-child relationship after extended absence. The second objective included incorporating activities that enhanced perceptions of self-efficacy. This is key because enhanced perceptions of self-efficacy can nurture healthy reintegration. The second sub-objective included acquiring a deeper understanding of deployment experiences from the perspective of service members and their families. In doing so, researchers and clinicians can continue to develop and implement support service programs that more proficiently aid families in healthy reintegration (Ashurst et al., 2014).

In partnership with Purdue University, the University of Kentucky Family and Consumer Sciences Extension unit offered a total of seven high-adventure camps for military families in 2014 and 2015. These programs targeted a specific military population that included military parents anticipating deployment or recently returned from deployment and their teenage children— typically ranging from age 14 to 18. Grant funding covered all participant expenditures. Transportation, lodging, equipment rental, and meals were included. Military service members and their teenage children from any state and all military branches—Reserve, National Guard, and Active Duty—were invited

to participate. Camps were held throughout the state of Kentucky and adjoining states. Wilderness based activities (e.g. canoeing, skiing, wilderness survival, horseback riding, mountain biking, whitewater rafting, zip-lining, backpacking, and camping) served as the premise of the camp. Field instructors, all of which had at least a Bachelor's degree in outdoor and experiential education or related field (Ashurst et al., 2014), provided guidance for each activity. In addition to camp events, a psycho-educational feature was incorporated into the camps by an instructor, who facilitated nightly conversations on military deployment.

Military Teen Adventure Camp Protocol

The five deployment cycle phases provided a foundation for the camps' protocol (Ashurst et al., 2014). Furthermore, an alternative seven-phase model (Morse, 2006) served as a key piece in development and implementation of the camps, helping inform researchers and clinicians about the family's experience of deployment (Morse, 2006).

Military Teen Adventure Camp protocol included the application of innovative therapeutic activities as a means to help military families to reconnect. These activities were inspired by wilderness and adventure therapy models (Ashurst et al., 2014). Gass, Gillis and Russell (2012) define wilderness and adventure therapy as "the perspective use of adventure experiences provided by mental health professionals, often conducted in natural settings that kinesthetically engage clients on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels" (p.1). This particular model was employed due to instantaneous feedback available to participants. This is significant because family members are then able to digest the feedback and immediately apply it to the given context. Additional benefits to this model include its ability to produce emotional vulnerability, surface transparent

emotions, and increase one's belief in one's abilities to overcome new challenges (self-efficacy) (Mason, 1987; Smith, 2011).

Chapter Three

Methods

Sample

This study was conducted using secondary data. As a result, no participant recruitment was required. Data included teenagers between the ages of 14 and 18 who participated in Military Teen Adventure Camps. This specific population was targeted due to the essence of adolescence, which often includes significant evolution of the self and interpersonal relationships. With our knowledge of the adolescent stage, we can assume additional stressors related to parental deployment, on top of stressors normally associated with adolescence, can have implications on teens' concept of self and their relationship with their parents. Pincus (2001) alluded to this suggesting the impact of deployment on children greatly depends on the individual child's stage of development.

A total of 185 adolescents from 129 military families responded to the survey. However, only 112 adolescents completed both the pre- and post-camp assessments. In an effort to maintain anonymity, data collectors did not require respondents to divulge exact age, thus a mean or standard deviation was not calculated in the data analysis. However, demographic information representing the entire family system was reported. Respondents with missing data were omitted. From each parent-teen pair (family) the majority of parental participants were male (n=100, 54.1%) and Caucasian (n= 121, 65.4%). Additionally, 62.2% (n=115) of the sample reported identified the father as service member. Over half of participants identified as belonging to the Army military branch (n= 100, 54.1%). At the time of camp, over half of participants identified as having just come back from deployment or preparing to deploy (n= 101, 54.6%). Nearly

40% were identified as Active Duty (n=70). Over a quarter (n=52, 28.1%) of families reported experiencing four or more deployments. A detailed description of the demographic variables can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Sample Demographic Characteristics

Variable	N	%
Sex		
Male	100	66.2
Female	51	33.8
Ethnicity		
White	121	82.3
Black/African American	9	6.1
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6	4.2
Asian	4	2.7
Other	7	4.7
Which family member served		
Mother	12	8.8
Father	115	83.9
Mother and Father	8	5.8
Brother	1	0.7
I don't know	1	0.8
Military branch		
Army	100	66.2
Navy	18	11.9
Air Force	22	14.6
Marines	9	6.0
Coast Guard	2	1.3
SM military status		
Active Duty	70	0.5
Reserves	36	25.9
National Guard	32	23.0
I don't know	1	0.7
SM deployment status during camp		
Pre-deployment	18	14.8

Currently deployed	5	4.1
Table 1 (continued)		
<i>Sample Demographic Characteristics</i>		
Variable	N	%
SM deployment status during camp (cont.)		
Post-deployment	83	68.0
I don't know	14	11.5
Post-deployment & Pre-deployment	2	1.6
SM number of deployments		
Zero	4	2.8
One	28	19.4
Two	33	22.9
Three	27	18.8
Four or more	52	36.1

Measures

The General Efficacy Scale (GES) was utilized to score differences in adolescents' perception of self-efficacy post camp participation. The General Efficacy Scale is a 10-item psychometric scale designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs pertinent to coping with a variety of life demands (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995). The scale was originally developed in 1981 by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995), targeting both adolescent and adult audiences. It is ideal for evaluating perceptions of self-efficacy because it explicitly addresses personal agency, i.e., the belief that one's actions are responsible for successful outcomes. The response format is a four-point, Likert-type scale questionnaire, ranging from not at all true to exactly true. An example item is as follows: I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough (rate 1 to 4, not at all true to exactly true). The scale is available in English and 30 additional languages. The scales reliability is as follows: a correlation of at least .80 is suggested for at least one type of reliability as evidence; however, standards range from .5 to .9

depending on the intended use and context for the instrument. The General Efficacy scale's internal consistency has been reported as .76 to .90, with the majority in the high .80s. Lastly the scale reports validity, to the extent a measure captures what it is intended to measure. To score this instrument one must add up all responses to a sum score. The range is from 10 to 40 points (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995).

Procedure

Upon arrival at the camp, after giving consent, participants were provided with a survey to complete prior to beginning camp activities. At the closing of the camp, participants were given the same assessment instrument. The General Efficacy Scale had previously been approved by the University of Kentucky Institutional Review Board for data collection that included a military sample.

Analytic approach

Two methods of analyses were conducted to examine the data. Prior to running each analysis, each instrument was scored according to the GES guidelines. All responses on each instrument were totaled, producing a sum score for every adolescent's pre- and post-assessment.

Initial analysis of the data included running a paired sample t-test to compare sums of each teenage participant's pre- and post-camp assessments. This test was executed with a 95% confidence level, and p-values were considered to draw sample conclusions.

Following the initial analysis, a one-way ANOVA was calculated for both pre- and post-assessments, assigning number of deployments as the independent variable and self-efficacy perception scores as dependent variable. This analysis was conducted to

determine if statistically significant differences in perceived self-efficacy between five groups were present. The groups investigated in this analysis consisted of families who experienced zero, one, two, three, or four or more deployments.

Chapter Four

Results

Intervention Effects

The present study aimed to conduct a secondary data analysis as an effort to evaluate one outcome of the aforementioned high adventure camps. The data analysis reflects information gathered from a one-group pretest-posttest design (O1 X O2). The design provides the aptitude to infer the potential impact of intervention posed by the high- adventure camps (Royce, Thyer, Padgett, and Logan, 2000). The difference between means was statistically significant. The perceptions of self-efficacy for military teens differed before MTAC participation ($M = 31.93$, $SD = 3.42$) and after camp participation ($M = 35.44$, $SD = 3.71$) were statically significant, $t = -8.32$, $df = 111$, $n = 112$, $p = .022$, 95% CI [-4.43 to -2.67], $r = .216$. On average, perceptions of self-efficacy were about four points higher after high adventure camp participation.

The process outcome, increased perception of self-efficacy, provides preliminary evidence that military adolescents who participate in MTAC experience enhanced positive characteristics needed to navigate issues facing them during the reintegration transition.

Number of Deployments and Perceived Self-efficacy

A one-way ANOVA was calculated on teen participants' self-efficacy ratings both pre- and post-camp participation by number of deployments. Descriptive data from both pre- and post-camp analyses of variance can be found in Table 2.

Table 2
Analyses of Variance Descriptives

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Pre-camp Participation								
Zero	2	31.500 0	2.12132	1.5000 0	12.440 7	50.559 3	30.0 0	33.0 0
One	21	33.476 2	3.76323	.82120	31.763 2	35.189 2	27.0 0	40.0 0
Two	24	31.416 7	4.05309	.82733	29.705 2	33.128 1	24.0 0	40.0 0
Three	22	31.500 0	3.87606	.82638	29.781 5	33.218 5	25.0 0	40.0 0
Four or more	36	31.694 4	2.56147	.42691	30.827 8	32.561 1	27.0 0	36.0 0
Total	105	31.942 9	3.49953	.34152	31.265 6	32.620 1	24.0 0	40.0 0
Post-camp Participation								
Zero	4	35.250 0	5.73730	2.8686 5	26.120 7	44.379 3	27.0 0	40.0 0
One	28	35.392 9	4.25432	.80399	33.743 2	37.042 5	25.0 0	40.0 0
Two	33	34.727 3	4.91346	.85532	32.985 0	36.469 5	21.0 0	40.0 0
Three	27	35.370 4	3.54258	.68177	33.969 0	36.771 8	29.0 0	40.0 0
Four or more	52	34.980 8	3.73374	.51778	33.941 3	36.020 2	28.0 0	40.0 0
Total	144	35.083 3	4.10270	.34189	34.407 5	35.759 1	21.0 0	40.0 0

There was not a significant effect of the number of parental deployments on teen self-efficacy prior to camp participation, at the $p < .05$ level for the five conditions [$F(4,100) = 1.300, p = .275$]. Additionally, there was not a significant effect of the number of parental deployments on teen self-efficacy after camp participation, at the $p < .05$ level

for the five conditions [$F(4,139) = .141, p = .967$]. Analyses of variance reflecting results of both pre- and post-camp participation can be found in Table 3.

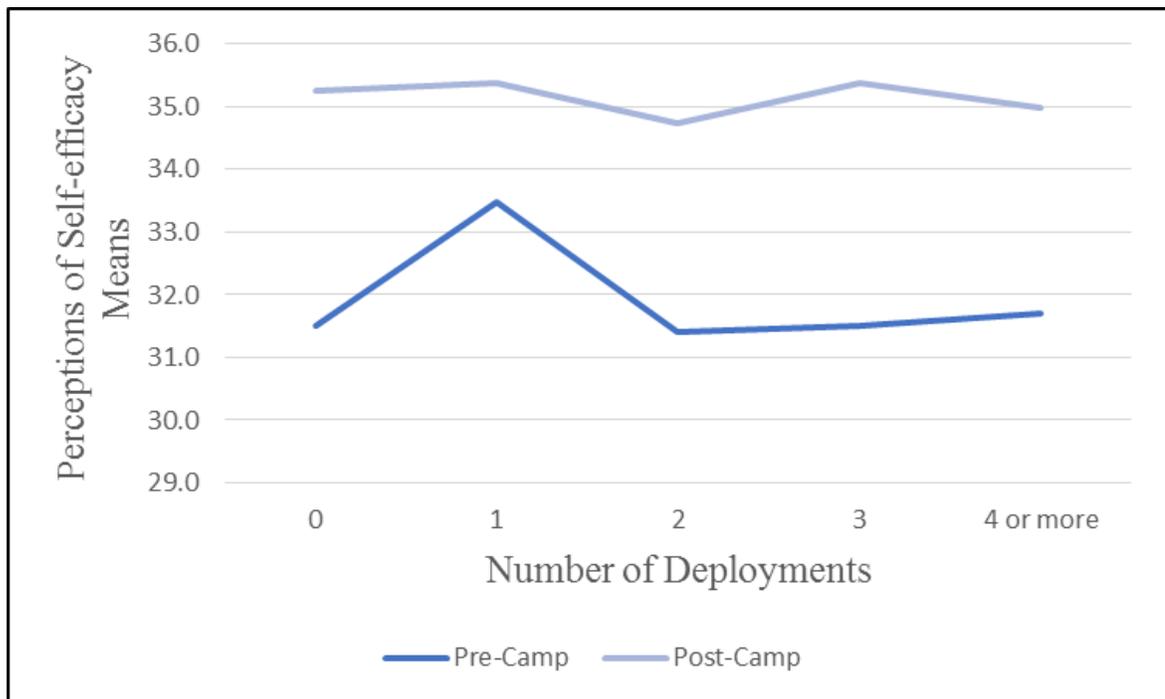
Table 3
ANOVA Analyses

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pre-Camp Participation					
Between Groups	62.947	4	15.737	1.300	.275
Within Groups	1210.710	100	12.107		
Total	1273.657	104			
Post-Camp Participation					
Between Groups	9.749	4	2.437	.141	.967
Within Groups	2397.251	139	17.246		
Total	2407.000	143			

However, an examination of the mean plots illustrated an unexpected trend (see figure 1). At the start of camp teens who had yet to experience the deployment of a parent rated perceived self-efficacy the lowest. Teens who had experienced one deployment, displayed the highest scores in self-efficacy, across all groups. As the number of deployments increased to two deployments, the data showed a decrease in self-efficacy perceptions, compared to the teens of the one-deployment group. Notably, for the three-deployment and four and up-deployment groups, perceived self-efficacy increases, following an upward trend, as the number of deployments increase.

At the end of camp, mean perceptions of self-efficacy for teens of the zero-deployment group increased by nearly four whole points. The results also indicated relatively lower self-efficacy scores for teens of the two-deployment group compared to teens' scores from other groups. This is consistent with self-efficacy reports made by this group, at the start of camp. As number of deployments increased to three, the post-assessment means plot shows perceived self-efficacy improvement. However, the group of teens who had experienced the highest numbers of deployments reported their perceived self-efficacy was the lowest.

Figure 1 Pre- and Post-Camp Participation Means Plot



Chapter Five

Discussion

The goal of this study was to evaluate the influence of Military Teen Adventure Camp participation on adolescent perceptions of self-efficacy. With support from family systems theory (Nichols, 2013), it was hypothesized that participating in the camp would be positively correlated with increased perceived self-efficacy among teens. Additionally, we postulated the more deployments a family experienced the lower the teens' self-efficacy perception would be (Nichols, 2013). The findings confirm the potential impact of participating in MTAC on the teen's belief in their ability to overcome unfamiliar hurdles and produce a desired result. Additionally, findings indicate perceptions of self-efficacy do not statistically differ between groups that experienced different numbers of deployments. However, an interesting trend was revealed in pre- and post-assessment means plots constructed in the one-way ANOVA analyses. It revealed, although teens who have experienced two deployments displayed increased perceptions of self-efficacy at the end of camp, this group consistently reported the lowest self-efficacy scores among all groups.

Program Effectiveness

One possible explanation for the observed difference between adolescent perceptions of self-efficacy at the start of camp and conclusion of camp is the opportunity to experience the challenge and conquering of new obstacles through practical, team-oriented adventure activities. These camps provided teens an opportunity to overcome new challenges in a nurturing and supportive environment, engaging them with their parent and support staff, who served as advocates during the experience. Approaching an

unknown task can be intimidating, threatening, and discouraging. However, support provided throughout the camp gave the participants courage to face uncharted territories. By the end of camp, adolescents had successfully overcome multiple obstacles, which had the potential to boost the teen's belief in his or her ability to produce a desired effect or result, in any given circumstance.

Facilitating the enhancement of self-efficacy perceptions is important because individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy have a tendency to view novel challenges, such as familial transitions, as an opportunity for potential growth (Bandura, 1994). This could be helpful during reintegration, which is characterized by new routines and uncertainty (Pincus, 2001). If adolescents approach reintegration with optimism, the family may experience a less stressful transition.

Number of Deployments

At the start of camp, teens who had not yet experienced deployment, rated self-efficacy perceptions relatively low. One possible explanation of this observation is doubt, fear, and uncertainty, which is often associated with anticipating new experiences. Although much preparation goes into preparing the service member and their family for upcoming transitions, for children anticipating family change is scary. Not only does deployment impact the service member but also the entire family system (Drummet, Coleman, & Cable, 2003). Uncertainties that lie ahead in the future are commonly seen as a threat to the cohesion and stability of the family system, presenting questions of "will I be okay" and "will my family be okay once the deployment takes place?"

Another notable finding from the analysis of variance is teens of the two-deployment group consistently reported lower self-efficacy scores at the start of camp

and end of camp, in comparison to the other four groups. One possible explanation for this observed decrease is that within families, initial change often results in a disruption to the family's equilibrium (Carter and McGoldrick, 1999). This is commonly associated with temporary lower levels of functioning and perceived overall well-being (Nichols, 2013). Although the experience of deployment is not entirely uncharted territory for the two-deployment group, unresolved family issues derived from previous deployments may have increased vulnerability of pre-existing self-doubt, decreasing perceptions of self-efficacy.

Limitations

The current study is not without limitations. A primary issue of this study is the modality of program evaluation: the pre- and post-test method. Previous researchers (Howard et al., 1979) have questioned the strength of program evaluation reports using pre- and post-tests, due to the difficulty of discerning whether measurable change can be attributed directly to the intervention, or if differences are being influenced by extraneous variables. As a result of isolated camp settings, the presence of common extraneous variables, such as technology, was removed, potentially influencing self-efficacy perceptions. Additionally, pre- and post-testing for program evaluation cannot account for whether the intervention is truly sustainable, due to the data being collected immediately at the program's conclusion. To add power to the findings, a follow up study that measures medium and long-term impact is planned.

Another limitation of this study includes the self-report measure used. When using self-report measures, researchers should be mindful of the variety of factors influencing the way a subject may respond in that moment. For example, if an adolescent

is not a morning person, and is in a bad mood when surveys were distributed on the morning of the last day of camp, their responses may reflect a less positive perspective, whereas an adolescent who reports being a morning person may answer more cheerfully.

An additional limitation is the demographic information of the sample. This is not a limitation of the study itself, rather a limitation of the data. Although ethnicity and sex were obtained for the parents, age, sex, ethnicity and race for the teens were not included in the secondary data set for the purpose of anonymity. Examining demographic information of military adolescents of deployed parents could provide a deeper understanding of how the adolescent stage of human development, influenced by cultural and contextual factors, impacts adolescent perceptions of self-efficacy, which may point toward differences in the reintegration stage between families.

Implications for Practice

Previous research has focused on the deployment cycle itself, but it is important to note that some stages of the deployment cycle may bring about more strain on the family than others, implying that special attention should be given to certain stages.

Furthermore, it is important to consider the role each family member and the relationship status of each sub-system plays in the family's overall functioning, especially after experiencing deployment.

The results of this study have implications for professionals working with military families experiencing reintegration difficulties. The findings from this study indicate that participating in such camps can meaningfully influence the reintegration phase by increasing the teens' perceptions of their ability to produce desired outcomes for their lives, even in the face of a new obstacle. Given these findings, the need to continue

providing military support programs for families is reinforced. Furthermore, it is key to continue to allocate added attention and resources to aid not only the entire family system, but also sub-systems, such as parent-teen pairs within the family, especially during times of transition and elevated stress.

Implications for Theory and Research

This research specifically relates to the postulates of family systems theory in that the findings demonstrate a cyclical interaction between teens' MTAC participation and their perception of self. More specifically, findings indicate that both relational and contextual factors work together to influence self-efficacy perceptions among teenagers. Overall, the study demonstrates the mutual influence system parts have on one another, which is the fundamental concept of family systems theory.

Future Research

Future research should be conducted including other variables such as age, because we can often identify various stressors based on where an individual stands in the life cycle of human development. At certain ages we may feel more confident in our self-efficacy than others. For example, a five year old may have a tendency to have an inflated sense of self-efficacy, whereas a college student who has experienced several obstacles and perhaps failures may have an attenuated perception of self-efficacy. Additionally, it would be interesting to turn this study into a longitudinal project, in order to determine whether elevated perceptions of self-efficacy among participating adolescents are sustained over time.

Concluding Remarks

In closing, this study indicated that participating in Military Teen Adventure Camps is a predictor variable for increased perceptions of self-efficacy among adolescents of military families. These findings highlight the importance of continuing government-funded programs for military personnel and their families.

Appendices

Appendix A

Key Terms

Self-efficacy: an individual's optimistic self-beliefs to cope with life's variety of difficult demands (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995).

Deployment cycle: The deployment cycle that service members experience when they receive federal orders to go on a military assignment. Sometimes deployment includes combat. The cycle includes five phases: pre-deployment, deployment, sustainment, re-deployment, and post-deployment/reintegration (Pincus, 2001).

Reintegration phase: Reintegration is the final stage of the deployment cycle that is often characterized by the service member returning home from a military assignment (combat/mission) (Pincus, 2001).

Appendix B



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EXEMPTION CERTIFICATION

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FROM: Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research Integrity

SUBJECT: Exemption Certification for Protocol No. 15-0989-X4B

DATE: December 4, 2015

On December 3, 2015, it was determined that your project entitled, *Healthy Reintegration: The Effectiveness of Military Teen Adventure Camp Participation on Adolescent Perceptions of Self-efficacy*, meets federal criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

Because the study has been certified as exempt, you will not be required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full review.

The Office of Research Integrity will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your file will be closed and the application destroyed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research Integrity upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. It is, therefore, important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research Integrity.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's IRB Survival Handbook web page [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/IRB-Survival-Handbook.html#PIresponsibilities>]. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site [<http://www.research.uky.edu/ori/>]. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at (859) 257-9428.

Appendix C

General Efficacy Scale

Response Format:

1 = Not at all true 2 = Hardly true 3 = Moderately true 4 = Exactly true

1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. _____
2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want. _____
3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals. _____
4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events. _____
5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations. _____
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort. _____
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities. ____
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions. _____
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution. _____
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way. _____

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Sigma Alpha Lambda Present	Spring 2013 -
Psi Chi Honors Society Present	Fall 2012-