

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Reconciling Parenting and Smoking in the Context of Child Development

Bottorff, J. L., Oliffe, J. L., Kelly, M. T., Johnson, J. L., & Chan, A. (2013). Reconciling parenting and smoking in the context of child development. *Qualitative Health Research*, 23(8), 1042-1053. doi:10.1177/1049732313494118

**SUMMARY:** Most research focuses on the negative impact of second-hand smoke and children and ways to reduce this risk. This study utilized qualitative interviews to better understand how children influence parent smoking practices. Results indicated that although parents wanted to protect their children and desired their children to never smoke they were able reconcile their desire to smoke and parent using various methods.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Parents discussed how they attempted to protect their young children from the negative effects of smoking by smoking outside or quitting smoking while pregnant as a way to rationalize their desire to continue to smoke.
- Common to all parents in this study was the desire for their children to never smoke.
- Parents who felt their efforts to conceal smoking/cigarettes from their children were successful and dismissed the need to quit smoking.
- Parents who felt they could not quit smoking and felt their efforts to conceal smoking would eventually fail, referred to social stigma and smoking bans as deterrents to their child's smoking.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Help develop modules that discuss how parent-smoking behaviors influence children's future smoking behaviors
- Facilitate peer support activities offered both in-person as well as via the internet (e.g., chat groups, social media sites) to help military parents discontinue use of nicotine products

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Offer education to military parents about how parent smoking influences youth smoking behaviors and how depending on negative social norms of smoking may not enough to deter this behavior
- Disseminate information regarding the negative effects of smoking on health outcomes for smokers and the negative effects of second-hand smoking on children

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Recommend targeted programs for military parents to motivate and support smoking cessation
- Encourage family assessments to gauge parents' smoking habits (e.g. light smoker, heavy smoker, etc.) and their children's knowledge and exposure to their smoking

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## METHODS

- Participants were recruited at a maternity hospital and through advertisements in local newspapers.
- Data were collected using in-depth interviews; mothers and fathers were interviewed separately to help ensure honest and reliable responses.
- Data were collected from three time frames related to child age and development; Age-stage one (12-19 months), Age-stage two (20-35 months), and Age-stage three (36-48 months).

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants included 28 mother and father pairs who had a child between one and four years old.
- Mother and father ages ranged from 22-43 years, and 40% of mothers and 57% of fathers identified as White.
- This study focused on civilian parents.

## LIMITATIONS

- In this study, no distinctions were made between the responses of mothers and fathers, which could influence the results.
- This is a very small sample, so their experiences may not generalize to the larger population.
- This study was conducted in a region with harsh tobacco control policies and low smoking rates in the general population, limiting the generalizability of results.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Conduct a similar study utilizing a quantitative measure to extend on these qualitative findings
- Examine the relation between concealing smoking/cigarettes and eventual child smoking behaviors within military families
- Explore smoking behaviors among military families

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



For more information about the Assessing Research that Works rating scale visit:  
<https://reachmilitaryfamilies.umn.edu/content/assessing-research-that-works>