

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Civilian

## Husbands' and Wives' Marital Quality: The Role of Adult Attachment Orientations, Depressive Symptoms, and Conflict Resolution Behaviors

Marchand, J. F. (2004). Husbands' and wives' marital quality: The role of adult attachment orientations, depressive symptoms, and conflict resolution behaviors. *Attachment and Human Development*, 6(1), 99-112.  
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**SUMMARY:** A couples' marital quality is associated with various variables. Husbands and wives answered questionnaires separately about their attachment orientations, depressive symptoms, conflict resolution behaviors, and marital satisfaction. Results revealed significant associations between the study variables, and indicated different patterns of associations between husbands and wives.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Husbands with insecure attachment orientations (i.e., less comfort with closeness and depending on others, and more anxiety over experiencing abandonment and rejection) and more depressive symptoms showed less marital satisfaction.
- Wives' insecure attachment orientations, but not depressive symptoms, were significantly related to lower marital satisfaction.
- Husbands with more depressive symptoms were more likely to use negative forms of conflict resolution, whereas wives with insecure attachment orientations showed more angry and attacking behaviors.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Work closely with married Service members and military spouses who show symptoms of depression, and discuss how depression may decrease their marital satisfaction
- Educate military couples on how to build secure attachment with their spouse and how to resolve conflicts in positive ways

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Provide military couples with workshops that aim to promote positive relationships and increase marital satisfaction
- Offer fun activities and events for military families to increase family cohesion

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support family programs that address marriage concerns and increase resilience in military families
- Recommend education for professionals working with military couples about the importance of secure attachment and positive conflict resolution strategies on marriage

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## METHODS

- The sample was recruited through announcements distributed to elementary schools and advertisements in local community newspapers.
- Self-administered questionnaires were completed by husbands and wives separately, and the questionnaires measured adult attachment orientations, depressive symptoms, conflict resolution behaviors, and marital satisfaction.
- Data were analyzed to examine associations among the study variables.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 64 married couples who were the parents of six to eight year old children, married for at least two years, and residing in the same household with one's spouse.
- The average ages of the wives and husbands were 36 years and 38 years, respectively.
- All the participants were White.

## LIMITATIONS

- Couples who agreed to participate may have differed from those who did not in various levels including marital satisfaction and depressive symptoms.
- All participants were White, so the results may be hard to generalize to other races/ethnicities.
- No causal relationships between attachment orientation, depressive symptoms, and conflict resolution behaviors could be drawn from the study because of its cross-sectional design.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Examine the effects of individuals' conflict resolution behaviors on their spouses' marital satisfaction
- Recruit participants from diverse race/ethnicity backgrounds so that the sample may better represent the general American population
- Explore additional variables potentially related to couples' marital satisfaction

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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