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Duty, Honor, Country, Disparity: Race/Ethnic Differences in Health and Disability Among Male Veterans

P.785-804

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Abstract

Given their unique occupational hazards and sizable population, military veterans are an important population for the study of health. Yet, veterans are by no means homogeneous, and there are unanswered questions regarding the extent of, and explanations for, racial and ethnic differences in veterans' health. Using the 2010 National Survey of Veterans, we first documented race/ethnic differences in self-rated health and limitations in activities of daily living among male veterans aged 30–84. Second, we examined potential explanations for the disparities, including socioeconomic and behavioral differences, as well as differences in specific military experiences. We found that Black, Hispanic, and other/multiple race veterans reported much worse health than White veterans. Using progressively adjusted regression models, we uncovered that the poorer self-rated health and higher levels of activity limitations among minority veterans compared to Whites were partially explained by differences in their socioeconomic status and by their military experiences. Minority veterans are a vulnerable population for poor health; future research and policy efforts should attempt to better understand and ameliorate their health disadvantages relative to White veterans.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Use Among Active-Duty Military Personnel, Veterans, and Reservists

P. 805-826

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Abstract

Subpopulations have variable connections to specific institutions, such as the military, which can influence their use of social programs and access to resources. We use data from the 5-year (2008–2012) American Community Survey (ACS) public-use file to examine current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) use by military service status: active-duty personnel, recent veterans, long-term veterans, and reserve/guard members. Overall and by military service status, we estimate weighted descriptive statistics and multivariate logistic regression models that include demographic and socioeconomic controls. We document low but non-trivial levels of participation among active-duty personnel (2.2 %), higher but still moderate levels of SNAP use among veterans (7.1 % for recent veterans and 6.5 % for long-term veterans), and the highest level of use among members of the reserve/guard (9.0 %). Multivariate analyses support hypotheses based on the potential for the military, as a total institution, to substantially reduce use of SNAP among active-duty personnel, while veterans and reservists, who are more distal from food-related institutional resources, have higher likelihoods of using SNAP. Although levels of SNAP use among active-duty personnel, veterans, and reservists are lower than those observed in the national population, which includes those with no direct connection to military institutions, findings suggest that leaving active-duty military service results in a substantial and relatively immediate reduction in food-related resources for many recent veterans and their families. We discuss the implications of the findings for policy, limitations of the research, and directions for future research.

Yujin Kim

Abstract

A significant association between incarceration and health is well established, but whether this association depends on the timing of incarceration is not known. Men who experience incarceration during the transition to adulthood are more likely to have their educational attainment and transition into the work force disrupted relative to others who are never incarcerated and to those who are first incarcerated in adulthood. Thus, I investigate whether age at first incarceration conditions the relationship between incarceration and men's health, including general and mental health in midlife. I also examine whether the disadvantaged socioeconomic status and health behavior of ex-inmates function as a main mechanism explaining the relationship between incarceration and health. Using propensity score-weighted regressions with data from the NLSY79, I find that men with a first incarceration during the transition to adulthood (at ages 18–24) are less likely to be in good self-reported general and mental health than otherwise similar men who have never been incarcerated. Results suggest that these negative health conditions among ex-inmates are explained mostly by socioeconomic status such as educational attainment and employment. On the other hand, men with an incarceration experience later in adulthood (at ages 25–40) are not less likely to be in good general and mental health compared to otherwise similar men who have never been incarcerated. Overall, the results from this study encourage a life course approach to understanding the relationship between incarceration and health.

Stress and Maternal Postpartum Depression: The Importance of Stress Type and Timing

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Abstract

Interest in identifying social risk factors for maternal postpartum depression has increased, with a growing emphasis placed on stress exposure. Despite increased interest, questions about the importance of lifetime stress exposure relative to stress surrounding childbirth, along with the importance of different types of stressful events, remain unanswered. The stress process model has gained prominence as a guiding framework for examining stress type and timing in studies of major depression and poor pregnancy outcomes, suggesting that this framework has the potential to advance our understanding of the relationship between stress exposure and depressive symptoms in postpartum women. Using in-person interviews and medical record data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-being Study ($N = 4362$), we draw on a stress process framework to examine: (1) whether lifetime acute stress exposure prior to pregnancy and birth is a risk factor for postpartum depression net of more proximate acute stressors occurring after pregnancy and birth, and (2) which types of stress (acute, chronic) are most salient for this outcome. Our results show that both acute stressors and chronic strains are independently associated with postpartum depression and acute stressors occurring prior to pregnancy and birth have long-lasting effects on postpartum mental health even when more proximate acute stressors are considered. Our findings underscore the need to more fully capture stressors and strains occurring throughout a woman's life course with regard to postpartum depression, and suggest the importance of rooting postpartum research and screening in a stress process framework.

The Effects of Household Technology on Body Mass Index among Chinese Adults

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Abstract

Current public obesity intervention focuses on promoting programs that encourage exercise and healthy eating. Our study emphasizes that rapid technological changes may also have the potential to lead to obesity epidemics. This research investigates whether household technology launched in China during the last two decades has the potential to cause increases in body mass index (BMI). We hypothesize that adopting household technology is a contributory factor in BMI increase, independent of daily calorie consumption and energy expenditure in exercise. To test this hypothesis, we use longitudinal data from individuals aged 18–55 who participated in the 1997–2009 China Health and Nutrition Survey. Linear fixed-effects regression captures the effects of the dynamic processes of adopting household technology on BMI. All analyses are stratified by gender. The results show that adopting computers or air conditioners is associated with BMI increases in

men, while adopting washing machines promotes BMI increases in women. Having a computer is associated with a decrease in BMI for women. Food-preparation technologies, such as refrigerators, microwaves, rice makers, and pressure cookers, are associated with BMI increases for both men and women. This study suggests that household technology ownership and BMI increases are linked, whereas changes in overall energy intake and exercise may not function as mediators for this relationship. Future public health policy may evaluate interventions focused on increasing low-intensity activities impacted by household technologies.

The Increasing Prevalence of Overweight and Obesity of Children and Youth in China, 1989–2009: An Age–Period–Cohort Analysis

P. 901-921

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Abstract

As childhood overweight and obesity, especially its cohort component, can be viewed as the leading edge of future changes in the population prevalence of obesity, scholars are concerned about what temporal effects drive the rise of childhood overweight/obesity prevalence worldwide. Using eight waves of the China Health and Nutrition Survey from 1989 to 2009, this research conducts hierarchical age–period–cohort analyses to investigate temporal patterns of the rising overweight/obesity prevalence for children and youth aged 2–25 in the world’s most populous country. We find that the age trajectory of overweight/obesity reaches a nadir around age 14 and 15 and increases afterwards. Children and youth are more likely to be overweight/obese in the most recent period of observation, and this pattern is persistent across different socio-demographic groups. Moreover, a statistically significant cohort component is detected for the overall population and further analyses reveal that this cohort increase is mainly restricted to males. Demonstrating distinct age, period, and cohort components embedded in the rise of childhood overweight/obesity in China, this research lends support to the global epidemic of obesity and calls attention to a new phase of the Epidemiologic Transition in China.
