

# Preventing Family Maltreatment Among Airmen: A Focus on Personal Resilience



Todd M. Jensen, PhD & Gary L. Bowen, PhD – School of Social Work, UNC-Chapel Hill

## Background

- Military-connected individuals and families experience unique work and family-life demands, and the risk of maltreatment perpetration among active-duty members is similar to the civilian population.
- The U.S. Air Force Family Advocacy Program has recently bolstered their approach to the secondary prevention of family maltreatment among active-duty members, resulting in a research-informed logic model.
- Incorporating a prevention perspective, the logic model calls for moving individuals toward a state of resilience and wellness, not only away from undesirable outcomes.

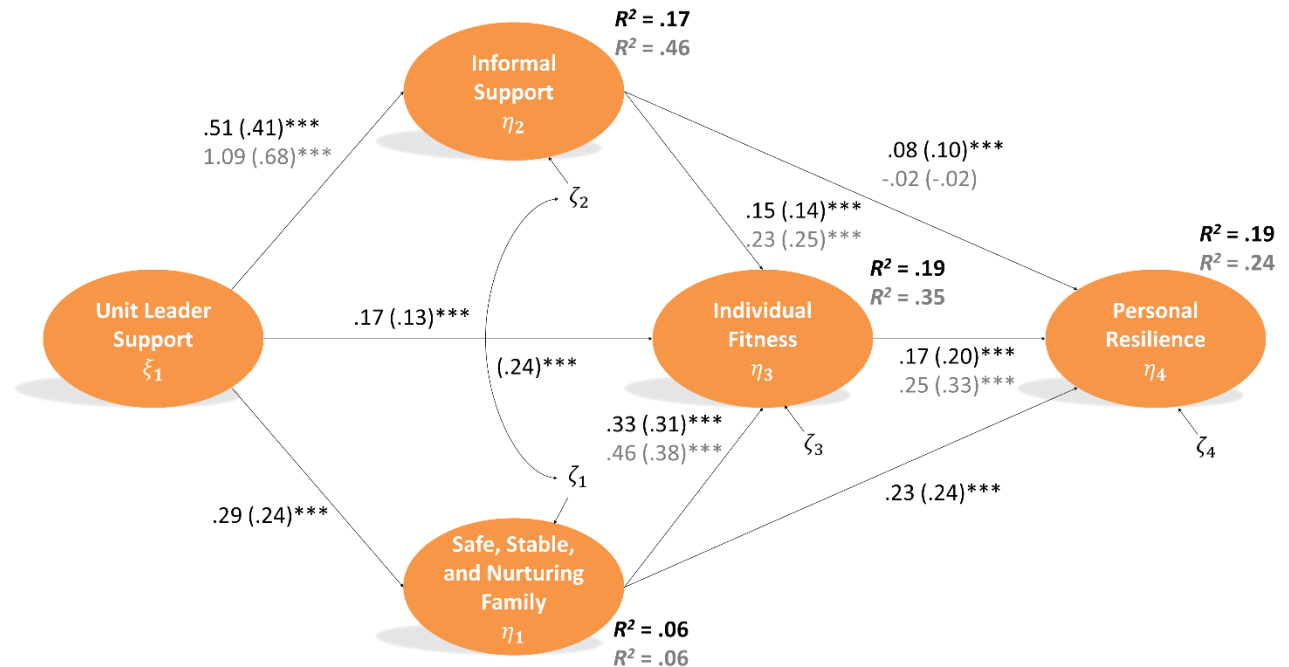
## Study Aims

- **AIM 1:** Using resilience and strengths-based perspectives, validate a proposed research-informed logic model for the prevention of family maltreatment.
- **AIM 2:** Evaluate the empirical performance of the logic model with respect to safe versus unsafe neighborhood contexts.

## Methods

- **Data:** 2011 Air Force Community Assessment Survey
- **Sample:** 27,154 active-duty Air Force members (83% male, 43% mid-enlisted paygrade [E5-E6]; 96% married) in a committed relationship with at least on child.
- **Subgroups:** 23,176 (Residents in Safe Neighborhoods), 3,978 (Residents in Unsafe Neighborhoods).
- **Analysis:** Structural Equation Modeling; Mplus 7.4.
- **Dependent Construct:** Personal Resilience (6 items)
- **Independent Constructs:** Unit Leader Support (4 items); Informal Support (second-order factor; 12 items); Safe, Stable, and Nurturing Family (second-order factor; 13 items); Individual Fitness (second-order factor; 13 items)
- **Covariates:** paygrade, biological sex, marital status, deployment status, and youngest child being 5 years old or younger.

## Results



Note: Standardized coefficients are displayed in parentheses. Estimates on top (black font) represent participants in safe neighborhoods (N = 23,176) and those on bottom (gray font) represent participants in unsafe neighborhoods (N = 3,978). Paths with one parameter indicate invariance between groups. Model fit indices were as follows:  $\chi^2(2,794) = 19938.55$ ,  $p < .001$ ; RMSEA = .021, 90% CI [.021, .022]; CFI = .97; TLI = .97. WLSMV estimator and sampling weights were used.

## Key Findings

- Personal resilience among airmen was **positively associated** with features of individual fitness; informal support; safe, stable, and nurturing family processes; and unit leader support.
- Almost all **indirect associations** were significant; the strongest of which was the path between unit leader support and personal resilience via safe, stable and nurturing family processes.
- **Neighborhood safety significantly moderated** some associations in the empirical model.

## Implications

**Practitioners focused on maltreatment prevention among active-duty Air Force members should:**

- Identify and implement interventions that effectively target one or more components in the logic model.
- Recognize that efforts to promote unit leader support and informal support might be especially impactful among members in neighborhoods perceived as unsafe.