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Separation Anxiety in Army Wives with Deployed Husbands

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SEPARATION ANXIETY IN ARMY WIVES
WITH DEPLOYED HUSBANDS

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

BY
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ABSTRACT

Research on Attachment Theory, its applicability to adult relationships and military spousal separations is reviewed, with a focus on wives’ reactions to deployment separation. Wives’ reactions are interpreted from the perspective of Bowlby’s Attachment Theory and from the Separation Anxiety diagnostic criterion of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV. This was done to (a) illustrate underlying similarities of all of the participants; (b) portray the similar reactions of adults and children upon separation from their primary attachment figure; (c) and to extend Attachment Theory’s conceptualization of Separation Anxiety as it applies to adult romantic relationships. It is argued that a healthier comprehensive approach should be used when investigating spouses’ reactions to separation from a primary attachment figure, rather than the over gender-specific and pathologizing conceptualization of the past.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

John Bowlby’s Attachment Theory built upon Freud’s notion that early attachment relationships, between an infant and their primary caregiver, become “prototypes” for later adult love relationships. The attachment bond is described as an individual’s use of another person as a “secure base” from which to explore their worlds. That person is also used as a “safe haven” in times of stress and danger. This bond can most clearly be identified when there is a separation or loss of one’s attachment figure. The individual left behind feels and exhibits signs of morning and grief. The similarity between this response in child and adult attachment relationships gives evidence to the fact that attachment relationships continue throughout our lives. Research on adult attachment relationships provide important insights into the significance of attachment behavior, expression and meaning across the life span (Shaver, P., Hazen, C., & Bradshaw, D., 1988).

Due to the numerous spousal separations that military couples endure, they provide a unique opportunity for investigation into the adult attachment relationship. One of the many reasons a soldier may be separated from their spouse can be due to deployment; the strategic movement of soldiers to battle formation in foreign lands for purpose of war, humanitarian efforts or training. These deployment separations disrupt
the marital relationship surfacing key elements of attachment behavior. Military wives’
reactions to their husband’s separation have been studied since World War II but
these studies tended to pathologize and depersonalize the separation experience. This
paper hypothesizes that reactions to spousal separation can be a natural and normal
process of an adult love relationship and studying them would increase our understanding
of adult attachment relationships.

Military couples endure continual extended periods of separation inherent to
military life. Frequent moves, hectic and varying job schedules and extended separations,
all within the context of a seemingly insensitive rule-bound social system (McCubbin, H.,
Dahl, B., & Hunter, E., 1976) can potentially affect marital and family relationships. It is
not unusual for a military husband or wife to be absent from their spouse during the birth
of a child, special occasions, a crisis situation or any combination of the above. A military
family may also have recently moved to a new area where social supports may be few or
absent, altogether increasing feelings of isolation and loneliness. Consequently, military
spouses rank military-induced family separations as their major dissatisfaction with military
life (Defense Manpower Data Center, 1985). With the decrease in the number of soldiers
in today’s Armed Forces and the increase in the number of their missions, more husbands
and fathers are spending an even greater amount of time away from their families.
Traditionally researchers have looked to Navy families to explore the effects of frequent
and prolonged family separations. More recently however, Army families are finding
themselves on fast paced deployment schedules. For instance, in 1996 Army soldiers
spent an average of five months per year away from their families and the effects of these
separations can be seen on family functioning (Naylor, S., 1997). Currently, these spousal separation reactions are being understood from an adult attachment perspective.

Traditionally, Attachment Theory attempted to explain the process of mother-infant bonding. It has since developed into a framework that emphasizes the full cycle of relationship formation, maintenance, and dissolution. Currently, it is being used to explore issues of romantic love, jealousy, loneliness, separation and loss in intimate adult relationships. The defining features of the attachment relationship are the reactions to both the presence and absence of the attachment figure (Hazen, C. & Shaver, P., 1992).

Bowlby’s Attachment Theory states that all humans are information processing organisms with innate goals of security and protection, where maintaining closeness to others is considered an evolutionary survival mechanism.

In accordance with this theory, this project hypothesizes that the accessibility and responsiveness of the major attachment figure (husband and soldier) is essential to the partner’s sense of security. Without this sense of security, feelings of Separation Anxiety will affectively and behaviorally manifest. Traditionally, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual has been used to assess Separation Anxiety in children who exhibit symptoms during separation from their primary attachment figure. In times of deployment, the wives will experience similar components of Separation Anxiety, as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV. By conducting dyadic interviews with military wives, during a naturally occurring separation, it is hoped that an understanding of their internal processes is gained in this seemingly stressful time. Through the utilization of the attachment framework, a clear understanding of the Army wives’ reactions during deployment should help to normalize their experience and reveal that these reactions are a natural part of the
relationship cycle. This information should enable clinicians to better serve military families. McCubbin and his colleges (1976) suggest that, “Investigations dealing with the normal crises of life in the military ... are sorely needed” (p.319). It is hoped that the end result of this project will contribute to a better explanation for the reaction of adult separation and loss.

This thesis will investigate adult emotional reactions during the absence of intimate attachment figures through a job related separation. For the purpose of this study, planned and unplanned deployments to Kuwait and Bosnia have been used. Because Army families continually experience deployments, they offer an opportunity to examine the emotional effects of separation apart from the confounds of structural family change. The purpose of this paper is to provide a brief overview of attachment theory as well as the most vigorously researched areas of military deployment separations. Specifically, the goal of this thesis is to illustrate a research study that integrates research on security of attachment and military marital separation through utilization of the DSM-IV.

Review of the Literature

This literature review will explore two major topics related to military deployment separation. First, a brief overview of Bowlby’s Attachment theory will be given, followed by research on childhood responses to separation and loss. Further, this thesis will discuss research in adult attachment and separation experiences which bear a striking resemblance to childhood reactions. Secondly, past and present literature on military marital separations will be reviewed to show how these separation responses have been conceptualized over the years.
Attachment Theory and Research

An attachment bond has been described as an individual's desire to maintain proximity to their primary caregiver while manifesting into anxiety during their separation. Although Bowlby's Attachment Theory emerged to explain infant-mother bonding, researchers have recently found it salient in adult relationships. This attachment bond can be expanded to include individuals in their best friendships, parenthood and other intimate relationships. A major component of this theory is that attachment behavior is regulated and organized by a control system within the central nervous system and out of an individual's control. Bowlby believed this behavior to be as natural to many species as reproduction, feeding, and protection behaviors and therefore necessary for a species survival (Bowlby, 1969, 1973, 1980). He hypothesized that the "attachment system" evolved as a means of keeping vulnerable infants close to their mothers and away from dangerous predators. Consequently when the child feels anxious, tired or sick the attachment system will propel the infant to seek out the primary caregiver for protection, comfort, and support (Bowlby, 1969 and Bretherton, 1987).

An infant born with this innate predisposition for proximity and contact with the mother figure will have a sense of "felt security" (Ainsworth, Blehar, Water & Wall, 1978) when her mother is consistently accessible and responsive to her needs. This child's connection with her mother determines the interaction the child has with the environment. Ultimately, parents can provide infants with a "safe haven" in which to retreat (Bowlby, 1969) and a "secure base" from which to explore their worlds (Ainsworth et al., 1978).
Separation in Attachment Relationships

Experiences of separation, whether short or long in duration, seem to comprise some of life's most threatening experiences. Researchers (Robertson and Bowlby, 1952; Heinicke and Westheimer, 1966; Bowlby, 1973) have noticed that like primates, infants will demonstrate a predictable three-stage behavioral and emotional sequence upon separation from their mother that attempts to bring them back into contact with their primary caregivers. According to Bowlby (1960, 1973), this reaction sequence begins with a stage of protest in which the infant is emotionally distressed and exhibits fear (Bronson, 1972), crying, and angry outbursts. The infant spends a lot of time actively searching for their parent and is resistant to comforting efforts. The second stage, despair, is when hope begins to fade and there is an emotional withdrawal, decrease in active movement, and a passive demeanor. Finally, if the separation is prolonged the infant will enter a stage of detachment, characterized by superficial complaisance with other adults and a renewed interest in the environment. If the primary attachment figure returns at this stage the infant will display ambivalence and a sense of remoteness. Upon reunion, the child's expression of anger serves to make the parents aware of the painful separation effects and to discourage them from leaving again (Bowlby, 1973).

Working Models and Attachment Patterns

In infant and childhood studies, attachment has been assessed through controlled and time mediated separations from their primary caregiver (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). Ainsworth's classic study, identifying major patterns of infant behavior, has shown that separation reactions can be seen after a matter of only three minutes due to a child's relatively undeveloped attachment and cognitive systems (Ainsworth, 1989).
These interactions between the infant and the primary caregiver were categorized into three distinct "attachment styles". Secure children may or may not be distressed by their mothers separation but seek proximity and interaction with her upon reunion. Anxious/ambivalent children show signs of distress and anxiety upon suspicion of their mothers departure. They become very distressed during the separation, and often display a mixture of approach and angry resistance toward their mother upon reunion. Avoidant children do not appear to be distressed by the separation from their mother, do not seek proximity to her upon reunion and avoid contact with her.

After additional longitudinal research Ainsworth et al. (1978) discovered that the mother’s responsiveness not only influenced the mother-child separation reaction but also the child’s everyday relationship with her. Bowlby (1982) believed that the perpetuation of these attachment experiences throughout childhood formed internal working models that determined how the child interacts with it’s environment. Bowlby claims that infants develop certain expectations about the availability and responsiveness of their primary caregiver. These expectations are based upon two variables, the level of responsiveness from the primary caregiver to the child’s needs for support and protection and secondly, whether or not the child believes themselves to be worthy of a caring response. Consequently, these internal working models form “attachment styles” that shape how the individual sees the world, significant others, and most importantly their own identity and security.

Bowlby (1969, 1973) and subsequent researchers found these mental models to be central components of the personality and persistent throughout life (Main, Kaplin, & Cassidy, 1985; Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979). However, it seems possible that
expectations about specific attachment relationships and relationships in general can change in response to life experiences (Bowlby, 1980; Thompson, Lamb, & Estes, 1982). For example, Napier and Whitaker (1978) determined that when an individual passes through psychological space, a time after leaving the home and before commitment with a significant other, they build an individual identity, dependent upon their own resources. During this time they battle their own fears without being dependent upon a significant other for support, security or happiness. Through the process of "bearing it" alone the individual learns a sense of self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-loyalty; all necessary components for strong commitments later in life. This time of independence may help to counteract any insecure feelings from childhood.

Growing research has suggested a link between attachment styles in childhood and subsequent attachments later in life (Arend, Gore, & Sroufe, 1979; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985; Waters, Wippman, & Sroufe, 1979). Kobak and Sceery (1988) applied this link to college age individuals and found a parallel to the Strange Situation classification. These researchers identified three distinct styles of emotional regulation. The secure attachment group showed greater ego-resilience and appeared to have better adjustment to college overall. They seemed to have found ways to engage others, ways to effectively channel negative feelings and seek support in troubling situations. The anxious/avoidant group (referred to as the dismissing of attachment group) seemed to minimize perceptions of distress. They showed signs of hostility in peer relationships and saw others as non-supportive. The anxious-ambivalent group (referred to as preoccupied with attachment) seemed to have a heightened awareness of their attachment figure and of their own level of distress. They demonstrated more anxiety and less self confidence in their
relationship with others. This research supports the notion that working models continue to construct and regulate our interpretation of self and others throughout our lives.

By adulthood these internal working models are flexible enough to tolerate and understand separations more easily and for longer amounts of time (Weiss, 1991). Although most adults need physical closeness, the amount of distance tolerable from an attachment figure increases with maturity. The transformation of desired psychological closeness over physical proximity (Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) also steadily develops with an individual’s physical and emotional maturity. Researchers believe attachment and separation anxiety to be adaptive and natural for human beings from the “cradle to the grave” (Antonucci, 1976; Bowlby, 1979; Cohen, 1974; Skolnick, 1986).

Research on Adult Attachment

Until recently, attachment theory remained primarily a tool for understanding child-mother relationships (Ainsworth, 1967, 1969; Arend, R. & Sroufe, L. 1979). The continuity of the attachment theory suggests the notion that adults experience similar attachments later in life. Recent studies propose that an adults ability to maintain affectionate bonds is rooted in their childhood attachment experience with their primary caregiver (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazen & Shaver, 1987).

Weiss (1987) proposes that “an attachment figure is not necessarily an intimate or confidant, but rather a figure that is security providing because of a perceptual and emotional sense of linkage to that figure” (p.11). Weiss (1988) also distinguishes between many of the primary relationships in peoples lives by noting the difference in grief responses in relationships of attachment and relationships of community. He states that when the attached relationship of husband and wife or parent and child is severed through
death, years of intense grief tend to follow. The death of a colleague, friend, or adult
relative in a different household is followed by sadness and distress but not intense and
prolonged grief.

Correspondingly, Ainsworth (1989) makes the distinction between “affectional
bonds” and attachment bonds by stating “affectional bonds” develop between an individual
and a partner over a long period of time in which there is a desire to maintain closeness to
that partner. “Affectional bonds” can be an attachment bond if the individual seeks the
closeness of the partner as a means of security and comfort. Ainsworth hypothesizes that
an individual will form other attachment bonds, such as friendships, throughout their
childhood. For example, Ainsworth (1989) states that in adolescence a developmental
shift occurs propelling the teen to look for a new type of attachment relationship with a
member of the opposite sex. This “sexual pair bond” is more complex and utilizes the
reproductive, attachment and caregiving systems but it is not found in all species.
Although each component may not be found in every adult relationship (Ainsworth,
1989), attachment is a key component for sustaining a healthy long term relationship and
without it emotional isolation and loneliness is a result (Weiss, 1982).

Attachment in Marriage

Marriage is considered to be the close relationship in adulthood that exemplifies
attachment. Adult, intimate, love relationships have been viewed as parallel to and a
repetition of the infant-mother relationship that represents symbiosis and separation-
individuation through which maturity and self identity continue to develop (Gilfillan, S,
1983). Shaver, Hazan, and Bradshaw (1988) make a similar comparison by noting the
expressions of holding, touching, kissing and affectionate name calling as behavioral
similarities from child and mother to adults in romantic relationships. The conditions of
the marital relationship offer a foundation for the growth of attachment. Weiss (1982)
states,

Indeed, the institution of marriage fosters attachment, whatever the initial
relationship of the couple. It makes the couple live in close proximity, so that
each is reliably accessible to the other. At the same time it introduces barriers to
the formation... of a close relationship outside the marriage, and so makes
individuals not attached to their marital partners vulnerable to painful loneliness.
Thus marriage not only imposes intimacy and so facilitates attachment, it also
may punish, with loneliness, those who, for whatever reason, fail to become
attached to their spouses (p.179).

Through the exploration of emotional reactions of divorced, separated and bereft
couples, Weiss (1988) suggested that the emotional relationship between spouses
resembled a child’s attachment to their parents in eight ways: (a) The presence and
accessibility of the attachment figure provides security for the spouse, (b) when the person
feels proximity to and confidence in the attachment figure their energy is directed towards
play or work, (c) the person experiences anxiety when the separation occurs, (d) attempts
to substitute for the attachment figure fail (e) the attachment system is not under
conscious control and thus it is not possible to block feelings of insecurities when the
attachment figure is missing, (f) attachments to primary figures are persistent and do not
decrease over time, (g) this persistence is unaffected by the quality of their experience
even in times of neglect and abuse, (h) the inability to locate the attachment figure results
in separation distress which is expressed by a compulsion to search for the figure, an
inability to focus on other matters, tension and sleep difficulties.

Despite these similarities, adult attachment is different from infant attachment in
some important ways (Weiss, 1982). First, childhood attachment bonds are usually
unequal. An attachment figure provides security and care but rarely receives it in return. In contrast, the adult attachments are usually reciprocal, with each partner contributing to the giving and receiving of care and security. The ability to derive comfort from an attachment also changes with development. The level of interaction moves from external, requiring physical contact in childhood, to internal, where mere knowledge and expectation that the attachment figure can be contacted if needed or that they will be present in a matter of time provides comfort (Main et al., 1985).

Another difference is that in childhood the attachment figure is a parent or other primary caregiver, whereas in adulthood the primary attachment figure is a peer or a sexual partner. As well as providing attachment, this partner can provide caregiving and sexual mating (Shaver, Hazen & Bradshaw, 1988; Weiss, 1982). Even though the primary goal of the attachment system is to maintain a sense of “felt security” (Sroufe & Waters, 1977) through physical closeness, there are differences in what motivates proximity maintenance. Although people of every age are motivated by anxiety and stress to seek out comfort from their attachment figure, in adulthood proximity seeking can be a result of a desire to protect or to engage in sexual activity.

Although the transformation of attachment from parents to peers is assumed to be a gradual process, there is little specified research about when this occurs. Even though parents are never fully replaced as attachment figures, their place in the hierarchy decreases with their child’s progression into adulthood and ultimately within marriage (Hazen & Shaver, 1994). Weiss (1982) asserts that it takes approximately two years of marriage for an attachment bond to become fully formed and once established it persists regardless of the length and quality of the marriage. Weiss (1982) also states that
attachment in marriage is not synonymous with love or sexual activity and these need not be present for the couple to be attached. This attachment also appears to be resistant to replacement by another individual for quite some time. Furthermore, strong marital relationships can be therapeutic for individuals who experienced less than optimal care as a child (Kotler, T. 1985). All of this research suggests that it would be most advantageous when exploring attachments in adults to focus on the relationship that exemplifies the attachment experience and the relationship that many adults find most significant, the marital relationship.

**Separation in Adult Relationships**

Although attachment theory is clearly a life-span theory, most of the research has focused on the first attachment relationship between the infant and the mother. The first attempts to expand this theory were made by Parkes (1972) with his research on loss due to bereavement and Weiss (1973) with his studies of loss due to divorce. Similar to Bowlby, these researchers began their studies of attachment by investigating the emotional reactions of loss. The results of these studies showed that the emotional reactions of loss in adults resembled children's reactions to loss (Bowlby, 1980 & Parkes & Weiss 1983). Whether the separation is due to death or estrangement the sequence of response is very similar. Individuals enter a stage of protest, followed by despair and emerge from the sequence in a state of detachment or more appropriately "identity change" (Hazen et al, 1992). This new image of the self reflects the reality of the changed relationship.

This reaction sequence does not happen in isolation, there can be numerous external variables that affect it. For instance, Brown, Felton, Whiteman and Manela (1980) found that following separation from a spouse, day to day stressors in economic,
social and parental responsibilities are shown to exacerbate feelings of distress. They also discovered that support networks tend to reduce the level of distress experienced by the spouse. Divorced and separated mothers also found their children to be a large source of strength and possible surrogates for the attachment once held by their spouse.

Even though attachment is difficult to observe outside of these loss experiences it does not mean that attachment bonds do not exist. As previously stated, attachment processes are developmental in nature. They proceed from a more overt or manifest level in childhood to a more covert level as the individual matures. As development progresses, it becomes possible to internalize attachment; thus allowing the individual to tolerate increased time and distance away from the attachment figure.

After years of marriage it seems that most couples take their experience of attachment for granted, until it is interrupted. In fact, Bowlby (1973) states that the more trustworthy or secure the attachment figure becomes to their primary caretaker, the more the bond will be taken for granted or overlooked. This emotional security and comfort are what Berscheid (1983) reports to be the cause of the affective reaction associated with loss and separation. When the interruption occurs the attachment behavioral system will attempt to re-establish a sense of security while the stages of the emotional reactions are played out. When conceptualizing these emotional reactions Bowlby (1973) states:

Young children are upset by even brief separations. Older children are upset by longer ones. Adults are upset whenever a separation is prolonged or permanent, as in bereavement.... What seems certain, is that missing someone who is loved and longed for is one of the keys [for understanding anxiety], and that the particular form of anxiety to which separation and loss give rise is not only common but leads to great and widespread suffering (p.30).
It is believed that working toward the understanding of this “suffering,” an explanation and prediction about the reaction to separation and loss may be possible. By investigating a naturally occurring separation it is proposed that the interruption will elicit attachment emotions that were once more latent in the relationship. This type of naturalistic observation will help to allay the ethical concerns of such a study and allow the emotional intricacies of attachment in these relationships to be studied.

Research on Military Marital Separation

Research on temporary marital separations has been studied in a variety of contexts but never so pervasively as in the military. Although temporary separations are not unique to the Armed Forces, they are inherent to military life. For the purpose of this paper, marital separations will be grouped into two categories; wartime marital separation and peacetime marital separation. Research within these categories are reviewed with respect to psychological symptomatology. Unfortunately, numerous investigators have overemphasized gender and pathology in their interpretation. A chronological examination of these studies will ascertain whether these attitudes have changed over the years.

Marriage in the Military

"If Uncle Sam wanted you to have a wife, he would have issued you one." For years this proverb warned against family intrusion into a demanding military life (Bennett, W., Chandler, H., Duffy, J., Hickman, J, Johnson, C., Lally, M., Norbo, G., Omps, A., Popsil, V., Seeberg, R., & Wubbena, W., 1974 & McCubbin, H., Dahl, B. & Hunter, E., 1976). Although this message may have been heard, it certainly was not followed. With the onset of World War II, the American family formation saw a considerable boost
With the rise in the number of enlisted men, came the rise in secure jobs and soldiers' allotments provided a suitable foundation on which to begin a family. Since the end of W.W. II, the proportion of married service men has steadily increased (Moskos, 1976). In 1945, only 36% of Army personnel were married (Bennet et al., 1974). With the installation of an all volunteer force in the 1970's, the proportion of married soldiers increased dramatically. In 1976, 93% of officers and 80% of higher ranking career enlisted men were married (Moskos, 1976), and in 1981, over half of the total armed forces of the Army, Air Force and Navy personnel were married with children (Orthner & Brown, 1982). Today, the number of military dependents far exceeds the number of soldiers (Teitelbaum, 1990). Male soldiers tend to marry at a younger age, have children earlier than the civilian population and have a high percentage of remarriage after a divorce (Teitelbaum, 1990). The days of the bachelor's army are over; today the military is a family force. This force is one that can make or break a soldier's decision for continued military service and therefore becomes an integral part of the armed forces. Evidence indicates that the soldier's family problems can affect his duty and combat performance (Steiner & Neuman, 1978; Teitelbaum, 1990), increase the risk of going AWOL and influence retention decisions (Nice, 1981; Teitelbaum, 1990).

Military families have a unique lifestyle, unmatched by other populations. Stressors faced by military families include, frequent moves, the potential for deployment into hostile territories, frequent periods of family separations and geographic isolation from extended family. Most families have to deal with a combination of these stressors at one time and this can put families at a higher risk for a crisis (McCubbin et al, 1980). Although crises can occur, military families certainly do not live in a state of emergency.
Families usually adapt and function in a healthy manner while taking advantage of some of the benefits of military life. Unfortunately, due to this uniqueness, military families have been stereotyped as dysfunctional and as having a higher prevalence of psychopathology. Some researchers have gone so far to suggest the notion of a "military family syndrome" (LaGrone, 1978) where the soldier is portrayed as an abusive tyrant, the mother as constantly depressed and the children as behaviorally out of control. Assumptions about psychopathology in military families should not be based on presupposition, misattribution, or bias (Jensen, 1992). Instead, an understanding of the problems of military families should be conceptualized as human problems rather than as a "syndrome" that only occurs in the military population.

Wartime Marital Separation

Loneliness, Depression and Anxiety

World War II marked the beginning of an interest in investigating wartime marital separations. This interest continued during the Vietnam War and surged during Operation Desert Storm. Although there are significant differences between these three wars, each produced special needs for the soldiers and their families. The first known empirical study involved 67 wives and 11 fiancés separated from their partners during W. W. II (Duvall, 1945). Duvall used an interview format to assess the reactions of these wives. The problem most frequently mentioned by the women was loneliness. He grouped the participants statements into five levels of loneliness. The extremely lonely group (14%) described depressive symptoms of crying, irritability, social isolation, weight loss, nervousness, tension, sleep difficulties, mood shifts and severe headaches. The greatly lonely group (15%) found themselves frequently distraught with loneliness, but able to
engage in social activities to distract themselves. Certain women in this group managed the loneliness and economic strain by moving back in with their families while keeping contact with their partners through letters. The considerably lonely group (20%) reported to have control over their emotions and found solace in church activities and vocational pursuits. The moderately lonely group (26%) admitted to missing their husbands but had outside interests to keep themselves preoccupied. The little or not-lonely group (15%) was composed of newly married women or fiancées who moved back in with their parents. The other 10% were not included because the marital separations were unique in that the husbands had frequent home visits.

Duvall found that the length of the separation (2 months to several years) and the length of the marriage (8 months to 17 years) had no correlation to the amount of loneliness the women experienced. All of the fiancées however, fell into the moderate, little, or undetermined loneliness group. Because it takes approximately 2 years of intimate companionship to form an attachment bond (Weiss, 1982), it is likely that the fiancées were not fully attached at the point of separation. The married women who experienced mild distress reported to have strong relationships with their own families which may have acted as a surrogate attachment when their husbands were absent. However, 49% of the women reported extreme or considerable loneliness during wartime separation.

A re-analysis of this study by Vormbrock (1993) suggests that loneliness may be too "mild of a term" for the experience these woman endured. Vormbrock suggests the irritability, nervousness and tension that these woman reported may be more appropriately described as anxiety. The absence of severe distress in some of these women seem to be
due to their undeveloped attachments to their partners or their ability to find surrogate attachments, such as family, while their husbands are away. This last point is not always an option for wives of military men. Their families may be in different states or countries or unable or willing to house their daughters in their time of need. These women may also have their own careers, with children in local schools and feel it inappropriate to go home as an adult for an extended period of time.

Anger and Detachment

Research on military marital separation continued during the Vietnam conflict. Bey and Lange (1974) interviewed 40 wives of non-career Army men retrospectively about their emotional reactions to their husbands one-year tour to Vietnam. The wives reported experiencing varying degrees of numbness, shock and disbelief when first informed of their husband’s orders. They also felt anger toward the Army for sending their husbands to war and anger towards the regular Army men, who they believed should have gone in their husband’s place. As the dreaded date of departure approached, the wives noted an increase of emotional distance between themselves and their spouses while superficially they appeared proud and supportive at farewell parties. A roller-coaster of emotions, filled with hyperactivity and increased tension interspersed with feelings of despair, inertia and hopelessness became almost overwhelming as the separation approached.

During the separation, many of the wives felt awkward in social situations, feeling out of place with both married couples and single friends. Jealousy and sadness kept some woman away from the social milieu. It was extremely difficult for the woman to justify their husbands presence in Vietnam when the popular belief was that the war was futile
of separation from their husbands. It is hoped that working toward this goal an alternative to gender based and pathology based explanations and predictions about the reaction to separation and loss may be possible.

Stress and Alienation

Operation Desert Storm, although brief in duration as a military engagement, was unique in the stressors it created on the home front (Hobfoll, Spielberger, Breznitz, Figly, Folkman, Lepper-Green, Meichenbaum, Milgram, Sandler, Sarason, & van der Kolk, 1991). Television, radio and computer coverage allowed for continuous monitoring of the war. Unfortunately with this modernization of war coverage came an exposure to misinformation and rumors that produced fear and stress for families on the home front (Figley, 1993).

The stressors during separation from the soldier are extensive and diverse. Rosen and Teitelbaum (1994) assessed the emotional well being of 1,107 military spouses during Operation Desert Storm by performing a cluster analysis using data from a survey previously completed. By grouping the women by age and emotional well being it produced clusters of fairly equal size. They found the clusters 1, 4, and 9 of slightly younger spouses experienced higher levels of emotional distress. Cluster 1 which comprised of enlisted spouses under the age of 30, had low support, high stress and poor coping. This group consisted of a large portion of ethnic minorities, who may have felt alienated from military support services because of their minority status (Rosen et. al., 1994). They reported to be dissatisfied with military services and tended to have increased visits to the health care providers. Wives who made too many demands on military personnel were labeled “problem spouses.” These “problem spouses” were
characterized as young women who reacted with high levels of emotion to their husbands deployment and to subsequent problems. The spouses who seemed to cope the best were the ones who moved home after their husbands deployment. These women reported average support and decreased need to seek medical attention. Cluster 4 had the most number of older and employed spouses, who also suffered from high stress, low support and dissatisfaction with service providers. Although, this cluster analysis does a good job in identifying the sociodemographic characteristics of distressed military wives, it labels emotionally distressed wives as “problem wives.”

Further research on the impact of the Persian Gulf deployment on family well-being was conducted with the Family Factor Field Study of Operation Desert Storm (Rosen, L., Teitelbaum, J., & Westhuis, D., 1993). The questions were aimed at identifying the key stressors that wives experience during their husbands deployment. The 981 wives surveyed were asked to report the level of distress caused by the following five events: (a) missing the soldier (b) problems with communication (c) concerns about their husbands safety (d) concerns about their husbands living conditions and (e) the uncertainty about the length of the duty. The wives were also asked to indicate the problems related to the deployment as presented in a checklist. This included such items as problems managing the household budget, getting repairs done, increase in child-care costs and problems in executing power of attorney. The outcome measure used was the Hopkins symptom checklist which measures anxiety and depression. The results indicate that emotional stressors related to the deployment were the largest predictor of symptoms and 70% of the wives surveyed were symptomatic during the separation (Rosen, 1995). The ability to successfully handle deployment related events was augmented by prior military
experience, their husbands rank, and support services which seemed to decrease the
perception of emotional stress. Precursory life stress, lack of comfort in dealing with the
military and poor post-alert climate for wives was associated with increased deployment
events which increased the perception of emotional stress.

Somatic Complaints

In an attempt to facilitate awareness of clinical manifestation in military families
during Operation Desert Storm, Blount, Curry and Lubin (1992) provide the medical
community with an identification of high risk families, separation issues, and the problems
they can cause. High risk families are identified as having a history of poor coping skills,
negative deployment attitudes, dysfunctional and conflictual relationships, and poor
communication. The most critical factor in distress relief is supportive and accurate
communication between the unit leader and family and between husband and wife that
provides a clear understanding of changes associated with deployment (Amen, Jellen,

Spouses who reside in foreign countries or in new communities are also at an
increased risk due to social isolation, language barriers, fewer supports and a decreased
awareness of military systems. Spouses of lower ranking officers are usually newer to the
army and have less financial stability. They tend to be younger and may not have the
coping or life survival skills to adequately handle a prolonged separation (Blount et al,
1992, & Lewis, 1986). Accompanying the emotional stressors experienced by the spouse
may be a new single parent role. Child care and discipline become more challenging and
older children in the family may be asked to help with parental roles. Responsibilities
previously assumed by the deployed spouse must be taken over by the family.
Subsequent researchers (McCubbin and Dahl, 1976; Yeatman, 1981) have reported that deployment stressors tend to manifest into physical illnesses. Blount, et al., (1992) state that although there is not an increase in prevalence of physical illness during deployments, a decreased tolerance for even the most insignificant symptoms seem to encourage spouses to seek increased medical attention. The most frequently presented symptoms for adults are depression, anger, frustration with their children, concern for spouses safety and fears of infidelity. It is advised that health care providers assess for increased use of drugs and alcohol that may be used as an outlet for stress. When confronting these problems health care providers are encourage to explore separation problems and family functioning issues. Kelley (1994) discovered that women with husbands deployed to war report to be less able to maintain close and nurturing environments. Support for the mother is crucial in view of the possible impact her stress can have on her child’s well-being (Rosen, et al., 1993).

Peacetime Marital Separations

Even when war is not eminent, separation associated with military deployment during peacetime can result in disrupted family dynamics and emotional stressors. In today’s military, soldiers face increasingly strenuous physical and mental demands (Martin and Ickovics 1987). Soldiers commonly work strenuous 10-12 hour days, and some combat units may spend up to 175 days a year away from home and family (Marlowe, 1985). These demands leave little time for family bonding and as a consequence family members may feel frustrated and abandoned. It is not uncommon for a military wife to feel in direct competition with the military for her husband’s time and attention. Even
though prolonged periods of spousal separation may become routine in military families, it continues to affect the families well-being and the ability for the services to retain soldiers.

**Loneliness, Anxiety and Depression**

Symptoms of depression were found to be fairly widespread in Navy wives during family separations due to ship deployments (Nice, 1983). The onset of depression is reported to occur two weeks prior to the separation and continue throughout. This depression tends to inhibit Navy wives from social interaction and minimize participation in support groups (Nice, 1970).

Utilizing Bowlby's attachment theory, Pearlman (1970) investigated individual differences in reaction to deployment separation. His study involved 485 married Navy wives under his care at a psychiatric outpatient facility. Their reactions to their husbands' recurrent three month sea duty were classified into four categories. The symbiotic women (3%) showed severe decompensation throughout the separation and seemed to be stuck in the stage of despair. Several women required psychiatric hospitalization, attempted suicide or abused alcohol to desensitize their emotional pain. Pearlman attributes this reaction to a lack of early attachment experiences with parents. Consequently, these symbiotic women were unable to tolerate being alone.

The second group, 10% of the women, consisted of women who only became severely emotionally disturbed when situational life stress accompanied the marital separation. In the group with marital problems, the majority of the women, handled the separation well but felt dominated and exploited by their husbands. These women tended to become depressed after their husband's return from sea. Their insecurity inhibited their ability to express their anger. Only 5% of the sample comprised the self-identity group
that used the separation period to develop an increased sense of identity and
independence.

Kelley (1994) found that even during routine separations there is a decreased
ability to maintain close, supportive relationships with in the family. Children appeared to
experience slight behavioral difficulties prior to the separation of their fathers, that tended
to decrease over time. Separations were especially disruptive for families with younger,
less self-sufficient children. Mothers tended to give into children more easily during
separation by relaxing rules, routines and responsibilities (Amen, Jellen, Merves, & Lee,
1988).

Mozon (1987) interviewed navy wives on a monthly basis during their husband’s
six month ship deployment to assess their psychological distress and coping strategies.
Mozon found that the first couple of months were the most stressful time during
separation. Wives who had previously experienced deployment reported less emotional
distress compared to wives without deployment experience. Additionally, the wives who
reported higher levels of marital satisfaction also stated feeling less emotional distress than
the wives with lower marital satisfaction.

In a study by Armfield, (1993) age and length of marriage proved to be a
significant variable influencing Navy wives’ reactions to deployment separation. Older
wives tended to experience less emotional distress and loneliness compared to younger
wives. This seems to be due in part to the older wives better social support functioning.
Wives who have been married over several years experienced less distress than newly
married Navy wives. Although this study does a good job at identifying variables that
mitigate distress, it seems a possibility that the rank of the seaman may be a confounding variable and should be recognized in future research.

**Somatic Complaints**

Abbe, Naylor, Gavin and Shannon (1986) investigated Navy families healthcare utilization during deployment separation. They discovered that wives’ stress related symptoms increased their visit to the doctors office during the spouses’ separation and immediately following the reunion.

Conversely, Van Vranken, Jellen, Knudson, Marlowe, & Segal, (1984) investigated Army wives’ adjustment to deployment separation and did not find a statistically significant increase in the frequency of visits to healthcare providers. However, wives reported an increase in problems when their husbands returned. Problems reported included resentment over unfulfilled personal needs, anger and behavior problems in their children. Relational problems with the children was the most frequent problem stated by these wives. Other problems ranged from stress of having to make major decisions alone, loneliness, isolation, lack of trust and fears of spousal infidelity. There was also a noticeable negative change in wives’ attitude regarding the Army.

Although there have been numerous studies of military-induced family separations, the majority of these studies have addressed routine separations in Navy families. There are very few studies of family separation in Army populations. Researchers have tried to homogenize the rich diversity in the different branches of the Armed Forces. Studies of Army populations are uniquely important with the development of rapid deployment task force units and peace keeping units (Van Vranken et al., 1984). The relationship between
the military and families is inherently competitive and studies are needed to investigate the reactions they impose.

Rationale for Study and Hypotheses

A review of the literature indicates that many military wives have difficulty coping with deployment separation. Their distress can be manifested in several ways, such as anger, loneliness, depression, sleep disturbances and somatic complaints. Individuals experience separations differently and each stage of deployment can have unique consequences. With the recent increase in Army deployment activity to Kuwait and Bosnia, it is advantageous for researchers and military support services to explore the wives entire subjective separation experience. This can be done most effectively by interviewing Army wives during a deployment separation. The attachment literature suggests that these emotional experiences may be better understood by assessing for Separation Anxiety; a natural reaction to separation from a primary attachment figure. The literature also indicates that variable reactions may be accounted for by different attachment styles.

Due to the fact that this study is guided by an already existing theory, some hypotheses based upon prior attachment and military research are feasible. These hypotheses are descriptive and are about individual reactions to deployment separation.

Although previous researchers have claimed separation anxiety to be a natural phenomenon experienced by children during separation from a primary attachment figure, they tend to shy away from that conclusion when it comes to adult separation. In childhood this reaction is expected and understood but as an adult the individual is
pathologized for experiencing distress upon separation from their primary attachment figure.

1. In this study it is hypothesized that wives' reactions to their husband’s deployment may be better understood from an attachment perspective and that the depression, anger, sleep disturbance, loneliness and somatic complaints can be more appropriately conceptualized as Separation Anxiety in adults.

2. Secondly, it is hypothesized that the length of the marriage, time in the military, the age of the individual, the time of residency at the current location, the number of support systems and the husband's rank will have a positive effect on the level of separation distress.

3. Further, it is expected that each participant will demonstrate some variation of the predictable three stage childhood sequence of protest, despair and detachment.

4. Finally, this study anticipates that the participants will be able to be classified into one of the three attachment styles (secure, ambivalent/dismissing, and avoidant) and will exhibit qualitatively different ways of dealing with their husband’s separation.

This study contributes to an understanding of attachment in the adult marital relationship. Previous researchers (Crowell, J & Waters, E., 1996) state that although “attachment theory is used with increasing frequency [it is] often without clear definition... what attachment-specific behavior might look like in adults are often only vaguely described” (p.33). This study attempts to extrapolate from the natural childhood phenomenon of Separation Anxiety and apply it to the attitudes, behaviors and feelings of adults to see if there is any applicability to the adult separation experience. By investigating the separation experiences of the wives from an attachment theory
perspective, this study will concretely describe what attachment-specific behavior looks like in adults. It will also furnish military support service agencies with a more humanistic view of military wives experience of separation from their husbands, allowing them to get the assistance they need.
CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

Participants were twelve female spouses of deployed Army soldiers from Fort Hood, Texas. This base was chosen because it is the largest military installation in the “free world” and home to more than 44,000 soldiers and 79,000 family members (Naylor, 1997). It is also known to be the number one base in the nation to deploy its soldiers. The participant’s husbands were either currently or recently deployed to Kuwait (11) or Bosnia (1) and the length of the deployments ranged from three months to twelve months (M=4.5). The women ranged in age from 19 to 57 (M=33.4). Eleven women were Caucasian and one was Hispanic. Marriage length ranged from 1 year to 26 years (M=10.3). Seven wives were employed full-time, four worked in the home, and one was a full-time student. Six of the wives had children living in the home at the time of the deployment and two were pregnant. The husband’s rank ranged from E-4 (Private) to O-6 (Col.) of which seven were enlisted and five were officers. The length of residency at the current location ranged from five months to four years (M=1.57).

Procedure

The majority of the participants were recruited by a member of the Family Advocacy Program and the remaining participants were recruited from an Army family support group meeting or by phone. All of the participants were willing to talk about their
experiences and most indicated their gratitude for the recognition of the stresses they endure. These participants were chosen, not randomly selected, from a military network (military support services), Internet and phone contact. Recruiting subjects was a formidable task due to the "top secret" status of deployed soldiers. The desired result was to get a sample that consisted of wives who were currently experiencing or who had just recently experienced separation from their husbands due to deployments.

At the beginning of each interview, the wives were provided with an explanation of the purpose of the study and an informed consent form was collected prior to any questioning (see appendix). The researcher stressed to the wives that their participation was voluntary and they could refuse to answer any of the questions. The information was kept completely confidential and the names used in the result and discussion sections of this paper are fictional. The majority of the interviews took place in an office of the Family Advocacy Program or at the participant’s home. After the interview the participants were given a debriefing form and a referral source for support services if needed (see appendix).

Interview Format

The interview format was derived from diagnostic criteria for Separation Anxiety from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (American Psychological Association, 1994). This was not done in attempt to diagnose the participants but rather to investigate whether the wives separation experience resembled childhood (18 and younger) Separation Anxiety. This study hypothesis that separation from a primary attachment figure will manifest as Separation Anxiety in adults. The interviews empirically test this hypothesis. The interviewers specific questions regarding Separation Anxiety have been
provided in Table 1. This was done to reduce any ambiguity about the how the researcher extrapolated from a childhood diagnosis to an adult experience.

TABLE 1

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR SEPARATION ANXIETY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DSM</th>
<th>INT.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. recurrent excessive distress when separation from home or major attachment figure occurs or is anticipated</td>
<td>1. When you found out your husband was going to be deployed what were your initial thoughts and feelings? Did you experience an increase in stress in your life upon his departure?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. persistent and excessive worry about losing, or about possible harm befalling, major attachment figure</td>
<td>2. Did you worry about your husband’s safety?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. persistent and excessive worry that an untoward event will lead to separation from a major attachment figure</td>
<td>3. Did you worry about your own safety while your husband was away?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. persistent reluctance or refusal to go to school or elsewhere because of fear of separation</td>
<td>4. When your husband returned or right before he left did you find yourself spending more time with him (for example did you take time off from work or cancel social plans to be with him)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. persistently and excessively fearful or reluctant to be alone or without major attachment figures at home or without significant adults in other settings?</td>
<td>5. Do you have any feelings about being left behind when he goes on deployment? When he came home did you think about the next time he would be deployed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. persistent reluctance or refusal to go to sleep without being near a major attachment figure or to sleep away from home</td>
<td>6. What was your sleeping pattern like while your husband was away?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. repeated nightmares involving the theme of separation</td>
<td>7. Did you have any dreams about the separation before he left or any dreams about the separation while your husband was away?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TABLE 1 - Continued

8. repeated complaints of physical symptoms (such as headaches, stomachaches, nausea, or vomiting) when separation from major attachment figures occurs or is anticipated

8. Did you experience any change in your health while your husband was gone?

Note. Bold faced DSM words are directly from the Separation Anxiety criteria of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV. The questions directly following are the researchers' extrapolations used in the interview.

Additional questions were asked regarding children, support networks, coping strategies, and level of support from the military (see appendix). All answers were quantified with regard to patterns of recurrent themes in the interviews and attachment styles were assessed based upon the qualitatively different ways the participants responded to the spousal separation.
CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The eight dimensions rated in the Separation Anxiety assessment were used to identify whether each subject was experiencing components similar to Separation Anxiety. Since the majority of the respondents provided information on an experience that occurred a month prior, much of the information is retrospective. This results in a degree of coherence which may coincide less with real events than with the respondents' own internal worlds. The DSM-IV deems Separation Anxiety an appropriate diagnosis if three or more criteria are evident in an individual. In this investigation all of the participants expressed at least four or more of the diagnostic criteria indicating that they were all either currently or had recently experienced some degree of Separation Anxiety during their husband's deployment. Table 2 shows the number of wives who experienced each of the eight dimensions assessed during the interview process.
TABLE 2

Number of Wives Experiencing Individual Diagnostic Criteria for Separation Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Wives Total N= 12</th>
<th>Enlisted Wives N= 7</th>
<th>Officers' Wives N= 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in Stress</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about husbands' safety</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worry about own/children's safety</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to be close to spouse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctant to be alone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Disturbance</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nightmares</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic Complaints</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 1: Adult Attachment and Separation Anxiety

In the coding process the researcher looked for recurrent and dominant themes in the individual transcripts regarding each of the Separation Anxiety diagnostic criteria. The participant's cognitions and behaviors were analyzed to be able to classify them into one of the eight criteria. The criteria of "increase in stress" related to the participants increase in responsibilities, making decisions alone, and handling crisis situations by themselves. For example, when one participant was asked how her husband's deployment had impacted her life Mrs. Mahoney responded,

"It was a relief when he finally left because it was very stressful not knowing when he was actually leaving. But then the kids start acting up, something breaks and I get upset. It was hard to juggle baby-sitting and stuff."

The next criteria "worry about husbands safety" was assessed by the amount of concern for their husband's safety, nourishment, sleeping conditions and level of protection. When Mrs. Young was asked about her initial reaction to her husband's deployment she responded,
“I was very afraid. I was very scared. I wasn’t afraid for my safety but I was afraid for him. He is going to a strange place. There is a crisis situation and he wasn’t prepared..... I was afraid for his safety and due to the separation, I was afraid. The fear comes from not wanting to be separated.”

This fear reaction was fairly typical for the majority of the participants. Initial reactions seemed to center around a fear that something would happen to their husband. On the other hand, a few wives responded in an internally distressed manner as exemplified by Mrs. Raymond,

“I was scared to death. I was new to the Army. I had been here six weeks and I didn’t know anyone.... I was crying and I told him ‘No, you can’t leave me, you can’t leave me’.... Of course I didn’t want him to leave but it was more like you can’t do this to me.... I just felt like, ‘what am I going to do?’, ‘I know you will be taken care of, but what about me?’”

This type of reaction was seen more by the younger, newly married wives than the other wives.

All of the participants indicated some increased level of worry about their husband’s safety and about possibly losing them as indicated by Mrs. Bradford and Mrs. Emerson,

“My biggest fear was that he might not come back. We don’t have children and I was like my God what if he never comes back. We have been talking about starting a family and it was like we will never get a chance.”

“I was really worried because they weren’t saying anything on the news... I would still sit there and think, what if something does happen? What if he’s out pulling a mission and they bomb his truck and all these things.”

When the participants were asked about the third criteria, “worried about own safety” during her husband’s absence, half of the wives responded that they had some concerns such as the ones Mrs. Maxwell described,

“Sometimes I worry. Sometimes things happen in the neighborhood and I say ‘gosh I hope that doesn’t happen to me’... If I have to go somewhere at night then I get stressed out... I really don’t travel at night because I am afraid something will happen to me and I will have no one to call to help me.”
The "need to be close to spouse" criteria was assessed by the level of the wife's need to talk or be near her husband. All of the participants except one stated that they rearranged their schedules to spend more time with their husbands either before or after the deployment, "Because I want to spend more time with him. I am not sure how long he will be home." Mrs. Fields also described what it is like before her husband leaves,

"Just before he goes I try to spend almost every second with him, I can't help it.....I must have called him 15 to 20 times a day. If he had to go to the store I would meet him there just so I could walk around the store and be with him."

Only three of the seven women suggested the fifth criteria of "reluctance about being alone" as suggested by Mrs. Emerson's statement about an upcoming separation "Please don't send him to NTC (National Training Center).... I was like please God, please God don't let him go." The majority of the women did not fear being alone but were reluctant to be separated. These wives were very independent and parts of them welcomed the separation as time to spend meeting their own needs. Mrs. Mahoney expressed it best by her statement,

"The first couple weeks he's gone I am enjoying myself. I can do whatever I want. I can watch whatever TV I want, the laundry is less. It is kind of like a vacation."

A problem that all of the wives encountered during their husband's separation was the criteria of "a disturbance in their sleeping pattern," as suggested by Mrs. Fields, "I can't go to sleep at night... when he is gone I get up at 4 a.m. and I'll be thinking maybe I should just go turn on the coffee pot ... instead of tossing and turning." All of the participants complained of disturbed sleep "I hear every noise in the house," lack of restful sleep, and all but one participant said she was not getting enough sleep. Three of the wives remember vivid nightmares about the separation and one wife seemed to experience night terrors due to the increase in stress. Mrs. Chavez recalls a recurrent nightmare,
“I had nightmares about him getting blown up. I would have dreams about the company commander coming to the house to give me my SGI (serviceman’s group life insurance)... I got a lot of anxiety during the nightmare because when I woke up he would not be there and I would wonder if it actually happened.”

When the participants were asked about the final diagnostic criteria of “change in their health,” eight women described some sort of somatic complaint as identified by Mrs. Larson,

“I have headaches. It seems like I get sick easier. It seems like every time he is gone I get some type of cold. I never noticed it until you said that but yeah it happens whenever he is away.”

The complaints ranged from an increase in headaches, colds and irritability to nausea.

Table 3 has been provided to reveal the frequency at which the eight variables were mentioned in the criterion context during the interview process. This was done to demonstrate the intensity of the eight criteria pertaining to Separation Anxiety. Note that perceived increase in distress and increase in stress pertain to the same criteria. Note should also be given to the addition of “reluctance to be separated from one’s spouse” included with the reluctant to be alone criteria. This was added because 11 out of 12 subjects indicated both criteria in their interviews. Additionally, the reference to anger and frustration was added because it was such a universal theme throughout the interviews.
TABLE 3

Frequency of Reference to
Eight Criteria for Separation Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Brad</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Yng</th>
<th>Emsn</th>
<th>Thmp</th>
<th>Dan</th>
<th>Erik</th>
<th>Floss</th>
<th>Chys</th>
<th>Lars</th>
<th>Mhy</th>
<th>Ray</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase in distress</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inc. Stress</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband's Safety</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own/ kids Safety</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for Closeness</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctant to be Alone</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep Disturbance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>Nightmares</td>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somatic Complaints</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger/ Frustration</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The small number of zeros argues that these individual components of Separation Anxiety played a part in most wives' experience of their husbands' separation. As indicated by the bold total numbers, the most recurrent themes were: Increase in emotional distress, Increase in Stress, Worry about Husbands Safety, A Need to be Close to her Husband, and a theme of Anger or Frustration at their spouse, Army and daily events. Although the other criteria were stated as problems, they were not mentioned as frequently.

Proceeding beyond the experience of Separation Anxiety, the participants were asked about changes in other daily events. Seven women had children living in the home at time of the deployment and of these women, four said that their children were more of a stress than a comfort or support. One mother stated that her daughters would “say things like if Daddy were here he would let us do this and that, I wish Daddy were home”

Another mother who thought her children were more of a comfort than a stress stated “I had a real hard time sleeping so I let the kids sleep with me... I slept a lot better, I tried the first couple of nights with out them and I couldn’t sleep.”
When asked whether the wives felt supported by the Army an equal number felt supported, not supported or mixed about the Army supporting them. Mrs. Bradford, who felt supported, stated, “I think the Army really tries. They offer a lot of support groups and services... The intent is there.” Mrs. Maxwell’s response to the Army changing the return date for the troops was, “They treat wives like they are children... I don’t count on them. It’s not that I don’t need it; I am just an independent woman and they let me down.” The reasons stated for wives feelings of resentment, anger and frustration with the military included uncertainty of husband’s deployment and home coming dates, very short notice before husband’s deployment (48 hours or less), uncertainty about the length of their husband’s deployment and the number one reason given was the “expectation that the military is supposed to come before the family.”

The wives whose husbands had already returned provided information about the readjustment period. They talked about their husbands needing to unwind and spend time by themselves and this was difficult for many wives. Mrs. Bradford describes, “It can initially be rough... because I want to spend time with him but he seems to need a little space to readjust and I am like ‘Why can’t you have more energy? Come on, I have been resting up for three months. Come on let’s go.’” Other wives find that they have become more independent and resented their husbands intruding in their new found space or disrupting routines. Other wives “expected him to fall back into line, which he didn’t understand.” This tended to cause marital strife which seemed to work itself out in time. Mrs. Larson describes what military life has done to her marriage,

“The separations have really taken a toll on us. Thank goodness it didn’t break our marriage.... We were told when he first got in “the military will either make or break a marriage, don’t get used to deployments and separation but learn to tolerate it.”
The findings regarding the Separation Anxiety diagnostic criteria support the first hypothesis. All 12 of the participants experienced at least four criteria, indicating that they were currently or had recently experienced Separation Anxiety in the absence of their spouse. The fact that all of the participants experienced Separation Anxiety supports the notion that wives' emotional and behavioral reactions vary merely in intensity, but not in kind (Vrombrock, 1993). The length of the husbands' deployment had little effect on the wives' experience. The universality of Separation Anxiety suggests it is a healthy and normal response to separation from one's primary attachment figure.

Hypothesis 2 Separation Sequence

All of the wives exhibited some variation of Attachment Theory's behavioral and emotional sequence of protest, despair, and detachment. The wives' initial emotional reactions occurred when they were first informed of the deployment and continued until actual departure. Initially two of the wives were in denial and refused to accept the fact that their husbands were leaving. Five of the wives described "Overall the greatest feeling I had was anger" and the remaining five experienced some level of anxiety, "No, you can't leave me." and fear "At first I got this panic feeling... I was worried about the reaction on the Iraq side." These initial anger, anxiety, fear and denial responses can be regarded as a form of protest.

Their subsequent emotional reactions, a mixture of anxiety, depression and loneliness can be construed as a despair response. Once the reality of the situation sunk in the deep emotions seemed to surface. The next emotional experience the women indicated more clearly was detachment. The sense of "heightened independence" and "feeling like a single woman again" or "he took the wife role with him when he left" suggests some
detachment had taken place during the prolonged separation. This detachment made it possible for the wives to reassume normal activity.

This comparison between separation reactions of adults and children exhibits that the wives’ reactions to separation were essentially the same as a response found in children. This reveals that like the mother-infant bond, the marital relationship is the ultimate attachment bond in adulthood.

**Hypothesis 3 Demographic Analysis**

When the participants separation reactions were analyzed by: their husband’s rank, length of marriage, age of the subject, time of residency at current location, and number of support systems some interesting, but not surprising, results were discovered.

First, the only commonality rank had in this investigation was the level of support the participant felt from the Army. All of the officer’s wives felt either a mixture of support or full support from the military. The wives suggested support through “the battalion commanders wife was very helpful when needed” or “they offer a lot of support groups and services.” Contrasting these beliefs were the enlisted wives opinions of Army support. Five out of the seven enlisted wives did not feel supported by the military stating “Why should these guys help me; they have their own families,” or

“I didn’t feel supported by the military at all. They want to say they are family oriented, but they don’t know how to be. The soldier is theirs 24-7(24 hours a day, seven days a week) if they want him and the family comes second. I resent that, but there is not much I can do about that with his current job.”

The length of the participants’ marriages corresponded with the length of military service and both related to a decrease in separation distress in most of the wives married over five years. Six out of the eight wives who had been married for six years or longer reported lower levels of distress. These wives made reference to the fact that when they were newly married separations were much more emotional because “I was not as self
sufficient as I am now. I was really clingy, and I relied on him a lot. But during the course of 13 years of marriage I have come to rely on myself.”

Although the participant’s age had some influence on their level of separation distress, the length of marriage and amount of time in the military seems to be a better determinate of the level of Separation Anxiety.

The participants length of time at current location did not vary that dramatically. All of the subjects have lived at Fort Hood for 4 years or less making “time at current location” an indiscriminate factor in this analysis. It did not seem to matter how long the participant had lived on the base, most wives still cited their families as their number one support system.

When asked how the wives cope in these stressful times of marital separation, the wives stated a wide range of activities from talking with friends and relatives to not feeling like they coped at all. In addition to other coping strategies, all of the wives, but one, stated that they pulled their strength from an inner reservoir. This reservoir seemed to be filled with past successful deployment experiences ("I did it before, I can do it again"), positive self statements ("I’m strong"), and rational cognitive messages ("It is only a training exercise, he’ll be home soon"). Table 4 is a ranking of the most frequent answers given to the question regarding coping mechanisms.
TABLE 4

Frequency of Coping Strategies for Army Wives During Their Husband’s Deployment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy</th>
<th># of Wives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal Strength</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with Family</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeping extremely Busy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking with Friends</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Group</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Social Activities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaned on Children</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Didn’t Cope</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remarkably, all of the wives found positive aspects to the separation as Mrs. Larson’s response shows, “... I didn’t live outside the home before we got married and it has given me a chance to be independent that I would not have had.... When he is gone I appreciate the things that I take advantage of when he is here.” Mrs. Mahoney found reassurance in her belief, “I know if something were to happen to him permanently I wouldn’t fall apart and not be able to function.” The most frequent positive answer given was that “the separation allowed me to appreciate him and our relationship more” and the close second was that “It showed me that I could do it on my own.” “It was a crash course in assertiveness training.... As much as I hated him being gone, I was really proud of myself in the end.”
Hypothesis 4 Attachment Styles

Although the body of this paper centers on the similarities of the separation experience, after completion of the interviews it was apparent the wives tended to differ in their relationship with their primary attachment figure. The ways of relating with their husband and coping with the separation form a pattern or style. The adult attachment research has used several different labels for these patterns, but for the purpose of this paper the labels secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant will be used to identify different attachment styles. Secure participants may or may not exhibit distress when separated from their husband. They anticipated their homecoming and sought proximity at reunion. Anxious/ambivalent subjects showed signs of distress and anxiety upon suspicion of their husbands departure. They became very distressed at separation and displayed a mixture of approach and angry resistance toward their husband at reunion. Finally, avoidant women did not appear distressed by the separation, did not seek contact to their husband upon reunion and will actively avoid him. These styles were useful in describing the variations in the subjects experience before, during and after the separation. Attachment styles were assessed throughout the entire interview but attachment patterns were particularly evident as the subjects answered the question about summing up their emotional experience during the separation.

Secure Attachment

Of the participants interviewed, half (6) fell into the securely attached group. This group had the best adjustment overall to their husbands deployment. She was sad to have her husband leave and missed him while he was gone, but balanced her reliance upon others with her reliance on herself. One securely attached spouse explained her 11 month separation like this,
"My husband is my best friend and I don't want to lose my best friend. At first when he leaves you get real depressed and when something goes wrong you're like 'Oh No' but then you get really independent. I know I can do it... I think it is like detachment and I am used to life as a single woman...but I can't wait for him to come home."

These secure women realized that their husbands were gone out of a duty to their country and that it was not a choice. The women tended to feel increasing anxiety as the separation was anticipated “The only way I could deal with it was to take the dog for a run at 9:00 at night. I had to get the energy out somehow.” The secure wives reported missing their husbands and feeling lonely during the deployment. They relied on friends and family for support but also looked internally for strength. The feelings of anxiety, loneliness and sadness declined during the reunion with their spouse. These secure wives exhibited a lowered affective response in comparison with the other attachment styles.

**Anxious/Ambivalent Attachment**

The anxious/ambivalent group showed the highest level of separation anxiety and expressed greater distress. This group consisted of five wives and all but one were enlisted spouses. This group tended to have the most dramatic initial reaction and tended to take the separation the hardest. For example, when Daniels found out about her husbands deployment “It really hit me hard and I screamed. I must have woke up the entire apartment building.” The majority of these wives tended to focus on the negative that would go wrong even before their husbands left. Three of the six anxious/ambivalent wives took the deployment personally “Why did he do this to me, I was thinking he could have done something to have stayed. If he really loved me he would have stayed.” These women had a decreased sense of confidence in their marriage and reported more accounts of jealousy and guilt as described by Mrs. Emerson,

"While he was away I wished I had done so many things differently. You know
some wives think about their husbands after they have died. ‘Oh I should have made this for dinner that night it would have made him so much happier’... I kept thinking ‘Gosh, what if he comes back and he doesn’t want me anymore...What if he meets someone over there.’”

In accordance with the attachment theory and previous research these anxious/ambivalent wives evidenced the highest level of anxiety and loneliness. For example, Mrs. Fields said when she got the news about her husband's deployment “At first I got a panic attack... I get a good cry out of my system... It takes two weeks before I can really feel comfortable.”

This group also tended to have more anger at their husbands and tend to blame them for things that occurred while they were gone. They became upset if they did not hear from their spouse regularly and as Mrs. Fields expressed “I tell him to never leave a message because I would be so upset if I missed his call after waiting so long. It gets to the point that you are doing whatever you can to be home when you think he might call.” These anxious/ambivalent women felt misunderstood and resentful when their husbands came home due to not getting enough attention or messing up their routine.

Avoidant Attachment

One subject fit into the avoidant attachment group. This participant experienced similar amounts of anxiety as the ambivalent group but displayed it more through hostile behaviors. She acknowledged very few symptoms of distress and considered herself a “hardened veteran.” She displayed a lot of anger towards her husband for leaving her during a very stressful time. She denied any anxiety about upcoming deployments and never mentioned being lonely while her husband was gone. She mentioned feelings of anger and frustration towards her husband quite frequently. She seemed to view her husband as rejecting and stated that she “didn’t even want to pick him up at the airport
when he arrived home.” She appeared detached and stated that she “didn’t want to take off time from work” to spend it with him when he returned.

The comparison of the three different attachment styles indicate that there may be a predisposition, stemming from childhood, that predisposes wives to their level of Separation Anxiety. The attachment styles crossed all demographic variables of age, rank, and marriage length, indicating that these styles are much more salient than the other variables. This does not mean that each of these variables does not mediate the separation experience, only these variables seem to effect the level of Separation Anxiety and not the kind. Assessing for one’s attachment style seems to be a good way to predict reactions to spousal separation.

Overall the results from this study support the hypotheses that Separation Anxiety is a applicable conceptualization of wives’ experience during their husbands military deployment. Several basic similarities emerge in wives’ emotional and behavioral reactions to their separation from their primary attachment figure. For example, the emotional responses of the wives’ included feelings of anger, sadness, loneliness, independence, strength and some weakness feelings as well. Generally, fear and anger seemed to be the predominante feelings prior to and during the separation. Sadness, loneliness and depression tended to follow the husband’s departure. A sense of detachment was felt by the majority of the wives which seemed to be a coping mechanism allowing the wives to live a normal life.

Additionally, the reunion process appeared to be more difficult than most wives expected. It was a time for readjustment and many wives found themselves a bit frustrated and irritated by their husbands. This frustration either stemmed from feeling rejected or intruded upon. All of these differences seem to be related to the participant
cognitive processes. The way the wife interpreted the initial separation, conceptualized it while it was happening and dealt with the reunion, greatly affected her behavioral and emotional reactions.
CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

Prolonged separation from one's primary attachment figure for a three to twelve month period proved to be a distressful experience for all of the participants in this investigation. Although subjects with more experience of separation and more years of marriage had less intense reactions, every woman responded emotionally and behaviorally to the separation from their husband.

This investigation supports the hypothesis that the adult attachment system functions in a manner similar to the infant attachment system. In both periods of the life cycle individuals seek “felt security.” Without the security of the primary attachment figure, the symptoms of Separation Anxiety manifest in adults in this study, as the symptoms have been found in children in previous research.

Bowlby’s Attachment Theory proved to be a logical foundation for this investigation. The subjects used the language and descriptions congruent with Attachment Theory. Participants talked about being “attached” to their husbands and feeling “anxiety” during their absence. Some wives talked about feeling angry at their husbands for leaving them and experiencing “detachment” and “hyperindependance” towards the end of the separation. Mrs. Emerson even talked about missing her husband so much that she felt as if he were dead because he was so inaccessible to her. She seemed to take the separation personally and spent a considerable amount of time wondering if she had ever made her
husband happy or if he had found another woman in Kuwait. Mrs. Fields indicated that she could not help wanting to be with her husband as much as possible before his departure, demonstrating an inability to control her attachment system.

The major difference between infant and adult Separation Anxiety centers on the developmental maturity of the women. Their more sophisticated cognitive structure allowed them to realize that the separation was only temporary and that the separation was out of duty, not choice. Conversely, this cognitive structure also gave them the ability to remember what past deployments had entailed. Difficult previous separations prompted a feeling of foreboding about an upcoming deployment. For other wives previous experience prepared them for separation, giving them confidence that they could handle another long separation.

The pre-separation period produced mixed emotions in the wives. The majority of the soldiers were on “hurry up and wait” status. Uncertainty about the actual deployment date produced stress and anxiety in most of the spouses. Wives expressed anger at the military for the lack of deployment notice and organization. After a week or so of “roller-coaster” emotions most wives wanted their husbands to leave. The uncertainty seemed to be more torturous than the separation.

During the separation, every participant expressed a desire to remain as busy as possible to avoid thinking about their emotional state or the safety of their husband. Some wives seemed to go overboard in trying to keep themselves busy, but most wives didn’t have a choice. With their husbands deployed they had become “mommy, daddy, budget keeper and house keeper” allowing little time for themselves. This was the point at which social supports seemed to be most needed. However, it became clear that no matter how
helpful support systems were they could not replace their husbands as reported by Mrs. Thompson "even though there are plenty of people to talk to it is not the same as my husband... I miss his companionship.” Other wives found surrogate attachments in their family of origin or through their children. For example, Mrs. Chavez talked about having her young children sleep with her to give her a sense of comfort that allowed her to sleep better. From an attachment perspective Mrs. Chavez was allowing her girls to serve as a surrogate attachment until her husband returned. Just prior to the reunion, many wives felt an increase in tension. They were apprehensive about the changes that may have occurred in their husbands as well as within themselves.

The reunion period was a time of excitement, relief and re-adjustment. Wives who had never experienced a prior separation expressed surprise at the difficulty of the re-adjustment period. It became evident to the couples that they were unable to comprehend their spouses experience and this caused frustration. Some wives felt that their husbands did not appreciate what they had been through. Other wives could not understand why their husbands had such a lack of energy or did not want to talk about their own experience. These unexpected reactions caused a few women to doubt the strength of their relationships and their own self confidence. After a number of these unexpected reactions the wives seemed to form “working models” about their attachment figure. This model of their husband with whom access is uncertain, seemed to change the wife’s interaction with him. For example Mrs. Fields stated that when her husband comes home from deployments he will not talk about his experience nor will he listen to her vent about the stress she endured will he was away. Although this pattern seemed to cause feelings of insecurity and tension in the relationship, the attachment bond persisted.
Hypothesis 1 Adult Attachment and Separation Anxiety

This hypothesis stated that the Army wives in this study who were dealing with separation from their primary attachment figure would demonstrate feelings of separation distress. This distress characterized by anxiety, loneliness, disrupted sleep, anger, feelings of despair and intense worry could better be assessed and conceptualized as Separation Anxiety. These findings were supported by the Separation Anxiety criteria from the DSM-IV. All of the subjects indicated that they had experienced four or more of the criteria for Separation Anxiety thus proving hypothesis 1.

The present study, based upon self report methodology is consistent with other studies on adult attachment and separation (Vrombrock, 1993; Brown, Feltman, Whiteman & Manela, 1980). In accordance with Attachment theory the participants demonstrated that the deployment separation was an obstacle to proximity maintenance with their husband. This perceived obstacle resulted in anxiety which in turn triggered their attachment behaviors designed to re-establish proximity. These behaviors persisted until the “set goal” for proximity was achieved. The separation experience increased their need to be close to their husbands. According to Bowlby (1982), the reactions of anxiety and protest, even detachment are highly adaptive responses to separation from one’s primary attachment figure. Although these reactions have been considered suitable for children and recent research has linked attachments to adulthood, it is only appropriate to suggest that adults and children have similar baseline reactions to separation from their primary attachment figure. By utilizing the attachment framework, one can further acknowledge that Separation Anxiety is an adaptive response in adult attachment relationships. For example, the separation reaction caused many of the wives to have a
better appreciation for their spouse and their marital relationship. It gave them a desire to be close to their husbands and in most cases increased communication and feelings of love.

**Hypothesis 2 Separation Sequence**

This hypothesis stated that all of the wives would exhibit some variation of the behavioral and emotional attachment sequence upon finding out about the deployment. The wife’s initial reaction of anger, anxiety and fear can be regarded as a form of protest. The news of deployment activated the attachment system and the instantaneous expression of feelings of frustration, anger and resentment were all an attempt to prohibit their husband from leaving. Once it was realized that the husband could not stay home, some feelings of helplessness set in. It appeared difficult for a few wives to have such little power over their husbands’ decisions. Even though many of the wives seemed in need of emotional reassurance, they tried to remain strong for their husbands’ benefit.

Once their husbands left, a few wives broke down and there was little that could soothe them. This stage of despair was something that many wives felt they needed to “get out of their system.” The attempt to remain calm while experiencing inner turmoil could only last for so long and an emotional collapse seemed to be therapeutic. Subjects’ attachment styles mediated the onset, duration and intensity of the despair stage. For some wives the onset of the despair stage did not occur until a few days after their husband’s departure, when the reality of the situation sunk in and other defenses abated. For other wives the despair stage lasted a few weeks and was accompanied by an increase in crying, feelings of abandonment and a decrease of interaction with their social environment. Anxiety and fear seemed to be most prevalent at this stage of the separation
experience. Some wives spent a great deal of this time worrying about their husband’s safety and concentrating on their own feelings of loneliness.

After a variable amount of time, all wives proceeded into the detachment stage. This stage was characterized by an increased level of activity where the women were trying to occupy their time with work, volunteering, household responsibilities and social plans. Some women described the situation as feeling single again. Realizing that they did not have to answer to another person, consider their spouse’s opinion or rely on someone else gave them a greater sense of independence. The renewed interest in her surroundings helped to alleviate feelings of loneliness and sadness. This stage was very adaptive and functional for the wives and allowed them to feel proud of themselves at the reunion with their husband.

Overall the similarities between the infant and adult separation sequence are remarkable. Differences may lie in the adult’s cognitive ability to understand and rationalize their current separation experience. For instance, the initial reaction of protest could be observed when the wives was informed of her husbands deployment, rather than when he actually left. This cognitive ability to foresee the separation event was helpful toward the deployments conclusion. The wives could anticipate a relief from their responsibilities and emotional isolation. Additionally, the ability to constrain intense emotional reactions is a common coping strategy for adults but not for children.

Hypothesis 3 Demographic Analysis

Hypothesis 3 stated that the wives age, length of marriage, time of military service length of residency at current location, number of support systems and husband’s rank would have a positive effect on their level of Separation Anxiety.
Three of these variables: the participants age, length of marriage and time in military service seemed to be so interrelated that they will be discussed as one. All five of the subjects over the age of 30 had been married for 10 years or more and had numerous prior experience with deployment separations. Overall, these wives were better adjusted and seemed to have better coping mechanisms, thus decreasing their level of Separation Anxiety. They relied on past experience to get them through current separations. They knew what to expect emotionally, they could foresee their children’s behavioral reactions and they knew where to receive assistance in a crisis situation.

Four of the five wives said the separation experience was more difficult when they were younger and newly married. This can possibly be attributed to the fact that their working models of their relationship were still relatively new and they did not know what to expect. The newness most likely caused uncertainty about the relationship and insecurity within the individual.

The higher the rank of the deployed husband the higher the wives perceived the level of support from the Army. The majority of the enlisted wives felt either ambivalent support or no support at all from the military. The military’s caste-like social system, where greater benefits are allotted to higher ranking soldiers, reinforces the study’s findings. The Army considers the spouse a dependent and her privileges and responsibilities are greatly determined by her husband’s rank. Although the military wife’s identity is only partly determined by her military role, often her needs are secondary to supporting her husband’s career. Even though the military continually tries to work in collaboration with it’s families relations between personnel are inherently competitive.
This can cause feelings of frustration and resentment towards the military especially in times of stress.

The quantity of support systems was not as significant in alleviating Separation Anxiety as the quality. A few highly supportive people such as parents, a best friend or children seemed to lessen the amount of distress more than the number of supports. Some wives reported that being around people not familiar with the separation experience, or unfamiliar with her, could exacerbate her feelings. This suggests that being around insignificant others could intensify the wife’s level of distress. Coping with deployment appears to be a very complex issue that is affected by a large number of variables. These variables were analyzed independently from the subjects attachment style to investigate whether any external variables were of significance.

Hypothesis 4 Attachment Styles

This hypothesis stated that there would be qualitative difference in the wives level of Separation Anxiety that could not be otherwise attributed to another variable than their style of attachment. It was suggested that securely attached individuals would express lower levels of Separation Anxiety than anxiously and avoidantly attached wives. This was most evident in the participant who had been married and in the military system for over ten years, but continued to experience a high level of separation distress. These results are consistent with other studies on adult attachment styles (Hazen & Shaver, 1987; Armfield 1992).

Although securely attached wives experienced Separation Anxiety, the level was more reduced. As a group they appeared the most well adjusted to the deployment separation. The most difficult stage for the securely attached subject was prior to and at
the beginning of the separation. She tended to worry about her husband’s safety, but had confidence in her ability to remain strong and conquer most obstacles in his absence. In the beginning of the separation she was lonely and felt as if a part of her was missing. She quickly tried to fill that void through activity, family interaction, letter writing and phone calls to her husband. As the separation proceeded, her self confidence mounted and she anticipated her husband’s arrival.

The securely attached individual felt comfortable leaning on family and friends for support and comfort. Her secure relationship with her husband allowed her to seek out other supports when he was not available. These individuals were also better equipped to address their distressful feelings. Their outlook on life seemed to be more positive and they tended to express trust in others. They believed others would help them if needed and did not hesitate to lean on them. These findings suggest that even though securely attached individuals experienced Separation Anxiety it was manifested at a lesser intensity. This finding gives further support to the theory that Separation Anxiety is a natural phenomenon that happens to even the healthiest and securely attached individuals. Suggesting that Separation Anxiety is more of a function of the attachment relationship than of an individual deficit.

The five participants classified as anxiously attached exhibited the highest levels of Separation Anxiety. According to Attachment Theory anxiously attached individuals are perceived to be preoccupied with psychological distress and will attempt to seek the greatest amount of support from their primary attachment figure. They seem to rely on their husband for their sense of security and this hinders their development of independence. These wives reported greater amounts of stress, the number of problems
encountered during the separation and the inability to be comforted by extraneous support systems. These subjects relied highly on their spouse for their comfort. They waited anxiously for their husbands phone calls and expressed a greater need for reciprocity. These participants reported more accounts of jealousy, of the military or of their husbands with other women. The anxiously attached subjects had reduced confidence in their husbands motivation towards the relationship and they tended to feel that their husbands were unresponsive to their needs. They experienced higher level of anger at their husbands than the securely attached group and they tended to take the separation personally. At reunion the wives experienced a decrease in anxiety accompanied with a mixture of anger and excitement. The anger seemed to serve as a warning for future separation experiences.

In comparison to the other attachment styles, the avoidantly attached individual exhibited a greater degree of anger. Her anxiety seemed to manifest into anger and she expressed decreased levels of loneliness and anxiety. Although the avoidant group consisted of only one subject, her reactions were consistent with past research (Kobak & Sceery, 1988) on avoidantly attached individuals. This individual reported a rejecting primary attachment figure who was self absorbed. She seemed to perceive most of her relationships as rejecting, including the ones she had with her children. She expressed jealousy at other wives and soldiers relationships. This participant did not acknowledge seeking support from anyone in her husband’s absence. At reunion this participant reacted in a more detached manner. She seemed unaffected by her husband’s return and did not seek proximity to him.
General Summary and Implications of the Study

The findings of this study strongly support the utility of the attachment framework when investigating adult attachment relationships. Separation reactions in adults parallel those found in childhood, supporting Separation Anxiety as a useful conceptualization of the adult separation response. This is not meant to imply that adults are at the mercy of their prior infant separation reactions. In fact, additional research is needed to investigate whether the adult reaction is a repetition of the child-parental relationship or whether the marital relationship offers a new sense of self and security unmatched by those found in childhood.

In this investigation, Separation Anxiety captured the wives’ separation experience. Although some of the wording in the criteria were altered to fit an adult population, the concepts remained the same and were relevant to the participant’s reactions. Further, the fact that all 12 participants experienced Separation Anxiety supports the notion that this is a natural reaction to separation from one’s primary attachment figure whether it be a parent or a husband. The criteria that proved to be most prevalent during the separation were an increase in emotional distress, increase in stress, worry about husband’s safety and need for spousal closeness. Findings from this investigation suggest ways of understanding deployment separation, and increasing coping mechanisms.

Evidence suggests trends between demographic variables and wives’ level of Separation Anxiety as well their ability to cope with the separation. Most older wives who have been married and in the military system for over 10 years tended to exhibit lower levels of Separation Anxiety. They relied more heavily on internal coping
mechanisms and had better and broader support systems than younger, newly married wives. Many subjects cited maturity as having a lot to do with their separation reactions.

Attachment styles seemed to transcend rank, age, duration of military service and length of marriage. Attachment theory’s assumption that internal working models from early childhood experiences form a basis for an individual’s emotions and behavior is supported by this investigation. These models guided the participants’ concepts of self and others. They helped the subject control their emotions and predict the response they would receive from their attachment figure and others.

Overall, the securely attached group exhibited lower levels of Separation Anxiety and had the best coping mechanisms. They seemed to be the most satisfied with their relationships and the least distressed by the current separation. Although the other two groups (anxiously attached and avoidantly attached) varied greatly from the securely attached group, group characteristics remained vague. This may be due to the limited number of subjects per group and classification system used.

The findings from this study suggest patterns of wives’ responses to prolonged separation from their primary attachment figure. Individuals who are young and newly married, anxiously attached to their husbands and new to the military experience higher levels of Separation Anxiety. This population could be targeted and given the proper support and insight into the separation experience.

In conclusion the degree of security or anxiety experienced by the wife seems to be a joint function between their attachment styles and life experience. The fact that all of the attachment styles experienced some level of Separation Anxiety gives further support to this project’s hypothesis that Separation Anxiety is a natural reaction to separation from
an individual’s primary attachment figure at any developmental level. This suggests that Separation Anxiety is a natural response to the relationship cycle and more of a function of the attachment relationship than of an individual deficit. As a result, military wives, of any branch of the Armed Forces, will experience normal separation anxiety in prolonged separation from their primary attachment figure, rather than abnormal pathology.

**Strengths and Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Research**

The absence of a control group was an obvious limitation to this investigation. Without the control group it could not be assessed if Separation Anxiety was unique to the wives experiencing separation from their spouse and not due to some other more chronic feature of military life. Future research should include a well matched control group to determine if Separation Anxiety is unique to the experience of spousal separation.

Because the participants were chosen, not randomly selected several characteristics of the sample may have influenced the findings. All of the wives volunteered to participate and may have experienced deployments differently from the wives who did not volunteer. Some wives who felt they had a difficult time with the separation may have been inhibited to talk about their experience. The ethnic/racial diversity of this study is limited due to the low numbers of minority subjects. Future research should utilize a more diverse subject pool to investigate whether the subjects ethnic/racial background affects their perception of the separation experience. However, the small number of participants allowed for a more in-depth look at the wives’ separation experience. The interview format facilitated an empathetic atmosphere where the interviewer acknowledged feelings and really listened to their experience.
Although the researcher was surprised and pleased by the level of honesty and openness expressed by the participants, some wives may have presented themselves in a more favorable manner. This practice is common in the military system due to the belief that stating things otherwise would have a negative impact on their husband’s career. This perception could allow wives to minimize their distress to portray a strong exterior that is needed in military life. One possible way to increase truthful responses would be to do the interviews away from a military installation and ensure total confidentiality from any military or support personnel.

The interview format posed several limitations on the current investigation. First, subjects may have had difficulty articulating the emotional and behavioral reactions experienced around their husband’s deployment. Second, this information may have been highly personal information which the participant may not have felt comfortable divulging to a stranger. Finally, the subjects hinted at the tendency of popular media to expose only the weakness of military wives and this may have caused positive responses. Future research in this area could be improved by collecting data from several sources including, their spouses, friends and family members.

This research investigated a deduction from the attachment perspective, future research is needed to ground empirically on a larger scale. Continued research in the area of deployment separations is needed to more fully understand the family’s separation experience from the attachment perspective while considering successful styles of coping. The present study found that certain demographic variables and attachment styles decrease the level of Separation Anxiety experienced by the participant. It is hoped that this information will not only help Army wives cope with future deployments, but it also gives
researchers, support services and military families in general a different, more natural perspective for understanding the reaction to prolonged deployment separation.
APPENDIX 1
RECRUITMENT LETTER
APPENDIX 1
RECRUITMENT LETTER

December 21, 1996

Dear Army wife,

My name is Alison Holland. I am a masters student in Counseling Psychology at Loyola University of Chicago, in Illinois. I am writing you to request your participation in a research study I am conducting for my masters thesis.

The focus of my study is on wives’ reactions to deployment separation from their husbands. I will be studying the amount and types of stressors wives experience during their separation from their spouse. I am especially interested in the emotional reactions and coping strategies wives experience during field deployment.

I will be conducting brief, one hour interviews during the day from Thursday, January 23rd to Saturday, January 25th on base at Fort Hood. I would be grateful for your participation in an interview. If you have children, your welcome to bring them. The questions asked will be about background information regarding you and your family, emotional reactions to separation, stress related symptoms and ways of coping with stress.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and confidential. Absolutely no one, including Army personnel, will have access to your responses. Transcripts from the interview will only be used to compile data for the study and no personal information, such as name, address or phone number will be used. Following the study, all transcripts will be destroyed to ensure total confidentiality. After the completion of my study, I will be giving a general summary of the results in written form to interested participants. No personalized feedback will be given.

A military dependent myself, I have lived around separation issues all of my life and can empathize with your unique style of life. With your participation you will be helping to increase our understanding of wives’ needs during deployment. It is hoped that through a better understanding of wives’ experiences during deployment, the military support services will be able to better serve all military wives and their families. Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in participating in one of these interviews, please call me collect at (773)244-2861. If you reach me directly, we can schedule an interview date and time. If I am unable to answer your call, please leave a message and I will return your call ASAP. If you have any other concerns about this study, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Alison Holland
APPENDIX 2
INFORMED CONSENT

We would like you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of the emotional reactions Army wives experience when faced with separation from their husband due to deployment. Participation in this research involves answering questions in a brief interview. Information obtained from you will be number coded and kept completely confidential, and no names will be used at any time.

While there are not experimental conditions in this study, there is risk of psychological stress resulting from the exploration of one’s own feelings during their husband’s deployment. Benefits of participation include an opportunity for self-exploration and the opportunity to increase our understanding of wives’ needs during deployments.

Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to stop participating at any time, and you do not have to answer all of the questions. Your participation or lack of participation in this study will in no way affect the services you receive through the Army, nor will it affect your husband’s career in the Army.

If you have any questions or concerns about your participation, please feel free to contact Alison Holland at 312-244-2861 or Dr. Quinnen at 847-853-3337.

I, ______________, acknowledge that: I am aware of the minimal risks involved with the participation in this research; I may withdraw from participation at any time without a problem; I am free to ask questions regarding procedures to be followed; and I will be given a copy of this consent form.

I understand that my participation in this research involves psychological risk. In the event of distress resulting from research procedures, counseling will be provided upon request at no cost in accordance with the policy of Loyola University. No additional free treatment or compensation will be provided except as required by Illinois law.

I freely and voluntarily consent to my participation in this research project.

(Signature of Participant) (Date)

(Signature of Researcher) Alison Holland (Date)
APPENDIX 3
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1.) When you found out your husband was going to be deployed what were your thoughts and feelings at that time?

2.) When your husband departed what were your experiences about being left behind during his military deployment?

3.) What emotions do you experience when your husband is deployed and the two of you are separated?

4.) When your husband is away on deployment, what types of thoughts do you have about him?
   A. Do you worry about his safety?
   B. Do you wonder where he is sleeping, or what he is eating?

5.) Do you worry about your own safety when your husband is absent on deployment?

6.) When you are with your husband do you have any feelings about deployments in the past or think about ones to come in the future?
   A. Do you spend time thinking about the next time he will be deployed?

7.) When your husband is home do you ever cancel plans to go places or limit your social or work activities?
   A. If so can you tell me a story about when this occurred?

8.) What is your sleeping pattern like when your husband is absent?
   A. How about when your husband is home?

9.) Do you ever have any dreams regarding the deployment separation from your husband?
   A. If so what are they like?

10.) Have you noticed any change in your heath since your husband’s deployment?
   A. Do you feel an increase in stress?
   B. Do you find that you have more colds?

11.) Who do you feel is your greatest support system when your husband is on deployment?
   A. If you have children do you find that they are a support to you or more of an added stress when your husband is gone?
   B. Do you feel supported by the military community in your husband’s absence?
References


VITA

I was raised an Army dependent and grew up in military communities throughout the United States and Germany. My Army background inspired me to investigate issues related to military life in my graduate work.

I am currently a master's student in the Community Counseling program at Loyola University of Chicago. During this two year program I have been a member of two research teams. The first team led by Elizabeth Vera, Ph. D. and Suzette Spieght, Ph.D. investigated multi-cultural issues addressed in clinical supervision while exploring the level of supervisor training in multi-cultural issues. The second team, supervised by Al Algresti, Ph.D., examined the underlying factors of the client’s perception of counselor competence. I was a co-presenter of a poster at Loyola University on a study of media’s portrayal of marital satisfaction. My own thesis research examined separation anxiety in Army wives with husbands deployed to Bosnia and Kuwait. It was awarded the “vote of distinction” for excellent work in written and oral presentation. I am also currently involved in the Committee on Multi-cultural Education for the purpose of planning programs for self education, open discussion of multi-cultural issues, and sponsoring events for community interaction. I am a student affiliate of the American Psychological Association and the Military Psychological Association. Currently, I am working at Community Counseling Centers of Chicago fulfilling my graduate internship. I provide assessment and counseling services for a diverse population of children and families.
I received my Bachelor of Science degree at Loyola University in Chicago in 1994. I was on the deans list in 1992 and 1994. I was a member of the Psychology Club and a research assistant to Paul Jose, Ph.D. My Junior year I studied abroad in Rome, Italy where I explored many different cultures. During my four years of undergraduate education I volunteered in a number of diverse settings. I was the volunteer coordinator at Jane Addams-Hull House, a volunteer at Children’s Memorial Inpatient Pediatric Psych Unit and a Child Life volunteer for the purpose of easing loneliness and anxieties of children hospitalized in isolation units. I was a Best Buddy to a mentally handicapped woman at Misericordia and a tutor for children at St. Sylvesters Transitional Housing for battered wives and children. I also volunteered with Public Action to Deliver Shelter for the homeless.
THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Alison Holland has been
read and approved by the following committee:

Edward Quinnan, Ph.D., Director
Professor of Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

Elizabeth Vera, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
Loyola University Chicago

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis
and the signature which appears below verifies the fact
that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis
is now given final approval by the committee with
reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

[Signature]
Director's Signature

Date 1 April 1997