



Congratulations to Valerie Wood, PhD, recipient of the 2019 Colonel Russell Mann Military and Veteran Family Health Research Award!

November 6, 2019

Each year, the Vanier Institute of the Family recognizes high-quality Canadian research that increases our understanding of military and Veteran family health with the Colonel Russell Mann Military and Veteran Family Health Research Award, delivered annually at the Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) Forum.

Dr. Valerie Wood was recognized at Forum 2019 as the lead author of *Reunited, but He's Not Meeting My Needs: Spouses' Attachment Anxiety and Conflict Post-Deployment* – a study exploring the role of adult attachment in spousal adjustment to military deployment experiences (abstract available on p. 20 of the Forum 2019 Abstracts overview). Findings from this research provide valuable insights for counsellors helping military families during the post-deployment reunion transition, and for programs and services that support the quality of life of military families.

“I was sitting in a faculty's office at RMC discussing deployments, and it dawned on me that the stages of a deployment closely mirror those of Mary Ainsworth's *Strange Situation*”, Dr. Wood recalls. “I wondered whether a military deployment can be thought of as an adult version of the *Strange Situation*. That led to me developing and submitting a proposal for a three-phased project on adult attachment and spousal reactions to military deployments, that was ultimately sponsored by Canada's Department of National Defence, and served as my PhD dissertation. The work that I presented at the CIMVHR conference this year was a small piece of that larger

project. At the time, I thought that I might be on to something important, but I had no idea that this project would have this type of reception and impact.”

The work that Dr. Wood presented at the CIMVHR Forum was focused on the role of attachment anxiety in relation to post-deployment reunion conflict reported by spouses of military members. Her research found that the issues of conflict reported by spouses during the reunion period differ depending on levels of attachment anxiety. In addition, attachment anxiety is related to more conflict and unpleasant partner interactions during the reunion, and feeling as though the reunion isn't living up to one's original expectations explains this relationship. Dr. Wood explains, “It's important to account for individual differences during deployment phases, and adult attachment is one such way that we can understand variation in couple's adjustment to military deployments”.

Dr. Wood is a Program Associate in the Psychology Department at Queen's University. She completed her PhD in Social Psychology, in which she focused on the role of adult attachment in spousal adjustment to military deployment experiences. More recently, she completed a Post-Doctoral Fellowship under one of CIMVHR's Advanced Analytics Initiatives, the #Here4U project focused on leveraging IBM's Watson Assistant chatbot capabilities in a mobile application to support the mental health of military members, Veterans and their families.

“I see that families are in need of evidence-informed supports that are tailored to their needs, which I think these findings can address, she says. “I've sort of made it my personal mission to see that these findings have an impact on military families, and have recently formed collaborations with representatives with DND's Military Family Services and CF Health Services to develop some psychoeducational resources for couples preparing for, and experiencing, military-related deployments.”