National Evaluation of the *Stay on Track* Program: Examining the Unique Outcomes of Adolescents From Military Families

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"Breathing Life Into Future Generations"

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- National Guard Bureau
- Dr. Michael Rabby
  - Assistant Professor, Washington State University-Vancouver

Evaluations Conducted

- Pilot of the National Guard Implementation of *Stay on Track, 2006*
- National Evaluation of the *Stay on Track* program, conducted annually since 2007
- Examination of the unique outcomes of the military children who participated in *Stay on Track,* conducted annually since 2007

Today's Objectives

- Provide an overview of a universal evidence-based program
- Discuss modifications made to the evaluation design based on cultural implications
- Discuss strategies to assess the unique outcomes of military children

Stay on Track Overview

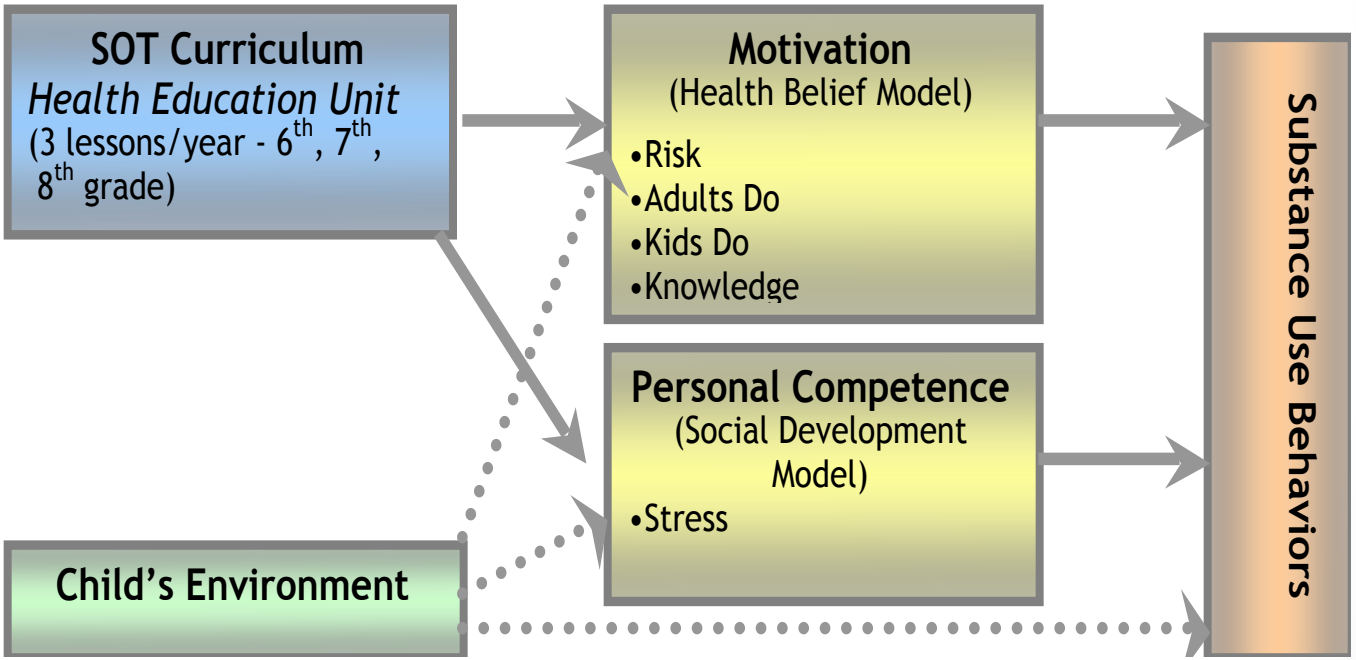
Theoretical foundation:

- Health Belief Model and Social Development Model
- Targets: Grades 6th – 8th
- Lessons:
  - Interactive lessons
  - Twelve lessons per level

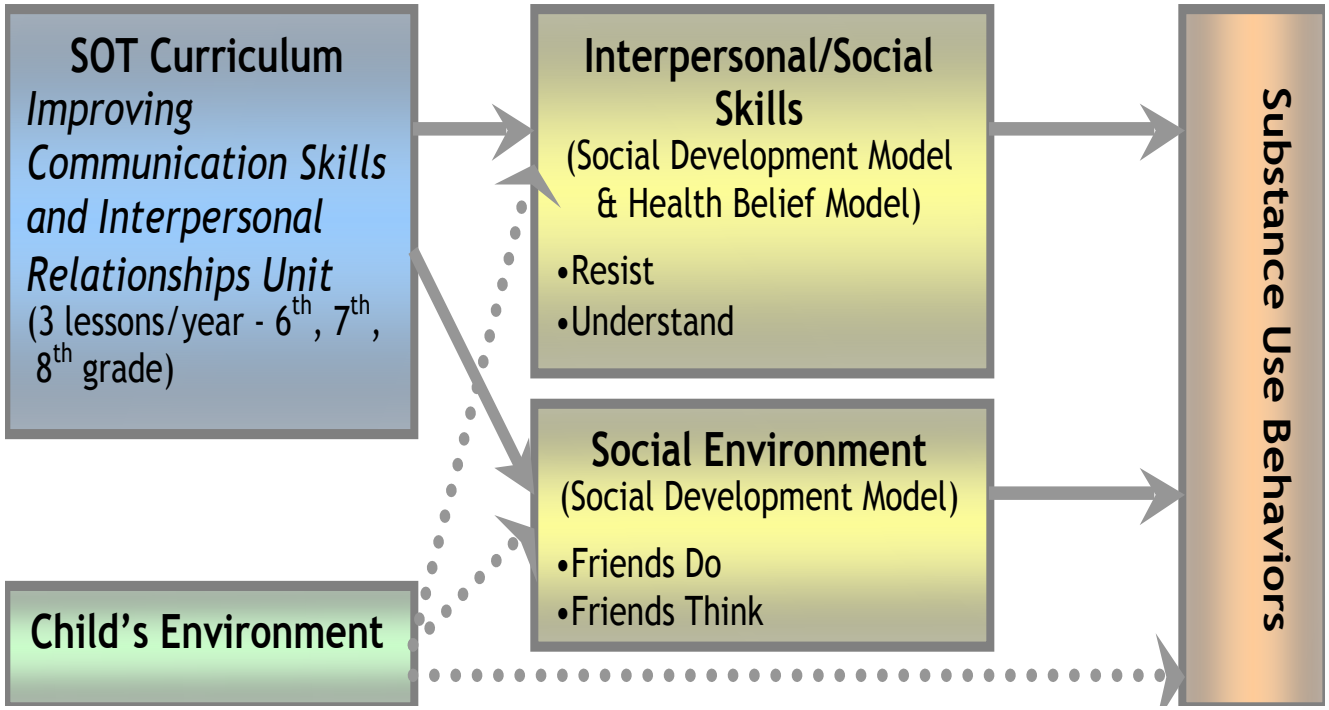
Stay on Track Development

- Designed with careful attention to three specific areas of individual development:
  - Cognitive
  - Social
  - Emotional
- Learning styles incorporated for:
  - Visual/tactile
  - Auditory
  - Cooperative
  - Individual

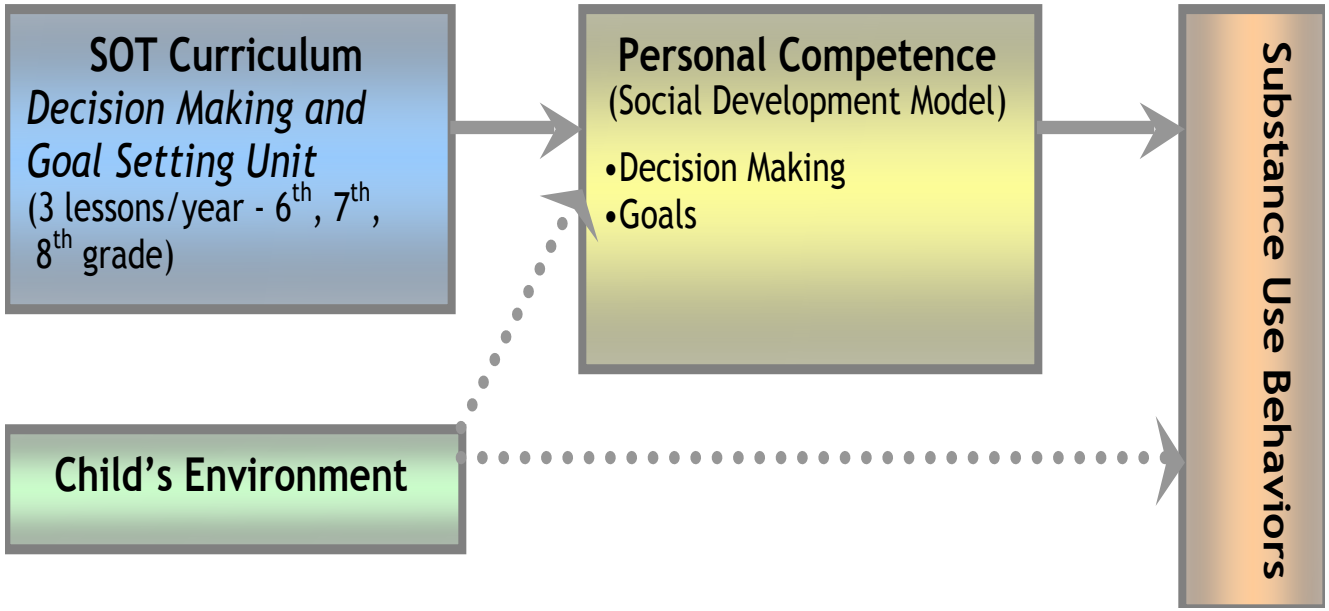
Health Education



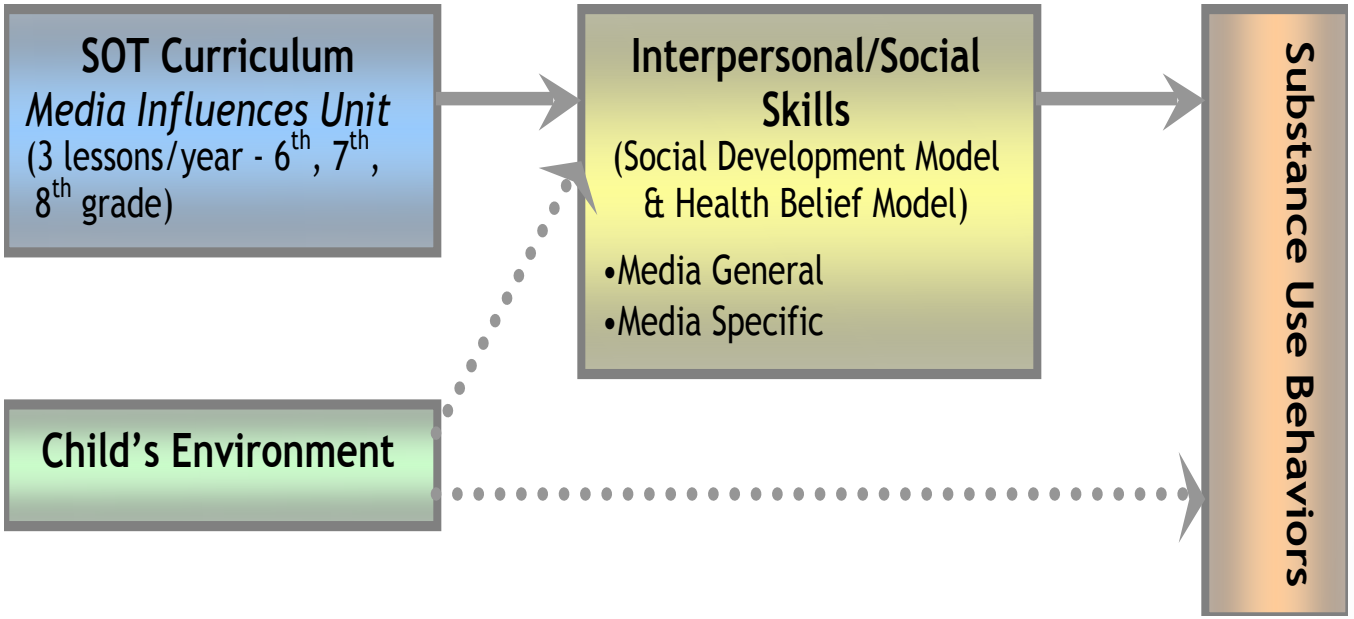
Communication Skills and Interpersonal Skills



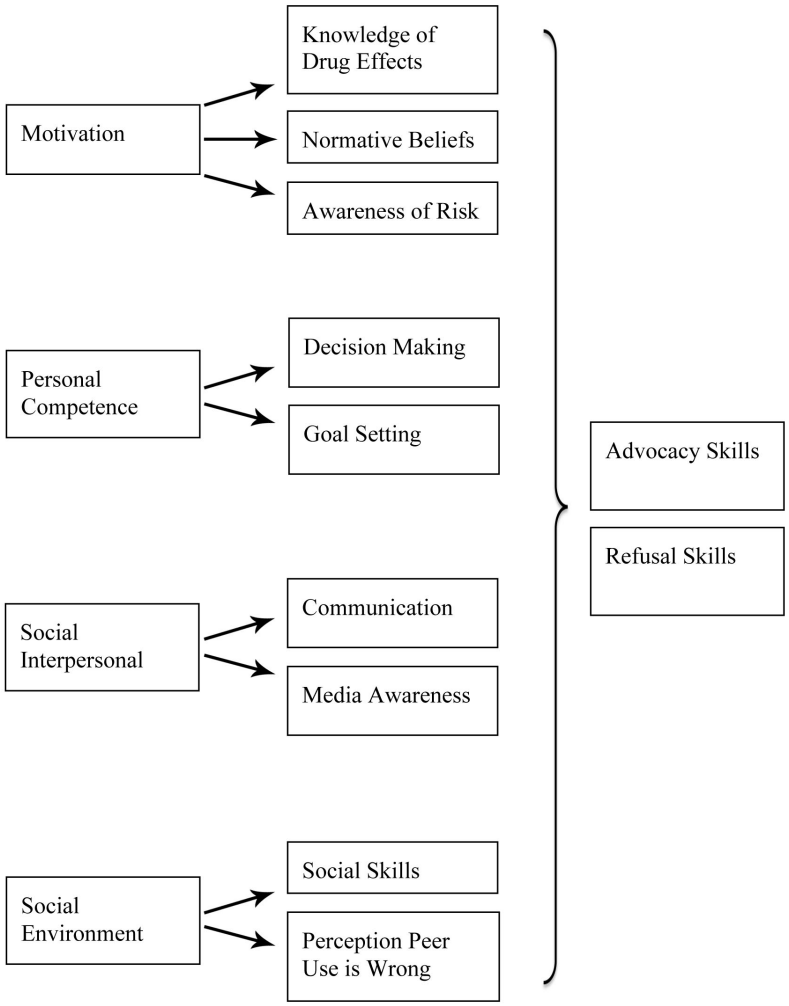
Decision Making and Goal Setting



Media Influences



Risk/Protective Factor in Curriculum



Clarity

- Activity - Fatal Vision Goggles
  - Volunteers?

Focusing on Helping Military Children

Evaluation Tools

- **Step One**: Audience Needs Worksheet
- **Step Two**: Communication and reporting plan for each audience
- **Step Three**: Outline each report identified in *Step Two*
- **Step Four**: Evaluation design matrix
- **Step Five**: Survey design matrix based on *Step One* through *Step Four*

Audience Needs Worksheet

Audience	Question	Response
NCPRS Program Group	• Example: Are the implementers receiving support and technical assistance from us efficiently? • Example: What are the unique outcomes of children from military families?	• Provide guidance on the report format and information provided. • Provide variations in student responses by military children.
Stakeholder	• Example: What are the yearly trends of the national evaluation? • Example: Does the program help children from military families?	• Provide yearly comparisons of core variables.
Parents	• Example: What is the purpose of the program? • Example: How can the program help my children?	• Provide parental resources on the website. • Involve parents in culmination events.

Evaluation Design Matrix

Research Question	Information Required	Information Source	Overall Design Strategy	Data Analysis Method	Limitations	What the analysis will provide
Does the *Stay on Track* program help in reducing risk factors identified within our national youth survey?	-QA survey envelopes -Calls with guardsmen -State-wide risk factors -Quasi-study	-Guardsmen -Student data -PM information	-Survey -Completed implementation checklists	-Descriptive /Inferential statistical procedures	-Lack of ability to monitor, relying on feedback, maturation, testing, other validity issues	-Program impact
Did the students demonstrate the intent to not use drugs after participating in the *Stay on Track* program?	-Calls with guardsmen -State-wide risk factors -Quasi-study	-Guardsmen -Student data -PM information	-Survey -Completed implementation checklists	-Descriptive /Inferential statistical procedures	-Lack of ability to monitor, relying on feedback, maturation, testing, other validity issues	- Program impact
What are the unique outcomes of children that report being from military families?	Military youth	-Student data	-Survey	-Descriptive /Inferential statistical procedures	-Self-report data	-Variations in student outcomes

Military Family Outcome(s)

- Parental psychosocial skills impact child's adjustment.*
- Families that do not live on military bases have more difficulty adjusting.*
- Increase PTSD reported by soldiers returning from war.**

*Palmer (2008)
**Hoge, et al., (2004)

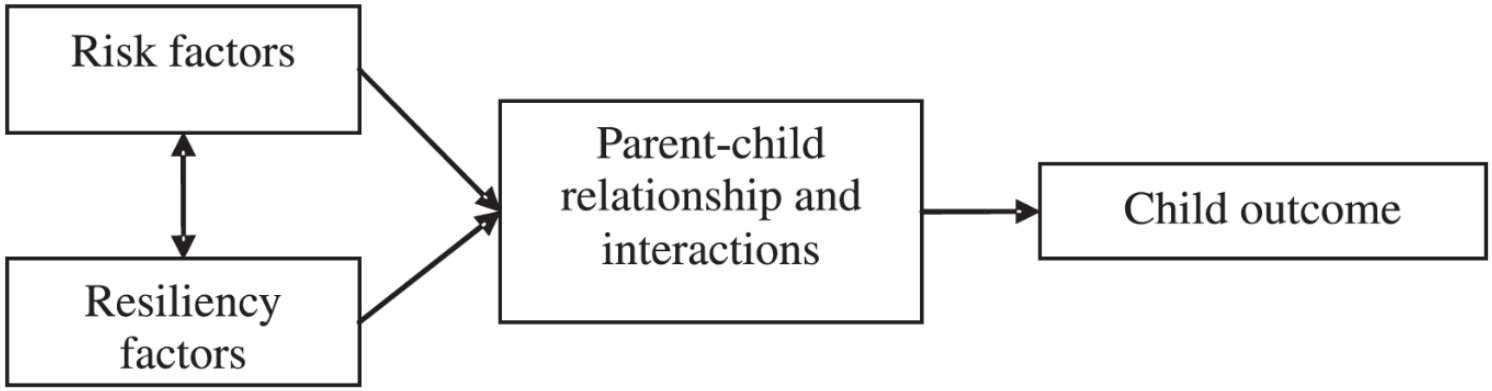
Individuals at a Greater Risk

The National Child Traumatic Stress Foundation* identified that children from military families are at a greater risk when they:

- Have pre-existing mental health conditions
- Are from a home with both parents deployed
- Are from a single-parent family where the parent is deployed
- Have parents who have experienced multiple deployments
- Have parents in Reserves/National Guard

*http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/military-children-and-families

Theory of Risk and Resilience Factors in Military Families (Palmer, 2008)



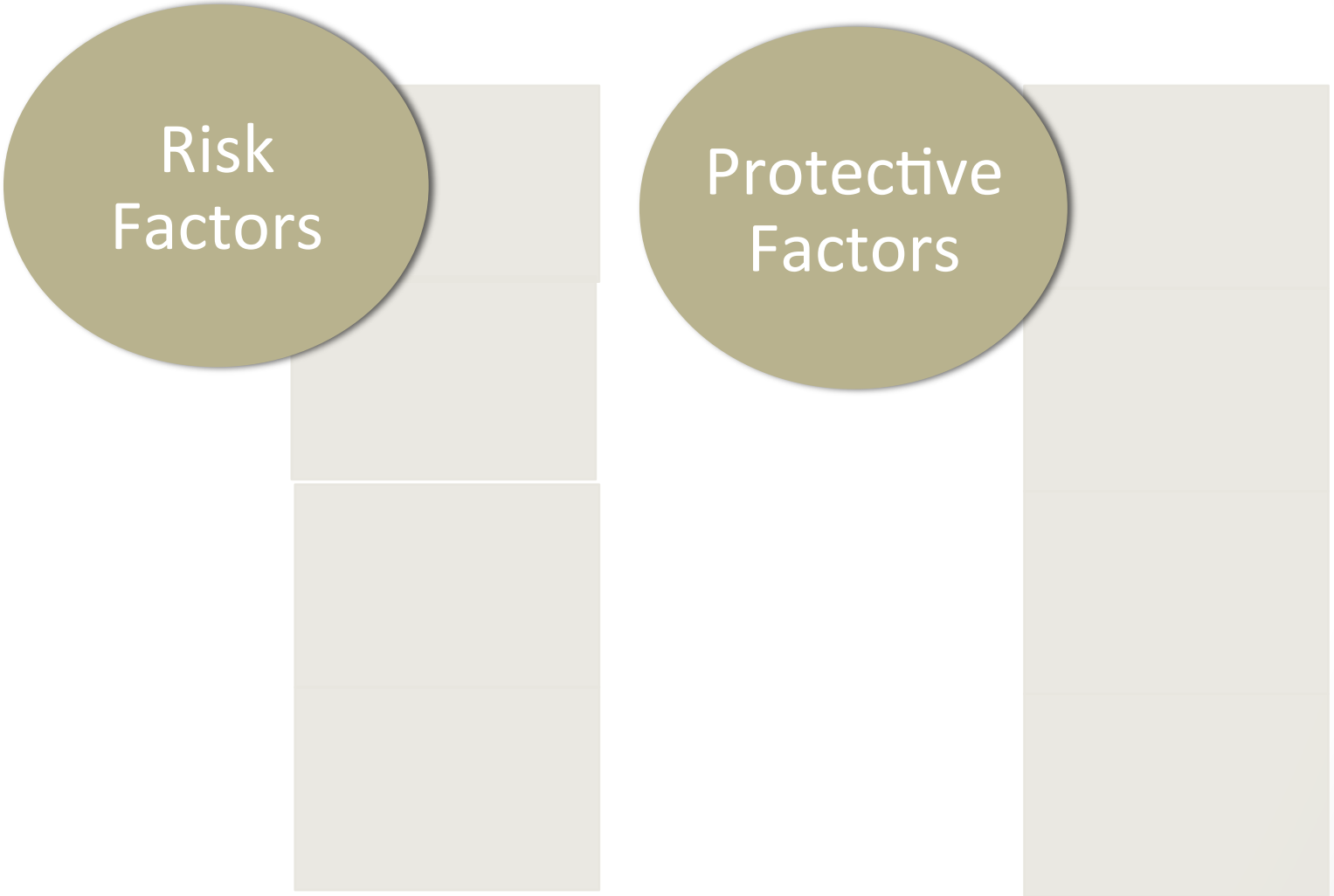
Pathway of indirect effects of military risk and resilience factors on child outcomes

Identification of Issue

- What does the data tell you?
  - Children from military families
  - Children experiencing parental deployment
    - Risk factors
    - Protective factors

Brainstorm Risk and Protective Factors

Children from military families

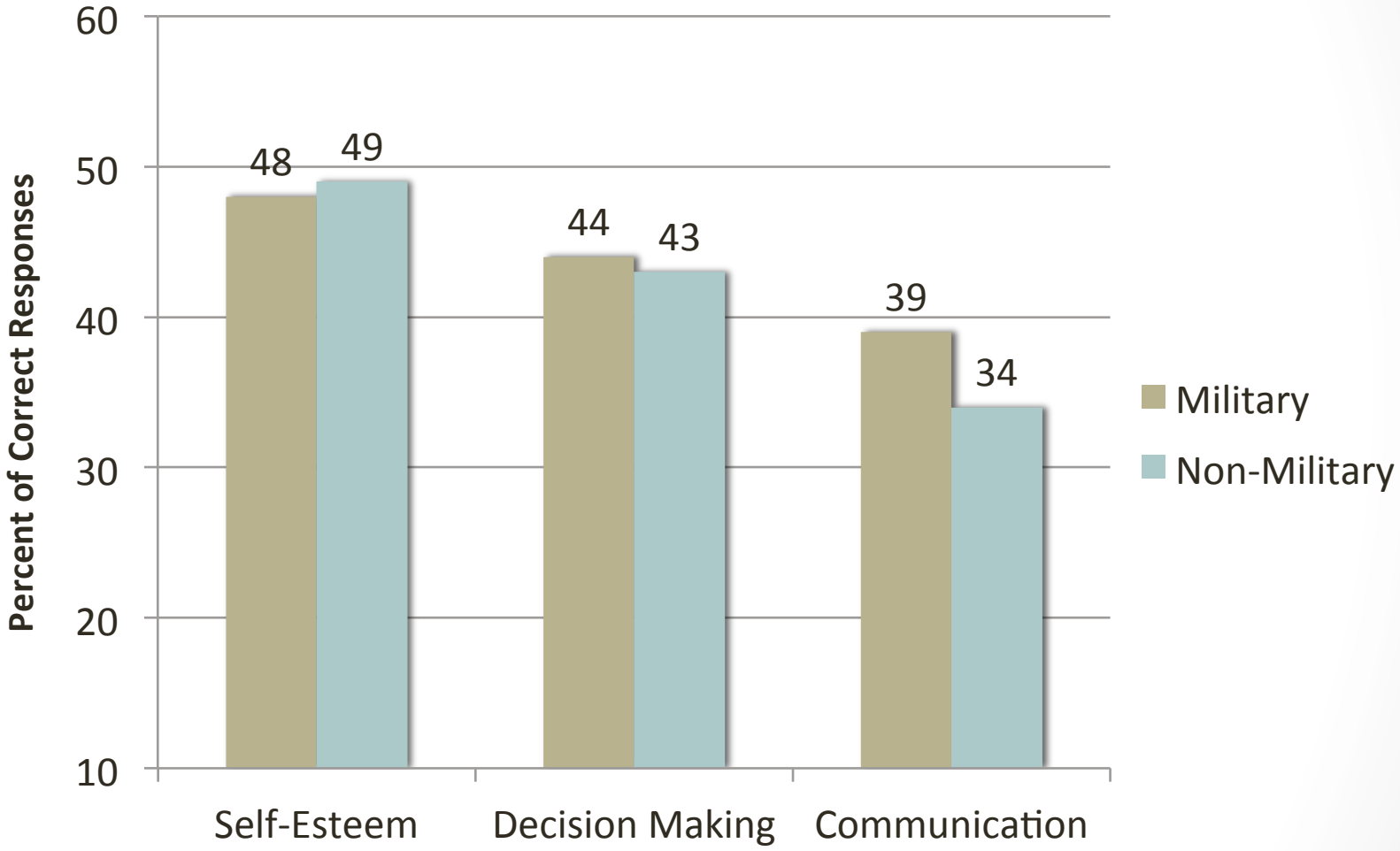


Individual Protective Factors*

- Positive coping *(e.g. Interpersonal communication)*
- Positive affect *(e.g.. Handling stress effectively)*
- Positive thinking *(e.g. Making sense out of a situation)*
- Realism *(e.g. Self-esteem)*
- Behavioral control *(e.g. Goal setting)*
- Physical fitness *(e.g. Functioning efficiently)*
- Altruism *(e.g. Selflessness)*

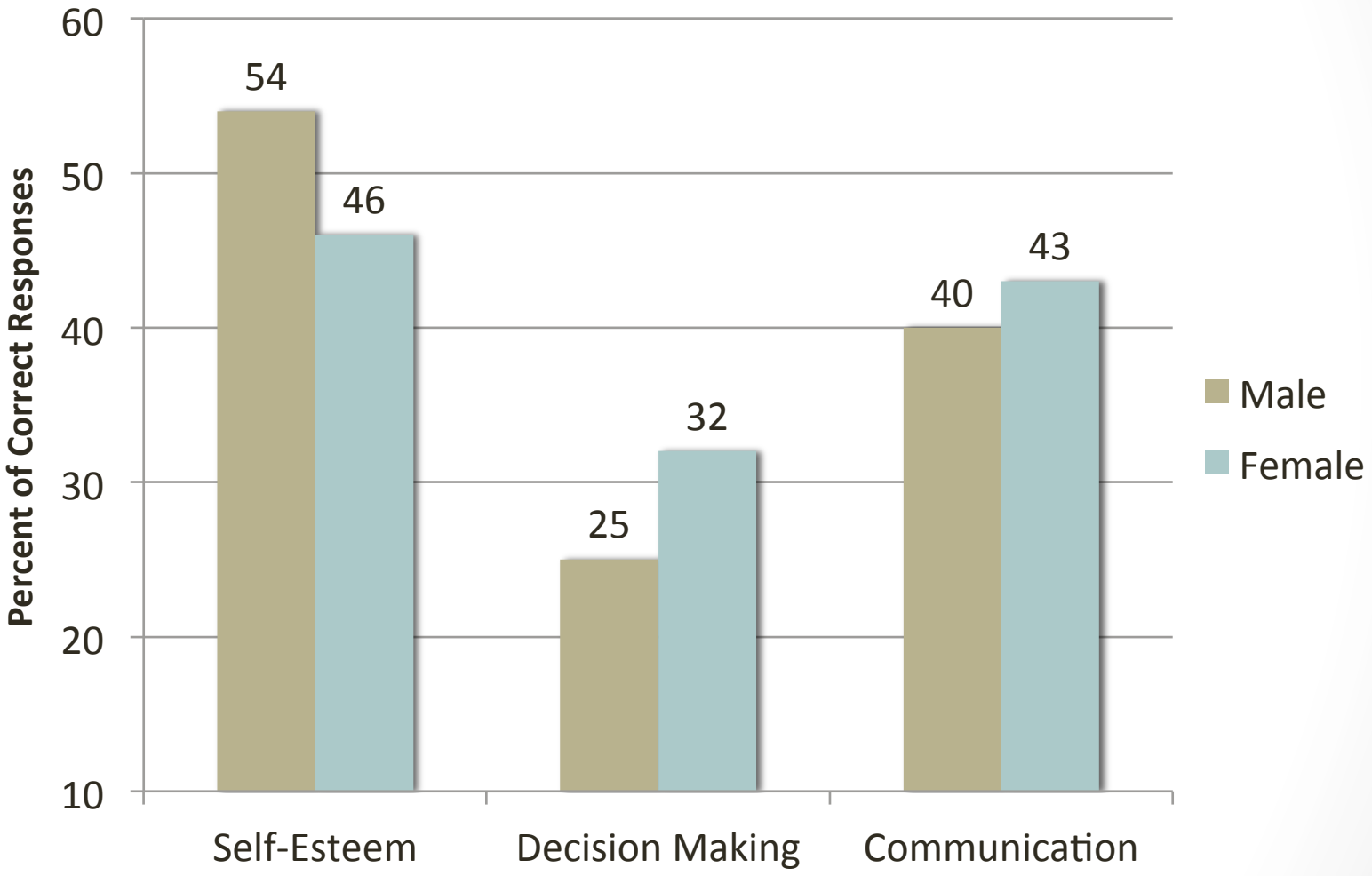
*Meredith, et al., (2011)

Individual Factors



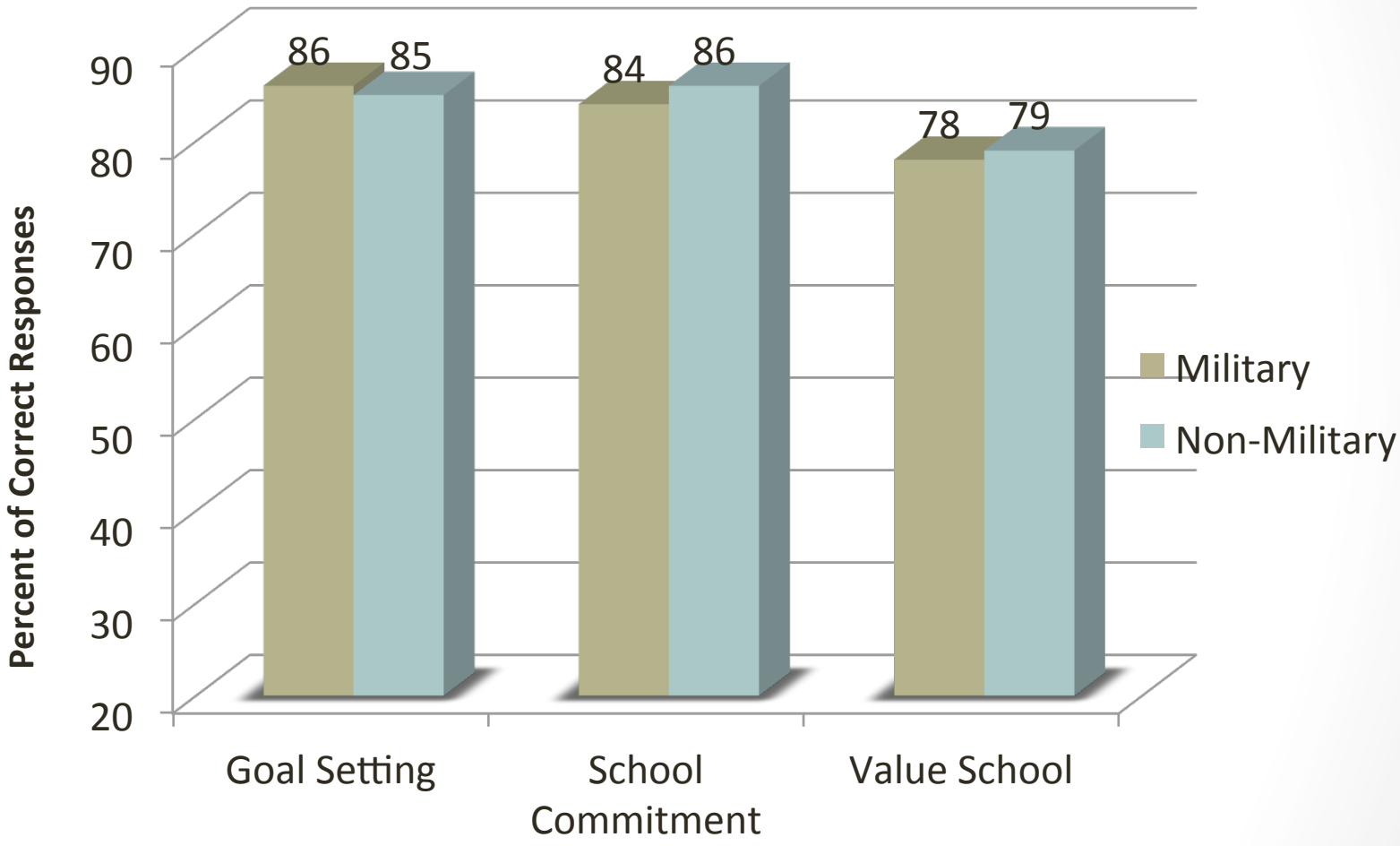
Military (N=9,584)
Non-Military (N=27,080)

Individual Factors by Both Parents Deployed



Male (N=129)
Female (N=99)

Individual/Environmental Factors



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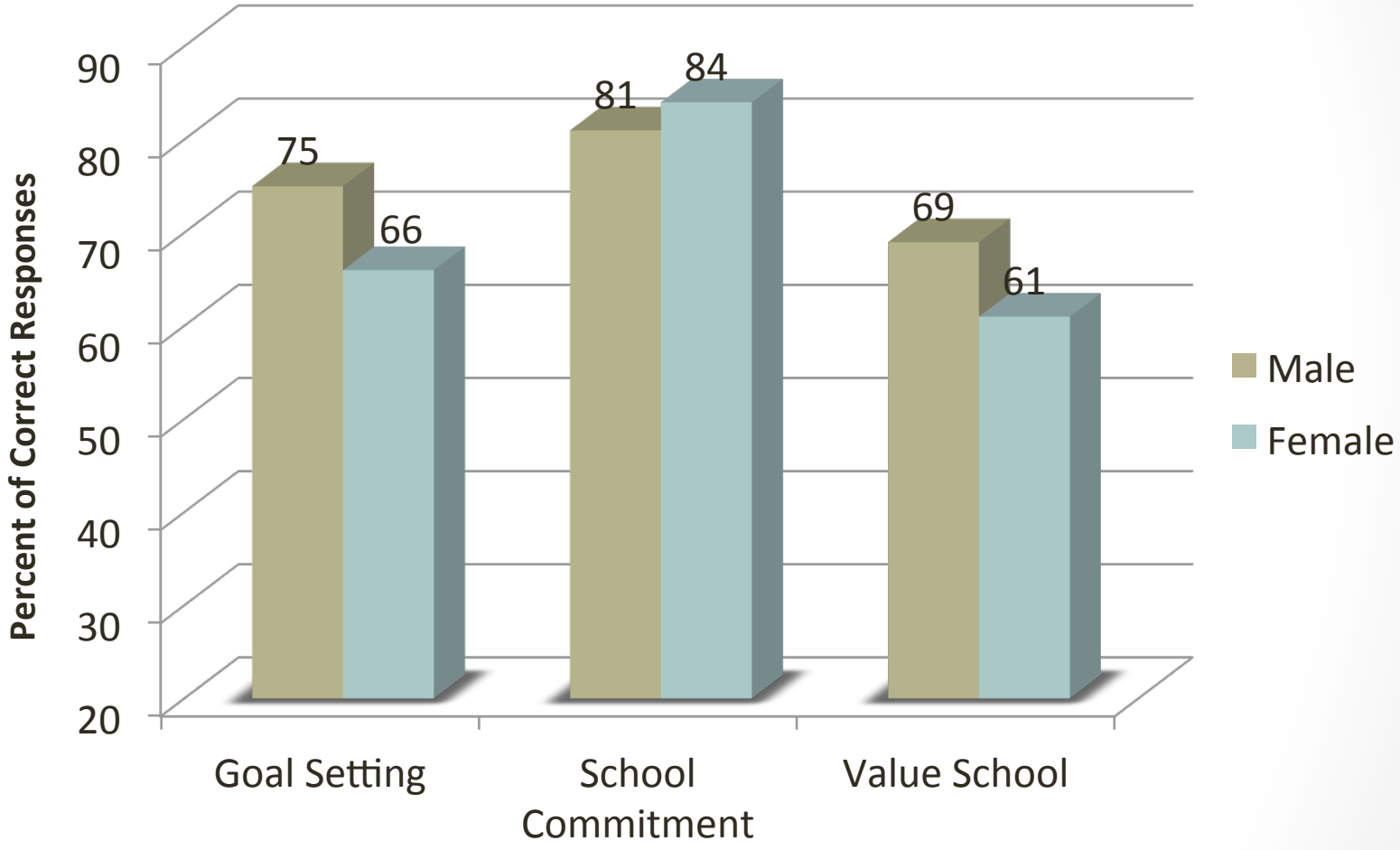

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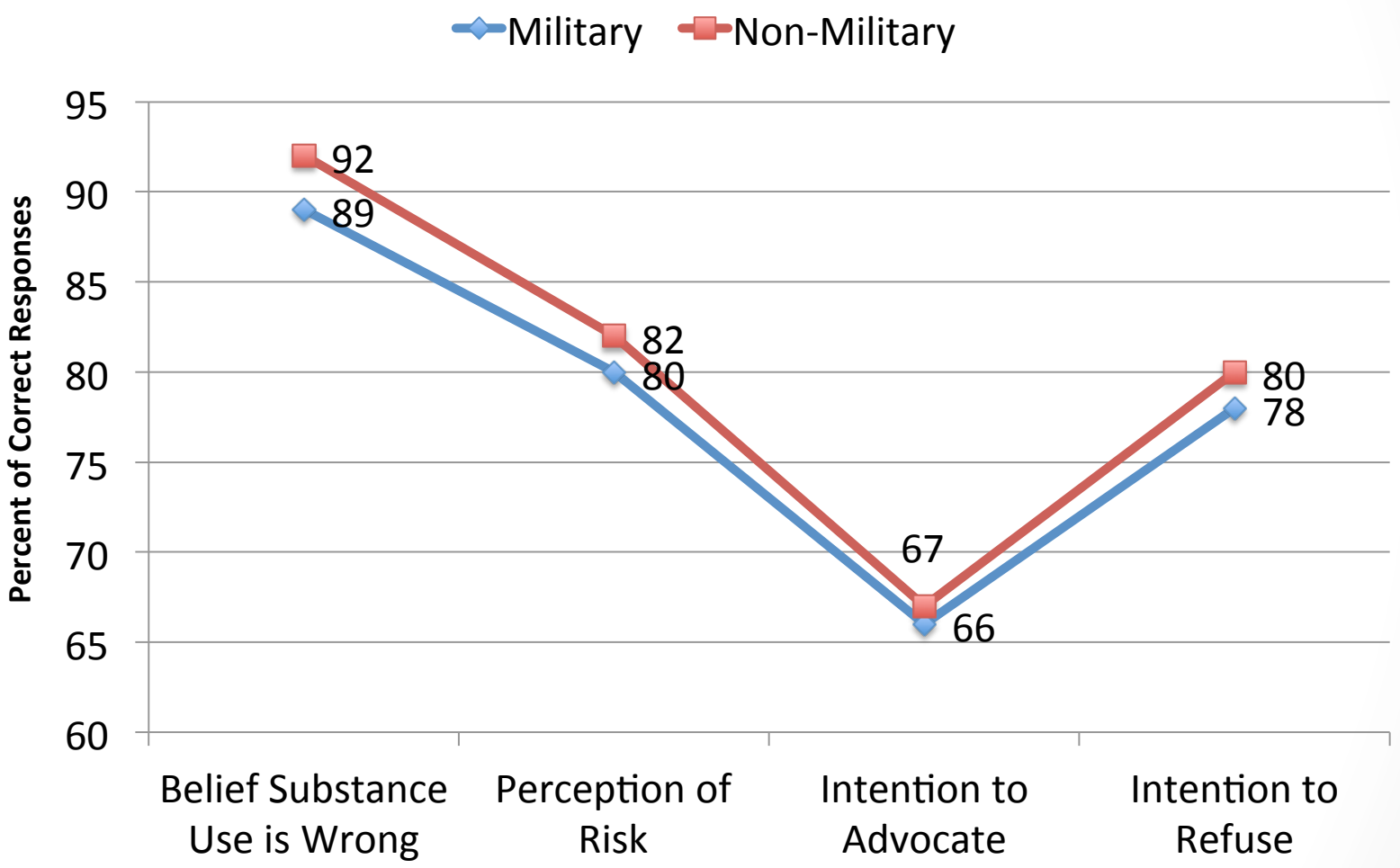
Substance Use Protective Factors



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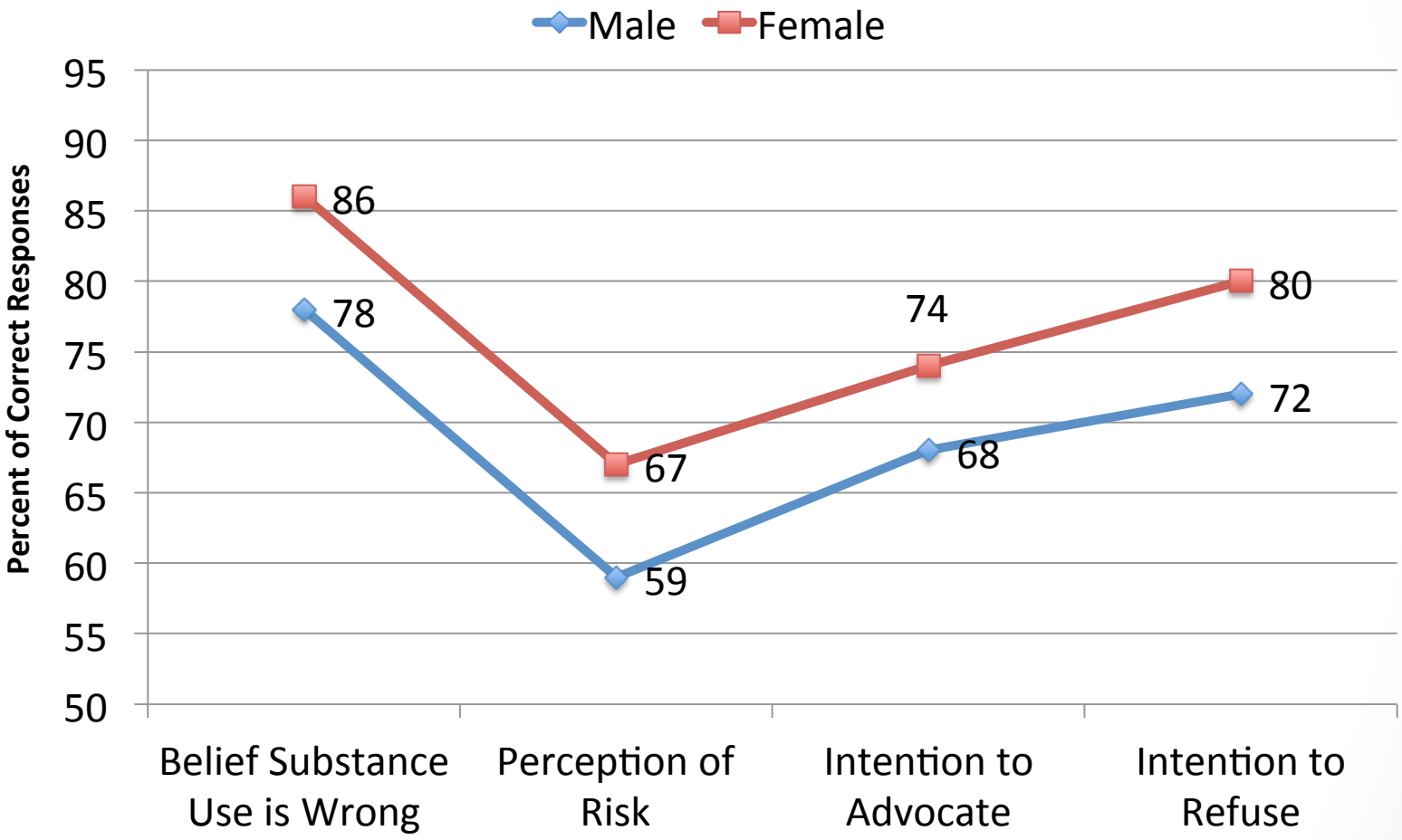
Substance Use Protective Factors by Both Parents Deployed



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Female (N=99)

Conclusions

Children from military families who participated in *Stay on Track* evidenced a positive effect on the protective factors that contribute to building their resilience skills.

Overall, children also experienced increases in the protective factors associated with illicit substance use.

Future Directions

- NCPRS is currently seeking a grant to examine the unique outcomes of children from military families.
- Evaluators can also consider capturing the impact of their interventions on military families by working with stakeholders during the planning process.
- Future evaluations should also examine the impact of parental substance use on children from military families, as reported use by military personnel is on the rise.

Questions

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