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## Coping Strategies and Relationship Satisfaction Among Dual-Military Married Army Couples

Leila Powell-DiSola  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Leila Marie Powell-DiSola

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Walden University  
2021

Abstract

Coping Strategies and Relationship Satisfaction Among Dual-Military Married Army  
Couples

by

Leila Marie Powell-DiSola

MA, Walden University, 2014

BS, Macon State College, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Proposal

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2021

## Abstract

Since 2001, millions of U.S. military personnel have deployed overseas. Military deployment can be a tremendous stressor on military families and negatively impact the marital relationship. Few previous studies and interventions have considered the effects deployment can have on dual-military married couples. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine what coping strategies dual-military couples used during deployment and whether use of these strategies affected their relationship satisfaction (RS). The theoretical framework for this study consisted of the social exchange theory and the exchange-based dual-military marriage model. A sample of 103 dual-military Army spouses, male or female, was recruited through social media and completed the survey instruments. The Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) and the Work-Family Conciliation Strategies Scale (WFCSS) were used to measure the predictive relationship between coping strategies (partner coping, positive attitudes towards multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustments, and institutional support) and (RS) among dual-military spouses. Multiple linear regression was conducted to identify the association between the predictor and dependent variables. Results indicated that spouses' increased scores on WFCSS were related to an increase in scores on the RAS. This suggests that having a more positive attitude towards the work-family arrangement and multiple roles, the greater RS. Positive social change in the form of additional training or counseling for dual-military couples regarding effective coping strategies during deployment are implicated.

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## Dedication

To military members: This dissertation is dedicated to all service members and their families. Thank you for your service to our country!

To my husband and two beautiful children: Jeffrey, thank you for supporting me through this process. You always believed in me and never doubted my ambitions and goals. “Tre” Jeffrey III and “Monie” Leila IV. Thank you for your bright smiles and giggles. You are my SUNSHINE!!

To my parents, James and Susan Powell: A special gratitude for consistently reminding me to stay focused and to “Stand on my Square.” Thank you for your guiding support and WISDOM!

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Military families are unique in the sense that they face challenges and stress that are not known to nonmilitary families. These additional stressors are long work hours, frequent moves, deployments, and residing overseas in foreign countries (Military Family Organization, 2017). Since September 11, 2001, 2.77 million service members have been on deployments to combat war zones, and half of the active-duty service members who have deployed have done so more than once (U.S. Veterans and Military Families, 2012). Studies conducted show that prolonged and frequent deployments have tremendous hardships and adverse effects on military families such as higher divorce rates, increased stress levels, and decreased RS (Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2017; Renshaw & Campbell, 2016).

Many researchers have examined the marital relationship of active-duty military members who returned from overseas and were married to a civilian spouse (Braun-Lewensohn & Bar, 2017; Collins et al., 2017; Cornish et al., 2017; McAndrew et al., 2017; Morgan et al., 2017). Marital outcomes among dual-military married couples are less well known (Lacks et al., 2015). This gap in knowledge is a concern because dual-military couples are engaged in even longer time apart if they are unable to deploy concurrently. In this study, I investigated the role played by marital coping strategies in the relationship satisfaction among dual-military married couples. Chapter 1 includes the background, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions (RQs) and hypotheses, the conceptual framework, nature of the study, definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and significance of the study.

## **Background**

Most of the research on military marriage involves couples with only one military member married to a civilian spouse; however, a review of the findings from these studies is meaningful to this investigation. Several studies address the unique issues and relational dynamics of military families with one active-duty service member married to a civilian spouse (Allen et al., 2011; Riviere et al., 2012; Van Vranken et al., 1984). Married military couples with one deployed service member must sometimes adjust to an extended period of separation. An imbalance between family and work during deployment may increase stress for married military couples (Drummet et al., 2003). Researchers have begun to acknowledge the consequences of time spent apart due to the length of deployments for military families (Andres, 2014; Bergmann et al., 2014; Negrosa et al., 2014; Renshaw & Campbell, 2016). Research indicates that active coping strategies may help military families with one deployed member handle the stress of separations and deployment. In their study, Maguire et al. (2013) found that, among military couples with one active-duty service member married to a civilian spouse, active coping strategies helped soldiers better handle multiple separations and deployments. Matias and Fontaine (2015) conducted a study among civilian couples, examining professional adjustment, partner coping, planning and management skills, institutional support, and positive attitude strategies. The two strategies of professional adjustment and partner coping were associated with a greater successful positive relationship. Maguire et al. used coping strategies of partner interaction only; however, Matias and Fontaine used partner coping in addition to other independent variables (IVs).

Active-duty dual-military marriages may exhibit even more marital problems such as marital health and adjustment issues and lower quality RS (Anderson et al., 2011; Lacks et al., 2015). Dual-military married couples can be deployed together or separately in the United States or overseas depending on the mission (Military One Source, 2013). Couples may have a lengthy time apart if one service member returns from a mission and the other spouse departs the household at the same time (Department of Defense, 2015). Balderrama-Durbin et al. (2017) found that during times of geographic separation and deployment, there is an increased risk for negative relationship outcomes such as infidelity, lower frequency of communication, and divorce.

However, for some service members in marriages where both members were active duty, deployment may not always lead to divorce and dissolution. For example, among male and female service members who served overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan, researchers found that the distance and fear of losing their loved one made them value each other more and increase communication, which led to increased closeness (Andres, 2014; Doss et al., 2015; Lufkin, 2017). It is not currently known, however, if these findings are applicable to active-duty couples where both members are deployed concurrently. Although military couples face many challenges such as career advancement, having children, and decisions about whose career has precedence, they can use strategies to yield a successful marriage (Huffman et al., 2017).

Understanding the effects of deployment on RS is an essential contribution to those who work and assist military personnel and their families in negotiating the impact of the deployment cycle. This research provides insight into partner coping strategies.

Findings may provide knowledge of marriage functioning in dual-married military Army couples and RS that counselors can use in helping couples to develop strategies for managing separation.

### **Problem Statement**

The existing studies present conflicting findings regarding the marital functioning and outcomes for families with a single military member and those with both partners in the military. Although some existing studies suggest a higher risk of divorce and dissolution (Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2017; Kachadourian et al., 2015; Negrosa et al., 2014), some suggest more positive outcomes due to the unique situations among military personnel (Doss et al., 2015; Huffman et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2013). The marital outcomes among dual-military married couples are less well known, however. I addressed the gap in the literature by examining the relationship between couple-level coping strategies of (partner coping, positive attitude towards multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support) and RS among dual-married military couples. Because marital coping strategies may play a different role among dual-military married couples in their marital satisfaction, I investigated these variables among dual-military married couples.

### **Purpose of the Study**

I conducted this quantitative analysis to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-military married couples. I wanted to gain insight on what



coping strategies dual-military couples used during deployment and whether use of these strategies affected their relationship satisfaction. I used the Relationship Assessment Scale (Renshaw & Campbell, 2016) to measure general RS and the Work-Family Conciliation Strategies Scale (WFCSS, Matias & Fontaine, 2015) to measure coping strategies.

### **Research Question and Hypotheses**

The key research question for the study concerned understanding the impact of the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-military married couples.

RQ1. Do couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support as measured by the WFCSS predict RS as measured by the RAS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustments, institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There is a predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills,

professional adjustments, institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

Social exchange theory is the theoretical foundation of the exchange-based dual-military marriage model, which emphasizes the exchange between marital partners regarding family and career decisions, in addition to the exchange between marital couple and the military organization (Huffman et al., 2017). Huffman and Payne (2005) built upon Blau's (1964) established theory to explain how perceived resources and perceived exchange balance play a key role in the exchange processes and decision-making processes of couples. It is essential to understand how active-duty dual-military married couples balance career and family decisions to manage the challenges of their military career and marriage, given the additional stressors these couples face. To investigate the relationship between couple-level coping strategies and RS, I used the WFCSS, which measures strategies that couples use to balance career, family, and marriage (Matias & Fontaine, 2015). As mentioned above, the social exchange theory is the theoretical foundation of the exchange-based dual-military model and could also explain decision-making strategies and the relationship between dual-military spouses and the Army organization.

### **Nature of the Study**

I used a quantitative design to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustments, and

institutional support, and RS among dual-military Army couples. Specifically, I used a nonexperimental quantitative design using multiple linear regression analyses to examine the predictive relationship between the IVs and the DV. Data for the research study were collected through self-report completion of questionnaires presented online using SurveyMonkey. Additional demographic information including age, gender, length of marriage, military rank, length of marriage, number of deployments, time frame of deployments, number of children, and educational level was collected as descriptive data. The target population were active-duty soldiers in heterosexual relationships who resided in the United States. The participants must have been in a dual-military active-duty marriage. Exclusion criteria were divorced or single non-Army members (participants could not be a member from other military branches of service), retired couples, and military active-duty not in a dual-military active-duty marriage. I used a purposeful nonprobability convenience sampling method, and all participants were recruited from the same geographical location in South Florida through the use of the Army Garrison Substance Abuse Program Newsletter Facebook page and flyers. Two assessment instruments, the RAS (Renshaw & Campbell, 2016) and the WFCSS (Matias & Fontaine, 2015), were used to understand the potential relationship between variables.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Active-duty military:* Soldiers who are full-time military duty Army personnel (Department of Defense, 2015).

*Dependents:* Military dependents are spouse(s), children, and other family members of sponsoring active-duty military personnel (i.e., active-duty, reservists or

retired) who qualify to obtain health medical care through the Military Health System (Hosek et al., 2006).

*Deployment:* The movement of military service members from their home station to an operational zone without their families (Pincus et al., 2007). For this study, the minimal length of deployment is 6 months.

*Department of Defense:* A Federal government office that manages all military service branches (Hosek et al., 2006).

*Military couple:* A legally married couple of any branch of the U.S. Armed Forces including Army, Coast Guard, Air Force, Marine, and Navy (Department of Defense, 2015).

*Relationship satisfaction:* A state of recognizing pleasure and contentment with the current condition of one's marriage along with the spouse perceiving the union to be personally fulfilling and worth maintaining (Karney & Crown, 2007, p. 13)

*Soldier:* Any uniformed member of the United States Army with no regard to gender or rank (Military One Source, 2017).

### **Assumptions**

I used two instruments to assess participants: the RAS (Renshaw & Campbell, 2016), which is designed to measure general RS, and the WFCSS (Matias & Fontaine, 2014), which measures strategies among dual-military couples. I assumed that all participants would answer the questions on the demographic questionnaire, the RAS, and the WFCSS accurately, completely, and honestly. However, self-reporting carries the risk of response bias (Frankfort-Nachmias, C. & Nachmias, D. (2008); thus, participants may

have felt obligated to claim an exaggerated RS. I also assumed that the research participants had not completed any surveys used in this study before. The other assumption is that the instruments measured both the IVs (predictors), which were partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and the DV, which was RS. In addition, it was assumed that the instruments used in this research are reliable and valid for the targeted population of interest.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

I recruited Army dual-military married couples, ages 18 years and older, to participate in the study. Participants completed surveys online, which may have limited the participation to only individuals who use the internet. The exclusion criteria for this research study were that it did not include active-duty service members married to a civilian spouse, nor did it include members of military branches of service other than the Army. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to all active-duty military populations.

### **Limitations**

My aim in conducting this quantitative study was to examine what coping strategies dual-military couples used during deployment and whether use of these strategies affected their RS. To examine the impacts of participating couples' coping strategies on their RS, I administered surveys. The research design could be viewed as a limitation because the survey design does not allow for making direct cause and effect inferences (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 62). In addition, the research study

was limited due to the use of a convenience sample instead of a random sample of dual couples and a single location instead of multiple locations.

### **Significance**

This research contributes insight on resiliency factors and RS among service members and families who face the daily challenges of the deployment phase. In doing so, it has implications for U.S. Army dual-military active-duty service soldiers, dual-military families, and the professionals who work directly in providing dual-military couples with the care that they may need. I addressed the gap in the literature by focusing not solely on marital dissolution and divorce, but on such dynamics as the relationship between strategies used and RS among active-duty dual-military Army couples. Insights from this study may increase understanding of strategies used by dual-military couples to bolster RS and manage issues associated with the deployment phase. Furthermore, the results of the study may contribute to the literature on the correlates of RS among dual-military married couples. This information may help military leadership, decision makers, military chaplains, counselors, Army Community Service, and Army Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs to develop new policies, intervention strategies, prevention strategies, more useful resources, and programs to assist dual-military families in navigating the challenges associated being in dual status.

### **Summary**

Maintaining a well-functioning and satisfying relationship when one spouse is away for prolonged periods of time is challenging (Andres, 2014, p. 22). Dual-military couples endure even greater challenges due to their active-duty status and mission.

Positive and meaningful relationships have been shown to be favorable to one's subjective well-being and psychological, mental health. Although faced with many challenges, dual-military couples can have control over their careers and marriage by using strategies for success (Huffman et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2013).

In this study, I sought greater understanding of the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-military married Army couples. Counselors may be able to use study findings to assist military personnel in navigating stressful situations to improve their RS. According to Kamp et al. (2005) and Williams (2003), RS is suggested to be positively associated with subjective well-being. Couples who are involved in satisfying and meaningful relationships tend to have positive subjective well-being in contrast to those couples who are in negative and unhappy relationships (Rosbult & Buunk, 1993). The findings of this study may also provide insight on how to foster greater resiliency among dual-military married Army couples. Several studies have identified resiliency factors among service members families who face the challenge of the deployment phase of one active-duty service member married to a civilian spouse (Palmer, 2008; Renshaw et al., 2008). In Chapter 2, I discuss the theoretical foundation for the study and review literature related to key variables.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

There is a large body of research on the effects of military deployment on active-duty service members and their families and on the strategies, couples can use to manage separation and deployment. The focus of most research has been on military families with one service member. There is limited literature focused on dual-military marriages as it relates to couple-level strategies. These strategies may play a key role in the RS of dual-military couples. Since 2001, approximately 8.9 % of the 2 million military personnel who have deployed for an average length 6 to 11 months have been dual-military married members (Bergmann et al., 2014; Department of Defense, 2015). The existing studies present conflicting findings regarding the marital functioning and outcomes for families with both a single military member and those with both partners in the military. Although some existing studies suggest a higher risk of divorce and dissolution (Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2017; Hosek et al., 2006; Kachadourian et al., 2015; Negrosa et al., 2014), some suggest more positive outcomes due to the unique situations of these families (Doss et al., 2015; Huffman et al., 2017; Maguire et al., 2013). According to Pearlin and Schooler (1978), coping with military deployment involves making choices and engaging in behaviors to avoid harm inflicted by the strains inherent in individual lives.

The marital outcomes among dual-military married couples are less well known. Because marital coping strategies may play a different role in their marital satisfaction, I investigated these variables among dual-military married couples. I designed this current study to address a gap in the literature by examining the relationship between couple-



level coping strategies (partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustments, and institutional support) and RS among dual-married military Army couples. I used two instruments—the RAS and the WFCSS to examine whether poor coping strategies lead to marital relationship dissatisfaction among couples. The RAS (Renshaw & Campbell, 2016) is designed to measure general RS, and the WFCSS (Matias & Fontaine, 2015) is intended to measure strategies.

In this chapter, I review the current literature relating to deployment of active-duty dual-married couples, marital coping strategies, and RS. This chapter includes a review of studies regarding the dynamics of relationship satisfaction and the specific effects on active-duty service members and deployment. It includes the social exchange theory, which provides the theoretical foundation of the exchange-based dual-military marriage model, which emphasizes the exchange between partners regarding family and career decisions, in addition to the exchange between the military organization and couple (Huffman & Payne, 2005; Huffman et al., 2017).

### **Literature Search Strategy**

The initial literature search for this dissertation involved using online databases available through Walden University. These included PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost, ProQuest, Military, and Academic Search Premier. For more specific information concerning active-duty military life, I consulted these specific sources: Military and Government Collection and Military Psychology. The primary search terms included the following: *mobilization and deployment*, *military personnel*, *relationship*

*satisfaction, coping strategies, marital satisfaction, civilian marriages, dual-military marriages, dual-civilian marriages, and social exchange theory.* The earliest research study reviewed was Hall (1972), and the most recent study was Huffman et al. (2017).

To identify gaps that existed in the literature pertaining to RS and to justify the use of the variables selected in this work, I conducted an exhaustive search of past research pertaining to military marriages of one service member married to a civilian spouse and dual-military marriages. There appears to be a lack of consistent data from 1972 to 2013 as times have changed in the dual-military active-duty environment. Therefore, in this current work I addressed the nature of RS among active-duty dual-military couples and what variables impact the degree of RS.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Exchange-Based Dual-Military Model**

Huffman et al. (2017) presented research on exchange relationships among active dual-military members and how they can balance and overcome the demands of active-duty status. The exchange-based dual-military marriage model builds on Huffman and Payne's (2005) model for dual-military marriages. Both works are premised on the social exchange theory's examination of general relationship processes. Responding to the increasing presence of dual-military couples in the U.S. military, Huffman et al. identified strategies used by such couples for navigating multiple roles.

### **Social Exchange Theory**

The social exchange theory provides the theoretical foundation of the exchange-based dual-military marriage model, which emphasizes the exchange between partners

regarding career and family decisions, as well as the exchange between the couple and the military organization (Huffman et al., 2017, p 11). Huffman and Payne's (2005) model built upon Blau's (1964) established theory to explain how perceived resources and exchange balance play a key role in the exchange processes and decision-making of marital couples. The model emphasizes that there are differences between active-duty dual-military married couples and non-dual civilian married couples. This model explains how marital couple experiences at both work and home can influence one another in the relationship of marriage.

Huffman et al. (2017) suggested that married dual-earner couples in the relationship make decisions together and develop the necessary strategies to negotiate life demands of family and work. The social exchange theory may possibly assist in explaining the decisions made by dual-military couples, the relationship between the couple, and the military organization. The exchange-based dual-military marriage model developed by Huffman et al. presents general relationship processes, which I used to explore coping strategies and relationship satisfaction among dual-military partners. Specifically, I used this model to explore dual-military members exchange relationships and how the couples in these relationships balance and overcome the demands of active-duty status. I believe the framework provided by both social exchange theory and the exchange-based dual-military marriage model is needed to further research on coping strategies and RS of dual-military couples.

## **Review of Literature Related to Key Variables and/or Concepts**

### **Military Deployment**

According to Military One Source (2017), *military deployment* refers to the movement of active-duty military members and materials from a home base installation to a specific destination in support of the mission. Deployment for active-duty service members involves the pre-deployment phase, deployment phase, and post-deployment phase. In the pre-deployment phase, the service member in units prepares and engages in traditional training for the responsibility and conduct of military duties. The service member is at home and reporting for routine work daily at the home installation. Also, during the pre-deployment phase, the active-duty service member has extensive evaluations. These evaluations include medical assessments to stabilize and maintain a personal life and maintain unit readiness (Military Strong Bonds, 2017).

Furthermore, upon the end of the pre-deployment phase, units are alerted for possible deployment receiving orders to mobilize. Orders to mobilize involve preparation. Preparation factors (i.e., additional training, medical appointments and evaluations, dental appointments and evaluations, required briefings, and possible pre-counseling on various needs of the service member) are examples (Military One Source, 2017). Once the service member's unit departs from the home installation, the pre-deployment officially ends for the theater of operations to their designation.

According to Military Family Organization (2017), the second phase of deployment involves the cycle that begins with the active movement of service members from the home installation to the designated theater of operations. According to Renshaw

and Campbell (2016), deployment can be a stressful time for active-duty members and their families because of what the deployment cycle entails. Renshaw and Campbell (2016) conducted a study involving 67 male active-duty service members who deployed 1 year after post-deployment. Results suggest that wives' relationships are more influential on deployment than the male service members' responses. During deployment, active-duty members perform duties in support of the mission, which can be in the theater of operations overseas or within the United States. The last phase of deployment by the unit involves planning for the service members to return home to the base installation, for the re-deployment phase.

In the post deployment phase, members' units return to the installation where they prepare for the reintegration phase into normal life. This reintegration involves training, briefings, medical appointments, and possible counseling to help the service members (Knobloch & Thesis, 2012). Knobloch and Thesis (2012) conducted a study of 259 participants who had been reunited with their romantic partner during the past 6 months. Online questionnaires were given to 137 service members and 122 partners. The study examined the issues military couples face during post deployment transition. The authors found that participants who reunited with a romantic partner during the past 6 months had diverse changes to their relationship, issues of relational uncertainty, and interference in daily routines. On the positive side, some individuals indicated that their relationship made them grow closer or their relationship made them value each other more; however, the risk for infidelity during the deployment cycle was a significant concern among

participants. The final phase of the post deployment involves military members returning to their regular duties on the military installation.

Reintegration involves active-duty service members' return to community life as well as family reintegration into their regular military duties. Moreover, this includes the military unit requirement for the completion of training, counseling, medical evaluations, and follow-up briefings (Military One Source, 2017). During the reintegration phase, active-duty members and their families may experience stress with readjusting to being back together. Resources are available to support military members to make life easier for readjustment. Resources are either through the community or branches of service (Wood et al., 2012).

### ***Dual-Military Deployment***

Dual-military couples' roles shift when mobilization and deployment demands are required. Deployments or remote assignments, and the separation that comes with them, are a fact of life for every military family. However, dual-military couples are more likely to spend even more time apart because they are juggling two assignments. Dual-military couples where both partners are in the military have many experiences most civilian couples do not share. Being a dual-military couple is one of the few instances where a military member has the chance to deploy with their spouse.

With the Married Army Couples Program (MACP), which helps place married service members in proximal units, some couples have the chance to spend their time overseas together. The MACP provides soldiers the opportunity to establish a joint domicile while fulfilling the Army's mission. Service members in the following

categories may apply: Regular Army, USAR Active Guard Reserve, Title 10 (Army National Guard) ANGUS reserve soldiers married to active-duty members of the Regular Army, Army Reserve, and other active-duty U.S. military services. In accordance with Army Regulation 614-200 Section IV, enrollment in the MACP does not guarantee reassignment together but does ensure that soldiers are automatically considered for future joint-domicile assignments (U.S. Army Resource Command, 2018).

Soldiers can submit documentation requesting enrollment in the MACP with a copy of their marriage certificate, and this information is loaded into the Total Army Personnel Data Base. Soldiers who are married to a member of another branch of the U.S. military (Air Force, Navy, etc.) are not eligible to enroll in the MACP for automatic joint domicile consideration. However, soldiers may request reassignment to join their spouse by submitting documentation to their career branch at Human Resources Command, Fort Knox, Kentucky. The Army intends to extend the courtesy of the MACP to the other services and accommodate joint domicile whenever possible, with the needs of the Army being the final determining factor. Soldiers may also update their preference for joint deployment or separate deployment cycles via the Assignment Satisfaction Key web page (U.S. Army Resource Command, 2018).

### **Stress and Military Deployment**

#### ***Infidelity and Divorce in Marriages With One Military Member***

According to Knobloch and Thesis (2012), the risk of marital infidelity during the deployment phase is a major concern by military members and their marital partners. Similarly, Kachadourin et al. (2015) conducted a study to examine the experiences of

combat-exposed veterans to infidelity (i.e., a marital partner reported that they were unfaithful or reported potential infidelity, stress from exposure, and/or related issues with social support) during deployment. The sample consisted of 571 participants, of whom 128, 22.2%, indicated infidelity during a recent deployment and 37.8% had suspected infidelity during the deployment cycle in their marriage. Also, participants who reported that marital partners were unfaithful had more symptoms of posttraumatic stress symptoms in comparison to those partners who did not report having symptoms.

Even though most couples are resilient despite multiple geographic separations and stress related to deployments, a significant proportion of military couples are involved in divorce and dissolution (Cigrang et al., 2014; Karney & Crown, 2007; Negrusa et al., 2014). Furthermore, military couples who experience deployments may have an increased vulnerability to infidelity because of multiple risk factors. Balderrama-Durbin et al. (2017) conducted a study on the risk for marital infidelity across a year-long deployment among 63 married airmen. They found that during times of geographic separation and deployment the risk was increased for negative relationship outcomes such as infidelity, lower frequency of communication, and divorce. Distress before deployment may render military couples more vulnerable to cheating. Participants who experienced a higher increase in relationship distress were more likely to suffer infidelity in comparison to those who did not. However, for some service members, deployment may not always lead to divorce and dissolution. For example, among male and female service members who served overseas in Iraq or Afghanistan it was found that the distance and fear of losing their loved one made them value each other more, increased



communication, and led to increased closeness (Andres, 2014; Doss et al. 2015; Lufkin, 2017).

### ***Stay-at-Home Partner and Stress in Marriages With One Military Member***

Allen et al. (2011) conducted a study on 300 active-duty couples (Army husband and civilian spouse) that deployed within the year. Wives reported increased levels of stress in comparison to husbands. Also, increased levels of stress for both marital partners who reported lower income and more significant economic strain were present. Husband combat exposure increased problems for both husbands and wives. Wives said increased stress was related to child behavioral issues and a sense of lower concern of the for families.

This study made a significant contribution regarding the military and deployment-related problems related to combat, family stress due to economic strain, marital conflict, and child problems. The results provide us with an increased understanding of the impact of stress due to military deployment and relationship functioning among families. These results suggest that interventions with military couples to help them cope with the challenges of military life and deployment are needed.

When an active-duty service member deploys into the combat zone, it can put an increasing strain and pressure on the military family and the marital relationship. The partner that is deploying experiences stressors and the prevalence of active-duty member returning from deployment experiencing depression, substance abuse, and PTSD is a factor (Mustillo et al., 2015). Mustillo et al. (2015) used data from both the Defense Medical Surveillance System and The Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center (January

2008 to March 2009) of service members. The sample consisted of 53, 534 active-duty service members who only served in Afghanistan and Iraq. Self-reported online assessments conducted by health care providers of face-to-face and follow-up telephone methods implemented allowed for data collection. The authors found that military service members reported symptoms related to their mental and physical health statuses and exposure concerns in both assessments.

The marital partner that is left behind does not have to deal with the traumatic, life-threatening, or life-altering experiences the active-duty member does during deployment, but he or she are likely encounter his or her stressors related to the deployment. It is an emotionally challenging time that is full of uncertainty, fear, and worry. During the deployment, the stay-at-home partner has to manage emotions and manage their deployed partners' emotional pain. According to Aducci et al. (2011), stay-at-home partners describe having physical and emotional feelings of being drained during the deployment phase.

In a study conducted by Aducci et al. (2011) interviews conducted among 25 military spouses aimed at examining participants lived experience of Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom of the deployment cycle. The authors found two themes of "split loyalties" and "being a good military wife." Military wives' experience reflected a disenfranchised existence and stress was exacerbated by the reality of the composition of their marital relationship—a couple–military threesome—that they bore in silence (Aducci et al., 2011, p. 4).

The added stressors brought on by the deployment exacerbate the stressors

of everyday life. Interestingly, the relationship roles of both marital partners, the increased pressures on the deploying service member, and the partner being left behind may have an adverse effect on RS in the marriage (Hull, 2007). The stay-at-home partner duties shift while the deployed spouse is away which may cause hardship on the marriage and the partner that is left behind responsibilities doubles because they are assuming the role of both mother and father in the case of marital partners of children.

According to Caliber (2006), military couples may experience unforeseen financial problems during deployment. The primary sources of these expenses are shipping costs, items required by the deployed soldier's unit of the shipping cost for clothing, and additional childcare needs. The duties of being a temporary single parent may harm the relationship satisfaction in the marriage.

Neff and Karney (2007) conducted a study to examine stress and the conditions that influence a marital partner's relationship evaluation called "stress crossover." Participants consisted of 169 newlywed couples married over 3 years. Neff and Karney (2007) suggest that stress is felt when one marital partner influences the other directly and these adverse feelings of the deploying spouse can affect both partners in the marriage. However, they found that there was an increase in RS if one marital partner was able to identify that there was stress being experienced by the partner due to situational factors than personal factors. Interestingly, military members are at an increased risk for relationship distress than the civilian population because they are recruited from populations that are at an increased risk for marital dissatisfaction based on factors (i.e., age, low amount of support, and financial stress (Karney & Crown 2007)).

The level of worry about deployment during wartime by the non-deployed spouse appears to be the soldier's safety, emotional adjustment, and opportunities for communication (Allen et al., 2011; Allen, Rhoades, Stanley, & Markman, 2010; Andres, 2014). Stress can occur in all phases of military deployment.

Andres (2014) conducted a study of longitudinal data on 153 military personnel on how life stress, work-family conflict, social support, psychological distress, and relationship satisfaction develop throughout military-induced separations. Moreover, the author examined what best predicted RS after being separated for several months and whether spousal interaction mediated these effects. The author found that there was a significant decrease in RS, social support, and psychological distress over time. The researcher controlling for pre-deployment levels of work-family conflict, relationship satisfaction, psychological distress, spousal interaction, and social support significantly contributed to the explanation of relationship satisfaction of military induced separations. The effects on the relationship varied for each stage of work-related separation of spouses.

Andres (2014) made a significant contribution; however, the article had several limitations. The author did not address gender differences. All of the participants were female spouses. There was no association between RS and length of relationship and marriage or cohabitation with the spouse, or with having children. This research made a significant contribution to the exploration and explanation of RS after deployment. Moreover, this research showed that the effects on the participant relationships varied for each stage of work-related spousal separation. This implication aligns with the need to

assist the military member and their families that is provided to focus on balancing work and family demands by communication and facilitating building networks.

### **Relationship Satisfaction**

According to Rusbult and Buunk (1993), the definition of RS is an interpersonal evaluation of the positivity of feelings for one's partner and attraction to the relationship. In addition to this definition, Gottman (1994) defines RS as a person's subjective evaluation of the quality of marriage. Satisfaction in the marital relationship is a topic that the general population has examined (Bowman & Sutton, 2004; Bradbury, Fincham, & Beach, 2000; Nelson, 2008; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993). Moreover, RS is contingent upon a variety of factors in the marriage (i.e., being empathetic, affection, and feeling that there is mutual validation) (Mackey, Diemer, & O'Brian, 2000; Rowan, Compton, & Rust 1995).

According to Vannoy-Hiller and Philliber (1989), RS is related to the individual intimately feeling close, plans for the future, and time spent together. Whereas marital dissatisfaction can cause arguments, verbal abuse, negative competitiveness, physical aggression, and relationship separation. Other researchers also suggest that the ability to communicate, social support, relationship equity, personality styles that are complementary, concerns that are mutual, and self-disclosure contribute to RS (Cowan, Cowan, & Mehta, 2009; Furman, Simon, Shaffer, & Bouchey, 2002). Military couples view the demands required by obligatory duties as an issue and threat to RS (Allen et al., 2011).

### ***Relationship Satisfaction in Marriages With One Military Member***

McLeland, Sutton, and Schumm (2008) conducted a study among three groups of participants of 74 active-duty male soldiers that recently returned from deployment in the combat zone, 46 non-military male married participants and 46 male reservists. The results showed that RS was significantly lower for active-duty members who recently returned from the combat zone in comparison to the reservists that were scheduled to deploy and those of the non-military male married participants.

Allen et al. (2011) conducted a study of 300 active-duty Army husband and civilian wife couples that deployed within the year and suggests that personal commitment to military marriage is an essential aspect of relationship functioning, along with the confidence that there is a future for the marital relationship. Moreover, marriage involvement of commitment demonstrates the intent to stay in the relationship with the marriage partner, which facilitates pro-relational behaviors that lead to levels of more stability and security in the marital future (Allen et al., 2011). The author suggests that pro-relationship behaviors, along with the perceived sacrifice of one's marital partner for the well-being of the other, have been essential predictors of RS in military couples comprised of a military husband and civilian wife. However, when the military spouse, is called to duty leaving the family behind, the stay-at-home spouse may feel a sense of abandonment, loneliness, or neglect. They could view the perceived behaviors as being pro-military rather than seeing the relationship as pro-relationship, which could create issues such as challenges or conflicts for the military couples (Allen et al., 2011). Relationships can be gratifying and can also be highly satisfying if each partner is willing

to work toward this goal. Many factors can influence how satisfied an individual is with her or his marital relationship, and gender differences may play a key role in RS (Allen et al., 2011).

In a study conducted by Christensen and Heavey (1990) 31 participants (one military member) were examined to measure the effects of gender and social structure on-demand or withdraw pattern in the marital relationship. The results showed that the demander, usually the female participant, pressures the other partner through criticism, emotional requests, and complaints, and the withdrawer, often the male participant, retreats through passive inaction and defensiveness (Christensen & Heavey, 1990. p. 73). Relationship satisfaction can be profoundly meaningful but also require commitment from the marital partner. Many factors can influence how satisfied the spouse is in a marital relationship.

### ***Relationship Satisfaction in Dual-Military Member Marriages***

A dual-military marriage is when an active-duty member is married to another active-duty member of any branch of the service (Military One Source, 2013). Dual-military married couples in the relationship are trained to be a mission and task oriented achieving personal and professional goals (Huffman et al., 2017). Dual-military married couples can be deployed together or separately in the U.S. or overseas, depending on the mission (Military One Source, 2013).

For example, as one service member returns from a mission, the other spouse departs the household causing lengthy time apart for dual-military married couples (Department of Defense, 2015). The Department of Defense requires dual-military

married couples that deploy together with dependents to provide a family care plan for submission that considers alternative and informative information for care during temporary duty and military deployments. This contingency plan assists dual-military married couples because they are more vulnerable to parenting and separation stressors (Melvin, Gross, Hayat, Jennings, & Campbell, 2012).

Researchers have discussed marriages where both marital partners are active-duty military members about marital satisfaction among dual-military couples (Huffman et al., 2015; Karney & Crown, 2007). Huffman et al. (2015) conducted a mixed-methods study with military personnel from Fort Bragg, Fort Campbell, Fort Bliss, Fort Shafter, Fort Huachuca, and Fort Irwin who completed surveys and interviews (37 focus groups). Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 276 married dual-military and 673 one military member married to a civilian spouse. Results showed four factors related to dual-military challenges: (a) programs and policies; (b) deployment; (c) supervisor and chain of command; and (d) permanent change of station. Also, findings suggest that gender differences exist in types of support, which indirectly affects career intentions p. 21. It was hypothesized that individuals in dual-military marriages are exposed to stressors and benefits in the work and family. Those partners in dual-military marriages who receive little, or no support may experience both adverse health and lower subjective feelings of well-being. The author also found that female service members perceived that they are not provided the same support mechanisms as male service members. Differences in perceived support of both men and women service members indirectly



affected turnover intentions. And dual-career couples have less flexible work-family boundaries than dual-career couples, which have more work-family management.

Lacks et al. (2015) reported on the marital health of 20 dual-military couples exploring marital health (satisfaction, adjustment, and quality) and stress among dual Air Force couples concerning the length of time in service, rank, deployments, and level of physiological stress. Results supported previous research that the number of deployments is not related to marital health, husbands' marital satisfaction was negatively related to wives' rank, and wives' rank was negatively related to marital adjustment and quality; however, husbands' deployment, rank, and time in service was related to physiological stress (responding to stressful environmental condition; body's method of reacting to a challenge).

Although Lacks et al. (2015) made a significant contribution, the article had several limitations. The small sample size of Air Force dual-military couples made it challenging to generalize information to a larger population. Second, the small sample size made it difficult to find significant results. This article captured cross-sectional data; however, they were unable to determine a causal relationship between factors (i.e., changes in rank, marital satisfaction, adjustment, and quality of time).

Interestingly, the work-family conflict had adverse effects and also affected the wellbeing of the spouses. Military couples have the same experiences and difficulties as civilian couples in their relationships; however, they encounter additional stressors that civilian couples do not. Stressors include mobilization and deployments, relocation assignments, long work hours due to mission responsibilities, and mission-specific work

(Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2017; Military One Source, 2017; Segal, 1986).-In this section, I discussed RS among couples with one military member married to a civilian spouse and active-duty dual-military couples. I measured the factors related to marital satisfaction in dual-military couples.

## **Partner Coping**

### ***Partner Coping in Military Families***

Partner coping is a factor shown to be related to RS. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), the definition of coping is the behavioral efforts and constant change to manage the internal demands that exceed the resources of a person. The authors view the relationship between the environment and the person as a mutual and reciprocal relationship. Coping with military deployment involves making choices and engaging in behaviors to avoid harm inflicted by the strains inherent in individual lives (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). Coping is done by controlling stress, changing the situation, and controlling the meaning of events or goals. Military families utilize coping strategies to deal with the stressors of deployment. Coping is a strategy to alleviate pressure until their spouse returns from the deployment phase.

### ***Specific Coping Strategies Measured by the WFCSS***

Managing family and work are increasingly demanding and difficult among dual-earners (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). Furthermore, Matias and Fontaine (2014) suggest that dual earners are not a majority and women and men's roles in the home and work have changed. Questions on how couples and individuals can balance work and family have been raised (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). Matias and Fontaine stated that there is limited

research that addresses work-family conciliation strategies and that it is limited to an approach that is conflict-driven and context-specific instruments and these two strategies are scarce. The authors developed a psychometric tool to assess how dual-earners manage roles that are detached from a conflict driven approach and that highlights work-family conciliation strategies. Using a quantitative and qualitative approach, they developed the WFCSS and administered to 217 civilian individuals between the ages of 24 and 56 years old. The research participants had to be employed for 15 hours a week, have at least one child, and live together with a partner. The conciliation strategies where childcare facilities, individuals and family, public support, and using their own resources to balance responsibilities are addressed. In order to understand the process of the WFCSS the authors addressed dual-earners way of dealing with responsibilities in relation to gender role attitudes. According to the authors women particularly mothers are primarily responsible for housework and childcare in addition to professional life. And, women are adjusting life to restructure careers to cope with demands of family.

The WFCSS is an instrument that was developed to measure strategies for dealing with multiple role responsibilities of those couples who are married (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). The WFCSS is composed of five subscales that correspond to strategies dealing with the multiple role responsibilities: partner coping, positive attitudes towards multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustments and institutional support (Matias & Fontaine, 2014).

The partner coping subscale measures a partner's emotional and instrumental support in regard to work-family balance and the specific time for the couple's

relationship. The positive attitudes towards multiple roles subscale refers to the positive outlook regarding the dual-earner situation of the family and to also regarding the fact that the participant occupies many roles. It represents an optimistic attitude towards the work–family arrangement. Management and planning skills subscale is associated with personal characteristics to deal with work–family responsibilities (i.e., flexibility, planning time, managing time, and segmenting work and family. The strategy of professional adjustments subscale represents those partners or individuals that are cutting down on their work time investment, work responsibilities or work hours. Institutional Support is related to the quality and use of childcare and free time facilities.

According to Matias and Fontaine (2014), research on work-family relations is exclusively focused on negative factors associated with role conflict and performance. Therefore, the research conducted has focused on what participants do in order to cope with the daily demands of family and work roles. Grzywacz and Marks (2000) suggest that the work family interface should not be viewed as a means of solving difficulties and problems.

More recent approaches emphasize that there are positive factors and benefits associated with multiple roles. It is the intent of this research to use the WFCSS to address positive strategies used by dual-military couples in order to promote a proactive approach to resiliency and coping. The research conducted by Matias and Fontaine (2014) is in line with the conceptualizations of coping which advocates the need to focus on the way individuals cope to prevent the impact of possible stressors. Moreover, the

authors suggest that conciliation is distinct from conflict and suggests that a person and the efforts made by the family to manage family life and work in an active way.

Matias and Fontaine (2015) conducted another study using the WFCSS to examine partners influence on the use of work-family coping strategies among 100 Portuguese couples (200 individuals). The researchers suggests that work-family coping strategies may lead to increases of balance by decreased work-family conflict and increasing work-family enrichment (p. 213). Another important feature to this research is that female participants use of coping strategies is associated with work-family enrichment and work-family conflict than male coping. Female participants responses concerning institutional support suggests that female participants believe that raising their children are valued more.

### ***Conciliation Strategies***

I provided an overview of research focusing on conciliation strategies used by people either to proactively adapt to work-family challenges or to cope with conflict. Of the literature review search, one of the earliest works reporting research on the conciliation strategies was done by Hall's (1972) study. The importance of this research introduces work family conciliation strategies and the strategy of personal perceptions. In this study, the author established 16 specific behaviors of women in the university to manage family and work which theoretically included three strategies.

First, reactive behavior implies that the individual is seeking to accomplish requirements without making changes of a role. Second, Personal role redefinition is defined as changing personal attitudes and perceptions about role expectations. Third,

Structural role implies the changes involved concerning the expectations about appropriate behaviors in a specific position.

In contrast to having three main strategies Kirchmeyer's (1993) research identified one single factor, which corresponds to a positive attitude and to a good personal organization. This research used a sample of 221 managers indicating how community work, parenting, and recreation affects work both negatively and positively. Also, the researcher studied participants' use of certain coping strategies.

In a qualitative study conducted by Becker and Moen (1999) interviews of 100 middle class participants in New York examined work family strategies. Three strategies are used to manage work and family. The first, establishes the limits of the number of working hours or working schedule. Second, career versus work (i.e., deciding to invest in a career that is more flexible and the investment in the increased demanding job of the other partner). Third, switching over the above-mentioned strategies over the span of life. Of the mentioned studies above some similarities are noted of the personal perceptions by Hall (1972) and Kirchmeyer (1993).

Hall conducted research in the 1970's among women participants who are college graduates; however, Kirchmeyer (1993) work used the exact model done 20 years later using both male and female participants who are managers. Moreover, Matias and Fontaine (2014) study consisted of dual-earner participants and assess how dual-earners manage multiple roles detaching from a conflict and highlighting the work-family conciliation strategies. Matias and Fontaine (2015) examined the mutual influence on the use of work-family coping strategies among dual-earners. Both works are conducted

among civilian couples, and both works used the WFCSS. An important fact to remember is that the research mentioned above and conducted was not done among active-duty dual-military couples limiting the knowledge of how the process of conciliation of family and work is implemented among this special population.

I designed this current study to expand existing research by examining the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-married military couples.

### **Coping Strategies in Marriages With One Military Member**

According to Rossetto (2009), the stay-at-home spouse occupies their time by going out with friends, working out at the gym, watching movies, and assisting their children with schoolwork. These routines are to be expected in the military relationship. Moreover, those that engage in volunteerism or working part-time can better cope with deployment (Orthner & Rose, 2005a).

Blank, Adams, Kittelson, Connors, and Padden (2012), conducted a study of 102 Army wives to examine coping behaviors during deployment separation, effectiveness of coping behaviors perceptions, and correlations of the two variables. The authors found that coping support systems and problem solving had the strongest correlations between coping use and effectiveness which measures the use of support systems. Braun-Lewensohn and Bar (2017) conducted a study of 100 Israel Defense Forces reserves wives to examine relationships between coping strategies and quality of life among

military wives. Results showed that active coping was the most common strategy used among military wives. Furthermore, women with no children reported a better quality of life. Although Braun-Lewenohn and Bar (2017) made a significant contribution, there were several limitations. First, women service members were not included to examine if there are variances. Second, dual-military couples were not used.

The military partners' daily patterns are adaptable to their environment, especially during deployment (Rossetto, 2009). The military spouse may use coping strategies that do not fit the usual models regarding stress management, which requires self-efficacy. This willingness to adopt coping strategies that are different from their habitual patterns in stress management requires a willingness to adapt to their new situations (Pearlin, 1999).

In a study conducted by Lapp, Taft, Tollefson, Hoepner, Moore, and Divyak (2010) results indicated that resources of support groups, face to face, or online, were not used by all due to spouses perceiving support groups, face to face, or online resources as a rumor mill for gossip concerning unit cohesion. Community support was not as prominent, and some spouses expressed they did not like to have to ask for help.

Lapp et al. (2010) conducted interviews with 18 spouses of National Guard troops deployed overseas to identify sources of stress and coping strategies showed that stressors varied from all phases of pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment. Pre-deployment resulted in spouses' lives being "on hold." Deployment resulted in worrying, waiting, "doing it" alone, pulling double duty, and loneliness. Communication technology made it possible for most spouses to stay in touch using the telephone, email,



or even Webcam. Daily tasks of staying busy (i.e., managing personal, family, and household responsibilities) was the most identified coping strategy. Post-deployment results showed a period of adjustment for participants.

Many military families support the notion of using chaplain support as a coping mechanism to deal with deployment. Religion is a system of beliefs, practices, and rituals established in the form of an institution (Dew, 2008). The unit Chaplain assists many military families during the pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment phase in spiritual guidance (Military Family Organization, 2017). This support is highly helpful in coping with the deployment of the stay-at-home spouse.

Cafferky and Shi (2015) conducted a qualitative study among thirteen wives to explore coping mechanisms and their relation to stay at home partner's emotional connection with deployed husbands. They explored how spouses adopted coping mechanisms during the deployment cycle. They found that emotional avoidance (self-sufficient independence) and autonomous interdependence (emotional connection) were related. Findings suggest that military spouses developed coping strategies to endure the times their husbands were deployed.

The first strategy was to attempt to maintain an unrealistic closeness to their husbands, which had influenced spouses' own emotional well-being. Second, distancing themselves from their deployed husbands was a coping strategy that led to preserving emotional well-being. The third strategy involved connecting emotionally with deployed husbands increased their own personal emotional well-being.

## **Resources and Support for Couples With One Military Member**

Seeking support during deployment is imperative to the well-being of a healthy marriage (Military One Source, 2017; Military Strong Bond 2017). Rossetto (2009) conducted a study to examine how military wives or fiancés report coping demands associated with deployment among 26 participants whose partners were deployed. Two main coping themes emerged: (a) maintaining a mediated interpersonal connection and (b) choosing open versus restricted communication. Further analyses revealed that the former theme promoted two relationship functions (e.g., intimacy and positivity, confronting realities and fears) and the latter four functions (e.g., closeness, smooth reunion, outlet, and protection). Rossetto (2009) found that it is difficult for individuals to ask others for help, they did not want to ask for help, or rely on other people; however, once participants did seek help, they realized that it was highly desirable, and they were happy to have support during the deployment phase.

Family Readiness Support Groups (FRGs) promotes a great deal of coping support (Caliber, 2006). An FRG is a company affiliated organization of military members and family members who utilize volunteers to provide social and emotional support, outreach services, and information to families before, during, and between family separations, deployment, extended tours of temporary duty and field training.

An FRG helps keep spouses connected during deployment (Military Community, 2017). Social support through social networks mitigates strain and stress on an individual, which can alleviate feelings of alienation and isolation (Orthner & Rose, 2005b; Military Family Organization, 2017). According to Military One Source (2017), the FRG has five

primary goals. First, it distributes relevant command information to the family members of the unit. It acts as a support and communication bridge. Second, the FRG acts as a support and communication bridge between the command and the family unit. Third, the FRG helps connect military spouses to the advocate for the community resources at their disposal. Fourth, the FRG helps solve problems that arise while the deployed spouse is affiliated with the command. Fifth, the FRG assist in making the spouse feel as ready, resilient, and connected as possible.

***Online Resources Available to Active-Duty Members and Spouses to Cope***

**Military One Source.** Military One Source (2017) is an organization which provides resources to assist military service members. Military One Source electronic resource provides the reader topics that help balance work and life for single, one active-duty military member, and dual-military couples. Dual-military couples are introduced to resources concerning deployment and separation, career decisions, and seeking help from family and friends.

Additionally, it introduces information concerning understanding different career paths. Nonmedical counseling and online counseling are available for those service members seeking help. This resource helps researchers to gain information about single, one active-duty military member, and dual-military resources for those specifically interested in materials concerning resiliency and military families. Single service members, one active-duty military members, and dual couples that seek to achieve helpful information to promote healthy decision-making strategies are introduced by using this resource.

**Military Strong Bonds.** Military Strong Bonds (2017) electronic resource provides information on family readiness and education. This information is chaplain led by the unit assisting military couples. This program introduces relocation information, life stressors, and deployment information. This resource provides researchers with knowledge of resources that are provided on the unit level by the chaplains. Also, Chaplains are allowed the opportunity to assist military families on up-to-date information from the command, unit level, and community. These resources are ideal for helping military families (Allen, Rhodes, Markman, & Stanley, 2015; Blasko, 2015). Although military couples are faced with many challenges, they can utilize strategies for success (Huffman et al., 2017).

Allen et al. (2015) conducted a randomized trial on 662 Army couples on the strong bonds "PREP" prevention and relationship educational program. The purpose of that study is to better understand the description of the "PREP" intervention used by the military in assisting active-duty service member couples. As mentioned above, the Military strong bonds is a system in place on the installation of relationship education programs offered by active-duty religious affairs Army Chaplains. This program is for military couples including specific programs on the deployment phase and reintegration. These findings regarding moderators raise the question of whether interventions like "PREP" for Strong Bonds should be offered universally or only target specific populations at risk of marital difficulties. The authors found that the study had a positive effect on reduction rates in divorce effects. The findings are solely based on the reduction rates of divorce among active-duty Army couples in relation to intervention methods.

## Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 2 presented a literature review of studies that examined the factors that contribute to RS and coping strategies of married civilian and married military service members. The literature review, covered components of RS of lifestyle, conflict resolution, partner coping, communication, education, spousal relationship, and length of the marriage. Relationship satisfaction in civilian marriages factors have been identified as providing positive or negative influences on the marital relationship (Karney & Crown, 2007; Lincoln, Swift, Shorteno-Fraser, 2008), such as personality traits that are positive, spouses showing feelings toward each other (Mackey et al., 2000), and handling stress (Matias & Fontaine, 2015).

Themes were found in marriages of dual-military couples using coping strategies of communication and staying emotionally connected during deployment (Rossetto, 2009). Themes were found in civilian marriages of respect, mutual love, ability to compromise, interests, and quality time together (Estrada, 2009). One limitation in the literature review is, although several studies examined the effect deployment has on military spouses, previous research has not examined marital outcomes among dual-military active-duty couples examining the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS. Since, marital coping strategies may play a different role among dual-military married couples than non-dual-military couples in their marital satisfaction; this study examined this relationship among dual-military married couples.

Chapter 3 provides a review of the research method and begins by reviewing the research design which explored variables, RQ, and constraints. Next, a review of the methodology and instruments are discussed which includes reviewing the population, sampling procedures, recruitment, participation, and data collection. Lastly, ethical procedures and threats to validity are discussed.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

I conducted this quantitative study to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual married military couples. This chapter includes a description of the research design that was used to explore the variables, a restatement of the study's research question and hypotheses, and discussion of the constraints of the study. I also explain the target population and procedures for sampling, recruitment, participation, and data collection. Next, the instrumentation, operationalization of constructs, and reliability and validity are discussed. Finally, the ethical procedures of the study are discussed.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

In this study, I used a cross-sectional design to measure the predictive relationship between multiple IVs (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support) and the dependent variable (DV), relationship satisfaction among dual-military Army couples. Multiple regression analysis was used to calculate the overall and unique contributions of the IVs to explain variance in the DV, RS. The partial and semipartial correlations uncovered by the multiple regression analysis revealed the unique contributions of IVs. I employed a demographic questionnaire to collect descriptive data of participants including age, gender, length of marriage, military rank, number of deployments, time frame of deployments, number of children, and educational level, which were then analyzed using a multiple linear regression model. According to Creswell (2009),

multiple linear regression is the best statistical approach when the relationship between multiple predictor variables and the DV is examined. Creswell (2009) also suggested that multiple regression analysis allows for the researcher to identify the weighted combination and unique contributions of predictor variables in the research study to predict the criterion variable. The research question and hypotheses were as follows:

RQ1. Do couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, as measured by the WFCSS, predict RS, as measured by the RAS, among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There is a predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitude towards multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

## **Methodology**

### **Population**

As of 2017, the Army had the highest percentage of married members, 55.5%, representing 261,873 individuals, according to Military One Source (2017). The population for this study were dual-military active-duty married husbands and/or wives



from one geographical area located on a joint base in South Florida. In the Department of Defense overall, a larger percentage of active-duty enlisted personnel marriages are dual-military (13.0%) compared to active-duty officer marriages that are dual-military (10.9%). Overall, 6.6% of active-duty service members are dual-military couples. Of active-duty members in dual-military marriages in the Army, 11,995 (3.0%) are men and 12,265 (17.4%) are women, according to Military One Source (2017).

### **Sampling and Sampling Procedures**

I used a convenience sample and recruited from a location that I had access to and permission. I work in the Army Garrison Substance Abuse Program as the suicide prevention program manager and the employee assistance employment coordinator. Furthermore, I used the Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP), Army Community Service (ACS), and Southern Command Family Readiness Facebook. Flyers in the main servicing building allowed me to reach more participants. The ACS handles relocation, educational services, job placement, financial services, new parent support, and more. The main servicing building houses the medical clinic, ID card section, force protection (security), retirement services, and ASAP.

### ***Sample Size Analysis***

I used G\*Power 3.1.9.2 (Faul et al., 2007) to compute the minimum required total sample size of 97 for husbands and/or wives. It was not necessary for both spouses of a married couple to participate, but both were accepted if they consented. The sample size was determined for a linear multiple regression analysis with two tails, an effect size of 0.15, power equal to 0.8, an alpha level of 0.05, and six predictor variables (Cohen 1988;

Faul 2007). The target population inclusion criteria were (a) active-duty husband or wife, (b) currently married to another active-duty Army member, (c) U.S. Army, (d) completed one or more mobilizations or deployments, and (e) 18 years and above. Exclusion criteria were (a) divorced or single, (b) non-Army members from other military branches of service, (c) retired, and (d) active-duty not in a dual-military marriage.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

#### ***Recruitment and Participation***

I recruited participants from a base in South Florida. I emailed the garrison commander, director of human resources, and supervisor on May 1, 2019, specifying that I am a student and describing the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). No issues, concerns, or objections were conveyed from leadership. The facility is a joint installation that includes tenant units that are non-Army, as well as Army. However, only Army units, for which I had permission to recruit, were solicited using the ASAP, ACS, Southern Command Family Readiness, and Regular Army's Facebook pages—and by flyer. The literature review indicated that online and social networks are widely used by active-duty service members and their families during deployment in order to stay in contact (Military One Source, 2017; Military Strong Bonds, 2017). I created an invitation (see Appendix B) to place on Facebook (i.e., ASAP, ACS, Southern Command Family Readiness, and the Regular Army's Facebook pages) and in flyers. The invitation stated my name, that I am a current student at Walden University working toward a doctoral degree, and that I am conducting a research study to fulfill the requirements to complete my degree. The topic of the study, purpose, estimated time frame for survey completion,

inclusion criteria, and a link for participation were provided. The flyer had all needed information if participants were interested in participating in the research study.

### ***Data Collection***

I collected data on participants after obtaining approval from Walden University's Institutional Review Board. The study data were collected online via SurveyMonkey. Prior to completing the survey, the informed consent was available to participants to complete before linking to the study. The participants were asked to read and sign the informed consent, which included the purpose of the research, a guarantee of confidentiality, identification of the researcher, discussion of the benefits of participating and the level and type of participant involvement, information on the risks to the participants, withdrawal information, and contact information for questions or issues.

Options on how to print the informed consent statement for records was provided on SurveyMonkey by hitting the consent button. After participants agreed by accepting the informed consent, they answered a series of questions to determine if they met the inclusion and exclusion criteria. If the participants did not meet the criteria, they were thanked and told that they did not qualify for the study. Those meeting the criteria were directed to the questionnaires. If participants wanted to end their participation, they were able to do so. Participants' identifying information was not collected; however, participants were given an identification number. Participants also completed an eight-item demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C). The demographic questionnaire collected information about age, housing, children, education, deployment history, and years of marriage. Once they input the demographic information, participants began the

WFCSS and the RAS questionnaires. My contact information, Walden University's information, and Military One Source (a free counseling service) information was provided for those participants who may have had questions or felt uncomfortable.

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

#### ***Work-Family Conciliation Strategies Scale (WFCSS)***

Matias and Fontaine (2014) developed the WFCSS to measure strategies used by married couples dealing with multiple role responsibilities (see Appendix D). The WFCSS is composed of five subscales that correspond to strategies in the following areas: partner coping, positive attitudes towards multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments, and institutional support (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). The partner coping subscale measures a partner's emotional and instrumental support in regard to work-family balance and the specific time for the couple's relationship. This is composed of 10 items. The positive attitudes towards multiple roles includes six items that refer to the positive outlook regarding the dual-earner situation of the family and to participants' occupying many roles. It represents an optimistic attitude towards the work-family arrangement. Management and Planning Skills is composed of six items and is associated with personal characteristics to deal with work-family responsibilities (i.e., flexibility, planning time, managing time, and segmenting work and family). The strategy of professional adjustments represents those partners or individuals who are reducing their work time investment, work responsibilities, or work hours and is composed of six items. Institutional support is composed of three items related to the quality and use of

childcare and free time facilities. For this study, the mean score for each subscale were used for the analysis.

**Psychometric Characteristics of the WFCSS.** The WFCSS has been used previously with dual-civilian married couples. The reliability analysis for dual civilian married couples of the WFCSS yielded an alpha of .87. Partner coping has a correlation of .87; positive attitudes toward multiple roles, .74; management and planning skills, .69; professional adjustments, .73; and institutional support, .79 (Matias & Fontaine (2014). These are the subscale correlations of the WFCSS. Also, the WFCSS has an item-total correlation of .69 to .87 (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). The score of .6 or greater is an acceptable score (Matias & Fontaine, 2014), and according to Matias and Fontaine (2014), the WFCSS has been used previously with dual-earner couples and shown good validity and good factorial stability through confirmatory factor analyses. The five-factor model had a good fit to the data. The WFCSS is thus effective at identifying strategies used by dual-earner couples with multiple role responsibilities.

***Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS)***

The RAS (Hendrick, 1988) is an instrument that was developed to measure RS of those couples who are married (see Appendix E). The participants in this study were asked to answer each item online. Seven items are rated using a 5-point scale: 1 = *unsatisfied*, 2 = *somewhat satisfied*, 3 = *typically satisfied*, 4 = *a little more satisfied than average*, and 5 = *very satisfied with relationship*. Items 4 and 7 are reverse scored: A = 1, B = 2, C = 3, D = 4, and E = 5. For this study, the mean score of the seven items was used for the analysis.

### **Psychometric Characteristics of the RAS**

The RAS has good reliability and validity to measure an individual's RS (Hendrick, 1988). Hendrick (1988) administered the scale to 125 college students who reported themselves to be "in love." Hendrick's reliability analysis of the RAS yielded an alpha of .86. Also, the RAS has an item-total correlation of .573 to .763 (Hendrick, 1988). The score of .6 or greater is more acceptable than the score of .573, which is considered low. According to Hendrick, the majority of the psychometric characteristics are considered to be acceptable. And, according to Graham et al. (2011), the reliability of the RAS is reasonable, with an average of .872 across many studies. The 6- to 7-week interval test retest was calculated at .85, and internal consistency was calculated at .86 (Hendrick, 1988). Also, the RAS has strong construct validity with a convergent validity of .80 in comparison to the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. The RAS is effective at predicting which couples are to remain together versus which couples are to separate.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Software version 21.0 to analyze raw data. A linear multiple regression was used in this study to assess whether there is a predictive relationship between the combined IVs and the DV. All relevant correlations were computed as part of the multiple regression analysis. I used the partial and semipartial correlations created by the multiple regression analysis to examine the unique contributions of each IV in the prediction of RS. According to Field (2013), one statistical assumption for multiple linear regression is that the relationship between the IVs and the DV is linear. The second assumption is normal distribution of the variables,

which can be examined using a histogram. To assess normality, the IVs and DVs were assessed. Another assumption is there is little or no multicollinearity in the data (Field, 2013). I checked for the absence of multicollinearity using VIF values. Field (2013) also stated that the assumption is that there is little to no autocorrelation in the data, which is tested using the Durbin-Watson test. Lastly, I checked that there was homoscedasticity by using the Goldfeld-Quandt test to determine the variance around the regression line to ensure the same for all value of predictor variables (Field, 2013).

### **Threats to Validity**

There are several limitations of this research study concerning external validity. According to Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (2008), cross-sectional data can be a limitation in and of itself because data are collected at a single point in time. External validity with replicating this research was conducted to determine external validity. Also, the participants who chose to participate may have had different characteristics than those participants who did not chose to participate in this research study. The sample size may not generalize or apply to all dual-military personnel.

Additionally, research participants may not be able to remember actual coping strategies used during mobilization and deployment. Lastly, surveys administered online may not be representative of the national population (Groves et al., 2009). Groves et al. (2009) also suggests that potential selection bias of participants is also a threat to online administration. Those participants who have access to the internet own a computer or have access to a computer, are better educated, and are knowledgeable regarding using technology and may have been more likely to participate. Moreover, to eliminate my own

bias, the study was conducted online anonymously which eliminated the likelihood of knowing the individual participants.

### **Ethical Procedures**

I followed all guidelines provided by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval no. 03-27-20-0365528) prior to collecting any data. Participants was assured that they remained anonymous while completing the surveys for this study. Participants were informed that as part of the consent that they have the ability to withdraw from participation at any time during the process and my contact information were provided. There was no harm associated with participating and if at any time a participant required mental health assistance, a toll-free number to Military One Source (1-800-342-9647), which is a free service for active duty, veterans, family members was listed at the start and completion of the research survey. At the end of the survey a debriefing statement (see Appendix F) was provided.

### **Summary**

In Chapter 3, I provided an overview of the research method for this study. I used a survey method consisting of a demographic questionnaire and two instruments to examine the predictive relationship between multiple IVs measuring coping strategies (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support) and the DV (relationship satisfaction) among dual-military army couples. The recruitment of participants was conducted by the help of advertisements placed on the ASAP, ACS, Southern Command Family Readiness, the Regular Army's Facebook page and flyers from the same geographical



location in Florida. This study contributes to the current body of research related to the effect of mobilization and deployment and on RS for dual-military couples. I used SurveyMonkey to collect data. In Chapter 4, the data analysis and results are described.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

I conducted this quantitative analysis to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-military married couples. The RAS (Renshaw & Campbell, 2016) is designed to measure general RS, and the WFCSS (Matias & Fontaine, 2015) is intended to measure coping strategies. The key RQ for the study concerned understanding the impact of couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support. The RQ and hypotheses for the study were as follows:

RQ1. Do couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, as measured by the WFCSS, predict RS, as measured by the RAS, among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination?

*H*<sub>0</sub>: There is no predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

*H*<sub>1</sub>: There is a predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skill,

professional adjustment, institutional support, and RS among army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

Participants completed a survey that included inclusion and exclusion criteria, a demographic questionnaire, the RAS (Renshaw & Campbell, 2016), and the WFCSS (Matias & Fontaine, 2015).

In Chapter 4, I present the specific quantitative method for the collection of the data and results addressing the RQ and hypotheses. I present findings beginning with descriptive statistics of the study's sample participants. Next, the results of the study are discussed. I conclude the chapter with a summary of the significant findings of the research study.

### **Data Collection**

Walden University's Institutional Review Board (approval no. 03-27-20-0365528) approved my application to collect data to ensure that there would be a sufficient number of participants. Data were collected over a period of 10 weeks (March 30, 2020, to June 6, 2020). The surveys were administered online via a survey link. The survey link was administered via SurveyMonkey and promoted through Facebook.

Once data collection was complete, I downloaded the raw data from SurveyMonkey and input into SPSS, which I then used for coding and analysis. A total of 105 participants entered the study; however, only 103 participants had complete data after the removal of disqualified and incomplete responses of two participants. Detailed demographic characteristics of participants are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1***Participants' Demographic Characteristics (N = 103)*

Variable		<i>n</i>	%
Gender			
	Husbands	56	54.3
	Wives	47	45.6
Age			
	18 to 24	19	17.48
	25 to 34	43	41.75
	35 to 44	27	27.18
	45 to 54	11	10.68
	55 to 64	3	2.91
Length of marriage (years)			
	0 to 5	58	56.31
	6 to 10	27	26.21
	11+	18	17.48
Military rank			
	E-1 to E-4	24	23.30
	E-5 to E-9	60	58.25
	W-1 to W-5	9	8.74
	O-1 to O-3	6	5.83
	O-4 to O-6	4	3.88
	O-7 and above	0	0
Number of times spouse deployed in the last 5 years			
	Deployed once	37	35.92
	Deployed twice	54	52.43
	Deployed three times	12	11.65
	Deployed 4 – 10 times	0	0
Number of expected time frame of spouse current deployment			
	Less than 6 months	53	51.46
	6 months to 1 year	48	46.60
	More than one year	2	1.94

*(table continues)*

Variable	<i>n</i>	%
Number of children		
0	0	0
1	55	53.40
2	34	33.01
3	8	7.77
4	3	2.91
5+	3	2.91
Education level		
High school	9	8.74
Some college	4	42.72
College degree	50	48.54

Participants were asked to provide demographic information regarding their age, gender, length of marriage, military rank, spouse deployment length of time, their own deployment expected time frame, number of children, and education level. Husbands (54.3%) and wives (45.6%) participants were almost equally represented. The majority of the participants (68.9%) were between 25 and 44 years old. Participants 18 to 24 years old (17.48%) and 55 to 64 years old (2.91%) were the least represented. Most of the participants ( $n = 58$ ) identified as having been married for 0 to 5 years; of the remaining participants, 27 had been married from 6 to 10 years, and 18 had been married for 11+ years.

The military spouses were also asked about their military rank. Most participants were enlisted personnel between E-1 through E-4 ( $n = 24$ ) and E-5 through E-9 ( $n = 60$ ). The military officer spouses W-1 through W-5 ( $n = 9$ ), O-1 through O3 ( $n = 6$ ), and O-4 through O-6 ( $n = 4$ ) were the least represented. Dual-military spouses were asked about the length of their most recent military deployment experience. Thirty-seven of the participants reported that their service members had deployed one time during their military service in the last five years, while 54 indicated that their service members had

deployed two times, and 12 indicated that their service members had deployed three times. The participants then identified the current deployment expected time frame: 53 identified that they are expected to deploy less than 6 months, 48 identified 6 months to 1 year, and two said that they expected to deploy more than 1 year. In the response to the question of children living in the home, 55 (53.40%) participants identified as having one child residing in the home, and 33 (33.01%) participants reported two children living in the home. Of the participants, eight (7.77%) reported having three children living in the home. Participants reporting the highest number of children living in the home were equally represented, with three (2.91%) reporting having four children and three (2.91%) reporting having five children. All participants graduated from high school, which is a requirement to actively join the Army; nine (8.74%) participants reported high school as their highest educational level. Forty-four (42.72%) had some college, and 50 (48.54%) had a college degree.

### **Instrument Reliability for Sample**

I conducted a Cronbach' analysis on partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and the institutional support subscale of the WFCSS survey. The items for the RAS had a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.51, indicating poor reliability Table 2.

### **Table 2**

*Reliability Table for RAS*

*(table continues)*

Scale	No. of items	$\alpha$	Lower bound	Upper bound
RAS	5	0.51	0.36	0.66

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

The WFCSS consists of five subscales that correspond to strategies for managing multiple role responsibilities: partner coping, positive attitudes towards multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments and institutional support. The partner coping subscale measures a partner's emotional and instrumental support regarding work-family balance and the specific time for the couple's relationship. This is composed of 10 items. The positive attitudes towards multiple roles includes six items that refer to the positive outlook regarding the dual-earner situation of the family and to the fact that the participant occupies many roles. It represents an optimistic attitude towards the work-family arrangement. Management and Planning Skills is composed of seven items and is associated with personal characteristics to deal with work-family responsibilities (i.e., flexibility, planning time, managing time, and segmenting work and family). The strategy of professional adjustments represents those partners or individuals who are reducing their work time investment, work responsibilities, or work hours and is composed of six items. Institutional support is composed of three items related to the quality and use of childcare and free time facilities.

The means and standard deviations for the IVs of partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support are shown in Table 3. The observations for partner coping had an average of 5.49 ( $SD = 0.53$ , Min = 3.50, Max = 6.00). The observations for positive attitude had an average of 5.34 ( $SD = 0.63$ , Min = 3.50, Max = 6.00). The observations for planning and management skills had an average of 4.96 ( $SD = 0.83$ , Min = 2.43, Max = 6.00). The observations for professional adjustment had an average of 3.24 ( $SD = 1.75$ , Min = 1.00, Max = 6.00). The observations for institutional support had an average of 5.43 ( $SD = 0.83$ , Min = 1.00, Max = 6.00).

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	Min	Max
Partner coping	5.49	0.53	97	3.50	6.00
Positive attitudes toward multiple roles	5.34	0.63	97	3.50	6.00
Planning and management skills	4.96	0.83	97	2.43	6.00
Professional adjustment	3.24	1.75	97	1.00	6.00
Institutional support	5.43	0.83	97	1.00	6.00

The mean and standard deviation for the DV of relationship satisfaction are shown in Table 4. The observations for RAS had an average of 3.69 ( $SD = 0.59$ , Min = 2.71, Max = 5.00).



**Table 4***Descriptive Statistics for Dependent Variable**(table continues)*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	Min	Max
RAS	3.69	0.59	97	2.71	5.00

**Assumptions Testing**

As discussed in Chapter 3, I performed a multiple linear regression analyses to test the hypothesis. For the mean and outliers for each variable I ran boxplots deleting five extreme outliers and to test normality deleted one extreme outlier. A total of six extreme outliers were removed in the analysis, which resulted in an improved structure of the data in the analysis. I discuss the assumptions of the linear relationship between the outcome variable RS and the predictor variables and multivariate normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The linearity of the predictor variables and outcome variable assumes that there must be a linear relationship between the outcome variable and the IVs. Multivariate normality using multiple linear regression assumes that the residuals are normally distributed. No multicollinearity for multiple regression assumes that the IVs are not highly connected with each other. Homoscedasticity is the assumption of equal variances and assumes that different samples have the same variance, even if they came from the same populations.

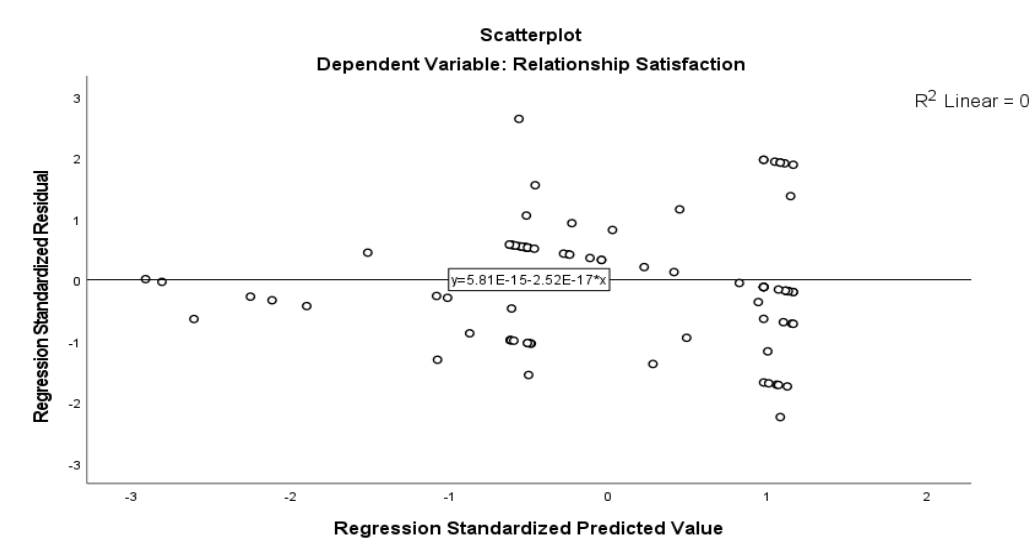
***Linearity Between Predictor and Outcome Variables***

A multiple linear regression analyses was used to test the hypothesis. Figure 1 shows how the assumption of linearity was assessed by examining the scatterplot of the

standardized predicted and observed residuals for the study variables partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, professional adjustment, and institutional support. I fitted the linear line showing that the scatterplot of the residuals shows it is randomly scattered around zero for the relationship to be linear.

### Figure 1

*Scatterplot Assessing Linear Relationship Between Relationship Satisfaction and Partner Coping, Positive Attitude, Management Planning, Adjustment, and Institutional Support Subscale Means*



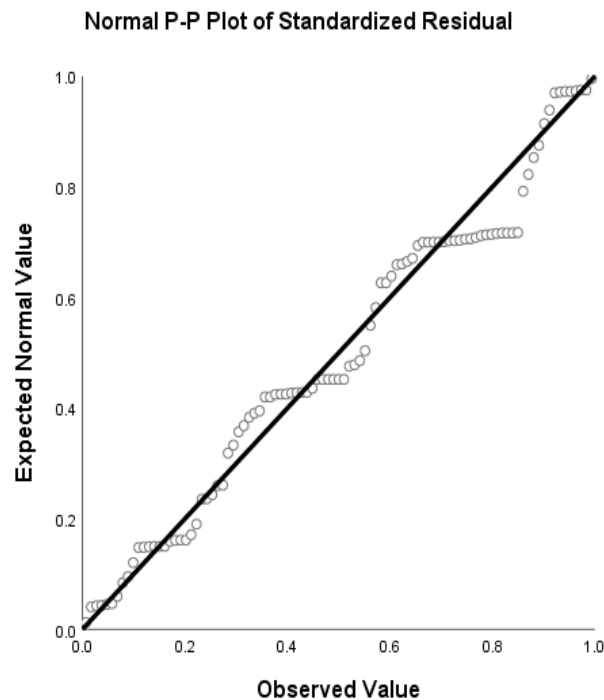
### *Multivariate Normality*

The test for the assumption of multivariate normality in the study for IVs partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support is shown in Figure 2. As mentioned above, five outliers were removed from the analysis due to lack of normality of

participants. Additionally, one extreme outlier was removed to test for normality. Visual inspection of the 97 participants P-P Plot for the residuals is shown below. The P-P plot suggest the assumption of multivariate normality has been met since there is little deviation from expected and observed values along the line, indicating the sample is normally distributed.

## Figure 2

*P-P Scatterplot for Normality of the Residuals for the Regression Model of Total Means*



## *Multicollinearity*

To assess multicollinearity the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) were examined. According to Fields (2016) multicollinearity refers to the presence of two or more variables that are highly correlated with one another. This assumption was implemented

in running the regression analyses by identifying tolerance and VIF. Examining the collinearity statistics VIF values for partner coping, positive attitudes towards multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments and institutional support predictors in the regression model have VIFs less than 10. All predictors in the regression model below VIFs are less than 10 (see Table 5).

**Table 5**

*Variance Inflation Factors for Planning and Management Skills, Partner Coping, Professional Adjustment, Positive Attitude, and Institutional Support*

Variable	VIF
Planning and Management Skills	2.53
Partner Coping	2.74
Professional Adjustment	1.73
Positive Attitude toward Multiple Roles	1.18
Institutional Support	1.23

Then, a (DWT) Durbin-Watson test was conducted to assess the degree of autocorrelation among the residuals. The result was significant,  $DWT = 0.20, p < .001$ , suggesting the results may be influenced by autocorrelation among residuals.

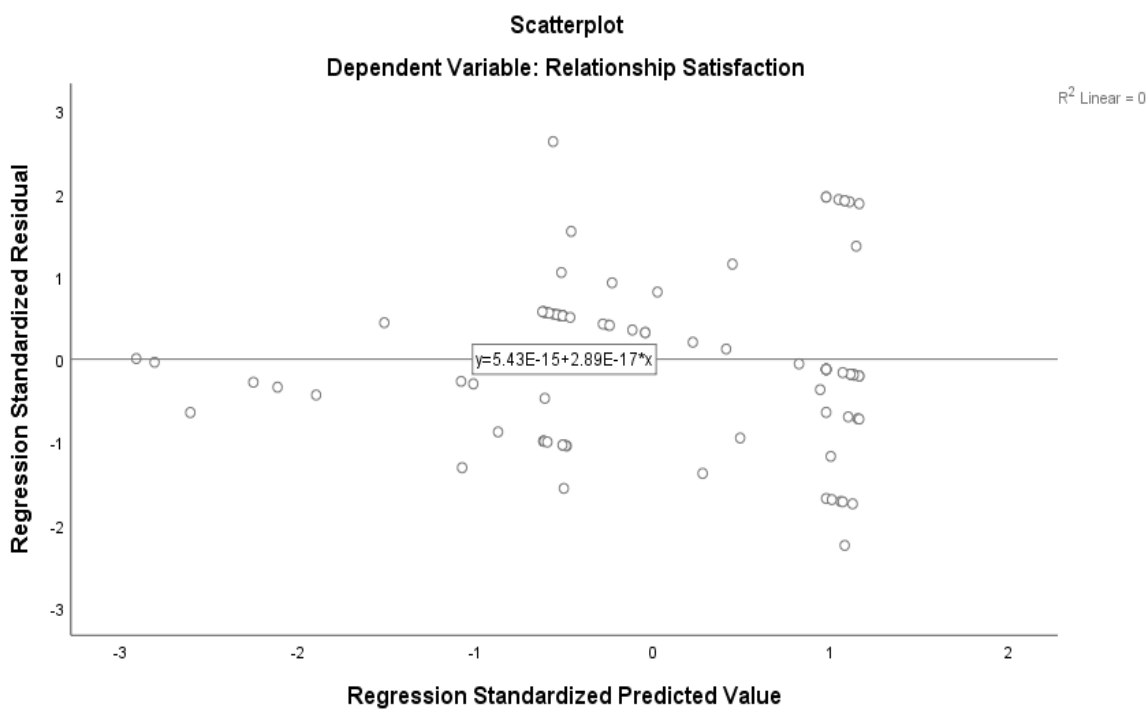
### ***Homoscedasticity***

Homoscedasticity was assessed by plotting the residuals against the predicted values partner coping, positive attitude, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support (Field, 2017). The assumption of homoscedasticity is met if the points appear randomly distributed with a mean of zero and no apparent curvature. Figure 3 presents a scatterplot of predicted values and model residuals. Of the

visual inspection, the lower end of the scale the dots are closer to zero; however, on the higher end there is more variance. More variance at the high end of the scale and it appears that there is a violation. The assumption of homoscedasticity is not met.

### Figure 3

*Scatterplot Assessing Linear Relationship Between Relationship Satisfaction and Partner Coping Positive Attitude, Management Planning, Adjustment, and Institutional Support Subscale Testing Homoscedasticity of Standardized Predicted Values*



### Multiple Regression Analyses

I conducted a multiple linear regression analysis to assess the combined and unique relationships between partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments and institutional support, and

RS. According to Frankfort-Namchias and Namchias (2008), many researchers in the social scientific community commonly use regression analysis to find an algebraic expression to represent a functional linear relationship among the variable analyzed in a research study. Multiple linear regression is used to explain the relationship between one continuous DV and two or more IVs.

Multiple linear regression tested the overall and unique contributions of the IVs to explain variance in the DV, RS. The partial correlations created by the multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the unique contributions of IVs. Creswell (2009) also suggests that multiple regression analysis allows for the researcher to identify the weighted combination and unique contributions of predictor variables in the research study to predict the criterion variable. The regression analyses were executed to address the hypothesis:

RQ1. Do couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, adjustment, and institutional support, as measured by the WFCSS, predict RS, as measured by the RAS, among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination?

*H<sub>0</sub>*: There is no predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, adjustment, institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

*H<sub>1</sub>*: There is a predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies, partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, adjustment,

institutional support, and RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

### ***Zero Order Correlations***

**Table 6**

*Zero Order Correlations Between WFCSS and RAS*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. RAS	1.00					
2. Partner coping	.308**	1.00				
3. Positive attitude toward multiple roles	.407**	.743*	1.00			
4. Planning attitude and management skills	.236*	.437*	.584*	1.00		
5. Professional adjustment	.041	.105*	.159*	.367*	1.00	
6. Institutional support	.101	.399*	.241	.046	-.094	1.00

\* $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .001$

The zero order correlations were computed to assess the relationship between each IV and DV. (See Table 6.) The zero order correlations were significant between the RAS and WFCSS scales for: partner coping ( $r = .308$ ,  $p = .001$ ), positive attitudes toward multiple roles ( $r = .407$ ,  $p = .001$ ), and planning and management skills ( $r = .236$ ,  $p = .010$ ). However, professional adjustment ( $r = .041$ ,  $p = .344$ ) and institutional support ( $r = .101$ ,  $p = .163$ ) are not correlated by themselves with RS. Three predictor variables partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, and management and planning skills were significant predictors of RS as single predictors.

### ***Multiple Linear Regression for Combined Variable Overall R***

I used multiple linear regression was used to analyze the five predictor variables to examine whether a relationship exists between the combined IVs and the DV. The results of the linear regression model were significant,  $F(5,91) = 3.64$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $R^2 =$

0.17, indicating that approximately 17% of the variance in RS is explainable by partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments and institutional support. See Table 7. The amount of the variance is positive which means that taken all together couples increased score on the five combined subscales is related to an increase in RS.

**Table 7**

*Summary<sup>b</sup> for Relationship Satisfaction*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	Change Statistic			Durbin-Watson
							df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
	.408 <sup>a</sup>	.166	.139	.54336	.166	6.175	3	93	.001	1.887

a. Predictors: (Constant), Positive Attitude Toward Multiple Roles, Planning and Management Skills, Partner Coping.

b. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction.

### ***Unique Contribution of Predictors***

In terms of the unique contribution of each predictor variable, accounting for all other predictors, only positive attitude toward multiple roles significantly predicted RS among dual-military married couples,  $\beta = .37$ , *partial r* = .255,  $p = .01$ . See Table 8. This indicates that on average, a one-unit increase of positive attitude toward multiple roles increased the value of RS by 0.37 units. The relationship between positive attitude toward multiple roles was positive indicating the that a more optimistic attitude towards the work-family arrangement toward multiple roles, the greater RS. None of the other predictors provided unique variance. Partner coping did not significantly predict RS,  $B = 0.01$ , *partial r* = .008,  $t(91) = 0.07$ ,  $p = .946$ . Management and planning skills did not



significantly predict RAS,  $B = 0.01$ , *partial r* = .007,  $t(91) = 0.07$ ,  $p = .944$ . Professional adjustment did not significantly predict RAS,  $B = -0.01$ , *partial r* = -.027,  $t(91) = -0.25$ ,  $p = .802$ . Institutional support did not significantly predict RAS,  $B = -0.00$ , *partial r* = -.003,  $t(91) = -0.02$ ,  $p = .982$ .

**Table 8 (Coefficients)**

*Unstandardized and Standardized Coefficients of Predictor Variables and Relationship Satisfaction*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Zero Order	Correlations	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>		<i>Sig</i>	<i>Partial Order</i>
Constant	1.632	.585		2.790	.006		
Partner coping	.012	.156	.011	.078	.938	.308	.008
Positive attitude toward multiple roles	.375	.147	.401	2.558	.012	.407	.256
Planning and management skills	-.002	.082	-.003	-.023	.982	.236	-.002

a. Constant: Relationship Satisfaction

### ***Secondary Multiple Linear Regression***

Given that professional adjustment and institutional support were not related to RS, I conducted a second analysis. This second multiple linear regression included the three predictors (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, and management and planning skills) that were significantly related to RS independently (See Table 10). The result of the multiple linear regression was statistically significant for the combined predictors,  $F(3,93) = 6.175$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .17$  (Table 9). The results indicated that the model explained 17% of the variance in RS scores. The amount of the variance is positive which means that taken all together couples increased score on the three combined

subscales is related to an increase in RS. In terms of the unique contribution of each predictor variable (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, and management and planning skills), accounting for all other predictors, once again only positive attitude toward multiple roles significantly predicted RS among dual-military married couples,  $\beta = .37$ , *partial r* = .256,  $p = .01$  (See Table 10). This indicates that on average, a one-unit increase of positive attitude toward multiple roles increased the value of RS by 0.17 units. The relationship between positive attitude toward multiple roles was positive indicating the that a more optimistic attitude towards the work-family arrangement toward multiple roles, the greater RS. None of the other predictors provided unique variance. Partner coping did not significantly predict RS,  $\beta = .12$ , *partial r* = .008,  $t(93) = .078$ ,  $p = .938$ . Management and planning skills did not significantly predict RS,  $B = -.002$ , *partial r* = -.002, *partial r* = -.002,  $t(93) = -.023$ ,  $p = .982$ .

**Table 9**

*Summary<sup>b</sup> for Relationship Satisfaction*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	F Change	Change Statistic			Durbin-Watson
							df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
	.408	.166	.139	.54336	.166	6.175	3	93	.001	1.887

a. Predictors: (Constant), positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, partner coping.

b. Dependent Variable: Relationship Satisfaction.

**Table 10**

*Unstandardized and Standardized Coefficients of Predictor Variables and Relationship Satisfaction*

	Unstandardized Coefficients			Standardized Coefficients				
	<i>B</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig</i>	<i>Zero Order</i>	<i>Partial Order</i>	<i>Part</i>
Constant	1.632	.585		2.790	.006			
Partner coping	.012	.156	.011	.078	.938	.308	.008	.007
Positive attitude toward multiple roles	.375	.147	.401	2.558	.012	.407	.256	-.242
Planning and management skills	-.002	.082	-.003	-.023	.982	.236	-.002	-.002

a. Constant: Relationship Satisfaction

### Conclusion

Overall, the regression analysis of the five predictor variables (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, professional adjustment, and institutional support) in the first analysis was statistically significant for RS. The results indicated that couples increased scores on the combined subscales of the WFCSS are related to an increase in RS scores on the RAS. The significance findings indicated 17% of the variance in RS is explainable including all five couple coping strategies (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, adjustment, and institutional support when combined). Of the predictors, positive attitude toward multiple roles was the only subscale that significantly predicted RS when all other predictors were accounted for. It contributed uniquely and represents an optimistic attitude towards the work-family arrangement and having a positive attitude towards

multiple roles regarding the dual-earner situation of the family. This suggests that having a more positive attitude towards the work-family arrangement and multiple roles, the greater RS. These findings suggest that while using all subscales accounts for more variance in RS, positive attitudes toward multiple roles is the only subscale contributing uniquely variance.

In the second analysis, the overall regression analysis of the three predictor variables (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning skills) was statistically significant for RS. The results indicated that couples increased scores on the combined subscales of the WFCSS are related to an increase in RS scores on the RAS. The significance findings indicated 17% of the variance in RS is explainable including all three couple coping strategies (partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning skills, when combined). Of the predictors, positive attitude toward multiple roles was the only subscale that significantly predicted RS when all other predictors were accounted for. It contributed uniquely to the prediction of RS and as mentioned above in the first analysis represents a positive attitude towards the work-family arrangement. Conducting the second analysis did not change the overall amount of variance accounted for in the first analysis nor the unique contribution of each of the three predictors in the analysis.

This quantitative study was conducted to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning skills, adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-military married couples. The RAS (Renshaw and Campbell, 2016)

is designed to measure general RS, and the WFCSS (Matias and Fontaine, 2015) is intended to measure coping strategies. The results indicates that couples increased scores with all subscales of the WFCSS in the model is related to an increase in RS on the RAS. The unique contribution of the subscale positive attitude toward multiple roles, was positive and significantly predicted RS positive attitude towards multiple roles refer to the positive outlook regarding the dual-earner situation of the family and also regarding the fact that the participant occupies many roles. It represents an optimistic attitude towards the work-family arrangement among dual-military couples. The null hypothesis is rejected. There is a predictive relationship of couple-level coping strategies with RS. In Chapter 5, I present the study results findings as well as limitations, implications, and recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction

I conducted this quantitative analysis to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitudes, management planning, adjustment, and institutional support, and RS in a sample of active-duty dual-married military Army couples. According to Balderrama-Durbin et al. (2017), during times of geographic separation, the risk increases for negative relationship outcomes such as infidelity, lower frequency of communication, and divorce. For example, dual-military married couples can experience a lengthy time apart when one service member returns from a mission and the other spouse departs the household at the same time (Department of Defense, 2015). Previous research has shown the effects of military deployment on active-duty service members and their families (Huffman et al., 2017; Knobloch & Thesis, 2012; Mustillo et al., 2015). Existing studies have presented conflicting findings regarding the marital functioning and outcomes for families with both a single military member and couples with both partners in the military. Although some existing studies have suggested higher risk of divorce and dissolution (Hosek et al., 2006; Kachadourian et al., 2015; Negrosa et al., 2014), other studies have suggested more positive outcomes for couples with both partners in the military (Huffman et al., 2017).

Furthermore, literature focused on dual-military marriages related to couple-level strategies is lacking. These strategies may play a key role in enhancing among dual-military couples (Huffman et al., 2017).

Therefore, I designed this current study to expand existing research by examining whether couple-level coping strategies predict RS among dual-military active-duty Army couples uniquely or in linear combination.

In this quantitative study, I anonymously recruited 103 dual-married military Army couples using SurveyMonkey to analyze relationships between couple-level coping strategies and RS relationship satisfaction using the WFCSS (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). The WFCSS is composed of five subscales that correspond to strategies for handling multiple role responsibilities: partner coping, positive attitudes toward multiple roles, management and planning skills, professional adjustments, and institutional support (Matias & Fontaine, 2014). The overall regression analysis of these five predictor variables was statistically significant for RS.

The content analysis for work-family conciliation strategies for the first three factors represents the promotion of family well-being (partner coping), emphasizes family harmony (positive attitudes towards multiple roles), and addresses couple communication (management and planning skills). Professional adjustments and institutional support reduce childcare facility support and work hours among dual-military participants. The findings suggest that increased scores on the WFCSS are related to an increase in RS on the RAS. Individually, only positive attitude toward multiple roles was positively correlated with RS. These findings suggest that having a more optimistic attitude toward the work-family arrangement and toward multiple roles increases RS. The results in the second analysis revealed the same results. Findings are similar to those of Matias and Fontaine (2015). Matias and Fontaine suggested that

outcomes are positively associated with enrichment, partner coping strategies, and having a positive outlook regarding the dual-earner civilian couple situation. Moreover, using partner coping strategies, having a positive attitude toward multiple roles, using planning and management skills, and avoiding reduced professional responsibilities are associated with increased RS and less conflict in the marriage. However, the strategy of having a positive attitude toward multiple roles appears to account for most of this relationship.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

To interpret the findings for this study, I used Huffman and Payne's exchange-based dual-military marriage model (Huffman et al., 2017) and the literature review that I outlined in Chapter 2. I present findings in the next sections based on the RQ for my study.

### **Theoretical Interpretation**

I based the theoretical framework for this study on Huffman et al. (2017) model of dual-military marriages. The authors discussed the exchange-based dual-military marriage model, which builds on Huffman and Payne's (2005) model for dual-military marriages. Huffman and Payne's model built on Blau's (1964) established social exchange theory to explain how perceived resources and exchange balance play a key role in the exchange processes and decision-making of married couples. Current research has contributed to a broader understanding of how marital structure and coping strategies influence perceptions of RS (Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2017; Doss et al. 2015; Huffman et al., 2015; Huffman et al., 2017; Lufkin, 2017; Matias & Fontaine, 2015). The exchange-based dual-military marriage model emphasizes the exchange between couples



regarding family decisions and careers, as well as the exchange relationship between the couple and military organization. My research findings support this theory. Couples who perceive the relationship as having mutual aspects in joint decision-making and navigating key life events are more likely to be satisfied with their marriages (Huffman et al., 2017). Similarly, according to Gottman (2014) couples satisfied with their relationship are less likely to separate or divorce.

### **Couple-Level Coping Strategies and Relationship Satisfaction**

The findings showed that partners with favorable couple-level coping strategies overall were more satisfied in their relationships. Furthermore, only positive attitude toward multiple roles was uniquely positively correlated with RS. This suggests that having a positive attitude toward the work-family arrangement and toward multiple roles the greater RS among participants.

On the WFCSS part of the survey instrument, dual-military participants answered five key questions related to positive attitude toward multiple roles: “Having both work and family responsibilities gives a clearer idea of what is really important to me,” “Having both work and family responsibilities is a way of achieving equality in our relationship,” “It is better for our relationship if we both are employed outside home,” “Having both work and family responsibilities makes me feel competent,” and “Having both work and family responsibilities makes me a more well-rounded person.” I chose the WFCSS for this study because it assesses how dual-military participants manage multiple roles and the work-family strategies put forward by these couples. The concept of the work-family conciliation strategies for this research involved analyzing the positive

factors of RS among dual-military couples and work-family balance. Furthermore, benefits exist and positive aspects are associated with multiple role involvement (Matias & Fontaine, 2015). Having both work and family responsibilities achieves equality in the relationship among participants, making couples feel competent and well-rounded. Partners seek to commit to relationships they perceive as equitable and able to meet their needs. Consequently, a need exists to engage in more pro-relationship behaviors and reach a deeper level of mutual understanding (Kelly & Thibaut, 1978).

The results of this study contrast with previous research, which has shown that military spouses may have difficulty communicating with their significant others, and these roles can cause strain and stress on romantic relationships (Balderrama-Durbin et al., 2017; Yambo et al., 2016). These findings apply to military members married to a civilian spouse. However, existing studies on military couples may account for these unexpected findings. Research on work-family relations among civilian dual-earner couples has focused almost exclusively on positive aspects associated with roles in the relationship. For example, Matias and Fontaine (2015) suggested that positive participation in multiple roles provides participants with more resources and opportunities that can be used to promote better family functioning across roles in the marriage among civilian dual-earner couples. Additionally, Matias and Fontaine defined *work-family balance* as a degree of overall satisfaction with the work-family interface and a sense that demands and outcomes are balanced in many areas in the marriage. This research supports this concept concerning dual-military couples; however, future research

concerning the number of resources provided to dual-military couples can further add to literature.

Cafferky and Shi (2015) found that the emotional bond and attachment with one military spouse married to a civilian provides an understanding of the romantic relationship and how a military spouse copes with deployment and maintains communication with the active-duty member during deployment. The authors also suggested that those participants who engaged in constant communication had a stronger emotional bond and attachment in the marriage during the deployment phase. Matias and Fontaine (2015) found that civilian couples' strategies associated with the promotion and exchange of positive emotions in the family and creation of harmonious environments may motivate them to strive to balance work and family life. Additionally, results from my study suggest that having a positive perspective regarding work and family balance is becoming more prominent among recent approaches in work-family issues. A key component of a successful dual-military marriage involves navigating life events and making decisions jointly.

Spousal communication among dual-military members is pivotal to cohesiveness and RS. According to Andres (2014), communication between service members and their civilian spouse is important to maintain trust, intimacy, and the support of each other. Moreover, service members' spouses reported that staying in touch with the active-duty member contributed to feeling relief and support and assisted in expressing their need for their spouse and helped to build trust (Baptist et al., 2011). Maintaining constant communication during the deployment phase is especially imperative for dual couples to

navigate the marriage. Technology has advanced to assist military families in communicating during the deployment cycle (Andres, 2014). Military spouses' use of telecommunication, instant messaging, and email help maintain the family connection concerning service members (Baptist et al., 2011). According to Houston et al. (2013), family communication is related to positive outcomes for the child and service members who communicated with their children, which include decreasing anxiety and stress levels during deployment.

According to Lazarus (1993), coping is the behavioral and cognitive effort used to manage specific internal and/or external demands that are resources of the person or are perceived as taxing. Moreover, according to Blank et al. (2012), as military families are confronted with different stressors, their individual type of coping skills can affect their mental and physical well-being. When a military individual in the marriage is confronted with an issue in the family, the manner in which the issue is appraised, and the available resources used by the military member, determines whether the family becomes overwhelmed and goes into crisis or whether they overcome these barriers (Green et al., 2013). According to Blank et al. (2012), a supportant coping style is the use of spiritual, personal, and professional support systems. Moreover, the authors suggested that a supportant coping style is the most effective in dealing with a stressor among military spouses; however, it was the second most-used coping strategy among one active-duty member married to a civilian spouse.

Confrontive coping style is used when using constructive problem solving or facing problems (Blank et al., 2012). Emotive coping style is when a participant uses the

release and expression of emotions to deal with a stressor (Blank et al., 2012). Evasive coping style is the avoidance of a problem by a participant (Blank et al., 2012). Both emotive and evasive coping negatively affect female active-duty military spouses' physical and mental well-being and are the least effective coping skill (Blank et al., 2012). Optimistic coping is the use of positive beliefs and attitudes (Blank et al., 2012). Female active-duty military spouses' psychological well-being is positively correlated with optimistic coping; however, it is the third most effective coping style (Blank et al., 2012).

The results from my study showed that coping strategies are a factor in having a favorable RS among the dual-military participants. I did not explore gender roles among dual-military participants. Future researchers may want to study gender roles to further add to the literature. Seeking data from a gender-focused lens on how male and female participants regard masculine versus feminine roles could benefit the military community. Furthermore, owing to time constraints, I could not explore each of the various coping styles; however, it may prove highly beneficial for these factors to be explored in a future study.

In summary, the hypothesis was supported in the results of this study. Results indicated a positive linear relationship of the couple coping strategies and RS. Individually, only positive attitude toward multiple roles significantly predicted RS. It is very easy for dual-military couples to become less committed to the marital relationship especially during stressful situations and deployment stress; however, evidence shows that cooperation, trust, and prorelational behaviors are important factors during conflicts

and are significantly related to increased RS (Andres 2014). Dual-military married couples are faced with unique challenges, and both partners in the military have many experiences that most military couples with one spouse as a military member couples do not share. Dual-military couples are more likely to spend even more time apart because they are juggling two assignments and are engaged in even longer time apart if they are unable to deploy concurrently.

In addition to separation stressors, parenting stressors are a factor for dual-military couples and having to be available at a moment's notice requires this population to repeatedly sacrifice day-to-day functioning concerning family life. The dual-military family dynamics of coping strategies are unique to this population in comparison to military couples with one spouse as a military member. However, the way that participants reported coping in advance of pre-deployment, deployment, and post-deployment despite the barriers, indicates that dual-military members seem to develop the skills to manage the challenges. In addition, dual-military members also must adapt to the constant demands of their unique career situation and family dynamics. Dual-military couples who engage in collaboration as they manage multiple roles and support each other is a key factor for RS in the marriage. Supporting each other effectively in a positive manner provides even more beneficial components for RS.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has several limitations that must be addressed. The sample of participants only included dual-military couples in the Miami, Florida area. Perhaps having a broader participant pool may yield a more generalizable contribution to research

on the perceptions of RS among active dual-military couples. Future researchers may want a more comprehensive sampling with a broader sampling for participants.

This study did not address active-duty service members who are in reserve status or part-time status. Those reserve status members may experience more or less extreme demands than their full-time active-duty counterparts. Future researchers can explore this suggestion to help investigate RS that are related to their situations. Positive attitude toward multiple roles among dual-military couples suggests that having a positive outlook regarding the dual-relationship yields greater RS; however, future research among part-time members may provide additional insight into dual-military marriages.

Some participants may have misunderstood the questions or the study's purpose. According to Frankfort and Nachimas (2018), this could have led to participants' biases affecting how they respond to questions. Participants may have inaccurately replied to the questions due to the mere convenience of using an online platform or recall biases.

I exclusively recruited active-duty dual-military Army spouses who had experienced at least one deployment within the last 6 years, rather than researching active-duty couples currently deployed. This was chosen due to time constraints of the research study and may have affected internal validity through recall bias due to the fact that participants had to recollect their experience from previous mobilizations and deployments. For this research, I selected a cross-sectional, non-experimental design; however, this study may have yielded richer data using a qualitative design method. Interviewing dual-military participants using open-ended questions could have provided more in-depth knowledge of dual couples perceived coping strategies and RS.

### **Recommendations**

Perhaps incentives may be used to attract more participants in future research to increase the participation of military spouses. This may provide a greater number of dual-service members. Collecting data on additional military spouses could provide insight into daily challenges they face and provide helping professionals with data to better support the population.

Another recommendation for further research could include obtaining a larger random sample of dual-military couples throughout the U.S. to support greater generalizability. This research was limited in Miami, Florida of active-duty army participants. Further expansion may provide greater insight to professionals working with the military population.

Lastly, additionally research conducted using a qualitative approach could further provide more insight into supporting dual military couples and further understand coping strategies. Participants could be trained and taught more effective relationship coping strategies in support of their marriage. These strategies could help support other dual-military couples in other military branch of services.

### **Implications**

The results for this research study may help assist positive social change within active-duty dual-military families and working professionals. Those professionals that work with military personnel spouses could incorporate the findings of this research study into workflow or practice. Conferences and trainings for working professionals could incorporate specified trainings on coping strategies and skills concerning positive



attitude of military personnel. This could potentially assist professionals in identifying negative or unhealthy coping strategies and help develop plans to implement positive coping strategies for military spouses of mobilized and deployed service members.

Research has shown that military spouses' psychological well-being has an effect upon their physical health, their children's well-being, and psychological well-being upon returning from deployment (Balderrama-Durbin et al. 2015; Knobloch et al., 2016). This dissertation provides additional information on the perceptions of dual-military spouses rather than on one active-duty military member married to a civilian spouse, thus showing the need to consider how dual couples manage coping strategies and RS. It is hoped that the findings from this research study could be used to educate military spouses on the importance of coping strategies used during times of military deployment and separation related to RS. In Chapter 5, I summarize the findings from Chapter 4, limitations, recommendations, and implications. I conclude with recommendations for future studies and implications for positive social change.

### **Conclusion**

In this research study anonymous dual-military spouses completed a demographics survey, WFCSS, and the RAS. The purpose of this research study was to examine whether couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support predict RS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination. First, a demographic questionnaire was provided along with two survey measures examining coping strategies and RS. A regression analysis were

conducted to address the following RQ: Do couple-level coping strategies of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, management planning, adjustment, and institutional support as measured by the WFCSS predict RS as measured by the RAS among Army dual-military active-duty couples uniquely or in linear combination.

The results of the research study indicated that couples increased scores on the scale WFCSS is related to an increase in RS on the RAS. Positive attitude toward multiple roles significantly uniquely predicted RS of the predictors. The null hypothesis were rejected, and the alternative hypothesis were excepted.

While the literature review regarding active-duty dual-military families and couples is vast and has provided knowledge on the population, there were some limitations within the literature. In summation, the findings of this research study add to a small portion of the needed research in the field of the dual-military population. The research body of literature on military marriages focused on negative aspects and infidelity and how civilian dual-earner couples interact (Balderrama-Durbin et al. 2015; Matias & Fontaine, 2014; Matias & Fontaine, 2015). Overall, this study was a continuation of Matias and Fontaine (2015) and provided focus on dual-military spouses. This study not only provided insight into the coping strategies but also an examination of RS. The results contribute to social change by adding additional insight into the implications of perceptions of coping strategies and RS. The results of this study suggest that a more positive attitude regarding work and family balance is important to RS. Working professionals that deal directly with the military programs should begin to look into the methods used by dual couples in order to strengthen the relationships during the

mobilization and deployment phase. The social change aspect of this research study could also be used to educate and promote the exchange of positive emotions in the family creating a harmonious family environment.

There are several implications for this research study for the U.S. Army dual-military active-duty service soldiers, dual-military families, and the professionals that work directly in providing dual-military couples with the care that they may need. The results of the study may contribute to the literature on the correlates of among dual-military married couples. This information may help military leadership, decision-makers, military chaplains, counselors, ACS, and ASAP to develop new policies, intervention strategies, prevention strategies, more useful resources, and programs to assist dual-military families in navigating the challenges associated being in dual status.

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## Appendix A: Invitation

My name is Leila Powell-DiSola and I am a doctoral student in Psychology at Walden University conducting a research project with active-duty dual-military married personnel. I am hoping to gain a better understanding of what coping strategies partners of dual-married military personnel used when their partner was deployed and which coping strategies are associated with higher relationship satisfaction. I am looking for participants between the ages of 18 and 55 who are active-duty Army and whose partners are also active-duty Army who have been separated by deployment. Participation will consist of the completion of a demographics form and two questionnaires about how you coped and your relationship satisfaction. The surveys will take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Participation in the survey is voluntary and subjects will remain anonymous. If you would like to take part, please click on the following links or open the camera application on your cell phone and hold your device steady towards the QR Code you want to scan below:

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Informed\\_Consent\\_Army](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Informed_Consent_Army)



[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Army\\_Demographics](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Army_Demographics)



[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MILITARY\\_WORK-FAMILY](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MILITARY_WORK-FAMILY)



[https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MIL\\_RAS](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MIL_RAS)



Please pass this on to other people you think might be interested in participating. I would greatly appreciate your help,

Leila Powell-DiSola

### Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

Please complete this demographic section of the survey. It is important that you answer each question carefully and accurately. No personal information will be revealed in the research study results. Thank you.

1. Please indicate your age:
2. Gender \_\_\_\_\_
3. Please indicate how long you have been married:
4. What is your military rank?
  - E-1 through E-4 \_\_\_\_\_
  - E-5 through E-9 \_\_\_\_\_
  - W-1 through W-5 \_\_\_\_\_
  - O-1 through O-3 \_\_\_\_\_
  - O-4 through O-6 \_\_\_\_\_
  - O-7 and above \_\_\_\_\_
5. How many years have you been married to your current spouse?
6. How many times have your spouse deployed in the last 5 years?
7. How long is your spouse's current deployment expected time frame?
  - Less than 6 months \_\_\_\_\_
  - 6 months to 1 year \_\_\_\_\_
  - More than one year \_\_\_\_\_
8. How many children are living in the household?
9. Education Level:
  - High School \_\_\_\_\_
  - Some College \_\_\_\_\_
  - College Degree \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Debriefing Form for Participants

### Instructions for Participants

Thank you very much for participating in this research study on the marital strategies and relationship satisfaction among Army active-duty dual-military couples. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the relationship between couple-level coping strategies, including measures of partner coping, positive attitude toward multiple roles, planning and management skills, professional adjustment, and institutional support, and RS among dual-military married couples. The target population of this study are Army dual-military active-duty service members. The goal of this study is to address the gap of current limited research on variables that affect relationship satisfaction of Army dual-military active-duty service members.

If at any time participating in this research study has created strong emotional feelings that are overwhelming for you, there are counseling services are free and available through Military One Source either by phone 1-800-342-9647 or in person if needed.

**Confidentiality:** No identifying information is being collected of participants.

Again, thank you very much for participating!