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The Militarization of Families:
Exploring the Gender Dynamic of the Army Wife in the United States

Introduction

The objective of this paper is to analyze the role of the Army wife through gender theory and patterns within the overall military lifestyle. By focusing on the Army wife rather than the Army spouse, I am able to analyze the gender dynamics that remain active for many Army families. Traditional gender roles have been upheld in various ways in the military, where the man works in the public sphere while the women remains in the domestic sphere. Applying theoretical constructs of gender to specific patterns seen in interviews and other research allows for those patterns to form a cohesive group of characteristics. This paper seeks to understand the ways Army wives are affected by the all-encompassing Army culture, and explores what it means to be involved in that culture or lifestyle when she has not volunteered for it. Part One begins by contextualizing gender and gender roles within a feminist theoretical framework in general, and then utilizes gender theory to examine the more specific context of the military. Part Two utilizes primary and secondary sources of information to support various gender theories and roles in the Army. Although the focus is primarily on the role of the Army wife and her gender roles, the paper also incorporates topics such as militarization, the everyday life of military families, and domestic violence as evidence and support for the complexities of an overall military lifestyle. Ultimately, I argue that the Army's attempts to modernize gender roles away from the traditional roles have failed because of the prevailing norms of readiness and family structure and support.

Part 1: Theoretical Background

In order to fully understand the importance of the gender dynamic within the Army, it is necessary to first understand the Army as both a subculture and an institution. The U.S. Army is a distinct subculture within the United States. Subcultures refer to “ a body of attitudes, values, beliefs and natural habits, shared by the members of a particular group or stratum within a society, which has significant determining effects upon them as individuals, and is distinguishable from the commonly accepted culture held to be characteristic of the society as a whole” (Bullock and Stallybrass 1979:609). It can also be described as a total institution based on Erving Goffman’s characteristics where:

All aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority . . . Each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. . . All phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole system of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials . . . The various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution. [Goffman 1961:6]

These characteristics represent the structured and controlled aspects of the Army lifestyle. There are rules and regulations regarding every aspect of life from where to live, what to eat, and what activities fill each day. For those who wish to enlist, it is seemingly as easy as walking into an office at the local mall or signing up at a table in one’s school. However, the actual lifestyle is much more demanding due to the highly structured and regimented lifestyle.

David Bayendor, however, argues that the Army is not in fact a total institution, but rather an intermediate institution based on specific subtleties that he outlines in his paper “HTS Redux: A ‘Halfie’ Talks Anthropology and the Army.” One of these subtleties is the fact that, “unlike the member of the asylum or the prison, the service member is still a member of the civilian population at large. While they have a vested interest in their military identity, they still

come from and participate in the world outside the institution, are still subject to the policies and norms of that world” (Bayendor 2011:7). Bayendor argues that the Army is not a total institution because of the level of participation with the outside world.

Regardless of whether the Army is defined as a total or intermediate institution, it is clear that Army involvement forms a crucial part of identity for those within it; an identity that is created once basic training begins. Edward Tick writes about how the purpose of warfare “. . . still repeats the archetypal blueprint for initiation; it is still a rite of passage that takes participants from an immature to a new self, ushering them through a kind of death and rebirth . . .” (Tick 2005:106). The Army strictly defines the lives and identities of soldiers and veterans. However, the lives and identities of their families are also defined by the concept of militarization. This is a result of the self-contained and self-sufficient characteristics of the military post and the hierarchal structure of rank (Robinson 1999:7).

There is a set of shared assumptions about gender norms in the military and what it means to be masculine and feminine. West and Zimmerman analyze the context of gender as being more than biologically determined in their 1987 paper, “Doing Gender.” They believe gender is a form of performance, a specific and conscious way of acting in situations that serves to create gender roles as known as appropriate or inappropriate. They write, “. . . to be successful, marking or displaying gender must be finely fitted to situations and modified or transformed as the occasion demands” (West and Zimmerman 1987:135). Gender roles in the military coincide with this idea of performance and social construction based on the significance placed on the collective gender identities. In this paper, I refer to the collective identity as the collectively male soldiers and their collectively female wives based on my research and evidence from the Soldier Family Wellness Project. It is also important to emphasize that men and women

can both occupy roles that are defined as more masculine or feminine, but even with the changing gender norms due to the increased number of female soldiers in the Army, these spousal networks are still mostly women. Because of this, some women feel very strongly about the sense of pride that comes along with being an Army wife and feel as though de-gendering this term may take away some of the pride. Similarly, rank is such a necessary part of the soldier's identity that it seems to be necessary for their wives as well.

The theory of 'sex-role spillover' reveals how the collective gender identities are exploited and upheld in the military. This theory suggests that:

. . . people endow a job with the sex-role expectations of the numerically dominant sex. When an occupation comes to be seen as 'female' or 'male,' it is then easy to assume that one's ability to do that work is somehow 'natural'. A by-product of this perspective may be the assumption that those who are not 'naturally' suited are not, in fact, capable of doing the job at all. [Herbert 2000:28]

The sex-role spillover suggests that the men are those who are naturally suited to be soldiers while women are not naturally suited, and are therefore incapable of doing the job. And while this logic seems highly irrational with the reality of female soldiers and their vast capabilities in the military, this theory is supported by the overarching values of a patriarchal society, a society that marginalizes the feminine. In this case, the implication is that ". . . it is comfortable – unquestioned– to infantilize, ignore, trivialize, or even actively cast scorn upon what is thought to be feminized" (Enloe 2004:5). Therefore, regardless of actual capabilities, experience or competence, gender becomes the primary characteristic for understanding capability. In many ways, the Army represents a patriarchy that supports and disseminates notions of ideal and traditional gender roles through the role of the Army wife.

Research Methods

My research is part of a larger project: The Soldier Family Wellness Project. This project seeks to understand how multiple deployments affect soldiers, soldiers' families and the entire Colorado Springs Community. Although this project incorporates national issues regarding the United States military, we focus on the nearby Army post of Fort Carson. Over the past few years, anthropologists Dr. Sarah Hautzinger, Dr. Jean Scandlyn, and various research teams have conducted research on topics such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), and the 2-12th battalion while examining the vast effects of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

I began working on this project in the summer of 2011 and did data analysis such as interview transcription and coding as well as collected interviews and contacted potential informants. In addition to the fieldwork that I did, I utilized past interviews that were collected by other researchers on the project and are located on the NVIVO database at Colorado College. These interviews were generally open-ended interviews that were recorded and later transcribed into the collective database. All interviewees were given consent forms and told of the project's objectives beforehand. In addition to the fieldwork, I used multiple secondary sources in order to better analyze the fieldwork at hand. Quotes from both secondary sources and from interviews will be used throughout this paper and will be differentiated as such.

Gender Theory

In order to better analyze gender within the context of the military, it is necessary to start with basic gender theory and the evolution of feminist movements such as the movements and ideologies of First, Second and Third wave feminism. This type of feminist theory is aptly named because of the apparent rises and falls of feminism over time (Pilcher and Whelehan

2004:52). First wave feminism occurred from the mid to late 19th century up until the 1920's. It was concerned with the demands for women's rights and equality with men through legislation changes, and the change from private to public patriarchy through the voting rights, access to education and professions, property ownership and marriage/divorce rights (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:52-3). Second Wave Feminism refers to "a new period of feminist collective political activism and militancy which emerged in the 1960's" (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:144). This feminist movement was concerned with radical change and wanted a "shift in the key political issues" including freedom from the patriarchy, understanding the meanings coinciding with biology, and a change in issues of sexual politics, including, among other issues family, abortion, rape, and domestic violence (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:144). Third wave feminism is "the feminism of a younger generation of women who acknowledge the legacy of second wave feminism, but also identify what they see as its limitations" (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:169). These limitations include class/race constructs, the prescriptive nature of second wave feminism and the recognition of a new time period and new social and political conditions that differ from the 1960's (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004:169). These different waves of feminist thought lend insight into the many debates of gender theory and women's struggles for equality. These movements are important to mention because they challenge traditional gender norms and the overarching patriarchy, both of which are prevalent in military gender norms and roles.

A common underlying theme throughout the progression of women's rights through the feminist movements in the United States is subordination. This subordination is often framed through the concept of "universal asymmetry in cultural evaluations of the sexes [where] . . . relative to men of their age and social status, women everywhere lack generally recognized and culturally valued authority" (Rosaldo 1974:17). Rosaldo makes an important distinction,

however, in stating that this asymmetry does not necessarily refer to subordination, but rather to distinct differences between the sexes. These differences are the factors that ultimately lead to this universal asymmetry. She notes, “every known society recognizes and elaborates some differences between the sexes, and although there are groups in which men wear skirts and women wear pants or trousers, it is everywhere the case that there are characteristic tasks, manner, and responsibilities primarily associated with women or with men” (Rosaldo 1974:18). These distinct differences often entail an innate sense of superiority or inferiority when understood through a larger biological or cultural framework.

This universal asymmetry is often justified and explained by invoking essentialist and biological determinist theory. This theory reinforces how a woman is the natural choice for the domestic sphere because of the biological necessity of child rearing. However, this theory is only relevant when analyzed through a cultural sphere. Rosaldo claims that “the observation of physical differences itself tells us little about the social worlds we live in; for humans, biology becomes important largely as it is interpreted by the norms and expectations of human culture and societies” (Rosaldo 1974:5). The underlying factor for widespread subordination relates to varying production between women and men.

In post-industrialized societies such as the United States, men are generally the providers, going out into the public sphere for their production, which separates themselves from the home and the family. This type of production reinforces one’s cultural and material capital, which defines status and class position in a modern society. In this scenario, the public sphere refers to any occupation outside the home, while the private sphere refers primarily to the home and its associated responsibilities (Rosaldo 1974:29). Because of the importance placed on status and class in American society, the production associated with men has been more respected and more

highly regarded than the “natural” forms of a woman’s production. The woman’s natural and biological role relates primarily to motherhood where her body is needed for the child’s survival early in life and she is therefore held responsible for caring for children and the domestic sphere. The man’s role, however, appears to be both a feat and a rite of passage; he must overcome obstacles in the public realm and provide for his family at the same time. Because it is not ‘natural’ to do this role, and has nothing to do with his biology, society has often deemed the man’s role as superior (Rosaldo 1974:29). The man’s earned identity will define him and the people that he provides for, such as his wife or children. Women “are given a social role and a definition by virtue either of their age or of their relationship to men” (Rosaldo 1974:29). Therefore, it is much more difficult for women to assert their status and social role independently from either men or their biology. Not only do the gender roles vary based on production inside each sphere, it also relates to a more abstract version of production. The woman makes perishable items, such as humans, whereas the man creates lasting items such as products or ideas (Ortner 1974:75).

Social Constructionism “. . . argues that we create gender, or what it means to be women or men” (Herbert 2000:30). Therefore, gender is really not innate at all but is both learned and taught accordingly. The classification of gender including male, female and a debated 3rd gender varies by culture, but gender is usually associated with one’s biological sex. A gender identity serves to categorize people into an easily learned and upheld system. And as Herbert points out, “by establishing ideas about what is essentially female or male, what is ‘normal’ or ‘natural,’ the culture instills within us a need to maintain these gendered identities. That is, we must continually create and recreate our identities as gendered beings” (Herbert 2000:116). The long-

lasting debate about nature vs. nurture comes into question whether one's gender is based on biological sex or created by society.

Gender Roles in the Military

Gender in the military is particularly regimented. To be successful in 'doing gender' in the military, one must generally stick to one side of the binary in order for one's behavior to be deemed appropriate. Within the military, ". . . we may expect the expression, 'men are men and women are women' to be taken seriously" (Herbert 2000:10). Joe Barrera is a Vietnam vet who describes this binary during an interview:

The Army is not tough anymore like it was when I was in . . . When you have women doing basic training with male soldiers . . . that's going to lessen the level of brutality training that is absolutely necessary. When you take a civilian and make him an infantry soldier, you have to brutalize him. Otherwise, he won't be a good soldier. Instinctively, we don't do the brutality training when women are present the way we would when women aren't present...¹

As Joe notes, men train differently because the gender dynamic has changed. There is no longer a strict boundary between the binary of the "male" Protector and the "female" Protected in today's Army, but it seems as though the gender binary still remains.

Stefanie is an Army wife who reinforces the traditional gender roles that Joe emphasizes. In her interview, she talks about how the changing gender dynamics would potentially affect her husband during combat and how they affect her as an Army wife. She says:

My husband has explained that if he was in a combat situation, and he was standing next to a woman, he would certainly feel a little bit more protective of her than a man. So I think it also expands into the spouse's world. To take somebody else who is completely different in many ways from us and their needs into consideration would be encroaching on our thing.

¹ Field Work Ft. Carson, Colorado, Data Reserves (NVIVO database), Colorado College. All interviews for this project are housed in this collective database. These interviews were primarily collected by Sarah Hautzinger and Jean Scandlyn, as well as research assistants.

Because of the historical and traditional gender roles and stereotypes in the Army, it has proven extremely difficult for those involved to change their mindset about what is natural or normal for a soldier or a spouse. Tim Vincent is a soldier who emphasizes the differences between female and male soldiers during an interview. He says:

I also think it's harder for a woman to deploy if she has kids because they have more emotional connectivity to a child. A father, I don't know, we are trained to see our caring as providing for the child. He's connected, but he just puts it out of his mind to make a better life for his family. If he dies, at least they will be better off. It's hard for the wife. She's a single parent household, but she has the constant fear that it will be like this for the rest of life [if her spouse is killed]. Every phone call or ring of the doorbell make her worried that soldiers are coming to tell her about her dead husband or that it's her husband.

In all three of these accounts, it is clear that the main issue with gender refers to how it impacts a particular situation. In Joe's opinion, women are not as capable of being as brutal, or withstanding as much brutality, in training as men. He is not discussing their level of fitness or physiology, but rather generalizing women as incapable strictly based on gender alone. Similarly, Tim Vincent generalizes all parents when emphasizing a mother or wife's emotional connectivity, while the father is strictly a provider. Not only is this a vast generalization, but it also puts a great deal of significance on gender as definitive rather than gender as performance. As Herbert points out, ". . . soldiering has been about not only war, but being 'a man'" (Herbert 2000:7). Both Joe and Tim seem to support Herbert's view with the huge significance placed on one's gender within the military based on their opinions regarding physical training and parenting. Stefanie agrees that the gender component would interrupt the general routine and be a pressing concern for those involved – noting that there are distinct differences between the two spheres and ways of life. Stefanie, Joe and Tim all reveal an underlying desire for a gender division in the military – at least regarding combat situations.

Part 2: Discussion and Evidence

Creating the Role of the Military Wife

The relationship between the Protector and Protected coincides with traditional gender roles within the patriarchal society of the Army. This section analyzes the creation of the “role” of the traditional military wife and the context for this idealized femininity and domesticity. Cynthia Enloe traces its emergence to the late 19th century with the “new appreciation of the fighting man as a moral creature, a man who would fight all the better if his moral dimension were cultivated – by a woman, and especially by a loyal, respectable, patriotic wife” (Enloe 2000:155). This creation of the ideal military wife was elaborated on with resources and guides – one among them being *The Army Woman’s Handbook* (1943).

Although this handbook’s message appears straightforward in terms of disseminating ideals of gender and the Army wife identity, understanding the historical context and larger social conditions in which it was written is critical. It was first published in 1943 – the same time period that many women had to leave the jobs they had acquired during World War II in order to make room for returning veterans. In doing this, many of the changes that had occurred during the war regarding legitimacy of women in the workplace and overall gender roles were ignored as soon as men returned. The handbook emphasizes the importance of the wife as a support system and outlines the ideal gender roles that she must play – the ideal gender roles being within the home and the domestic sphere. Ultimately, this handbook serves as a guide for how to deal with the transition to ‘normalcy’ – normalcy being traditional gender roles.

This handbook details appropriate ways for how an Army wife should show her loyalty and support not only to her husband but also to the Army as a whole. The list of suggestions includes:

1. Make your husband as happy and comfortable as possible
2. Watch the health and well-being of your family carefully
3. Keep interested in and informed on the affairs of your country
4. Do not talk about movements of troops or other army events
5. Be thoroughly prepared for sudden orders for your husband
6. Carry out the advice given in this book
7. Do red cross work
8. Join a first-aid class
9. Buy defense bonds
10. Join a civilian defense corps
11. Learn defense signals
12. Rouse your friends to do likewise. [Collins 1943:4]

This traditional gender role here emphasizes the importance of the Army wife and the resulting Army family.

The entirety of the wife's role in this context is centered on her husband's role within the Army. She is not given an individual identity, but rather is included with her husbands' and with the overall Army identity. This can be seen in the Handbook through passages such as:

“In such a widespread coming together of women whose each heartbeat is timed to the common rhythm of their men's marching feet lie the essentials for the finest combat weapon ever devised for defense, a closely knit and mighty organization of women whose reason for existence should be cooperation with those in charge of the welfare of our nation”. [Collins 1943:ix]

Although this role coincides with the traditional gender roles of the time, it takes supporting one's spouse and family to a whole new level, subsuming the Army wife into Army culture and forming a foundation for the militarization of the family.

The Role of the Army wife in the Modern Era

Has the role of the military wife changed since the era of the *Army Woman's Handbook*? In many ways the traditional gender roles have been upheld, where the man works in the public sphere and the women stays within the domestic sphere. She is responsible for taking care of the house and the children and socializes with other women in her same situation. While those roles

may have worked in the past, the recent increase in the number of female soldiers has altered this gender dynamic. An Army spouse can be now a man, and the family structure may not always include the wife being confined to the domestic sphere. But in many ways, the identity of an Army wife is very much intertwined with the identity of her husband and the collective group of the Army lifestyle. This can be seen through groups such as Defender's Own "a social networking site [that] creates a space for military spouses to assert their own voices within a military construct they have usually been excluded from" (Remington-Bell 2009:1). In order to get on the website, one must list his or her military affiliation and branch (Remington-Bell 2009:8). Remington-Bell provides a profile analysis of the wives on the website and found many occurrences where the wives chose to include references to their military partner, military life and their thoughts about deployments or husbands' absences (Remington-Bell 2009:19). Even though Remington-Bell argues that this website is a way for a wife to assert her own identity and agency, it is clear that this website also serves to emphasize appropriate behavior and feelings about the role of a military wife. The wives often vent about their issues with the military and certain struggles, but they overall display a certain level of support and acceptance of their role. Even with the anonymity of the Internet, there are specific regulations that one must abide to and recognize through the shared ideology of what it means to be the ideal military wife. This corresponds to the amount of posts referring to their husbands, children, life on post and support for the war as well as for the Army as a whole (Remington-Bell 2009:36).

Gender Norms: Army Spouse or Army Wife?

What do the military spouses think about these gender norms? It is clear that different people adapt to situations in different ways, but how do people respond when there is such an element of conformity? Mary Beth and Stefanie are two Army spouses who are very honest

about what they think about these gender norms. They were interviewed together about multiple topics, one of them being gender issues in the Army. Stefanie says:

I think that the gender roles are very definite, speaking in our gender terms, and our family as a unit, my husband has told me many times that 'I don't care if you volunteer as many times as you do' but I know that he gets a great sense of pride from it. So when I was planning the cocktail party and he was still in theatre, he was telling everybody, my wife's planning the cocktail party. He felt pride from that, where I feel pride when I hear that he has done something great in the field. So we do hold very specific gender stereotypes still to this day. And it seems slightly archaic . . . but it's just kinda the way that it works best honestly.

Similarly, both spouses feel a sense of pride about how much they do beyond their defined roles of military wives – roles that would be too much for their husbands. Mary Beth, who herself was an active-duty soldier in a dual-military marriage before having children, says:

I think that for most male spouses . . . their concentration is just going to be on raising the family. And holding down the homefront in that respect, you can't pile too much on. Multitasking part, not so much . . . I know Ben could do it, he could do it, he loves his kids, he'd figure it out, but they probably wouldn't be in karate, wouldn't be in soccer, wouldn't be in this . . . Yes, they all would have been fed, they all would have been dressed, and they all would have made it to school. But, it probably, would have stopped at about that.

These women use their own husbands as examples for how the gender stereotypes play out and their own 'appropriate' roles as being where they are currently. However, it does reveal an interesting aspect of power dynamics between these two couples in that even when both parents are active-duty soldiers, it is more common to see the female soldier step down from her position rather than the male.

Although there is no doubt that many people wish to change the gendered norms within the Army, some make it clear that they wish these norms to stay the same. This is most evident with the emphasis on spousal gender and the differentiation between Army wife and Army spouse. This may be due to the differences in parent gender and how male spouses do not seek help as much as female spouses do. Mary Beth says:

Male spouses tend to be a lot more self-sufficient. They don't have those things that girls need of the girl contact. Guys are different in that aspect, that's my opinion at least. I think they tend to deal with situations themselves and everything else. They would ask questions . . . I just don't think he [an Army husband] wanted to bother us. He didn't want to bother us.

It seems as though the spousal networks are very important for creating and maintaining the sense of community and camaraderie on post among families as a whole. Some women feel very strongly about the sense of pride that comes along with being an Army wife and feel as though de-gendering this term may take away some of the pride. When asked if *The Army Wives' Handbook* should be named the Army Spouse handbook Stefanie replied:

Honestly, being very frank about it, I'd feel like they were encroaching on our thing; this is our thing. But I know when I think about it that it's their thing too. They're an Army spouse; they're going through the same thing. However, I certainly would have that guttural instinct of, no this isn't your playground, go play somewhere else. Socially, that's unacceptable . . .

It is clear from this quote that Stefanie receives a great amount of pride and territoriality from her role as an Army wife. She feels protective of her role within the collective group of Army wives and seems to imply a certain amount of superiority over the role of wife over spouse. Although she realizes this feeling is irrational, Stefanie endorses the traditional gender roles associated here and the fact that there is an inherent difference to these Army wives as to the roles that they participate in. Based on this account, Stefanie represents how Army wives themselves can be resistant to changing the traditional gender roles.

Militarization

The concept of militarization is critical for understanding the military family. It is one way to address Goffman's theory that the family and the Army as a total institution are incompatible (Goffman 1961:11). What is militarization? According to Enloe:

To become militarized is to adopt militaristic values (e.g. a belief in hierarchy, obedience, and the use of force) and priorities as one's own, to see military solutions as particularly effective, to see the world as a dangerous place best approached with militaristic attitudes. These changes may take generations to occur, or they may happen suddenly as the response to a particular trauma. Most of the people in the world who are militarized are not themselves in uniform. Most militarized people are civilians". [Enloe 2007:4]

Although there are many examples of militarization worldwide, Army spouses become militarized not necessarily by choice but because of their spouses' profession. When a woman marries a soldier, she is integrated into the larger Army culture. She may adopt militaristic values as a means to be supportive of their combined lifestyle, generally a lifestyle that values the military and what it stands for. Her subsequent militarization is representative of how their marriage may be manipulated to better suit the Army's agenda.

The Militarization of Families

In 1995, 60.1% of all military personnel were married - 73.5% of American officers and 57.3% of enlisted personnel (Enloe 2000:160). In order to respond successfully to this new pattern, recruitment efforts decreased an emphasis on individual soldiers and increased the emphasis on the family as a unit that needs to be recruited. And while the Army uses this concept of family cohesion and creates living situations that are beneficial to entire families, Enloe argues that this is just a way that the government seeks to control military families in her 2007 book, *Globalization and Militarism*. This notion of control is very important because of how many people are affected by the rules and regulations imposed on military families. In 1995, there were less U.S. uniformed personnel than there were U.S. military children and spouses (Enloe 2000:168).

The Militarization of Families – Life on Post

In the mid-1990's, 33% of American military families lived in housing provided by the government and the remaining 67% lived in housing rented or bought with government money.

Whether this housing was on or off post, the funds all came from the same place (Enloe 2000:156). In a sense, “Military wives are very similar to women reliant on state welfare programs: their housing, schooling, medical care, often their food, and even their recreation flows from the government” (Enloe 2000:196). Their reliance may be manipulated into a state of submission and subordination, making change more difficult. And although life on post may seem difficult when all aspects of one’s life are confined to a particular area, there are some definite perks for living on post. When asked about her life on post, Toni Thompson replied:

It has its ups and its downs. We're 2 1/2 minutes from my husband's job. He gets to come home for lunch, as soon as he's done with work, he's home. It's safer. I know there have been issues on post but in general, you feel safer. You're driving onto one of the biggest gated communities and they're armed. I'm pretty okay with that. A lot of the resources they have for military families, they're all on post. On the other hand, I have a 1/2 hour drive one way to my daughter's school everyday, that's because I don't put her in the schools on post.

The benefits are clear for their family structure and the presence of Toni’s husband for living on post. However, by putting her daughter in a school off-post Toni is making an active choice in resisting 100% militarization. Her daughter will be educated outside of the schools within the Army post – therefore she is being educated away from the total institution atmosphere and is able to gain a broader world view and life experience when she leaves the post. Similarly, Colleen O’Brien talks about the advantages of the Army post lifestyle that she misses after her divorce and move off post. She says:

There's part of me that will miss it, even though it really does suck and is something that is harder than anything I've ever done in my life, I'll miss it because it's almost like a gated community. You have so many things available to you and they're all free. Not just the whole free thing, but everything is right there, just right behind these gates it's all there. It's this family that never gets torn up. Back in the real world, you don't have any of that. You fend for yourself, you're all by yourself. But in the military you're not. You all work with each other and you're taken care of.

It is clear that life on post does have its advantages. However, living on post ensures more of the total control that Enloe discusses. It is easier to know all aspects of a person’s life when funds

and activities are so strictly controlled and monitored. Similarly, living on post would make the Army wife stereotype much more present and ubiquitous, a constant worry about upholding one's role and one's husband's role. Enloe writes,

A woman married to a soldier has to cope with the demands peculiar to being a military wife: she is defined by society not only by her relationship to a particular man, but by her membership in a powerful state institution; she is seen not just as a particular soldier's wife, but as a military wife. Moreover, she lives in a social world often deliberately insulated from the "real world" (as many military people call the civilian world) and thus loses much of the potential support from women in that wider, less tightly controlled civilian world. [Enloe 2000:156]

The isolation and structure of the Army institution instills a larger sense of conformity and idealization of traditional family roles by emphasizing and rewarding those who uphold the stereotypes and stay within the approved boundaries. This implies why many Army wives choose to conform to the ideal gender binary: the rewards and benefits that those roles can achieve.

The militarization of families is most evident in the amount of resources on each Army post. There are specific benefits included in military life including health care, social support, a sense of community, job security and the opportunity for adventure and travel (Robinson 1999:7). The intention behind these programs and benefits is that it will "create a sense of security, foster morale, and encourage a sense of solidarity" (Robinson 1999:29). By gearing the programs largely toward the family support and family wellness with programs in place that offer child care, marriage counseling, family violence prevention and treatment, the programs are designed primarily for wives and children. Because "no one is born an obedient, flexible, loyal, patriotic woman, a woman who loves swinging back and forth between living sometimes like a grateful dependent and other times like a resourceful single parent. A woman has to be persuaded, and sometimes is pressured, to become –and stay– a 'model military wife'" (Enloe

2007:58). These resources and benefits are designed to persuade and pressure an Army wife into the ‘model military wife,’ serving the Army’s own agenda to increase recruitment and enlistment.

Enloe makes a compelling argument about the usefulness of the wife in terms of promoting her husband’s career, in that wives are only as useful “. . . to the extent that they assist a soldiers’ mobility” (Enloe 2000:168). Wives are forced to adopt militaristic values and accept militaristic attitudes as a means to show their support for their spouse as well as for the Army as a whole. And although many of them may have been supportive of the Army before getting married, it seems to become a mandatory requirement for an Army wife to become militarized, particularly since the transition to the All-Volunteer Army in 1974 (Griffith 1997:12). The new recruitment and retaining policies were altered with financial compensation and bonuses for volunteers – allowing many soldiers to have the greater financial stability that would support a wife and a family. This led to leading to a greater number of “Army families” and a new system of support for the soldiers.

The Militarization of Families - Children

The militarization of families not only incorporates the roles of the military spouses but includes the roles of military children as well. It must be difficult to for children to cope with absent parents in any situation, much less when they know their parent is in a high-risk environment such as combat. Toni Thompson talks about how her family copes with her husband’s absences. She says:

I'm glad he's deploying now when they're young because he won't miss as much. He's not going to miss graduation, and weddings, and things like that. At the same time, it's really hard to hit a reset button on a 2-year-old ‘cause they just don't get it. A lot of those routines he just doesn't ever get involved with, and right now, it's just not worth it . . . He kind of gets to be the celebrity parent in a lot of ways. He gets to do a lot of the really fun stuff and I do the same stuff everyday.

Not only is there the stress of an absent parent, but also the potential stress of constant moving having to make new friends and adapt to situation. Katie Weikel is the principal at a school on Fort Carson who has been making a valiant effort to try and understand how to improve resources and help for these children. Educators on post must try to understand how problems manifest and why they do – reasons that are generally related to the absence of their parent. Katie Weikel says in an interview:

Either attendance was poor because they were home cleaning the house, getting ready for the parent to come back, or they kept thinking they [the parent] were coming home that day and they didn't come home . . . kept getting delayed. So missing school for those reasons. Also, when a parent leaves, missing school to spend time with the parent before they leave, which is very valid, but we're trying to strike a balance of consistency with a kiddo, and not falling behind with their education as well . . . you could tie anxiety to deployments. I think a lot of depression...too. [It manifests as a] lack of motivation. Just not caring, not doing their school work, not doing their homework.

Although there are certainly challenges in any school environment, educators and families dealing with the military lifestyle are often faced with many problems involving missed school days and changing locations.

In addition to dealing with problems such as children's emotional symptoms, attendance, or behavior, there are also deviations from a typical school environment in terms of attitudes toward guns and violence. In most traditional school environments, guns and bombs are not toys – they are not appropriate items to play with and violence is never the solution for dealing with problems. But when a child's parent is a professional bomb maker or carries a machine gun everyday, what was appropriate in traditional schools will not always apply. Katie Weikel says:

How do I handle the kiddos who are drawing machine guns and war...tell them, "You can't do that" when that's their life, reality, that's what Dad is doing. That's what is in their house. Camo...It's just their culture. I do struggle with that. Because the majority of it comes from a military kiddo, drawing that type of thing. And, just, boys in general. But then military as well...How do you teach them how to handle that appropriately, instead of just...cutting it all out?

Schools on post must go beyond typical norms of institutional education to account for these cultural differences of military life.

Two educators at the Child and Youth School Services on Fort Carson notice similar situations where they must adapt their usual teaching style to incorporate some military components. In my and Sarah's interview with Bridgitt and Analita in the summer of 2011,

Outside the gates [of Fort Carson] when you hear children [pretend shooting] using guns and stuff, I hear teachers say, "You're not supposed to use guns." Well, maybe that's relevant there but when your dad is an officer - we had one dad that was a bomb expert - someone said, "Bombs are bad!" I'm not gonna use any of that terminology because, that is a pretty cool thing - "My dad does this!" So to let them know the context of the world and how those things balance out, but in the context of what their reality is, "That is some cool stuff that your dad builds bombs. I respect that." But also they're some other alternative ways to look at in a positive way. So, for me, that's been interesting.

Military families face numerous obstacles when trying to raise a 'normal' family with all of the pressures and constraints of military life. Toni Thompson tries to keep her family life as separate from the military as possible in terms of raising her kids. She says:

When he comes home, he's not a soldier anymore, he's dad. I think it's because he isn't in a leadership position it makes it so that his kids are his kids and not his soldiers. You see that so much and just like, they're just kids. They're going to be rowdy and do something; you don't get to freak out. Our house is our house and work is work. When we can keep the two separate we do.

Parenting and the military lifestyle do not always coincide. There are many difficult adjustments that one must make to both incorporate militarization as a part of everyday life yet still be able to separate oneself from it if it becomes negative. However, doing so is much more difficult than it may seem.

The Chain of Command

The militarization of the family is also reinforced by the "chain of command." The chain of command "is a straight line that runs from the president of the United States . . . down to the newest, lowest-ranking soldier. Every member of the Army is responsible for his or her actions

to the person above” (Crossley and Keller 1990:354). There are strict boundaries between the ranks in the army and so there are subsequent boundaries between Army wives.

The Department of the Army formed the Family Readiness Group (FRG) in 1987 to provide a concrete support system to foster soldier readiness from family readiness (Crossley and Keller 1990:191). The FRG is “. . . a command-sponsored organization of family members, volunteers, Soldiers and civilian employees belonging to a unit, that together provide an avenue of mutual support and assistance, and a network of communications among the family members, the chain of command, chain of concern and community resources” (FRG guide 2005:2). The FRG, as it became known, was based on a similar chain of command in the army, where the spouses with husbands of higher rank in the Army were given more authority within the FRG itself (Enloe 2010:180). Julia Burch points out, “Your husband gets promoted and the wife feels like she gets promoted as well. She wears the rank, too”. The FRG abides by strict rules and must act within these rules as to not disturb the Army chain of command. The FRG mission is to:

- 1) Foster competent, knowledgeable, and resilient families
- 2) Act as an extension of the unit in providing official, accurate command information
- 3) Provide mutual support
- 4) Build soldier and family cohesion and foster a positive outlook
- 5) Advocate more efficient use of community resources
- 6) Help families solve problems at the lowest level
- 7) Reduce stress and promote Soldier and family readiness
- 8) Contribute to the well-being and esprit de corps of the unit (FRG guide 2005:3).

Once again, families have been militarized to become part of the ‘mission’ with the advent of the Family Readiness Group.

This relates to Lamphere’s work on the domestic groups of women where the women gained influence using the authority of males (Lamphere 1974:99). This is very true for the way the FRG functions traditionally: the female spouses gain ‘domestic’ authority based on the ‘public’ authority of their husbands. It is clear that the spouses themselves know what rank they

hold based on their husband's rank within the FRG. As Lamphere writes, "women's strategies are centered on 'political' goals, that is influencing the men who hold authority" (Lamphere 1974:100). This structure of rank is apparent through the FRG hierarchy where each unit has a pyramid formation including "chain of concern" with a FRG leader (Crossley and Keller 1990:191).

The spousal chain of command is important to understand in terms of family dynamics and the rigid hierarchy of the army. Amber Nicodemus is one spouse who is well aware of how this hierarchy works both within and outside the FRG:

I know my role. I know what I'm allowed to say and not to say and who I'm allowed to talk to and not allowed to talk to . . . if I would have wanted to talk to the post-commanding general, General Graham, then I would have had to go through my husband's chain of command to request an appointment or time with him because it is seen as disrespectful to my husband's chain of command to go outside of their unit and above the rank without them having knowledge of it. It's a courtesy issue . . . In the military, you respect rank and you respect order and you follow it. But the lower enlisted wives, spouses are usually the first to step out of line and go straight to the top ranting and raving rather than going through chain of command and showing respect for rank and for order . . . So if it's the private, it is my responsibility as the platoon sergeant's wife to educate or interact with all of the wives that my husband has command over. So all of the other E6's, E5's, all the way down to the privates - all of their wives. I would be their point of contact. Conversely, my point of contact would have been my husband's commander, first sergeant or sergeant major's wife. I would have gone to her and she would have taken it to the colonel's wife and so on from there.

Here Amber shares her dissatisfaction with spouses who show blatant disrespect for the chain of command and appropriate behavior within the Army. Although she does have many problems with certain aspects of military life and the chain of command in general, Amber is aware of the emphasis on respect and courtesy that is expected and deemed necessary within this hierarchal institution.

How do other spouses feel about this structured and hierarchal network within the FRG chain of command? When asked about how she feels about the network of spouses, Julia Burch responded:

On some levels, it does [feel like a sisterhood] but there's still that level where the younger spouses, the junior spouses, they see the senior spouses as separate. I really feel like that line is still there. Even with the senior NCO spouses, they see the officer spouses [as separate]...there's still that separation, too, I think. It's a little blurry...but it's still there . . . I recently went to an FRG 101 class, just to freshen up. It's changed. [The rules have changed] as far as funding...how to raise money for the FRG. They're trying to enforce that there are no lines [between JR and SR spouses]...they're really trying to enforce that. I feel like you can't change that, because if you change that among the wives, it causes a problem with the soldiers. Because that is strictly enforced within the Army ranks. You can't mingle that way. Because if you do, you lose the mission, and the focus...To do that with the wives...you can only do that to a certain point.

Julia sees the chain of command for spouses as inherently structured because of the ranks of the husbands. For that reason, it seems difficult to remove the hierarchy because of their shared identity. The necessary aspect of rank for a soldier identity also becomes a necessary aspect for his wife and family, contributing to the militarization of the family.

Readiness and Retention

The concept of readiness refers to a soldier's level of preparedness before deploying so that they are more competent and capable of fighting while deployed. However, the individual soldier's readiness also relates to the larger Army readiness; an Army with experienced soldiers is presumably more capable than an Army with newer recruits. Experienced soldiers do seem more capable in terms of training and practical knowledge, however, it is important to acknowledge the potential effects that multiple deployments can have on a soldier. In the realm of PTSD or TBI, these effects can be harmful and possibly detrimental to soldier readiness and capabilities. Readiness is related to retention, wanting to keep those who have enlisted previously to reenlist when their term of service is up. As Enloe points out, "A military is falling

short of a full state of readiness if it cannot recruit the new personnel it requires or if it cannot retain the seasoned soldiers it already has (expensively) trained . . . the opinions of a soldier's spouse are critical when that soldier comes to decide whether to reenlist or quit" (Enloe 2000:174). Julia Burch comments on the changes the Army has made for spouses and families, not so much for them, but as means to persuade the soldiers to re-enlist. She says in her interview:

They don't make these options for us. It's always the soldier. And it was the truth, because they always took care of the soldier more than they took care of the family. I think that's changed . . . they want to retain the numbers in the Army . . . The number one thing that came up for why soldiers were leaving . . . "my family", "my wife wants to pursue her education, a career" "I want to keep my family stable, don't want to move every couple of years." The Army is looking at that . . . changing that, retaining . . . They'll move the family in the summer, leave the soldier and his family for more than 3 years, I think the length now is six. They've made those changes to retain their numbers. They don't want to lose good soldiers, the good ones that they've got.

How did the government and the Army respond to these issues associated with readiness? By employing programs that emphasized 'family readiness,' strengthening the roles of families once again to suit their own agenda of soldier readiness.

Mission First

During an interview with military provider Jane Smith, she claims that it is important to understand the soldier's role and his job as a whole comes before the family while he or she is in combat. She says,

It's military first. Your family is not first - that's pretty engrained and that's just what it is. To have someone you're involved with to really understand that (and to be pretty tough, moving through that military world) I think can really help with keeping the marriage strong. Plus, when a soldier's deployed, the true work of a spouse is to do everything in their power to keep the focus on the mission. Not all the stuff that may be happening at home, like the car breaking down and little Billy just failed out of school. That kind of stuff needs to be handled, not to bring that to the soldier when he's on his mission.

This mentality is a common one among experienced Army spouses. They know that the mission is the most important part while a soldier is in combat and everything else is less important during that time. Jessica Copeland notes a similar attitude as wives as secondary. She said:

The tone of emails and letters during deployment from higher command . . . seem to suggest that first and foremost we're wives, we're support, or we're families, but not really alluding to the fact that some of us may have other careers . . . It's fully expected that the women are able to drop whatever is happening, pull the kids out of school, fly the kids to Florida in the middle of the week because the guys want to have a family thing. So there's very much this sense that we're available at a moment's notice to make things happen.

Colleen O'Brien is an Army wife who has a similar view to Jane Smith in this regard. During an interview she said:

You always kind of feel second and you really are second. I mean, it sucks to think about it that way, but you really are. The Army comes first. Have you heard that saying . . . 'If you wanted a wife we would've issued you one' . . . Yeah it's really how it is, you're second and you gotta get used to that, and it was hard for me to get used to that because I always put people I cared about first. And so it really hurts after a while when you realize, 'Wow sometimes what I do, doesn't matter what I say, doesn't matter what I do, it will happen anyway.' You just have to follow.

Amber Nicodemus is an army spouse whose husband was recently diagnosed with Traumatic Brain Injury and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. During an interview with Amber, she said:

The warrior mindset starts with and ends with mission first, last and always. That's really important for you to remember . . . A lot of people think that has to do with military operations but it doesn't. It is the way they live. That expands into family life, society, decision-making, interaction with peers, education; you name it, that is the basis for their operation as a person. When they're active duty, when they're carrying out an operation, it doesn't matter what happens to them, it doesn't matter what happens to their buddies - they have to complete the end goal at all expense.

These women raise many important questions about the changing values for marriage and soldiers and what their role means to the military at large. Even with all of the apparent efforts that the Army has made to incorporate the wife and the family, these efforts can be minimized as ways to increase readiness and support the overall goal of the Army with the warrior mindset and the emphasis on mission first.

One feature that helps maintain the binary gender structure is that Army wives have been able to see themselves as genuine patriots for doing all that the government needs them to do.

This includes:

Moving frequently, sacrificing their own career aspirations, volunteering for unpaid work to keep a military base community together, enduring the loneliness of single motherhood when their soldier-husbands are deployed far away, staying publicly cheerful while privately coping with the possible bouts of anger and depression that their husbands may experience after stints in tense combat zones, not asking too many questions about the possible sexual liaisons their husbands might have engaged in when away from home, and staying quiet in their grief if their husbands are killed while deployed (Enloe 2007:56)

These common patterns for a typical Army wife are obviously very difficult. The Army and the government justify this difficult lifestyle by emphasizing the role of the spouse as necessary, patriotic and supportive for their husbands. With resources such as *The Army Wife's Handbook* (1990), there are clear designations for the appropriate behavior in any situation be it addressing letters, introducing oneself, or throwing the perfect dinner party. This handbook also outlines the structure of the battalion, provides correct titles based on rank and gives advice about military roles, military living and military functions. Although these would all be helpful for a wife newly embedded in military culture, it is also another resource for wives to become militarized and generic when trying to fulfill these roles successfully. The continued use of this handbook implies how Army wives feel the need to comply with these guidelines and uphold the norms in every context. In many ways, the handbook is a physical representation of how these gender norms remain upheld.

“Problem Wives”

“Problem Wives” refer to wives who deviate from the ideal ‘institutional dependents’ (Enloe 2007:57). Such deviations include, “. . . encouraging their husbands not to reenlist, by speaking out against domestic violence perpetrated by soldier-husbands and soldier-boyfriends

against their wives and girlfriends, by criticizing the policies that deprive senior officers' wives of military health care and housing benefits when their husbands file for divorce . . ." (Enloe 2007:57). These deviations are a sign of an unsuccessful militarization or socialization of the Army wife and may be detrimental to the army or nation as a whole in that sense. Officials view these 'problem wives' not only as " . . . falling short of a feminized militarized marital ideal but as threats to national security" (Enloe 2007:58). The entire purpose of this militarization of wives and families is to promote soldier readiness – a feat that cannot be obtained if 'problem wives' are present – and is representative of 'incomplete militarization' (Enloe 2000:177).

One of the ways that this 'incomplete militarization' manifests is when spouses work for salaried jobs. This is an issue because it lessens the spouses' reliance on the military for economic assistance, one of the ways that the Army uses militarization to enforce order. There is a dilemma because these wives are bringing in additional revenue to their families, reducing " . . . the demoralizing poverty of soldiers' families and lessen[ing] the pressure for military pay raises. On the other hand, military commanders lose some of their control over those more independent women" (Enloe 2000:179). These women are no longer as constrained to staying on post for all amenities such as groceries or activities. Not only does the Army lose total economic control, they also must cope with the lower levels of militarization. These may include less time to volunteer on post and a need for Army funded childcare (Enloe 2000:179). Similarly, a spouse who has her own paid job may be more reluctant to give up this job if the soldier is reassigned, which may lessen the soldier's decision to re-enlist or move. These changes can be significant in terms of the soldier mobilization and the subsequent army mobilization.

One woman who does not fit in this stereotypically militarized frame for military wives is Jessica Copeland. During an interview with Sarah and Jean in the fall of 2012, she reveals a great

deal about her resistance to the role of military wife and the challenges that she has faced while adjusting to the role (as the wife of an Air Force member). Her first challenges stemmed from her own opinions and her family's opinions about weapons and violence. She says, "My mother was, and is, very fearful of weapons and I a self-proclaimed pacifist. My father never had any interest in weapons in the house so it was a major hold over me to reconcile being in a relationship with someone who had weapons and who used them." Although there are many women who have had to adjust to the military lifestyle, it is quite a large jump from pacifism to living with someone who is trained to use weapons and even lethal force. Jessica continues to discuss her resistance to her new role by stating:

I didn't know how to be in a relationship with someone who was fighting a war that I had some major reservations about. Especially with regard to things like enhanced interrogation at Guantanamo was coming out at that time, Abu Ghraib was fresh on my mind at that time, things like that. Whether or not there was a legitimate rationale to go into Iraq and all that, and I didn't know how to fit love into that story. . . . But I think at the end of the day I was not willing to fall in love with someone who might die. So that's the heart of it. There's a lot of resistance.

Another element of her struggle to adjust is clear from her quote about the military's "seductive" quality and her constant battle to resist the role while also noticing how it entices her. She says:

There's something very magnetic about it that has been difficult for me to watch myself get embroiled in Where now when the wives are sort of supposed to wear red dresses, I take great pride in finding just the perfect thing. And I hate that I sort of love these really cheesy Tim McGraw songs, and it's sort of like, part of me is on the train headed towards this kind of solidifying my status as a member of this in-group and then there's this part of my that's like no, no, no, no, no. [Tim McGraw is an American country music singer]. You do not like Tim McGraw. You do not. So it's funny because at the same time that I'll kind of watch this and it's the ritual is so dripping with hubris and overly dramatic on the one hand, I can see that, I can see that all of these things are set up to draw me. And they draw me in anyway. And I'm always doing this dance where I'm resisting it and letting it pull me in, and resisting it. I think that's important to note.

It is clear in her case that her adjustment to a military wife has been very difficult and that she is atypical from the usual type of wife in many ways but still notices how the military lifestyle is

seductive and alluring. This seductive and alluring lifestyle is a part of militarization in that the Army utilizes these events and what they represent to draw people in.

When a wife begins to detract from a soldier's mobility, this may become a problem for that soldier's unit and consequently, a problem for the entire Army. Similarly, "A woman's wifely femininity . . . is valued by military officials only insofar as it enhances militarized masculinity. Femininity and wifeliness must not be permitted to interfere with or dilute the male bonding that remains the preferred glue holding together military units" (Enloe 2000:156). So even as much as the traditional feminine roles and upholding the domestic sphere is emphasized, it is only to the extent that the wife is supporting the husband. Once she detracts from the Army in any way, the Army wife is no longer a useful tool for furthering the overall goals of the military.

Domestic Violence

The Department of Defense Family Advocacy Program's (FAP) 2010 military family data recounted 18,785 reports of spouse abuse, 721 reports of intimate partner abuse and 14,986 reports of child abuse (Family Advocacy Program 2010). This can be compared to the surveys from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute of Justice regarding intimate partner violence in the United States. The research showed that "almost 25% of men and nearly 8% of men reported being physically assaulted, raped, or stalked by an intimate partner in their lifetime, with 1.5 million women and 1 million men reporting such abuse annually" (Tiefenthaler, Farmer and Sambira 2005:565).

Domestic violence within the military family relates to militarization because it can affect readiness and overall family structure, two key components of militarization. Some women advocating for military families use readiness as a reason for why abusive soldiers are

‘unreliable’ soldiers, “. . . that they jeopardized military readiness . . . a military wife who endured violence at the hands of her husband/soldier was unlikely to encourage him to reenlist and might even file for divorce, and high divorce rates lowered military morale (Enloe 2010:184). However, there was ultimately a discrepancy between military readiness in terms of family readiness and the actual soldier’s readiness. Enloe writes,

There remained deeply ingrained incentives for twenty-first-century American military commanders and their civilian superiors not to take domestic violence within soldiers’ families seriously . . . admitting that a male soldier was abusive would require the officer taking deliberate action to investigate and perhaps even to punish the violence-wielding soldier (or sailor or airman). This would deflect commanders from what they had been trained to consider their top priority: waging war. Taking seriously reports of domestic violence might also result in losing a trained soldier in whom the military had invested years and a lot of money” (Enloe 2010:186).

Domestic violence in the military is a highly complex issue due to the multifaceted components of punishment, readiness and family stability.

The Denver Post wrote that the frequency of sexual and domestic abuse in the military, as seen in the statistics by the Family Advocacy Program, was based on the “. . .dominant culture shaping the twenty-first century U.S. military. It was an institutional culture that privileged a certain kind of combative masculinity, a culture that prioritized fighting a war and treated women as minor players at best, as a subverting distraction at worst” (Enloe 2010:187). The most important relationships are the relationships among the soldiers in the Army. The cohesive units of soldiers provide the best kind of readiness. But his camaraderie may intrude on the prevention of domestic violence. At TESSA, an agency in Colorado Springs that deals with domestic violence and sexual assault, a victim’s advocate said in this same interview:

In the Army, I expect you to have my back, I expect you to save my life if it comes down to it. There’s a different kind of trust in what in the civilian world, we would think of as a co-worker relationship. If I trust you with my life, everybody should trust you with their lives. Your wife must be crazy. Your wife must be cheating on you. Your wife’s not stable if she thinks you’re hurting her cause there’s no way you could do that. I trust you

with my life.

This emphasis on trust among soldiers often surpasses notions of logic or truthfulness in a domestic violence situation.

Toni Thompson is an Army spouse who was active duty herself. During an interview she talks about domestic violence within the military.

If you're convicted of domestic abuse in the military, they kick you out because you can no longer have a weapon so you're absolutely no use to them. Somebody is going to potentially harmful to themselves or others; they need to be able to know that because they're going to be the one who gives them stuff that blows up.

So much of this issue relates to the war mentality of mission first. It gets in the way of dealing appropriately with issues that may decrease readiness or the mission. A victim's advocate working at TESSA recounts some of these issues during an interview with program director Aimee Sutherland:

Soldiers would just say, no, of course, I'm fine, I'm fine because of this war mentality . . . [commanders and first sergeants would say] 'Roger ma'am, and this is a mission ready post. The number 1 mission is to prepare soldiers for battle, bring them home safely from battle and to prepare them again for battle. That's the deployment cycle. Everything else comes in at a very distant second to that . . . The way that is interpreted is 'I will put the mission before my own well-being, my family. I will defend my friends before I will believe their spouses when they tell me my friends are hurting them.' That's the mentality . . . People think if he's a good soldier, he's a good person because soldier is person in the army. Right? If he's good at his job, there's no way he could be bad at anything else including his relationship.

The mission-first mindset can become detrimental to family wellness in the light of domestic violence.

How is the Army responding to this influx of domestic violence? What measures are being taken to address and solve these problems? An advocate at TESSA who used to work at Fort Carson speaks of the problems with the screening process they had in place during her interview. She says:

We did these re-integrations and at these re-integrations the soldiers were asked to

complete a risk reduction survey. I don't know what survey they're using these days but the survey they used when I was going through it went something like, "Have you thought about hurting yourself or someone else lately, yes or no?" If you answered yes, you were sent to Evans for an evaluation, if you answered no you got 30 days block leave. Tell me, who is going to answer yes?

Another important aspect of these re-integrations is that they occurred immediately after a soldier came home. As the advocate from TESSA points out, "They haven't even recovered from jet lag at that point [72 hours later] . . . It takes 2 or 3 months before the depression sets in and they weren't doing any evaluations, weren't doing any follow-up with these soldiers and then our rates of domestic violence doubled in those units". These time restrictions can potentially result in a missed diagnosis and a subsequent lack of treatment for mental health issues.

Even though domestic violence certainly impacts the militarization of families on an everyday basic, it becomes even more militarized when it goes beyond just affecting the family and begins to affect the Army itself. The TESSA advocates talk about the potential hardships of reporting domestic violence in general and the added constraints with a military family:

At every level the wife is usually afraid of getting him in trouble, she doesn't want to get him in trouble and to lose his position or his rank so there's a mixture of deterrent . . . Especially if the wife is not working or is a stay at home mom, not enough to support herself and this child on her own she's going to say what's more important? In any domestic violence relationship it's a values call. I value my child being supported more than my feeling safe in a relationship so I'm going to put up with whatever I need to . . . When you have that added dynamic of, I'll kill you if you cost me my career, or she thinks, okay I'll stick it out because he deployed and I'm okay because I have a year on my own whereas if the Army kicks him out he has nothing better to do than just stalk me. No ties to the community . . . She won't have money, won't have insurance. If he gets kicked out of the military, that affects her income, her medical insurance for the kids and herself.

Although domestic violence is difficult in any situation, the consequences of reporting abuse are often more dire because of an immediate cessation of financial assistance and other benefits associated with the military. In addition, the components associated with the military as a total

institution and the corresponding isolation would only add to the complexity of reporting and dealing with domestic violence.

It is important to contextualize domestic violence as being a non-universal phenomenon. Sarah Hautzinger writes, “If partner violence is not a fixed, inevitable part of ‘human nature’ but rather relies upon a culturally conditioned response to conflict, supported by specific values and social processes, then it can be changed” (Hautzinger 2007:33). There are also some indicators that may lessen stresses that may lead to violence such as: sharing of domestic decision making, wives’ control over fruit of labor, shared chances for divorce, monogamous marriage, no premarital sexual double standards, infrequent divorce, healthy sexual relationships, peaceful conflict resolution among men, and an intervention with wife beating (Hautzinger 2007:32).

Financial security and specific socioeconomic backgrounds are two common factors in shaping domestic violence situations. This is due to the fact that

“Poverty creates anxieties, uncertainties, insecurities, and desperation . . . people struggling in poverty, in a society with entrenched patterns and prescriptions about violence, may find themselves in the kinds of situations in which violence tends to arise more often than do persons whose socioeconomic circumstances subject them to fewer stresses, insecurities, and uncertainties” (Hautzinger 2007:35).

Although the military is only one example of how financial burdens can result in elevated occurrences of domestic violence, it is easy to make the connection between stress and violence when analyzing typical Army salaries. Margaret Harrell looks at the lifestyles of three wives who are married to junior enlisted soldiers in ranks E2 and E3. One of the wives, Jennifer, discusses her financial situation. Each month, she and her husband get \$1,446.63 dollars. Their monthly bills come to a total of \$1,104.80, leaving only 340 beyond basic necessities (Harrell 2000:49). Another couple, Dana and Ted, gets 901.00 dollars after taxes each month and their monthly expenses come to 534 (Harrell 2000:20,22). This severely limits their lifestyle and puts a great

deal of stress the couple as they try to make ends meet every month. In this case, it is not difficult to see how common poverty and financial stress can be for junior enlisted families. The 2012 Military Pay Scale Chart on militaryfactory.com provides a detailed look on salary data for officers and enlisted personnel. Even with government programs and benefits provided on-post, the basic pay grade for an enlisted officer with 2 years or less of cumulative service is \$1491 per month (Military Factory, accessed on March 28th, 2012). In addition to the financial issues associated with junior enlisted officers, there is also the notion of the occupational hazard of being trained to use lethal force in everyday situations.

In these ways, militarization impedes progress on issues of domestic violence. The high reports of spouse abuse, intimate partner abuse and child abuse emphasize the severity and prevalence of domestic violence in the military. Many aspects of the current system need to be changed in order to deal with this problem effectively. These aspects include more extensive evaluations post-deployment, better monitoring of past infractions, and an overall safer environment to report and disclose abuse. In many ways, the Army's efforts to address and alter domestic violence in the military have fallen short because of the deeply ingrained gender roles, structured lifestyle and the financial burdens that militarization imposes on the typical Army family.

Conclusion

Militarization is an overarching component of current military life. It expands into the roles of military spouses, military children, life on post, and the corresponding roles and behaviors that have been deemed ideal and appropriate for all of those involved. Although the Army and the Department of Defense may support the concept of militarization as a means for

soldier and family readiness, this control and manipulation goes further than to ensure Army readiness when militarization extends into a ubiquitous realm.

In addition to the propagation of traditional gender roles, there are many constraints placed on individuals because of age, rank and status. In the case of the junior enlisted, there are more instances of militarization because of the limitations they face due to financial need and Army support on and off-post. The ideals of these militarized components ultimately create problems for what it means to be an ideal Army wife and what happens when one falls short of these prototypes as seen by the 'problem wives' and the issue of domestic violence within military families. The role of the Army wife has not been altered much since the days of the original *Army Woman's Handbook* (1943). Regardless of the pride and territoriality that some women express over their traditional gender roles, the role itself does not reflect the larger changes resulting from the feminist movement and gender progression. The institutionalization of the Army subculture continues to apply controls and regulations onto the lives of the soldier, the Army wife and the Army family in order to uphold the agenda of achieving readiness at any cost. This necessity for readiness at any cost impedes alterations to the traditional gender binary of the Army. The impediments of militarization lead to a structured and formulaic lifestyle for the Army wife that proves nearly impossible to deviate from and change the norms of current military life.

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