

A FAMILY AFFAIR: MILITARY
SERVICE IN THE
POSTWAR
ERA

A Dissertation
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by
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August 2017

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ABSTRACT

Prior to World War II, the typical American Soldier was young and unmarried. As the old saying in the service went: if they wanted you to have a wife, they would have issued one to you. Today's servicemember is most likely married and we customarily thank our military families in the same breath as those who wear the uniform. This dissertation is the story of how "support our troops" came to encompass the broader community of military families and how this fundamentally changed the military.

Rooted in cultural and gender history, my dissertation argues that changing gender roles in the domestic sphere (i.e., fatherhood, motherhood, breadwinner, and homemaker) had a profound impact on martial roles in the military world, and vice versa. In the postwar era, as domestic roles were beginning to change, more and more married men enlisted in the Army and the Marine Corps, forcing the services to craft policies to accommodate families. Large numbers of married men in uniform was a new development in the United States, and my dissertation shows how marriage transformed civil-military relations.

My dissertation addresses questions that are crucial to both the history of the military as well as American cultural life in the second half of the twentieth century. Just as military life became more family friendly, and as the services expanded opportunities for women, far fewer Americans overall chose to share in the burden of national service. Although military policymakers crafted policies to make military life more attractive, they contributed to its further isolation from the broader population by providing

generous social services for military families increasingly inaccessible to other American families. Embedded within these contradictions is the story of what it meant to be an American after the Vietnam War.

For my mother, Michelle,
who loved to read.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several vibrant intellectual communities have influenced my scholarship and my identity as a scholar. And although researching and writing history can be a lonely pursuit, I have been fortunate to meet so many wonderful people along the way. As an undergraduate and master's student at the University of Utah, Beth Clement was (and remains) the best mentor, friend, teacher, occasional under-the-table employer, writing coach, and advisor a student could ever hope to meet. I know I would not be where I am today without your guidance and continued faith in me. Thanks also to Bob Goldberg, who taught me the value of writing deadlines, and for our many discussions in your office and at your home.

The American West Center (AWC) at the University of Utah made a public historian out of me, giving me the chance to cut my teeth in the world of oral history. Thanks to the venerable Floyd O'Neil for teaching me that getting a PhD is the process of learning something about everything and everything about something. Floyd will be pleased to know that I've accomplished both—all while staying out of jail. Matt Basso is a gentleman and a scholar, in that order. Thank you for the years of continued friendship, mentorship, patience when I was your assistant director at the AWC, and being a role model for what it means to be a publicly engaged scholar.

The history department at Temple University has been my intellectual home for six years now, and I am sad that my time here is over. To the members of my cohort—especially Jess Bird, Seth Tannenbaum, David Thomas, Tom Reinstein, Tommy Richards, and Kaete O'Connell—thank you for building a supportive community with me

these past several years. Jess, Tom, and also Minju Bae proved to be indispensable writing partners, and this dissertation is much better because of your feedback and insights. Carly Goodman never stopped believing in the importance of my work or my ability as a writer. During my time at Temple, I was fortunate enough to serve as the Allen Davis Fellow in Public History at the Philadelphia History Museum. I am grateful to Cindy Little and the rest of the staff at the museum for making that experience rewarding.

From day one, Beth Bailey has been my unfailing advocate in the department and in the broader academic world. She always asked the hard questions and pushed me to be a better writer and scholar. Even after she left Philadelphia for greener pastures (literally) in Kansas, she continued to direct my dissertation, read chapter drafts, write me countless letters of recommendation, and feed me delicious food nearly every time we met. Richard Immerman was kind enough to step in and chair my committee when Beth left, even serving into his retirement. Richard is a model scholar and mentor to graduate students — even students who don't work under him have benefited from his tireless advocacy in the college and from his dedication to graduate training. Bryant Simon has always encouraged me to think about the broader story. I value our friendship very much. Thanks to Jennifer Mittelstadt for the thoughtful feedback on conference papers and for her willingness to serve as external reader for this dissertation.

The Center for the Study of Force and Diplomacy (CENFAD) generously supported my research over the years, awarding me both the John Votaw and Marvin Wachman Endowed Research Fellowships. CENFAD and the College of Liberal Arts at

Temple have awarded me travel grants to present my work at conferences. The Graduate School at Temple awarded me a dissertation completion grant, which allowed me to spend my last semester at Temple writing. I am eternally grateful to the McEvoy-Worsencroft family for their years of support as I pursued my educational goals.

Researching this dissertation took me all over the country, occasionally on long road trips with my dog Barley, who is the best copilot. I have been fortunate to work with several great archivists who have helped me navigate online catalogs and finding aids, pointed me to collections I would have never known about, and provided much needed conversation to break up the silence in the archives. The research librarians and archivists in Ridgeway Hall at the Army's Heritage and Education Center have been most helpful over the years. Likewise, Frank Shirer at the Army's Center for Military History was kind enough to give me the lay of the land when I arrived at Ft. McNair. Thanks to the professional and courteous staff in the Library of the Marine Corps, especially Greg Cina. I am grateful to the research librarians at the Schlesinger Library at Harvard, who patiently guided me through the WEAL and NOW collections. Any researcher would be lucky to meet an archivist like David Hays, who works way down in the bowels of the Norlin Library at UC Boulder. David was kind enough to take me to lunch at Dot's, show me around his beautiful campus, and share stories with me about his time in the Army—*allons!*

I also want to thank Cynthia Enloe for always responding to my emails, helping me track down sources, and for courageously speaking truth to power for decades. Finally, thanks to Carolyn Becraft—a central actor in this story—who was kind enough

to talk with me over the phone, providing me with some much needed background information to help me make sense of what I was reading in the archives.

Graduate school is measured by a series of milestones—coursework, exams, prospectus, research, writing, and, finally, the defense. And while most of my memories of Temple are happy, my journey has also been marked by personal tragedies. Six months after I started the PhD program at Temple, we found out that my mom had brain cancer, and although she fought bravely, she died at the end of my second year, while I was studying for my comprehensive exams. My mom taught me to question everything, to always search for a deeper meaning. She had an insatiable thirst for knowledge and a pile of books always surrounded her. I wish you could have read this dissertation, Mom. Perhaps overcome by the grief, just over a year after my mom's death, my younger brother Wes died suddenly. It was a profoundly difficult experience to be writing his eulogy while also writing the prospectus for this dissertation. In one of his last text messages to me before he passed away, Wes encouraged me to stick with it and finish the dissertation. I wish you could be here to share this moment with me, Brother, you would be so proud.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to the members of my committee, my close friends in the program, and the rest of the history department faculty for their understanding, kindness, and unflagging support. Amid all of the loss, my remaining family and my close friends outside of the program have provided me with strength and support throughout graduate school. Thanks especially to my dad and my sister, Kathryn. I love you both.

Finally Angela Bennett, the love of my life, has been my constant companion for most of my adult life. From the Marines and Iraq to graduate school and Philadelphia, for sixteen years you have been my compass. Thank you for sharing in this adventure and for making me a better man along the way.

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, President Barack Obama sacked his top commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, after a series of very public disagreements over US strategy in that country. The final straw came in the form of a *Rolling Stone* article, which revealed that members of McChrystal's staff freely and routinely made disparaging remarks about senior members of the Administration. Even though some agreed the President had no choice but to axe his insubordinate general, most observers believed the whole affair signaled a low point in civil-military relations.¹

And yet barely a year later, seeking to mend that relationship, Obama recalled McChrystal to Washington to help lead a new military program. The White House announced what would become Michelle Obama's signature initiative as First Lady: "Joining Forces," a nationwide effort to encourage "companies, schools, philanthropic and religious groups, and local communities to recognize the unusual stress that is endured by families of active-duty personnel, reservists and veterans, and to strive to meet their needs." Initiatives to help struggling veterans are nothing new in American history, but this one was unique because it was a nationwide effort, started by the White House, and aimed at the military community more broadly. After a long decade of war, the White House acknowledged the sacrifice—and the service—of military families. Of

¹ For example, see Thomas E. Ricks, "Lose a General, Win a War," *New York Times* (23 June 2010).

(now retired) General McChrystal's mission, Michelle Obama stated, "He will be a unique and powerful advocate for the millions of Americans who serve our country selflessly." And to the American people she charged, "This program will build upon our nation's great patriotism by asking all Americans to take action and ensure our military families have the support they have earned." The First Lady concluded, "[Military families] are making these sacrifices quietly for all the rest of us."²

On commemorative and patriotic holidays, during major sporting events, and in local community gatherings across the country, when Americans speak about the 21st century wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, they call upon an old language of service and sacrifice to describe the men and women who serve in uniform. But, as the description of the "Joining Forces" program suggests, this language now includes military families in our rituals for giving thanks to those who heed the call to serve. "Thank you for your service" and "support our troops" came to encompass not only the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines in uniform, but also their wives, husbands, children, and relatives who we started to imagine serving alongside them. "Unlike our troops," Obama said, "military families don't wear uniforms so we don't often see them." The notion that families also serve, that they too sacrificed for the nation certainly took on a new sense of

² Quoted in Thom Shanker, "Obama Asks McChrystal to Return in New Role," *New York Times* (11 April 2011), 15; and in Mimi Hall, "Michelle Obama, Jill Biden are 'Joining Forces;' Project Aimed to Support Military Families," *USA Today* (13 April 2011), 4a. Also, see John M. Kinder, *Paying With Their Bodies: American War and the Problem of the Disabled Veteran* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

urgency amidst the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. But the roots of this development are much older.³

One hundred years ago Americans did not talk much about military families—and for good reason: there really weren’t any to speak of. The old saying, “If the military wanted you to have a wife, it would have issued one to you,” was a truism of military life—not just as a matter of tradition, but also one inscribed in defense manpower policy and in military regulations. Prior to and during World War II, the typical soldier was young and unmarried. But in the second half of the twentieth century—for the first time in American history—military service evolved into a family affair.⁴

In peacetime and in war, during eras with conscription and without, the military has long been a site for working out what it means to be an American, and those meanings have changed markedly. Marriage and families were a new phenomenon for the United States military, and this demographic shift happened during decades of significant social and cultural change in America. This dissertation traces family policies as they were crafted within the service branches, the Department of Defense and the White House, and in Congress, and I argue that these policies transformed civil-military relations.

³ Quoted in Hall, “Michelle Obama, Jill Biden are ‘Joining Forces.’”

⁴ Betty Sowers Alt and Bonnie Domrose Stone, *Campfollowing: A History of the Military Wife* (New York: Praeger, 1991); Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, The War, and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978); John Whiteclay Chambers, *To Raise an Army: The Draft Comes to Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1987); George Q. Flynn, *The Draft: 1940-1973* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993); Lewis B. Hershey, *Outline of Historical Background of Selective Service: From Biblical Days to June 30, 1960* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960).

This study situates the fundamental transformation of the military within several larger changes to the broader American society in the post-World War II era. Perhaps most significantly, the decision to maintain a large standing military in the decades after World War II bore consequences beyond the immediacy of meeting the cold war threat. As draft policies evolved in the postwar era, Americans and policymakers frequently circled back to concerns about the incongruities between military life and family life. As historian Michael Sherry argues in his foundational text on the period, policymakers merged the peacetime welfare state, and its implicit goal of shoring up male breadwinner families, with a Selective Service system that channeled men into careers, into colleges and professional schools, and, for some, into the military.⁵

This militarized post-World War II state provided generous services and benefits almost exclusively to those men who fulfilled their masculine martial duties, most notably through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, popularly known as the GI Bill. Through low-interest mortgages, loans to start a business, money for college and trade schools, and a year of unemployment compensation for demobilizing veterans, the GI Bill fueled the postwar economy. Through this process, America's political economy and political culture shifted to make breadwinner and military manhood mutually reinforcing.⁶

⁵ Michael Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

⁶ Kathleen Frydl, *The G.I. Bill* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), James Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Robert B. Westbrook, *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2004).

The postwar era, then, was a time of consolidation around the ideals of breadwinning and military obligation. As journalist Susan Faludi argues, “The United States came out of World War II with a sense of itself as a *masculine* nation.”⁷ For the World War II gender order to function, two key ingredients were required to resolve the tensions between breadwinner manhood, which pushed men to get married and provide for a family, and military manhood, which required men to put off these familial responsibilities to serve the nation: first, an activist state willing to spend massive amounts of resources shoring up breadwinner manhood as repayment for military service; and second, a public willing to accept the idea that sacrifice in a time of war was a man’s duty and that he should be rewarded for that sacrifice.

But in the 1960s, the expansion of the rights and benefits of citizenship to include more than just white men, coupled with America’s experience in Vietnam, which shook the public’s sense of duty and obligation, shattered the post-World War II gender order. Until 1973, military manpower policy in the United States reified the age-old belief that men had an obligation to serve in a time of war. The male soldier was the embodiment of American patriotism, duty, and citizenship, and military manhood, to quote one historian, was “the very foundation of the nation’s image.”⁸

Over the course of decades, but especially after the move to the All-Volunteer Force in 1973, military policymakers opened up military service to a broader set of

⁷ Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of the American Man* (New York: William and Morrow Co., 1999), 16 (emphasis hers).

⁸ Robert O. Self, *All In The Family: The Realignment of American Democracy Since the 1960s* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2012), 47. Also, see Faludi, *Stiffed*; Andrew Huebner, *The Warrior Image: Soldiers in American Culture From the Second World War to the Vietnam Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

Americans, thus changing the demographic makeup of the uniformed services. Although Harry Truman desegregated the Armed Forces in 1948, the hard work of dismantling the institutional barriers to full and equal participation did not start in earnest until the 1960s, when members of the John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson administrations began to see the military as a site for salvaging marginalized men. New Deal and Great Society liberals believed that the government had an obligation to create policies that strengthened the idealized nuclear family. During much of the postwar era, draft policies that shielded family men from serving worked in tandem with long-held assumptions that young, unmarried men who were drafted would reap the masculine benefits of military service, becoming more capable breadwinners once they settled down to start a family. These assumptions shaped key policy documents in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, such as the 1964 *President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation Report* (begun at Kennedy's behest before his death), which first conceptualized the idea that military service built capable breadwinners; and in 1965, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (often referred to as "The Moynihan Report"), which fused military manpower policy with the administration's broader Civil Rights strategy. Even in the face of widespread criticism over the draft after Johnson escalated the war, men in his administration held firm in their belief that military service made better breadwinners and strong heads of household to the bitter end.⁹

⁹ Self, *All in the Family*, 3, 6; Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). These historians make clear that the "traditional" family was always more myth than reality, but it was a powerful myth in American discourse. For more on the family, see Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage: A History: From Obedience to*

Conservatives also believed in the centrality of the breadwinner in American life, but they viewed the government as a threat, not an asset, to its viability. In 1970, the Nixon-appointed Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force recommended ending the draft and moving to a volunteer force structure. Between 1967 and 1970— just three short years— the gendered logic of the previous thirty years had been upended. The Commission, usually referred to as the Gates Commission after its chairman, Thomas Gates, wrote that the Selective Service System forced “young men to distort their career and personal plans... [To avoid the draft] they enter college when they otherwise would not. They stay in school longer than they otherwise would. They accept employment in positions they otherwise would not take. They marry and have families before they otherwise would.” To the authors of the 1970 report, “Channeling young men into colleges, occupations, marriage or fatherhood is not in their best interests nor those of society as a whole.” Emphasizing personal choice and arguing against government

Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage (New York: Viking, 2005), Mintz and Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions*. Historians who study war and society have not overlooked the family, either. In his seminal work on the post-World War II United States, Michael Sherry argues that during the late-1970s and into the 1980s, America’s nearly century-long project of militarization turned inward to fight battles that were largely cultural and social. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War*, 391-430. Also, see Michael J. Allen, *Until the Last Man Comes Home: POWs, MIAs, and the Unending Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Allen argues that POW/MIA activists projected an image of the POW as family men, which effectively played to American sentiments at the time. Aaron B. O’Connell, in *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012) argues that the Marine Corps became adept at the language of the family as early as the 1950s, especially toward women critics of the Corps. He writes, “To men, [the Marines] emphasized toughness and combat readiness; to women, they stressed the Marines’ value as parental role models. Together these two narratives successfully framed the Marine Corps as a service that was rough enough for the battlefield but still appropriate for the kids” (190).

intrusion into the “natural” life path of American men, the Gates Commission advised President Nixon to transition to a volunteer military.¹⁰

In the 1970s, the creators of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) dismantled the state mechanisms for compelling men to perform these traditional duties of manhood, but they still explicitly gendered the military as masculine in their writing. The Gates Commission never even considered what role, if any, women might have in the AVF. As economic transformations and the wider women’s movement were already challenging gender roles, the cultural guardians of masculine institutions now confronted the fact that women were demanding entry into more occupations and taking on roles traditionally reserved for men.

The transition to the AVF had two unforeseen consequences. First, the services began to rely on women to fill the ranks, and with each passing year, cracks began to form along one of manhood’s conventional pathways. The number of women serving in uniform ballooned from about one percent in 1971 to 7.6 percent by 1979; meanwhile the scope of women’s roles within the military also expanded. At the end of the decade, the Army disbanded the Women’s Army Corps, fully integrating women into the service. Second, in the absence of a draft, the military had to compete for people with every other career in the marketplace. In order to meet recruiting goals, policymakers took steps throughout the decade to let more people with families to join the military, a privilege once reserved for officers and senior enlisted personnel. This dramatically increased the

¹⁰ President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, *Report* (Washington DC: Government Printing Office, 1970), 26-33.

married population: in 1967 only 41% of soldiers were married, but in 1973 marriages soared to 56% and peaked at 59% in 1979.¹¹

I argue that these two consequences fundamentally altered the military as an institution, because policymakers extended benefits once reserved for male citizens to both women and military families. As benefits and pay became more generous in the late 1970s and the 1980s, the military, in effect, subsidized heteronormative, married families at a time when the wider society began questioning the value of getting married. Significantly, when the military began to guarantee a certain level of comfort to families, this also put those families into the service of the nation.

This dissertation is about how policy gets made and how the actors in this story—military officials, presidents and their administrations, members of Congress, activists, and, importantly, military families—dealt with the consequences of those policies, and worked to change them. In writing this history, I am also making an argument about changing notions of American citizenship. Who gets to consider him- or herself an American was never a given, and the actors in this story frequently debated the meanings of citizenship in the postwar era.

At any point in the second half of the 20th century, I argue, citizenship in American was the product of an unresolved tension between obligations on the one hand, and individual liberty and freedom on the other. As the actors in this story crafted policy or advocated for change, they had to confront these contradicting definitions. I define citizenship not just as a negotiated set of rights, obligations and benefits, but also as a

¹¹ Peter A. Morrison et al., *Families in the Army: Looking Ahead* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 1989), 7.

dynamic relationship between the state and the public. Citizenship is an idea, expressed in people's beliefs and opinions about themselves as an imagined community. Rather than choose whether to focus on citizenship as a status or as an act, this project engages the tensions that exist between personal rights and collective obligations, asking who is entitled to the benefits of citizenship—and how those competing models vied for supremacy.¹²

Military families sit at the nexus of this debate over citizenship. The language of sacrifice, duty, and service that Americans use to describe the actions of both servicemembers and their families contradicts the powerful language of personal freedom and individual liberty. While military service and providing for veterans have historically provided a foundation for the welfare state in the United States, as programs that provide a safety net or assistance to civilians in need have eroded, servicemembers and their families have become touchstones in a public debate over who is deserving of government assistance and who is not. The obligations of citizenship have a gendered history, and they have rested uneasily on bedrock notions of liberal personhood, particularly the right to personal freedom. Prior to the Vietnam War, Americans

¹² I define the state in a broad sense, much like Theda Skocpol does in *Protecting Soldiers and Mothers: The Political Origins of Social Policy in the United States* (New York: Belknap Press, 1995), as a vast entity formed from the collective work of disparate organizations, which claim coercive authority and control over both a geographic area and a population. The state, therefore, is more than government organizations, but also includes interest groups who advocate for their constituencies. While I reserve the term 'policymaker' for those who craft official government/military policy, this dissertation is the story of how policymaking is not done in a vacuum. I also agree that war and war-making institutions are central to the formation, maintenance, and expansion of the state. Michael Sherry's work on the growth of the welfare state and the military-industrial complex has also shaped my thinking on the state.

reconciled this tension through the notion of the citizen-soldier. But, the war destroyed that tenuous balance, and Americans ever since have failed to reconcile obligations with models of citizenship that privilege consumerism, individualism, and minimal intrusions by the state.¹³

Although I focus primarily on the family policies of the Army, I will frequently turn to the experiences of the Marine Corps. The Army is America's largest military branch, and although each of the services had considerable leeway in crafting their own policies, the choices that Army leaders made significantly affected the entire Department of Defense. The Marine Corps, on the other hand, provides an instructive counterpoint, and not just because of its much smaller size. The Marines often balked at policies that could threaten its deeply ingrained masculine warrior ethos. While the Army sold opportunity, the Marines doubled down on appeals to men who wanted to have their manhood tested at an elite level. Moreover, the Army was much more willing to experiment with new policies, especially after 1973 when the United States moved to an all-volunteer force structure. I agree with Tom Ricks, who said that while Army leaders made a conscious effort to continually justify their institution's existence to the American people, "the Marines [became] more withdrawn; they [felt] they simply [couldn't] afford to reflect the broader society." Historian Aaron B. O'Connell has argued that while the

¹³ Beth Bailey, *America's Army: Making the All-Volunteer Force* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Linda K. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1998).

other services looked to the future for answers, the Marine Corps turned to the past. This isn't to say that the Army simply represented "change" and the Marine Corps intransigence, but rather that the differences between the two services marked the boundaries within which the military evolved in the post-Vietnam era.¹⁴

Finally, until recently the Marine Corps is often left out of histories that study the military as something other than a war fighting institution. Marines themselves, and their admirers who study them, have made Marine Corps history largely about how Marines train for, and fight in, our nation's wars. In this lore of the Corps, when culture enters the discussion, the Marines transform into samurai, or Spartans, or mythical Vikings—archetypal warriors from the sea to be revered, not critically studied. In my story, however, the Marines were not immune to context, change over time, or the wider social and cultural forces at play in the 20th century. Today's Marine Corps is a product of the same social, cultural, and political history that transformed American society—indeed, the Marines took an active role in shaping it.¹⁵

A final note on the scope of this study: while this dissertation is certainly women's history, it is not a comprehensive history of women's service in the military, except when that story overlaps with family matters. However, to policymakers (the overwhelming majority of whom were men), women and families were often one and the same, whether the women were in uniform or military spouses. Families did not become

¹⁴ Thomas E. Ricks, *Making The Corps*, rev. ed. (New York: Scribner, 2007), 22; O'Connell, *Underdogs*, 8-9.

¹⁵ A classic history of the Marine Corps, which has been through several revised editions, is J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1992). Also, see James A. Warren, *American Spartans: The U.S. Marines, A Combat History from Iwo Jima to Iraq* (New York: Free Press, 2005).

a “problem” for the military until large numbers of women with dependent children began serving in the 1970s, and family problems have been treated as women problems ever since. But to the constant consternation of military policymakers, in the last third of the century, military families came in all kinds: single mothers and single fathers served in uniform; some Soldiers and some Marines had civilian husbands; dual-service families became more common. Faced with these changes, policymakers struggled to shake their visions of men as soldiers and breadwinners, and women as mothers and homemakers. The unshakeable belief that men wore uniforms and women wore aprons manifested over and over again in the records—“family” was gendered female and “soldier” was gendered male.

The history of conflating women in the military with military families poses a challenge to writing the story of military families. For example, while researching this dissertation, I placed a request for documents and records pertaining to military families with the archivists at the Marine Corps University. Without prompting, the genuinely helpful research librarian sent me a detailed catalog of all their holdings on women Marines and women in the military more broadly. I strive to point out when policymakers blended the two issues, and how this created real tensions within the military community. I also try not to perpetuate this problem in my writing.

This project engages several historiographical conversations. First, I am interested in the history of gender in America, how assumptions about gender shape state institutions like the military, how gender systems inform policymaking, and vice versa.

Gender is the wide set of fluid characteristics that define social roles for men and women. While the categories male and female pertain to biology, masculinity and femininity are defined, negotiated, and constrained by time, place, and culture. According to Joan Scott, gender is useful because, “[it] is a primary way of signifying relationships of power... politics constructs gender and gender constructs politics.” Her seminal 1986 essay, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” challenged historians to take another look at history, using gender—much like class and race— as a lens for viewing the past. Gender analysis breathed new life into fields that had become stale, even passé, to academics—military, diplomatic, and political history, in particular. If gender signifies power relationships, Scott wrote, then the military, warfare, and even the political, social, and cultural scaffolding of nation-states could be reexamined in a new light. So, too, can the relationship between the military and families.¹⁶

Many scholars have employed gender analysis to examine the military. Some explore questions about why men are drawn to military service, arguing that war and manhood became linked to citizenship with the coming of modernity. The age of democratic revolutions made state-on-state warfare a defining component of political transformations. Gender roles influence why states conduct wars and maintain standing armies. As war became “democratized”—as non-elites became actors in political, diplomatic, and military history—masculinity and femininity changed accordingly. Seemingly non-gendered concepts like “citizen of the state” or “the people” were actually highly gendered constructs. Who could serve in the military shaped wider expectations of

¹⁶ Joan W. Scott, “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis,” *American Historical Review* 91.5 (December 1986), 1069-70.

manhood and womanhood. To quote a pair of gender scholars, “Universal male citizenship and general conscription—and the exclusion of women from them—were vital in making sexual difference a prime difference.” Since the mid-eighteenth century, they continue, “the rise of political and military modernity...helped to produce, as much as it was itself shaped by, new configurations of state and society, politics and war.”¹⁷

This dissertation is the story of the contested relationships between gender roles in the domestic sphere and the military world. Other scholars have focused on a more domestic politics of gender, a conversation that is more concerned with family gender roles within the home, or on the broader homefront. Sociologists describe the military and the family both as “greedy institutions,” and the state grappled with the tensions between domestic family roles and military roles through policy. How did military policymakers expect men and women perform roles as parents and soldiers? What happened when it was mom—not dad—who wore the uniform? Men and women—as

¹⁷ Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann, and John Tosh, eds., *Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 7-11, 18. For an excellent historiographical essay on masculinity and the concept of the citizen-soldier, see Robert A. Nye, “Western Masculinities in War and Peace,” *AHR*, Vol. 112.2 (2007), 417-438. On war and gender, see Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women’s Lives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), Joshua Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), Paul Higate, *Military Masculinities: Identity and the State* (London: Praeger, 2003), Alexander Macualay, *Marching in Step: Masculinity, Citizenship, and the Citadel in Post-World War II America* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), Leisa D. Meyer, *Creating GI Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women’s Army Corps during World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), Heather Marie Stur, *Beyond Combat: Women and Gender in the Vietnam War Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), Karen Dixon Vuic, *Officers, Nurses, Women: The Army Nurse Corps in the Vietnam War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

members of a family unit and as servicemembers— negotiated those tensions as they lived and worked in an environment governed by those policies.¹⁸

Within this broader conversation about gender, I am also joining discussions about what happened to gender roles after the disruption of the Vietnam War. For years, the scholarly debate revolved around popular and political culture. Susan Jeffords, James William Gibson, Susan Faludi and others argue that the American loss in Vietnam triggered a crisis of masculinity, one that fundamentally altered American culture— making it more violent, hypermasculine, and retrograde in its treatment of women, of minorities, and of anybody who failed to conform to rigid and hierarchical notions of gender and sexuality. This narrative—told through popular culture mediums—dovetailed with narratives of declining trust in traditional sites of authority, the conservative backlash that opposed not only civil rights but also women’s rights, gay liberation, and other harbingers of a “permissive” culture. My project takes lessons from this cultural discussion, but re-centers the focus on institutions and policymaking. Inept Washington bureaucrats, bumbling policymakers, and ineffectual pencil pushers became ready foils for men of action in the cultural expressions of the era, but what policymakers actually

¹⁸ On domestic masculinity, the two classic texts are Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free Press, 1997) and E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993). Both scholars deftly cover the sweep of American history through the lens of manhood, but both missed crucial opportunities to analyze masculinity in war and the military. There are several excellent books on gender in the cold war era, including K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold war Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Faludi, *Stiffed*; Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold war Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

did—the policies they crafted and the lives those policies touched— during this time period is often missing from gender analysis.¹⁹

Second, I place the story of military families into conversation with a historiography that puts the politics of the family at the forefront of the social, cultural, and political realignments of the latter-third of the 20th century. The historian Robert Self has argued that the idea of the nuclear family is best understood as a national mythology, and understanding who controlled that mythology is vital to understanding American history. This fight drove the late-20th century culture wars, but the struggle over defining the American family also reshaped American institutions. Instead of a top-down narrative of evangelical Christians attaining powerful positions in government and using their influence to reshape policy along Christian or “traditional” values, my dissertation highlights women activists, driven by pocketbook concerns rooted in the family, who increasingly appealed to the government for help. In this case, I agree with scholars such as Michael Kazin and Bethany Moreton when they point out that late-twentieth century conservatism echoed late-nineteenth century Populism. Indeed, the vocabulary of populism— and, by extension, conservatism— was interchangeable with the language of family. To quote Moreton, “The term ‘family,’ like ‘populist,’ has been pressed into service in such a bewildering array of circumstances that it can be hard to recapture its particular meaning in a given time and place.” Strengthening the family and restoring

¹⁹ Faludi, *Stiffed*, James William Gibson, *Warrior Dreams: Paramilitary Culture in Post-Vietnam America* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1994), Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989); Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994).

American military might were pillars of the conservative movement. Yet, these narratives are usually told separately so that on the one hand we read about the likes of Anita Bryant, Phyllis Schlafly, the Moral Majority, and Focus on the Family as they battled feminism, the ERA, and the left's "assault" on tradition, morality, and the family. On the other hand is the story of increased defense spending, a rekindling of the cold war, "Star Wars," and the Reagan/H.W. Bush rehabilitation of Vietnam's legacy. The narrative I tell here certainly has elements of this back-and-forth, but I also uncover the less known story of how these powerful impulses often worked in tandem.²⁰

Finally, this project contributes to the important work of understanding the military as an institution and its role in the broader society. The bottom line: military family history *is* operational military history, and historians need to incorporate the contributions of family labor into our understanding of how militaries function. The growing complexity of military families created new realities—and new challenges—for policymakers, and an empowered military community has had a sizeable impact on how the United States projects military power and conducts war globally in the twenty-first century.

Dramatic changes have occurred in the Army and Marine Corps since Vietnam, and American's relationship with the military has evolved apace: there is no longer a

²⁰ Michael Kazin, *The Populist Persuasion: An American History* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 51, On the politics of the family, see May, *Homeward Bound*, Self, *All in the Family*, and Zaretsky, *No Direction Home*. On the New Right and the military, see Anne C. Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the U.S. Military, 1942-1993* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

functional Selective Service system in America; the services now have to find recruits in the marketplace; demographically, there are more women serving in an ever-expanding number of military occupations. Vietnam may have been a “working-class war,” but the class backgrounds of the soldiers and Marines who donned desert camouflage in the Middle East in the 1990s and 2000s were more often from the middle classes, not the working poor. Contrary to the fears expressed in the 1970s, the All-Volunteer Force did not become an “all-black force;” although African Americans —especially black women—tend to make a career out of the military more often than white people do.²¹

During the Vietnam War, combatant commanders in the military were deafeningly silent on family matters. Today, nearly every operational decision requires that the military consider its implications for the millions of Americans who live in military communities. In the 1970s, Americans were weary of war and clamoring to extricate themselves from the burdens of military service. By the 1990s, citizens—the overwhelming number of whom had never served in uniform— implored their elected officials to think of the economic impact on families and communities as they closed bases, downsized the military, and took steps to wind down the cold war. To be certain,

²¹ The phrase “working-class war” is in reference to the classic text on class and the Vietnam conflict: Christian Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers & Vietnam* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993). Since 2001, the convention in the historiography on the Vietnam War has been to append a concluding chapter on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. By skipping over thirty years, Vietnam historians have unsurprisingly found continuities between their topic and the 21st century wars. While many of them are excellent histories of the Vietnam War, I see much more change than continuity in the ensuing decades. See for example Meredith Lair, *Armed With Abundance: Consumerism and Soldiering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); Kyle Longley, *Grunts: The American Combat Soldier in Vietnam* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2008); John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

the significance of the Vietnam War cut deep grooves in both American life and the historiography that seeks to understand it. But, this dissertation strikes out on a different path.²²

The chapters that follow are organized chronologically. The second chapter begins by briefly sketching the longer history of US draft policy, and how those policies kept martial gender roles separate from marital roles by channeling married men away from military service. In the 1960s, anxious about shifting gender roles and simmering racial tensions, architects of social welfare policy in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations began to view the military as a site for restoring and strengthening the male breadwinner as the head of the “traditional family.” Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Robert McNamara—men not often mentioned in the same conversations—both spoke of “salvaging” young men through military service. Each man devised policies that proposed to use the US military to shore up men’s ability to provide for a family, creating programs for remedial education and jobs training.

To policymakers in the Johnson administration, I argue, the rights and obligations of citizenship went hand in hand—marking the boundaries of the liberal imagination, even at a time when who counts as an American expanded under pressure from the Civil Rights movement. But, even as policymakers labored under gendered assumptions about citizenship and obligation that were forged during World War II and the early cold war,

²² For accounts of the myriad changes to the Army since Vietnam, see Bailey, *America’s Army* and Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

Americans were beginning to reject those principles. In chapter three, conservatives called upon a competing formulation of citizenship, one that privileged personal liberty and individualism, and an unfailing belief in the free market, not government, as the most competent arbiter and protector of those rights. The end of the draft unburdened male citizens of their martial obligations, but what that meant for those who chose to serve in the new All-Volunteer Force remained intertwined with the shifting politics of the family.

These changes did not happen in a vacuum, nor were they simply the result of inertia. The AVF era began at the tail end of the post-World War II economic boom, amid lingering questions of America's role in the world as the United States struggled to extract itself from an unwinnable war, and a growing disillusionment with government and its institutions. Chapter four is about how the military, servicemembers, and their families struggled to make ends meet in the 1970s. As a changing global economy made it difficult, if not impossible, to comfortably support a family on a single income, the military demanded much from military families, but gave very little in return. Wives in particular were expected to "volunteer" their time to service the needs of the military community. More wives went to work in order to supplement the family income and more women entered the service—challenging the assumption that the military was an exclusively masculine world—and activists in the women's movement began to pay attention to the needs of women in the military community. Histories of second wave feminism often forget that some of the most consequential legal battles over women's rights involved military women and military families. National women's groups, including the National Organization for Women (NOW), lobbied members of Congress

on behalf of women in uniform and wives of servicemen. This chapter contributes to a growing body of literature that emphasizes the coalition-building capacity of feminist groups, rather than focusing on their widely explored differences. Women's rights groups confronted a military bureaucracy that continued to rely on conservative notions of traditional family and gender roles—beliefs that no longer reflected reality. In the broadest sense this chapter is about how the state and its institutions were fundamentally reshaped as a result of more women entering the public sphere.²³

Whereas chapter four is the story of the military community struggling with external forces beyond its control, and how those members of the community enlisted outside groups such as feminist organizations, civil liberties advocates, and members of Congress when the military could not meet their needs, chapter five is about how activists began to work within the system to make the military more accommodating to the changing needs of families. As the services cast about for solutions to recruiting and sustaining a volunteer military in the 1980s, wives began advocating for a greater stake in the community, demanding improvements to their quality of life. Within an ossified system, their demands grew louder: for better housing, for healthcare, for services such as career counseling and childcare for working parents. The Army began to listen at a time when officials sought to rebuild the post-Vietnam War military's tarnished image, and to manage the challenges posed by the new demographics of the volunteer force. In the

²³ Stephanie Gilmore, ed., *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline L. Castledine, *Breaking the Wave: Women: Their Organizations, and Feminism, 1945-1985* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Catherine E. Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism from Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

1980s, Army policymakers expanded expensive family programs as a means to strengthen their institution.

In stark contrast, the Marines struck out on a different path, believing that families were a distraction from their primary focus on war fighting and a costly drain on their resources. This was easier for the Marines to do because the Corps did not experience the same demographic changes until much later. In the 1970s and early 1980s Marine policymakers pushed back against calls to expand women's roles in the Armed Forces, they did not allow men with dependents to enlist, and, until 1976, Marine officers aggressively discharged women who became pregnant. Finally, in part due to the grueling deployment cycle for first-term enlistees, marriage rates never rose to the levels experienced by the other services. But in the mid-to-late 1980s, demographics finally caught up with the Marines. In 1984, for the first time, dependents outnumbered Marines. Alarm bells went off in the Office of the Commandant, and there was a moment when the Army and the Marine Corps were heading in opposite directions on family policy. In 1993, the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Carl Mundy, ordered his recruiting command to stop recruiting married people. He declared that marriage was a "privilege" reserved for the career force, and he laid out a 3-year-plan to achieve a "dependent free first term force."

The order did not last a full week before Defense Secretary Les Aspin very publicly reprimanded General Mundy, telling him to drop the issue. House Armed Services Committee member Patricia Schroeder (Dem., CO) placed the blundered plan within the broader context of civil-military relations in 1993— in her typically blunt

fashion—asking, “If [Marines] are not allowed to be homosexuals, and they are not allowed to be married, what are they supposed to do, take cold showers?”²⁴

Yet, officers in the other services, and some policymakers within the Department of Defense took notice, and the Marine Corps’ ill-fated decision paradoxically set the tone for the post-Gulf War 1990s military. Family policies, which grew to be quite generous in the 1980s, became substantial budget items in a post-cold war military that was learning to cut costs and downsize for the first time in a generation. Whereas “support” characterized the purpose of family programs in the 1980s, the services began talking about family “readiness” in the 1990s. The Army’s Family Support Groups became Family Readiness Groups, signaling this change in priorities. In the Marines, General Mundy began talking about families being the “fifth leg” of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF)—the Corps’ primary organizational structure for military operations—and Mundy created a new “Married to the Corps” program for military families. If the Marines could not beat them, then families were going to join them.

For military families, the turn to readiness in the 1990s felt like a return to the austerity of the 1970s. The Department of Defense began a decade long process of significantly downsizing. Between 1988 and 1995, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) program closed 330 military installations, and another 173 would be significantly reorganized. BRAC worked in tandem with a new focus on privatizing core military support functions. Gone was the cold war military, instantiated into the fabric of American communities around the country. Now the majority of military personnel and

²⁴ Quoted in Norman Lockman, “Once, Getting Married Was Good Military Strategy,” *Washington Times* (15 August 1993).

their families lived in remote mega bases—cut off, unseen, and largely forgotten by the wider civilian population.²⁵

Since the dawn of the 21st century, the United States has been in a near-perpetual state of war. Despite the public's frustration with the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, its elected leaders continue to be willing to commit the military to unending conflict abroad in the name of security at home. But the burden of America's global military commitments has fallen on an increasingly small subset of the population. Today, less than one-half of one percent of Americans serves in the military. And even that miniscule number only counts those who actually wear the uniform. Meanwhile, the burden of America's military incursions overseas is increasingly borne by the millions of family members in the broader military community.

In November 2010, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General George Casey, told a crowd of military families, "Never before in the history of our Army have we asked so much of families." General Casey was marking the beginning of "Military Family Month," which President Obama created by proclamation to coincide with his wife's efforts to help military families. Casey said families "are serving side-by-side with our Soldiers, enduring their hardships, providing the unconditional love and support that truly makes our Army strong."²⁶ The Chief of Staff chose to highlight intangibles like love and

²⁵ David S. Sorenson, *Shutting Down the Cold war: The Politics of Military Base Closure* (New York: St. Martin's, 1998), 1.

²⁶ Quoted in Neal Snyder, "November: Military Family Appreciation Month" (1 November 2010), <https://www.army.mil/article/47516/november-military-family-appreciation-month>.

hardship, but he might have spoken more concretely about the ways that families had become integral to the Army mission. Another Army general, in charge of family and morale programs, wrote in 2011, “In an era of persistent conflict, our Army Families are called upon to endure many hardships and are no less critical to mission success than our Soldiers.”²⁷

But how much sacrifice do we expect military families to make? “Military Family Month” represents just one of the ways that Americans are occasionally reminded of that tiny sliver of the population who serves, but beyond our thanks, what do we owe them? For their part, military families have sacrificed their personal liberty in order to take up the obligations of citizenship that so many of their fellow citizens have forsaken. This is a bargain that was struck over course of several decades, although the details of that deal have been largely ignored. What follows is an accounting of that debt.

²⁷ Reuben D. Jones, “Army Family Covenant: Enabling Army Families to Reach their Full Potential” (28 March 2011), <https://www.army.mil/article/53940>.

CHAPTER 2:

“THE TWO GREAT STREAMS OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE CONVERGED:” THE MILITARY AND THE GREAT SOCIETY

Rights and Obligations

Shortly after five o'clock in the afternoon on August 26, 1965, the phone lines to the Elkton, Maryland Police Department began to ring— young couples were inquiring about marriage licenses from as far away as New York and Connecticut. Some didn't even bother to make a phone call, but instead hopped in their cars as soon as they heard the news out of Washington, DC. Ever since around the turn of the twentieth century, the tiny town of Elkton, Maryland, tucked up near the border with Delaware and Pennsylvania off Route 40, had been known as a destination for impatient elopers. Prodded on by Progressive era prudes, many state legislatures passed laws to prevent hasty marriages—but Maryland held out for several decades, when in 1938 the state passed a law requiring a 48-hour waiting period. But by that time Elkton's reputation as America's "Gretna Greens" for east coast lovebirds had become a matter of legend.¹ The marriage bug quickly spread across the country because the news from Washington was that President Lyndon Johnson had just announced that if a man were not married before midnight on that very night, then marriage alone would not exempt him from the draft.

¹ Alistair Cooke, "Speedy Matrimony the Better Part of Valor," *The Guardian* (28 August 1965), 1.

Through the Selective Service System the American state placed inordinate pressure on young men to make enormous life choices very quickly. Prior to Johnson's order, in just one week, in just one induction center in Georgia, 46 men who received induction notices quickly got married to avoid service.² According to Lawrence Baskir and William Strauss, who worked on President Gerald Ford's Vietnam-era clemency commission, between 1963 and 1966 "there was an immediate 10 percent rise in the marriage rates for twenty- and twenty-one-year-olds." Except for a brief time during World War II, and for an even shorter time during the Korean War, once a man entered the bonds of marriage he was no longer obligated to fight for his nation.

President Johnson's order to end marriage deferments was a direct result of his decision in July to dramatically escalate the war in Vietnam. Clearly, the young Elton elopers missed the warning signs, but all that summer Johnson's administration had been telling members of Congress, Selective Service draft boards, and the press about the impending changes. Many saw the decision as a radical departure from both established policy and American traditions of masculine obligation.

This chapter is about how liberals in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations tried to make military service—long a tradition of manhood during times of war and national emergency—an essential component of male citizenship, along with breadwinning, fatherhood, and being a husband. Policymakers working in these administrations were dedicated to the belief that stable and productive household required a capable man at its head. And, although historically women and their dependent children

² Lawrence M. Baskir and William A. Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance: The Draft, The War and the Vietnam Generation* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 33.

received most of the nation's welfare benefits, in the 1960s the state turned its attention to salvaging marginalized men under the auspices of military service and the broader Selective Service System. Men in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations believed in the unparalleled value of the military as a manhood framing institution, where men could start anew, retrained and salvaged for a lifetime of productive citizenship. In other words, not only did liberal policymakers see military service as a necessary component of citizenship, they believed that serving in the military could set men on the path to securing the other elements of manhood.

This vision took on a particular valence within the broader context of the Civil Rights Movement, and the concerted effort to inculcate masculine citizenship into African American men through military service provided a sense of urgency. Civil Rights also contributed a policy framework from which to draw ideas, insight, and people. This context pressured policymakers to stamp out racial discrimination in the military, a promise left unfulfilled ever since the Armed Services were desegregated in 1948. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Department of Defense and each of the services launched (or were subjected to) investigations on issues like equal opportunity within the military and housing discrimination on and off base. The Defense Department created civil rights offices to study and implement policy changes, and, especially during the early years of the Johnson Administration, DoD officials faced enormous pressure and directions from the White House to implement civil rights-advancing policies.

To understand why liberal policymakers turned to the military as a site for building productive male breadwinners, we must recognize the importance these men

placed on military service. Nearly every key policymaker who served in the White House under Kennedy and Johnson wore a uniform during World War II. Indeed, military service was nearly a prerequisite for key positions in government in the postwar era. In the 1960s, politicians and policymakers frequently expressed that men who could not serve in the military would amount to little in life. Service in the military was seen as an important step on the way to fulfilling the next important masculine function in society: starting a family. The vitality of the American family—and by extension the nation—required men who could fulfill their martial obligations to protect and serve their country, and military service would in turn make men better providers, husbands, and fathers. All of this is not to dismiss the glaring fact that the convictions of these (mostly) older white men were increasingly out of step with society as the decade wore on. But, looking back from today it is useful to remember that for most people living in the 1960s, "the sixties" had not happened yet.

What it means to be an American is never a given; rather, it is an idea that is constantly negotiated. In the late twentieth century and in the present, notions of citizenship rooted in personal liberty and individualism are firmly entrenched. But, this chapter uncovers a competing notion of citizenship as a reciprocal relationship between the citizen and the state, an understanding that was steeped in concerns over a man's martial and marital roles. Ideas such as obligation; responsibility; and duty, as well as breadwinner; husband; provider, and father defined citizenship in the minds of policymakers. This language would continue to echo in policy debates and discussions in

the press about the military and marriage long after Americans stopped talking about citizenship as a reciprocal relationship.

Although the marriage between the military and the family happened through policies that were domestically oriented, because this was a union that took place in the 1960s, the "honeymoon" was often a trip to Vietnam. Administration officials, critics at the time and scholars ever since have charged, were overzealous in their belief that Americans could have both guns and butter. Yet, the historiography on the War on Poverty rarely overlaps with that of the war in Vietnam, except to say that the former was a both casualty and a driver of the latter. What actually happened fits a pattern that usually describes later decades of the twentieth century: the military was increasingly taking on more and more of the states' capacity to identify needy citizens and distribute benefits and resources to them. Historian Jennifer Mittelstadt recently argued that social welfare benefits expanded in the military community at a time when welfare tapered off for the rest of Americans. The dismantling of the broader welfare state was certainly attended by a growing military welfare state in the late 70s and 80s, but I argue that War on Poverty and Great Society liberals always saw them working in tandem. In other words, the military and the broader Selective Service System were constitutive elements of the very welfare state that was dismantled in the latter third of the twentieth century—ending the draft was the first step on the road to “welfare reform.”³

Recent scholarship on social welfare in the 1960s is clear: policies that targeted the poor were almost universally designed to prop up the idea of a "family wage,"

³ Jennifer Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015).

supporting households in which the husband was the breadwinner and the wife took care of the home. In her recent book on welfare policy from the 1960s to the 1990s, Marissa Chappell argues that the imaginations of even the most ambitious liberals in government were chained to the notion of the "traditional" family and the family wage, which "fatally undermined their generous social-democratic economic vision."⁴ But what is not discussed as frequently is how preoccupied policymakers were with not only providing relief to needy families, but also in salvaging the lives of men they deemed to be weak, burdensome, and the ultimate source of dysfunction in society. Citizenship was gendered as male and the onus of maintaining a stable family was placed squarely on the shoulders of the male breadwinner. Citizenship, to key policymakers in bureaucracies from the Department of Defense to the Department of Labor, could entitle men and their families to benefits and public assistance, but it also obligated them to serve the nation.

Duty and rights went hand in hand, but they are rarely discussed in the recent scholarship on welfare policy because, for the most part, these scholarly projects are concerned with understanding how America got to 1994 and the end of "welfare as we know it." While well-researched and useful, these teleological interpretations fail to account for notions of citizenship as they were conceived of at the time, when the frame of reference was the triumphal sacrifice of citizen-soldiers in World War II, not a post-Vietnam, post-industrial, and post-identity politics conception of citizenship. Yes, policymakers in the 1960s, who came of age in the cauldron of the Depression and a world war, were deeply committed to solving the problem of poverty, but they were also

⁴ Marisa Chappell, *The War on Welfare: Family, Poverty, and Politics in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 5.

convinced that social welfare demanded reciprocal responsibility from its male citizens. In his memoir on his time as president, published before his death, Lyndon Johnson recalled that in 1964, when many of his political advisors believed that he should pull back after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, "I feared that as long as these citizens were alienated from the rights of the American system, they would continue to consider themselves outside the obligations of that system." Benefits, rights, and obligations of citizenship marked the boundaries of the liberal imagination in the 1960s.⁵

An Odd Couple

The marriage of the military and the family in the 1960s was actually a significant departure from the past; military service set boys on the path to becoming men, but for much of American history, this proposition had been a one-way street. Except in extreme circumstances (such as total mobilization), once a man took on the burdens and responsibilities of family life, he became unburdened of his masculine obligation to serve his country in a time of war. The family has often been invoked as the bedrock of American society, and a man's primary calling within society was to be a breadwinner and patriarch. Not until the postwar era did policymakers begin to see these two institutions as mutually beneficial.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the military lumped wives together with laundresses, prostitutes, and other "camp followers." With the exception of a few high-ranking officers, army regulations forbade married men from serving, and if men chose to

⁵ Lyndon B. Johnson, *The Vantage Point: Perspectives of the Presidency, 1963-1969* (New York: Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, 1971), 160 (emphasis his).

marry after donning the uniform, the military took no responsibility to provide for the wellbeing of wives or of dependent children. Moreover, military pay for enlisted men and junior officers was so low that it served as an effective barrier, keeping family men from entering the service. With few exceptions, the military of the 19th century was for the young and single.⁶

The tensions between family life and military service continued to shape policy during World War I, when the United States exempted all married men from the draft. But, during the interwar period the military began providing modest family allotments for career enlisted men and officers. Although the military began to ease its policies regarding family men in the 1920s, enlistees with the grade of E-4 or below had to request permission from their commanding officer to marry, and failure to do so resulted in discharge from the service.⁷

World War I may have forced policymakers to think hard about the possibility of drafting family men, but the war ended before they had to make hard choices. World War II, however, put America's commitment to keeping fathers out of the military to the test. Historian George Q. Flynn argues that America's traditional devotion to the institution of the family was inscribed into draft regulations, but "in striving to maintain the American

⁶ For an account of those exceptions, see Betty Sowers Alt and Bonnie Domrose Stone, *Campfollowing: A History of the Military Wife* (New York: Praeger, 1991). Although Alt and Stone diligently describe the lives of women within and around military encampments, forts, and bases, they write that as late as the beginning of the 20th century, "the military still had not established an official policy regarding accompanying wives and children. Although the numbers of wives campfollowing were increasing, the military ignored them as much as possible" (64).

⁷ Alt and Stone, *Campfollowing*. See also, Lewis B. Hershey, *Outline of Historical Background of Selective Service: From Biblical Days to June 30, 1960* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1960).

family the government created a dilemma. As America instituted its first peacetime draft with the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, the traditional belief in the centrality of the male breadwinner to society became national policy: policymakers determined that a wife was dependent upon her husband, even if she had a job. Given a way out of the draft, men rushed to the altar in droves so that before Pearl Harbor, 84 percent of all men deferred were classified 3-A (the category dealing with men with dependent wives, children, or elderly parents). This left only a fraction of the overall draft pool eligible for service. Emblematic of the decentralized way the Selective Service System worked, policymakers after Pearl Harbor simply created more classifications and left the tough choices on drafting married men to the local draft boards.⁸

These community draft boards felt immense pressure from Washington to meet their quotas, while at the same time they also felt the squeeze from the grassroots—and from outraged congressmen— every time they dipped into the pool of married men. As early as 1942, Selective Service Director Lewis B. Hershey (who would hold that position for more than the next quarter century) began warning the president that the draft pool needed to be expanded. The choice was between drafting married men, including those with children, or lowering the draft age to 18. Reflecting the sentiment of Congressman Paul J. Kilday of Texas, who believed that the draft was becoming a threat to "the preservation of the family in American life," Congress chose the latter—no father could be drafted if an unwed man was available for induction in another state. In the end, wartime necessity prevailed over protecting fathers and families. According to Flynn,

⁸ George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940-1973* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1993), 69.

"No amount of political legislation could protect the family from the impact of the war."⁹

Gender conventions that seemed axiomatic in peacetime became deeply problematic in wartime. At a time when hundreds of thousands of married women were joining single women in the wartime workforce, in addition to the incremental expansion of women's auxiliary roles within the military, deferments for fatherhood fell precipitously from 8 million in 1943 to less than 100,000 in 1945.¹⁰

In part due to widely held convictions about the value of national service, and partly because of the emerging realities of the cold war, the United States chose to maintain a peacetime draft after the war. While World War II had temporarily upset long-held assumptions about gender roles in America, policymakers quickly returned to those older beliefs about the incompatibility of military service with family life. From 1947 until August 1965, when love-stricken elopers threw themselves at the mercy of Elkton, Maryland civil servants, family men usually received blanket deferments through the Selective Service System. According to Hershey, deferring married men was necessary "to strengthen the Nation's civilian economy...[and to] foster the family life of the nation."¹¹ And although this was the height of the cold war, there were far more men in the draft pool than the nation needed in uniform. This, of course, does not diminish the fact that the choice to maintain a peacetime draft meant that for a 33-year-period, by far

⁹ Ibid., 72.

¹⁰ Ibid., 74.

¹¹ Hershey, *Outline of Historical Background of Selective Service*. The one exception to the general rule was during the Korean War, when President Truman issued an Executive Order stating that married men were no longer exempt from the draft, except in cases of "extreme hardship," in which case they were categorized as III-A. But, as General Hershey points out, because local draft boards had an enormous amount of discretion, the "extreme hardship" exception was usually granted to men with families.

unprecedented in American history, every single adult male had to reckon with this system in the most intimate of ways: influencing—often determining—decisions to marry, have children, go to college or vocational school, and choose a career. The “channeling” mechanisms of the Selective Service System cut deep grooves, essentially sorting and reorienting half of the American population at a crucial moment in their lives, making it a singular institution in US history. At the time the Selective Service Act was written, what Americans valued as a nation was inscribed into the mechanisms that made it function, and as those values changed over time, so too did those mechanisms, right up to the point when enough Americans no longer valued the draft and abolished it in 1973. It was within this context, and indeed in part because of this extraordinary period of state social engineering through manpower policy, that policymakers began to see the military and the family as mutually beneficial institutions.

“One-Third of a Nation Ill-Housed, Ill-Clad, Ill-Nourished”

Published in middle of the 1960s, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, or “The Moynihan Report,” is both temporally and thematically at the center of this chapter. Probably the most controversial policy paper to come out of Washington in the second half of the twentieth century, “The Moynihan Report” traced the problem of black poverty, or in Daniel Moynihan's ill-advised words, the “tangle of pathology,” to its historical foundation in slavery and, later, Jim Crow and racial segregation. To Moynihan, years of emasculation through racial violence and intimidation made it so black men could no longer claim their rightful place as provider and head of household.

With no strong male breadwinner, Moynihan argued black women were forced to step into the breach as the primary wage earner, parental authority figure, and role model—to the detriment of the black family and the black community. Although Moynihan lauded the strength and spirit of these matriarchs, he believed that matriarchy, borne of necessity and forged in racist subjugation and segregation, was preventing impoverished blacks from pulling themselves out of the cycle of poverty.

Some of this story will likely sound familiar, although I want to reframe the discussion of “The Moynihan Report” using the lenses of citizenship, gender, the family, and military service together. The problem with “The Moynihan Report” is that it was a history lesson masquerading as a policy document. While it made clear Moynihan's belief that female-headed households and the lack of strong, successful black men kept the black family in poverty, Moynihan offered surprisingly few policy prescriptions. Indeed, historian David Geary points out that this ambiguity is a major reason why “The Moynihan Report” has become a touchstone for discussions on race, the breakdown of the family, and a myriad of other social issues—liberals and conservatives both could grasp onto whatever parts of the report fit their ideology or agenda and ignore the rest.¹² But, whereas most scholars who study “The Moynihan Report” follow the threads of the controversy it generated, this chapter identifies the roots of the report in Moynihan's earlier work on manpower policy in the Kennedy Administration, and then follows the Report's only clear policy prescription—military service for young black men—as it was implemented in Robert McNamara's Defense Department.

¹² Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights: The Moynihan Report and Its Legacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 5.

"The state," in the words of historian Margot Canaday, "is notoriously difficult to conceptualize and write about." What is more, she charges, because of this difficulty historians have tended to not write about how the state works at all. The state, or less accurately the government or the federal bureaucracy, often takes on anthropomorphic powers and can become an actor in its own right as a result. We uncritically write statements like "the Department of Defense did this" or "Secretary so-and-so did that," when "this" or "that" are actually very complex actions that require the work of dozens, hundreds, and sometimes thousands of people. We tend to think about the various agencies within the executive branch as fairly autonomous and rarely overlapping. The Department of Defense is at The Pentagon, across the river from the Department of State in Foggy Bottom, and under the respective secretaries the departments operate as quasi-fiefdoms. But, if we heed Canaday's call to peel off the roofs to see "what officials do," we see overlaps, interconnection, and crosstalk between agencies.¹³

One such office with a lot of overlap among government agencies was the Office of Policy Planning and Research in the early 1960s. Ostensibly located in the office of the Assistant Secretary of Labor, the Director of Policy Planning and Research was also considered an advisor to the President, which meant that the Director wasn't bound to the Department of Labor in the same way as a typical civil servant would be. In 1963, the directorship of the Office of Policy Planning and Research was handed over to Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who had just finished his doctorate at Tufts University's Fletcher School in 1961. Moynihan's first big breakthrough in government policy came when he

¹³ Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4-5.

was asked to assist the President's Taskforce on Manpower Conservation to write its report to the President in 1963. The Taskforce itself was an exercise in how government agencies often overlap: its members were the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, Health, Education, and Welfare and the Director of Selective Service.

The report, *One-Third of a Nation*, an homage to Franklin Roosevelt's famous Depression-era speech a generation earlier, was an expression of how liberal policymakers viewed the interrelationship between citizenship, obligation, and social welfare policy. It would later serve as a blueprint for the military's role in fighting the War on Poverty and building the Great Society. The men who were enlisted into the Taskforce believed that government had a singular power to solve big problems such as poverty and racism. But they also believed that citizenship, and by extension access to the benefits of citizenship, required reciprocal obligations from Americans. They labored on the Taskforce under the assumption that the willingness and ability to serve in the military was an essential component of male citizenship, and by extension, manhood. A man need not actually serve, but by submitting to the Selective Service System's battery of mental and physical induction tests, he was proving himself a worthy and productive member of society. These tests also identified men who needed assistance. "The Armed Forces Qualification Test is a uniform national test," said the report, and the fact that women would not be included in this "uniform national test" notwithstanding, the

Taskforce argued that it had "the potential for providing the communities of the nation with an important comparison and indicator of social achievement."¹⁴

The Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) was, to policymakers, a predictor of future performance in society. According to the Report, "Failure to pass it [is] a matter of unavoidable concern to the community-at-large. The qualities needed to be an effective soldier, sailor, or airman in today's modern force are similar to those needed in a wide range of civilian jobs." In the eyes of the administrators, men who failed the test were destined for failure in life. And, given that men were expected to be the breadwinner and head of the household, they believed his potential for failure would have a ripple effect in the wider community.¹⁵

Moynihan, like other social scientists at the time, was obsessed with the cyclical nature of poverty and how to disrupt it. Anticipating the Taskforce, the Department of Labor interviewed 2,500 Selective Service rejectees in order to ascertain the "social and economic profile of the group, and an evaluation of their apparent willingness to raise themselves above their present status in life."¹⁶ They discovered the characteristics of the cycle of poverty in those who failed the mental test. Too many of their parents are poor," they reported, "Too many of them are poor. If the present course of events continues, their children will be poor." To Moynihan and the other men on the Taskforce, stopping the cycle was more than a manpower issue; its presence challenged the sturdiness of

¹⁴ President's Task Force on Manpower Conservation. *One-Third of a Nation: A Report on Young Men Found Unqualified for Military Service* (Washington, DC: US Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1964).

¹⁵ Ibid., 15.

¹⁶ Ibid.

democracy itself. "One of the fundamental facts about democracy," they posited, "is its recognition that mental ability is distributed widely throughout any population." They channeled well-rehearsed ascension narratives of democracy's unique ability to provide equality of opportunity to those who want to lift themselves out of poverty. Within an equal opportunity environment, "offspring of the poor will prove their worth at an early age and go on to live lives of substantial achievement." To these men, the AFQT was a nationwide opportunity for policymakers to break the cycle, lift men up, and dust them off for a lifetime of economic and social productivity.¹⁷

AFQT screenings and medical examinations through Selective Service would "enable the community, as well as the individual concerned, to learn which young men are not qualified, and for what reasons, and to make appropriate plans for remedial action." To the Taskforce, the problem was not a lack of government-run services for vocational training, education, and mental or physical health care; it was the inability to target the right population. Using the decentralized, local offices of the Selective Service System, policymakers could provide young men with the resources they needed to improve their lot in life, and by extension, make the entire community stronger.¹⁸

The Taskforce made recommendations that recalled some of the most ambitious public health goals of the Progressive era. To its core, the report was a call to action for government intervention into the lives of young men, those men who the Taskforce members deemed a liability to the vitality of society. Concerns over a man's worth, and

¹⁷ Ibid. The report noted that the rejectees had a 28% unemployment rate, or four times greater than the national average for 1963, four out of five were high school dropouts, with only 75% ever completing grade school.

¹⁸ Ibid., 35.

creating programs that gave men the tools and skills to succeed if they chose fits what the late historian Michael Katz argues was a major contradiction in federal social welfare policy: despite their understanding of poverty as a structural problem—"too many of their parents are poor. Too many of them are poor"—policymakers backed programs that assumed poverty was a personal failing. Within this framework, giving a man remedial education, or practical vocational training, or medical attention to correct maladies that were impediments to gainful employment was more worthwhile than costlier alternatives such as a program for full employment.¹⁹

Beyond the practical benefits of using an existing system, seeking to achieve this manpower project under the aegis of the Selective Service System also pointed to their belief in the transformative effect military service could have on a young man. Speaking in 1968, Undersecretary of Defense for Manpower Alfred Fitt remarked,

You have men in our society who are high school dropouts and what not, educational cripples, unemployed, who don't meet military entrance standards but who we think would, given the benefit of the expert training and motivating skills which now exist in the armed forces, could be brought up to a higher standard of performance, thus easing the burdens on the outside without adversely effecting combat readiness. That's a fairly appealing proposition.²⁰

Without remedial training, men would never, in the words of the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation, "become effective citizens and self-supporting individuals."²¹ Just a few weeks prior to his assassination, President John F. Kennedy (who originally convened the Taskforce) expressed concern that nearly half of all men who reported for pre-induction

¹⁹ Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989).

²⁰ Transcript, Alfred B. Fitt Oral History Interview by Dorothy Pierce, Interview 1 (25 October 1968), LBJ Library, 18.

²¹ *One-Third of a Nation*, 29.

examinations through the Selective Service System were found unqualified for the military. In a statement, Kennedy said bluntly, "A young man who does not have what it takes to perform military service is not likely to have what it takes to make a living. Today's military rejects include tomorrow's hard-core unemployed." Indeed, the very makeup of the Taskforce itself illustrates how policymakers saw the relationship between social welfare policy and citizenship: the President's Taskforce on Manpower Conservation was chaired by the Secretaries of Defense, Labor, and Health, Education, and Welfare, as well as the Director of the Selective Service System. These men were charged with identifying "those young men in our nation who are—for reasons of education, or health, or both—not equipped to play their part in society." And although the Taskforce brought together Cabinet secretaries who we tend not to think of as working together on policy matters, the driving force behind group was the Director of the White House Office of Policy Planning and Research, Daniel Moynihan.

Indeed, the very idea for a war on poverty was shaped by the policy proposals outlined in *One-Third of a Nation*. As Lyndon Johnson described the impetus for the War on Poverty in his memoir, "Basically, the idea was this: Local organizations would be transformed in the neighborhoods and communities where the poor people themselves lived, and programs to help the poor would channeled through organizations on the scene... self-determination at the local level."²² The Johnson Administration's idea for a "bottom-up" approach to targeting services to the needy was first conceived of in *One-Third of a Nation*. Wary of Congress and the American public's aversion to massive

²² Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 74.

federal programs, the Taskforce envisioned revamping manpower policy at the local level, and through existing government agencies, chiefly the Selective Service System. They emphasized the community-building potential of a concerted manpower policy. Those men who were found unqualified for military service, wrote the Taskforce, "are members of their local communities. It is at the community level that the problems of youth in need of help are resolved. While some financial support is available from the Federal Government, the institutions that get the job done are part of the community and are to a considerable extent community-financed." Far from being a massive government manpower program, using the AFQT to identify local registrants in need of assistance would "enable the community, as well as the individuals concerned, to learn which your men are not qualified, and for what reasons, and to make appropriate plans for remedial action."²³

Fighting the War on Poverty Through the Department of Defense

After the legislative achievements of 1964 and '65 to end racial segregation and secure political rights for African Americans, liberals within the Johnson administration turned to the ambitious goal of attaining economic equality for African Americans, and more broadly, for America's poor. The White House Conference on Civil Rights, convened in 1966 to maintain the administration's momentum after a string of legislative and electoral successes, established a four-pronged strategy for the Johnson White House: housing, economic security, education, and the administration of justice. This was

²³ *One-Third of a Nation*, 35.

breadwinner liberalism expressed through civil rights, and the cold war military proved to be a useful and ready ally in the War on Poverty.

In the wake of the "To Fulfill These Rights" Conference, the Department of Defense quickly and quietly began working on three programs that went to the heart of the Conference's strategy. Between 1966 and 1968, McNamara would announce Project Transition, a program to provide job training at the end of a serviceman's enlistment, and Project 100,000, which lowered the mental qualifications for draftees. Project 100,000 echoed the loftiest goals outlined in *One-Third of a Nation* and the "Moynihan Report:" to salvage marginalized men for a life of productivity. Finally, beginning in Maryland in 1967 and then nationwide on January 15, 1968, the Defense Secretary decreed that any home or rental property near military installations that discriminated against black GIs would be off limits to all service members, regardless of color.

DoDs participation in pursuing the Johnson administration's four-pronged approach to civil rights in the post-Civil Rights Act/Voting Rights Act era—access to housing, economic security, education, and justice— was not just ancillary to its growing wartime needs. This was not a shrewd numbers game in the bowels of the Pentagon aimed at sending more young men to Vietnam. Like most social policy during this time period, the intention of Projects Transition and 100,000, in conjunction with off-base housing desegregation, was to provide assistance to the male breadwinner and shore up the institution of the American family. In sum, these three programs were the epitome of the administration's vision for achieving the broader goals of the War on Poverty and Great Society.

From Civil War pensions to the World War II GI Bill, America has a long history of providing services, training, preferential treatment in hiring, or money to veterans returning to civilian life. Anticipating the recruiting slogans of the 1980s, the Vietnam-era military began offering training to troops near the end of their enlistments to provide "marketable skills" that would help them transition from military to civilian life. Project Transition began as a small pilot program at Ft. Knox, KY, in 1967, but it soon spread to the entire military and would become the most successful and longest lasting of the DoD social welfare programs. Whereas some military skills readily translate into the civilian job market, especially in an era of increasing reliance on advanced technology, many soon-to-be veterans struggled to find ways to parlay other military skills into a civilian economy. Project Transition targeted men with less than 180 days left on their enlistment, particularly men who had no previous civilian occupation, men in the combat arms, and men who were disabled in combat.

In practice, Project Transition illuminates how America's military-industrial-complex functioned. DoD first partnered with the Labor Department and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, but soon expanded to other agencies such as the Postal Service, and later to private corporations. Echoing the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation and highlighting the broader contours of the War on Poverty, the entire process was pushed down to the local level. Commanders at major military installations were encouraged to partner with local agencies and local businesses. According to Undersecretary of Defense Alfred Fitt, the "business of the military departments, aside

from fighting wars, is to train people. They are the best training institutions—most able in our whole society in terms of taking masses of men who don't know something and over a period of time teaching them." To policymakers inside and out of the Department of Defense, the military wasn't just for fighting the nation's wars: the military had an active and positive role to play in society, and providing a ready-supply of manpower to the private sector fit that belief.²⁴

And businesses wanted in on the action. Private industries, seeing the potential for freshly trained new hires, not only sent their job recruiters to military bases, but they also provided the resources, curriculum, and expertise necessary to train veterans. Dictaphone, the dictation machine and recording equipment giant, strategically placed its corporate "Advanced Training Center" in Jackson, South Carolina, a few miles down the road from Fort Jackson so that GIs could attend their schools. Dictaphone's president Walter Finke thought the program was a win-win for his corporation, providing it with a steady stream of qualified applicants at a time when the corporation was expanding into new sectors of the tech economy, adding, "at the same time, it gives us an opportunity as good corporate citizens, to help solve an important national problem."²⁵ Humble Oil & Refining set up a classroom-on-wheels in a refurbished cargo trailer to teach soldiers how to manage and run roadside service stations. Out of one class of twenty, chosen from nearly 100 applicants, six former GIs took over managing service stations after their contracts were

²⁴ Fitt Interview.

²⁵ Quoted in John Rogers, "From Skilled Soldiers to Skilled Civilians," *Boston Globe* (17 November 1968), B25.

up, and three more were placed on a waiting list. To observers, Project Transition was like running boot camp in reverse.²⁶

Government agencies at the local, state, and federal level, too, contributed to the program. The United States Post Office was the first government agency to provide training to GIs in the original pilot program. In mock post offices, soldiers learned how to sort and process mail, operate machinery, and drive delivery trucks, all while getting coached on how to pass the Civil Service exam.²⁷ In 1967, the Los Angeles Police Department formed a partnership with Project Transition to entice qualified GIs to trade in one uniform for another. To politicians and department brass in Los Angeles, Project Transition was viewed as a means of recruiting minorities—especially African Americans—into the police force. Equal Opportunity employment and growing the number of minorities in police uniform were goals that local elected officials were under increasing pressure to achieve in major cities in 1967, especially officials in charge of the LAPD.²⁸

Project Transition avoided the controversy that the other DoD social welfare programs would suffer because it traversed well-travelled avenues of acceptable government programs for veterans going back to the Civil War. Firstly, it was designed to help veterans transition from military life to civilian life, a recurring concern to the American public—the specter of an unskilled, maladjusted, and idle veteran population

²⁶ "U.S. Offers Discharged Soldiers Job Training," *Los Angeles Times* (May 1, 1969), B4.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ "LAPD Pilots a Worthy Job Project," *Los Angeles Times* (October 17, 1967), A4.

has long been a driving force in debates over veterans' benefits.²⁹ Secondly, although the program was coordinated at the federal level in the Department of Defense, the program was administered locally, and one of its strengths was that it drew support from local businesses and the needs of the local economy in base communities. Finally, although its creators conceived of Project Transition as a social welfare program within the Great Society's War on Poverty, the program was ostensibly available to any serviceman, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. This, and the fact that most major military installations were in the American South, made it palatable to Southern "Dixiecrats" in Congress, who were skeptical of supporting any program that could be construed as having a civil rights agenda.

In contrast to Project Transition, Project 100,000 would become one of the most controversial programs of the era. This program was the clearest expression of the belief, held by men in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, that military service was a fundamental component of manhood. To recall the language in *One-Third of a Nation*, "The qualities needed to be an effective soldier, sailor, or airman in today's modern forces are similar to those needed in a wide range of civilian jobs." Men like Moynihan and McNamara believed that those who failed the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT)

²⁹ See Kathleen Frydl, *The GI Bill* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

could "be expected to lack many of the qualities needed to lead self-sufficient, productive lives in the civilian economy."³⁰

They also saw military service as a step in the path to stable families with a strong male breadwinner. According to Moynihan, who wrote most of the report, "[We have] a unique opportunity to identify those young men in our Nation who are—for reasons of education, or health, or both—not equipped to play their part in society."³¹ Those who failed to meet the Selective Service's standards for mental reasons were the victims of poverty, and Moynihan lamented the fact that "far too many of these young men have missed out on the American miracle," of the military. Within the context of the 1960s, questions of race often overlapped with discussions of poverty. The language in *One-Third of a Nation* would presage much of what Moynihan would later write in the controversial *Report on the Negro Family*.³² Although that document would touch off a firestorm of criticism, in it Moynihan continued to articulate the belief that military service imbued men with the right stuff to succeed in life. In the *Report on the Negro Family*, he described the transformation in an almost mystical fashion. "There is another special quality about military service for Negro men," Moynihan wrote. "It is an utterly masculine world...a world away from women, a world run by strong men of unquestioned authority, where discipline, if harsh, is nonetheless orderly and predictable, and where

³⁰ *One-Third of a Nation*, 15. My thinking on Project 100,000 is derived in part from my masters' thesis on the subject, "Salvageable Manhood: Project 100,000 and the Gendered Politics of the Vietnam War," Unpublished MA Thesis (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 2011), 25-41.

³¹ *One-Third of a Nation*.

³² Ibid.

rewards, if limited, are granted on the basis of performance."³³ Indeed, putting African American men into the military was the only prescription Moynihan enumerated as a way to unwind the “tangle of pathology” that had ensnared the black community.

Moynihan, and others policymakers in government, believed that the number of black men in uniform should be brought to parity with their percentage of the population. A major obstacle was the AFQT, which black men failed fifty-six percent of the time. Moynihan saw the test as a measure of "competence," believing that "a grown young man who cannot pass this test is in trouble." He continued, "The ultimate mark of inadequate preparation for life is the failure rate on the Armed Forces mental test." In 1965, African Americans comprised roughly eight percent of the Armed Forces, which was about three percent less than their representation in the population as a whole. At the time, putting more black men in uniform was not controversial; indeed, getting African Americans to join the military—either voluntarily or through the draft—could be characterized as a primary goal of policymakers in the Johnson administration. Nor was the policy the subject of ridicule outside of the administration. That would come later, and much of the controversy over Project 100,000 got mixed up in the ire over “The Moynihan Report.”

Many people—including some scholars—believe that Project 100,000 was started because of the recommendations in “The Moynihan Report.” But it was actually first conceived in the final days of the Kennedy Administration, as a result of the President's Committee on Equal Opportunity in the Armed Forces, often referred to as the

³³ Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* (Washington DC: Office of Policy Planning and Research, US Department of Labor, 1965).

Gesell Committee after its chairman, Gerhard Gesell, and also from the ideas put forth in *One-Third of a Nation*.³⁴ In what was a trial balloon to what would become Project 100,000, Robert McNamara introduced the Special Training Enlistment Program (STEP) in 1964, shortly after his service on the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation and the release of *One-Third of a Nation*. STEP targeted potential enlistees scoring between fifteen and thirty on the AFQT, which required a minimum score of thirty-one for enlistment. The goals of the program were to enlist 15,000 men annually and send them to Fort Leonard Wood for intensive educational training prior to their completion of boot camp. The Defense Department estimated that the additional cost per trainee would be

³⁴ Finding the roots of Project 100,000 has more to do with than merely correcting dates on a timeline. Project 100,000 was a major part of the administration's broader effort to use the military as a means of fighting the War on Poverty and salvaging marginalized men. Christian Appy, in his classic *Working-Class War* (1993), was one of the first historians to take a look at Project 100,000. He rightly stated that the program began with *One-Third of a Nation*, but only because he accidentally conflated that document with "The Moynihan Report," using quotes from both as if they were the same. Appy's mistake may stem from his reliance on Baskir and Strauss's 1978 book *Chance and Circumstance*, in which they don't make clear the distinction between the two documents.

Steve Estes, in his excellent book *I AM A MAN! Race, Manhood, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), points out that Project 100,000 "may not have been directly inspired by The Negro Family," he does argue that Project 100,000 was a post-1965 strategy of the Johnson Administration. To Estes, Project 100,000 provided the Administration a way of fighting both the War on Poverty and the War in Vietnam simultaneously. Daniel Geary, who doesn't actually mention Project 100,000 in his excellent book on "The Moynihan Report," did make that claim in a recent piece in *The Atlantic*, entitled "The Moynihan Report: An Annotated Edition," (September 14, 2015). For more insight into the roots of Project 100,000, see Transcript, Robert S. McNamara Oral History Interview I (8 January 1975), by Walt W. Rostow, Internet Copy, LBJ Library, 46; Fitt Interview, 8.

\$2,100. Critics in Congress argued that job programs already existed and there was no need.³⁵

McNamara reintroduced STEP to Congress in 1965. He believed that the objections were as much about race politics as money, stating, "When the Congress learned that we were considering modest incremental expenditures on such individuals, it actually passed a law prohibiting such expenditures. This was because the program would deal with large numbers of blacks."³⁶ One such member of Congress was South Carolina Senator Strom Thurmond, who argued that STEP would drain the Army's training resources. On the Senate floor, he asked Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson, "Does not the Senator feel that these young men should be trained in the educational fundamentals by the Job Corps rather than to place this responsibility upon the Army, which has its hands full training soldiers?" Nelson responded, "We provide education in our schools, which education [sic] helps young men enter the Army.... The Army is the biggest single educator in America.... This is a function the Army could handle very well."³⁷ Senator Thurmond and others were not convinced: while the House voted to allow the Defense Department to proceed with STEP, the Senate balked at the price and the program died.

According to Undersecretary Fitt, McNamara was furious, "[He] was quite put out at having met this defeat... of a project that seemed to have a very high potential for good

³⁵ Janice H. Laurence and Peter F. Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military: Who Profits, Who Pays?* (New York: Praeger, 1991), 16; Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 32-33.

³⁶ McNamara Interview, 46.

³⁷ *Congressional Record*, 89th Cong. 2nd Sess., (25 August 1965), Senate 21719-20.

without any real degradation in military readiness."³⁸ In order to end-run around Congress, McNamara devised a program that did not require additional funding. This new program would lower the induction standards to allow rejected men in, send them straight to boot camp, and merely monitor their progress. In essence, McNamara envisioned a STEP-like program without the need for separate or additional training facilities. Worried that Congress would see this as a ruse to initiate STEP behind their backs, Fitt advised McNamara to wait until year's end to make any announcements. McNamara, who didn't like being told what to do, refused, and in fact, had already issued orders to lower the requirements on the AFQT in April 1966, something he deemed the Defense Department could do without congressional approval. Project 100,000 was officially born October 1966 without further response from either the House or Senate.³⁹

Despite its artful inception, the Johnson administration soon publicized Project 100,000 in earnest. The Johnson White House pitched Project 100,000 as a part of their post-Civil Rights Act and post-Voting Rights Act strategy for economic and social justice for African Americans. Recall the four-pronged strategy that the President's advisors laid out at the 1965 "To Fulfill These Rights" conference at the White House: housing, economic security, education, and the administration of justice. The president took this message to Congress on March 6, 1967 in a speech on the Selective Service System and Project 100,000. He reminded Congress of the sacrifices that freedom required: "The knowledge that military service must sometimes be borne by—and imposed on—free

³⁸ Fitt Interview; Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 33-34.

³⁹ Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*; Laurence and Ramsberger, *Low-Aptitude Men in the Military*; Fitt Interview, 11-12.

men so their freedom may be preserved is woven deeply into the fabric of the American experience." Project 100,000 would allow, "disadvantaged youths with limited educational backgrounds" to share in the benefits and burdens of service. His words illuminated the boundaries of the liberal vision of citizenship: "The nation can never again afford to deny to men... the obligation—and the right— to share in a basic responsibility of citizenship."⁴⁰ And he also called upon the belief that military service was inherently good for men, that it would imbue them with the character traits to lead successful and productive lives. As Johnson recalled his feelings about this moment in his memoir, the "two great streams in our national life converged—the dream of a Great Society at home and the inescapable demands of our obligations halfway around the world. They were to run in confluence until the end of my administration."⁴¹

Roughly 40,000 New Standards Men, as they were called, were inducted in 1966, and 100,000 in both 1967 and 1968. Critics of STEP, who argued that New Standards Men would drain Army resources, were silenced when 96 percent completed boot camp, which was only two 2 percent less than other recruits. Feeling somewhat vindicated after Congress's rebuke, McNamara proclaimed, "The plain fact is that our Project 100,000 is succeeding beyond even our most hopeful expectations." Meanwhile, newfound supporters in Congress deployed rhetoric that often treaded into the ethereal. Massachusetts' Representative John McCormack, the Speaker of the House, observed, "Like the glorious sun breaking through dark clouds on a stormy day, the President's

⁴⁰ "Text of President Johnson's Message to Congress on the Selective Service System," *New York Times*, (March 7, 1967), 32; Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 34-35.

⁴¹ Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 324.

message lights up a clear and welcome path ahead." Speaker McCormack believed that Project 100,000 would "[remove] the cancer of doubt and hopelessness that has been gnawing at the Nation's vitals."⁴² Speaker McCormack, like many white northern liberals were deeply concerned about recent urban riots in northern cities. Many hailed the idea of putting black men in uniform as a solution to urban unrest. Testifying before the House Armed Services Committee in May 1967, Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts quoted a Project 100,000 trainer:

The Army is the last chance for many of them, if they are rejected from the Army, they have nothing left.... They roam the streets. They get in a group, something develops, and the next thing you know they are in the courts. On the other hand, those who have served, maybe in Vietnam, are very proud of their service. Many want to go back and serve in Vietnam for their nation.⁴³

Kennedy supported Project 100,000, noting, "preliminary results" were "highly satisfactory... particularly from the standpoint of the military, because of the high military motivation of this group."⁴⁴

But, at the time of Kennedy's testimony, no data on the performance of Project 100,000 recruits existed, and none was ever collected on the "motivation" or morale of New Standards Men while they were in the service. To solicit the opinions of New Standards Men would have violated McNamara's policy to protect them from unjust scrutiny and ridicule: New Standards Men were not supposed to know that they were part

⁴² *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong, 2nd sess., (30 January 1968), House 1409; Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 35-36.

⁴³ *Congressional Record*, 90th Cong, 1st sess., (4 May 1967), Senate 11854-55.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

of "McNamara's Moron Corps," as his critics derisively called the program.⁴⁵ When Kennedy spoke about "high military motivation," then, he was conjuring the commonly held belief that the military produced motivated men.

To paraphrase the historian Robert Dean, ideals of manhood that held currency within society were circulated and repeated.⁴⁶ The belief that the military built strong, capable men was an unquestionable truth to many men in government, as many had served in the military during World War II in some capacity. More importantly, military men made better future family men because the military gave them the gumption to be good breadwinners. In a speech to Congress in January 1968, President Johnson proclaimed that New Standards Men "have gained self-confidence and a sense of achievement" from their service in the military.⁴⁷ When McNamara spoke to the Educational Broadcasters Association, he proclaimed, "The Defense Department is the world's largest producer of skilled men. [There are] 1,500 different skills, in more than 2,000 separate courses. And each year we return about three-quarters of a million men to the nation's manpower pool." Using the same words as the president, McNamara told the audience what was most important: the military could deliver a "vital sense of achievement and self-confidence." He concluded his speech by saying, "Hundreds of

⁴⁵ McNamara believed that protecting the identity of New Standards Men was the key to Project 100,000's success. However, many in each recruit's chain of command had access to personnel files, which made deducing who was a New Standards Man relatively easy. Also, in the early stages of Project 100,000, New Standards Men were assigned a service number beginning with "67." Although the DoD quickly fixed this problem, New Standards Men were referred to derisively as "sixes and sevens," which ironically is an old English idiom, meaning a state of confusion and disarray. Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 36.

⁴⁶ Robert Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood*.

⁴⁷ *New York Times* (7 March 1967), 32.

thousands of men can be salvaged from the blight of poverty, and the Defense Department... is particularly well equipped to salvage them."⁴⁸

This is not to say that Project 100,000 was without its critics, or that the virtue of military service was without a counter-narrative. Many African American Civil Rights leaders deplored the program. Representative Adam Clayton Powell of New York called Project 100,000 "brutal" and tantamount to "genocide." He stated, "It's nothing more than killing off human beings who are not members of the elite."⁴⁹ In late 1966, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) issued a statement to condemn the program arguing that it would "increase the imbalance of black Americans in the war in Vietnam."⁵⁰

However, gender complicated the politics of race. In 1967, in response to rumors that President Johnson was going to ask for Secretary McNamara's resignation, the editorial board of *The Baltimore Afro-American*—which was firmly and consistently critical of the American war in Vietnam—lavished praise on McNamara and his sense of "Christian ministry:"

One of the tenets of modern Christian religion is that the moral and ethical teachings of Jesus have relevance to all men in all pursuits—that the barber, the baker, the candlestick maker should all create opportunities to perform a Christian ministry. Doubtless the man whose business is maintaining the fighting and killing capability of a country would have to be most creative to relate the ethics

⁴⁸ McNamara, "Remarks."

⁴⁹ Quoted in "Rights Leaders Deplore Plan to 'Salvage' Military Rejects," *New York Times*, (26 August 1966), 3.

⁵⁰ Ibid. Also, see Sol Stern, "When the Black G.I. Comes Back From Vietnam," *New York Times* (March 24, 1968), 27. While African Americans in the military were proportionally represented, their share of combat deaths was often disproportionate, reaching a height of 20 percent in 1967. On the whole, however, black casualties during the war averaged 12.5 percent, and the precipitous decline can be attributed to the backlash from those in the Civil Rights community. Appy, *Working-Class War*, 20-22.

of brotherhood with his main pursuit. But that is just what Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara has accomplished.⁵¹

The editors agreed that “salvaging” men from a life of poverty and giving them the tools to become good breadwinners and family men was prudent, that America needed “more top echelon administrators with McNamara’s sense of ministry.”

While Civil Rights leaders criticized Project 100,000 in particular and the Vietnam War in general, many African American men volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam. For example, nearly 30 percent of airborne units were African American (airborne personnel were volunteers) and reenlistment rates for blacks were three times higher than those for whites. Of course, inequalities in the draft system pressed more black men into the military because they were less likely to receive deferments. African Americans also performed poorly on the AFQT, and Project 100,000 increased the number of low-scoring black men in the military. Facing unemployment that was twice as high as that of whites, the military was an attractive option to many African Americans. More important to some black veterans was the desire to feel like a man. According to one black ex-Marine, "For some goddamned reason I believed that the U.S.M.C. made a man out of anybody. And I wanted to be a MAN more than anything in this whole

⁵¹ “Mac’s Sense of Ministry,” *The Baltimore Afro-American* (November 18, 1967), 4. For more on *The Baltimore Afro-American*’s editorial stance on Vietnam, see Lawrence Allen Eldridge, *Chronicles of a Two-Front War: Civil Rights and Vietnam in the African American Press* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2011), 142 and *passim*.

goddamned world."⁵² If some black men saw the military as a steady job, to many military service meant taking on the burden of citizenship and being a man.⁵³

From 1966 to 1968, 240,000 New Standards Men were inducted into the military.⁵⁴ Although McNamara promised to provide Category IV (the bottom third percentile group on the AFQT) men with the necessary training to qualify for jobs within the military, thus giving men the skills to compete in the civilian economy, this trust was broken almost immediately. McNamara argued that Congress had tied his hands: funding for major rehabilitative training was not forthcoming. Still, 96% of New Standards Men succeeded in completing basic training, compared to 98% service wide. A 1968 government report on Project 100,000 boasted that 62% of New Standards Men were assigned to non-combat military occupations, which "have direct or related counterparts in the civilian economy." This is a remarkable statistic in light of the fact that only six percent of New Standards Men received any serious remedial training to help them qualify for non-combat assignments. In comparison, 70% of all other draftees were assigned to non-combat roles. Of the nearly 40% assigned to combat units, the Department of Defense reasoned that "New Standards Men perform significantly better in combat-type training courses" than those that required "significant reading and mathematical abilities." "Failure rates" they concluded optimistically, "have been

⁵² Quoted in Estes, *I Am A Man!*, 166.

⁵³ Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 38-39.

⁵⁴ Project 100,000 draftees dwindled from a height of 100,000 a year in 1967 and 1968 to 75,000 in 1970 and finally 50,000 in 1971. Nearly 400,000 New Standards Men entered the service prior to the institution of the All-Volunteer Force.

dropping as a result of better assignment procedures."⁵⁵ If some New Standards Men were more likely to be assigned to combat, the majority found in the military a potential job training facility.⁵⁶

"I'll Be Honest, I Need the Military:" Desegregating Off-Base Housing

Since the end of World War II, government construction of housing for service members could never keep up with demand. Even though the military got really good at quantifying just how badly it was performing, it took a long time to come around to the simple truth that there was never going to be enough housing stock for service members and their families. The reasons for the shortage are fairly straight forward: first, during World War II, in order to meet the demands of a 12-million-plus-man wartime military, the government constructed temporary—and shoddily constructed—barracks and bachelor's quarters, and not homes for families. After the war, the United States decided that the global demands of the cold war required an enormous standing military, a first in American history. Like an elastic waistband worn out from the bloat of the war years, the postwar, garrisoned military was just too big for its prewar frame. The second reason for the housing shortage was that servicemen were early and eager participants in the postwar baby boom. Military service was no longer just for the young and single—especially within the enlisted ranks. From 1946 until 1963, the marriage rate for enlisted

⁵⁵ Baskir and Strauss, *Chance and Circumstance*, 129; Office of the Secretary of Defense, Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs), *Project One Hundred Thousand: Characteristics and Performance of "New Standards" Men*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1968).

⁵⁶ Worsencroft, "Salvageable Manhood," 39-40.

service members increased from one quarter to one half. More married personnel created acute housing shortages, and larger families, which were characteristic of the baby boom years, only compounded the problem. Between 1955 and 1961, the percentage of servicemen from all ranks with three or more children jumped from 12.6 percent to 27.8 percent.⁵⁷

In order to meet the demand, the military authorized servicemen to find housing off-base, and provided subsidies for paying rent or a mortgage. While popular among servicemen because on base housing in this time period ranged from simply inadequate to grossly dilapidated, this arrangement posed a unique problem for African American servicemen. In 1962 the Department of Defense used three basic criteria for measuring the adequacy of off-base housing. First, the location of the dwelling should be close enough that the commute to base did not exceed 45 minutes one way. Second, that the cost for rent/mortgage plus utilities could not be more than the serviceman's allowance for housing. And, third, the dwelling needed to be in good repair and meet the basic needs of the size of the family occupying it. According to the 1963 US Commission on Civil Rights report on the Armed Services, the current housing stock available to African American GIs and their families routinely failed all three of those criteria.⁵⁸

Scholarship on race over the last twenty years has made clear that housing discrimination contributed to structural racism in America. And the contours of that

⁵⁷ United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman: 1963 Staff Report* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1963), 1-2. The marriage data comes from Morrison, et al., "Families in the Army: Looking Ahead" (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 1989), 6-7.

⁵⁸ *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, 13.

struggle are embedded into the layers of federalism—local, state, and federal actors pushing and pulling at the racial status quo. In 1948, when the US Supreme Court ruled in *Shelley v. Kraemer* that restrictive covenants, or clauses that prevented home ownership or access to rental properties on the basis of race, were unconstitutional, state and local actors went about interpreting what that meant in the absence of federal mechanisms of enforcement. As Thomas Sugrue writes in his landmark study on race in postwar Detroit, "The liberal state communicated an ambivalent message on matters of race that had a powerful impact on individual group interactions at the local level."⁵⁹ In the wake of *Shelley v. Kraemer*, African Americans pushed back against restrictive covenants, redlining, and other racist methods for maintaining segregated communities, and, whites also began to organize community groups to maintain the housing status quo. "Localism" remarks Sugrue in another work, "as in the case of housing and social welfare policies—often reinforced structural patterns of inequality by enshrining local prejudices into real practices." Because of federal ambivalence, these white community groups were largely successful in maintaining segregated communities in the postwar era.⁶⁰

In many respects, desegregating military housing had a parallel story. When President Harry Truman desegregated the services, it had ramifications beyond black and

⁵⁹ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 10.

⁶⁰ Thomas Sugrue, "All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth-Century America," in Meg Jacobs, William J. Novak, and Julian E. Zelizer (eds.), *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 310. See also, Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

white troops serving in the same units. Every aspect of military life, in theory, became integrated, including on-base housing. According to the 1963 report by the United States Commission on Civil Rights, "North and South, Negro servicemen reported that the Government-owned housing, to the extent available, was assigned without regard to color and on a completely non-discriminatory, nonsegregated basis."⁶¹ Of course, this isn't to say that racism, whether personal or structural, had ceased to exist on military installations. That same report pointed out that because scarce on-base housing was assigned largely by seniority, and because African Americans were disproportionately under-represented in the upper echelons of the officer and enlisted ranks, these structural forms of racism made on-base housing unattainable for most black servicemen and their families, even while they couldn't blame a specific discriminatory housing policy. Again, the report stated:

The criterion of rank in the assignment of family quarters, although fair and impartial, nevertheless works to the disadvantage of the Negro serviceman. The result is that a higher proportion of Negro servicemen than white servicemen are forced to resort to the community housing market where it is more difficult for them to locate housing because of discriminatory practices.⁶²

Making matters worse, the report pointed out, because the military sought to maintain "color-blind" metrics for deciding when to build more on-base housing, it failed to account for racial discrimination when surveying available housing options in the surrounding community. In other words, to base housing planners, all off-base housing was erroneously counted as equal opportunity, even though many communities refused to rent to black families.

⁶¹ *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, 13.

⁶² *Ibid.*

Black military families in search of housing around military installations faced the same discriminatory practices confronting black civilians—restrictive covenants, redlining, intimidation, and coercion. The wife of one airman recalled having a door shut in her face by a landlord. She had called and scheduled an appointment to see the property, but when she showed up, the landlady exclaimed, "You don't sound like you look." One African American major recalled a similar experience while looking for a place to rent near his duty station. "By telephone the place would be available, but as soon as I appeared in person, the vacancy no longer existed." When he instead sought to buy a home, he was confronted by the insidious nature of housing market discrimination at midcentury for African American would-be homebuyers. After two weeks, he confessed that buying a home was "highly improbable, if not impossible." Frustrated, the black officer said:

I have talked to real estate agents, builders, and homeowners. The real estate agents blame the builders, the builders blame the homeowners, the homeowners blame the neighbors. One builder told me his development mortgages contain restrictive covenants, no Negroes, one dog, no boats in the driveway and so forth.⁶³

Housing for black servicemen and their families illustrates just how entrenched racial segregation was across the United States—north, south, east, and west. But, being chronically short on housing, the 1950s military adopted an approach to off-base housing discrimination that paralleled federal toward racist housing policies—ambivalence and neglect. In 1963, the US Commission on Civil Rights shed a light on the problem, but

⁶³ Ibid.

DoD continued to pursue the path of least resistance to avoid upsetting long-standing racist traditions. In July 1967, Secretary McNamara sought a different path.

The conventional wisdom on the Johnson administration's Civil Rights record holds that after the landmark achievements of '64 and '65, Johnson tried to redouble the government's efforts by pursuing a strategy of economic justice for African Americans. But, faced with pushback from the American people and their representatives in Congress, and within the context of an ever-widening war in Vietnam that continued to sap resources and the attention of Administration officials, Johnson largely abandoned his more ambitious policy proposals. G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot argue that by 1966, "The liberal hour was over. Its end came quickly, sharply; and it came from many directions. The perfect storm that yielded the policy explosion of 1963-66 passed as swiftly as it had formed."⁶⁴ Much of the conventional story is wrapped up in the mystique of Lyndon Johnson. Images of the President towering over congressmen to get the Civil Rights and Voting Rights bills passed—the "Johnson Treatment"—complemented memories of a time when LBJ ran the Senate with an iron fist, controlling the agenda, always in command of a ship that moved for him and him alone. After Johnson's impassioned speech at Howard University in 1965, in which he endorsed the sentiments in the Moynihan Report, the conventional story has it that Johnson was rebuked by his critics, and, choosing to focus on Vietnam over racial and economic justice, he retreated

⁶⁴ G. Calvin Mackenzie and Robert Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour: Washington and the Politics of Change in the 1960s* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 327.

from his bully pulpit on civil rights.⁶⁵ Efforts within the Department of Defense complicate this narrative.

The conventional narrative belies how government works. Johnson may have stepped out of the spotlight, but he had long ago given his marching orders to his cabinet secretaries, and in 1967 they continued their work in earnest. Bureaucrats kept doing their jobs; policies were still implemented. When Congress began to balk at more federal War on Poverty programs after 1965, policymakers in the executive branch simply went about doing what they could without legislation.

Never known for barnstorming, Robert McNamara spent a good amount of time traveling the country during the fall of 1967 talking to Americans "about the unused potential of the Department of Defense—a potential for contributing to the solution of social problems wracking our nation." One such occasion, on November 7, 1967, to the Denver meeting of the National Association of Educational Broadcasters, McNamara posed a provocative question to the audience: could the resources of the Department of Defense, "the largest single institution in the world...employing directly four and a half million men and women" be "used to contribute to our nation's benefit beyond the narrow—though vitally necessary—role of military power?"

Of course, Robert McNamara would never ask a question to an audience without already having an answer prepared. This speech in Denver, which he would give again and again across the country, was not written to marshal support for a new policy

⁶⁵ See David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1994); Mackenzie and Weisbrot, *The Liberal Hour*. For an account of Johnson's time in the Senate, see Robert Caro, *Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

proposal. McNamara was not visiting the home districts of select congressmen in order to put pressure on them before a key vote. This speech was show-and-tell, meant to promote programs that had been in the works since the Taskforce on Manpower Conservation report was issued back in 1964. It was a progress report, one that began unsurprisingly enough, given the reputation of the man delivering it, with a long-winded explanation of the military's overall global posture in 1967. There were statistics: "A 200% increase in the number of guided missile surface ships—from 23 to 72," McNamara droned, probably pointing to a chart as he was wont to do. He spoke of new weapons systems and described a dozen different types of missiles: The POSEIDON, the WALLEYE, the LANCE, SPARTAN and SPRINT—both "anti-ballistic missiles which will provide defense against a possible Chinese attack in the 1970s." After McNamara rattled off the laundry list of missiles, he moved on to dazzle the audience with factoids about the COBRA attack helicopter and A-7 attack aircraft. The speech was laden with numbers and acronyms, perfect for a military crowd, which was the audience when he gave this same speech to members of the VFW earlier that year. But this was a gathering of educational broadcasters, and so, after ten minutes of military boilerplate, he finally moved on to the topic that the broadcasters wanted to hear: the potential for achieving social justice through the Department of Defense and the United States military.⁶⁶

"Racial discrimination," McNamara started, "granting the great legislative advances that have been achieved in the past six years, remains a festering infection in

⁶⁶ Robert McNamara, Speech to the National Association of Educational Broadcasters (Denver, November 1967).

our national life.”⁶⁷ Back in July 1963, the Secretary issued a DoD-wide directive on Equal Opportunity and racial discrimination, arguing "discriminatory practices directed against Armed Forces members, all of whom lack a civilian's freedom of choice in where to live, to work, to travel, and to spend his off-duty hours, are harmful to military effectiveness."⁶⁸ He ordered members of the military to "oppose such practices on every occasion." He confessed to the audience in Denver that this order may have been lacking. "One fact became painfully clear" in the ensuing years, McNamara admitted, "Our voluntary program had failed, and failed miserably." In front of the educational broadcasters, McNamara continued with conviction:

I put the matter to you bluntly: our nation should not, and will not, ask a Negro sergeant, for example, to risk his life, day after dangerous day, in the heat and hardship of a jungle war, and then bring him home and compel him to remain separated from his wife and his children because of the hate and prejudice that parades under the pomposity of racial superiority.⁶⁹

McNamara told the broadcasters that "thousands of our Negro troops, returning from Vietnam" were facing systematic discrimination in off base housing.⁷⁰ But, he quickly added, his department was doing something about it. McNamara's Open Housing initiative began in the greater Washington area, including communities around bases in Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia. The Department of Defense sent surveyors out into the suburban communities around Washington to assess the extent of the problem. Segregated communities that rented to servicemen were flagged, and DoD officials were dispatched to meet with the landlords and realtors. Rental property owners and their

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ *Family Housing and the Negro Serviceman*, Appendix B.

⁶⁹ McNamara, Denver Speech.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

agents were not confronted by lowly bureaucrats but by assistant secretaries of defense, the service secretaries, service chiefs, and base commanders.

What began as a request for voluntary compliance soon escalated, as landlords continued refusing to rent to African Americans and their families. Landlords argued that if they opened their properties to black families, whites would no longer want to live there. The local Chamber of Commerce in Laurel, Maryland, which is home to many service members stationed at nearby Ft. Meade, called the DoD efforts "precipitous and unwarranted." The president of the Laurel Chamber, Fred Frederick, worried that the order would "cast a stigma of off limits to a community not deserving of it," and warned of adverse consequences for the "economic welfare of our entire community."⁷¹

In the DC Metro area alone, McNamara had to declare communities off-limits near Ft. Meade, Aberdeen Proving Ground, Ft. Holabird, Andrews Air Force Base, and Edgewood Arsenal. For his part, McNamara expressed sympathy with business leaders' economic arguments, even while calling them "shortsighted." Still, by making segregated rental properties off-limits to white servicemen, McNamara had changed the landlords' calculus. Ever the Harvard business professor, McNamara said dryly, "This had the effect of applying a countervailing economic pressure, and [afterward] our open housing program took on an altogether new and positive direction."⁷²

Within the context of southern states' massive resistance to desegregation, the Open Housing initiative was so successful largely because of the federal and hierarchical

⁷¹ Quoted in Michael Drosnin, *Laurel Raps Housing Rule By Pentagon*, "Washington Post (7 July 1967), B1.

⁷² McNamara, Denver Speech.

nature of the military and broader Department of Defense. Robert McNamara could unilaterally declare that everyone under him—DoD civilian employees, contractors, and uniformed members of the military—must comply with this directive. Military leaders could not object because the military was, ostensibly, an equal opportunity employer and entirely integrated. Those white servicemen and their family members who would have preferred to live in segregated housing off base couldn't object to a lawful order. And, once landlords and business groups in towns and cities that were dependent upon Defense dollars realized the potential for huge losses if they didn't rent to all members of the military, they found out that they couldn't object either. More than just money from rental payments, entire municipalities near bases relied on the revenue streams that service personnel and their families generated; local schools needed military children sitting in their desks; the local grocery, hardware, and drug stores that sold food and daily necessities needed those servicemen and their government paychecks to stay open.

W. Dale Hess understood this basic fact all too well, even while he hated the idea of renting to African American servicemen. Hess was the owner of a 150-unit apartment development under construction near Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, and he was also the Democratic Majority Whip in the state's House of Delegates. In the late hours of the 1967 legislative session, Hess used his power as Whip to try to get his apartment complex exempted from a new anti-discrimination law the Maryland Legislature was debating that March. The law stipulated that properties built after June 1, 1967, would have to comply with the anti-discrimination ordinance and allow renters regardless of race. Hess had the bill amended to allow developments that had only filed for permits

prior to June 1 to be exempted also. When McNamara issued his directive in July, Hess knew that his artful legislative work was for naught, saying, "I'll be honest, I need the military." He projected that one-third of his tenants would be military.⁷³

Southern segregationists in Congress were incensed, but they could do little but bluster and hope that the plan would fail. The Chairman of the Armed Services Committee, southern Democrat L. Mendel Rivers, fumed that McNamara's move was a "purely political...completely unenforceable move." But Rivers was wrong: in northern Virginia and Maryland alone, the Open Housing initiative more than tripled the number of housing units available to African American families from 15,000 to 53,000 in just four months. And black families immediately took advantage. Of the 633 African American military families that applied for off base housing in the Washington metro area between July and December 1967, 287 applications were approved in housing units that were segregated six months earlier.⁷⁴ Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina called it "another unconstitutional extension of executive power."⁷⁵ McNamara later recalled that his department faced "substantial pressure from members of Congress representing white property owners who strongly objected to the policies we were following." But he knew he had the full support of the President, and the service chiefs were "quite willing to pursue" a policy of desegregation.⁷⁶

⁷³ "Hess Exemption Undone; He Integrates for Military," *Washington Post* (13 July 1967), B1.

⁷⁴ McNamara Speech, James MacNees, "Open Housing Gains Listed By Pentagon," *Baltimore Sun* (31 December 1967), 16.

⁷⁵ "Pentagon Reports New Housing for Negro GIs," *Los Angeles Times* (31 December 1967), D5.

⁷⁶ McNamara Interview.

McNamara ordered Alfred Fitt, along with the service secretaries, chiefs, and base commanders, to meet with national real estate organizations and other national business groups to request that they comply with the Open Housing initiative. The Department of Defense began conducting surveys nationwide in every community with a military base to ascertain the scope of segregation in off-base housing. On Veterans' Day in 1967, Undersecretary Fitt addressed the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB), which was holding its annual meeting in Washington, where he asked them for their support in this nationwide effort. Echoing the words in McNamara's speech, given just a few days earlier, he told them that "our nation should not, and will not, ask a Negro sergeant, for example, to risk his life in Southeast Asia and then bring him home and compel him to remain separated from his wife and children, or condemn him to off-base housing which in many instances is at once more distant, less desirable, and more expensive than that opened to other servicemen." According to one reporter for *The Washington Post*, the DoD's message was received by a "polite but restrained audience." Nonetheless, Fitt urged NAREB to adopt a resolution endorsing the end of housing discrimination. He ended with a simple warning: comply voluntarily or face sanctions like those the DoD imposed in Washington.⁷⁷

When the Department of Defense nationalized the Open Housing program, policymakers immediately turned their attention to California, in part because it was the state with the most military installations and military personnel, but also because, of the fourteen states with statewide open housing regulations and laws on the books, it had the

⁷⁷ John B. Willman, "Military Notes Housing Gains," *Washington Post* (12 November 1967), D2.

lowest percentage of apartments open to black tenants. With the notable exception of the municipalities surrounding Marine Corps Base, Camp Pendleton in southern California, where surveyors found a "healthy acceptance" of African American renters, most base communities around the sunshine state were not willing to rent to black GIs. In Santa Barbara and Ventura counties, surveyors estimated that twenty percent of off-base housing was off limits to black families. Perhaps noticing the national attention this issue attracted, many rental property owners began refusing to answer government questionnaires about their rental policies. In Oxnard, which is in Ventura County, and home to a missile testing range at Point Mugu, a group of landlords who owned over 500 units refused to answer specific questions about their policies. In spite of state open housing laws and the Department of Defense's new push, thirteen percent still said they would not rent to black families.⁷⁸

And yet, in the face of opposition from property owners, national real estate groups, and members of Congress, the Open Housing program had measurable success. In California alone, the number of desegregated housing units rose from 206,100 to 253,800, or from seventy-one percent to eighty-seven percent overall. Nationwide, the DoD estimated that the number of equal opportunity housing units available to black military families increased by more than 150,000 in the last seven months of 1967, from 646,700 to 802,200. The progress in some states was remarkable: North Carolina's available housing stock jumped from 68% to 93%; Arizona from 72 to 98%. Of the forty-

⁷⁸ McNamara, Denver Speech; Howard Kennedy, "Bias in Housing Near Military Bases Noted," *Los Angeles Times* (23 September 1967), 14; Julian Hartt, "Acceptance of Negroes Cited: Pendleton Area Praised for Open Housing Policy," *Los Angeles Times* (3 July 1967), A6.

six states surveyed, only Louisiana remained below 50% open housing compliant by December 1967.⁷⁹

April 1968 saw the passage of another major Civil Rights bill, which enshrined the Fair Housing Act, an elusive goal of the Johnson administration, into law under Title VII of its provisions. But as late as December 1967, when DoD issued its glowing report on Open Housing, the landmark federal legislation looked doomed. Open housing had become a major issue in the '68 election campaign. Republicans and segregationist democrats stoked fears of "LBJ's bureaucrats...swarming over every neighborhood setting up Negro-white quotas, forcing homeowners to sell their property, and encouraging vicious gangs of rioters and looters to destroy neighborhoods which dare to resist." President Johnson's liberal supporters, fearing backlash over the housing issue, couldn't even get a bill out of committee in 1967. Within this context, McNamara's Open Housing initiative provided Republicans with ammunition. Although the most virulent of the right wing tactics were gross distortions meant to scare white voters, the Department of Defense *was* dispatching "bureaucrats" into neighborhoods and, in some communities, ordered desegregation by military decree. To the chagrin of Johnson administration policymakers, the headway that the DoD was making on desegregating housing in military communities was making the passage of federal civil rights legislation more difficult.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ "Pentagon Reports New Housing for Negro GIs," D5; Macnees, "Open Housing Gains Listed By Pentagon," 16.

⁸⁰ "Effective Lobbying Put Open Housing Bill Across." In *CQ Almanac 1968*, 24th ed., 14-166-14-168 (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly, 1969), <http://library.cqpress.com/cqalmanac/cqal68-1283472>; Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 178.

But in early 1968, several events changed the political calculus. First, the senate was finally able to break the two-year-long filibuster on the bill in February. The motion for cloture carried by one vote; the bill passed the senate on March 11. President Johnson wrote to Speaker of the House John McCormack and implored him to bring the measure to a vote. He argued that passage of the bill would be a signal to Americans and the world that the United States was committed to civil rights. In the letter, he invoked the unassailable character of the black soldier,

To one man—the Negro veteran of Vietnam—the fair housing provision will have a special meaning. I do not need to tell you what he has done for our country. It is up to us—to all of us—to assure him the elemental rights in his own country for which he risked his life overseas. That man—and his race—are entitled to the justice this bill provides.⁸¹

All eyes were on the house, where it looked like it was going to get buried in committee. But then Johnson made his March 31 announcement that he was not going to seek reelection, and, on April 4th, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. The morning after King was shot, Johnson wrote another letter to the Speaker telling him that the time to act was now. He invoked a fundamental belief of liberal policymakers in the 1960s, that "the right of a man to secure a home for his family regardless of the color of his skin" was a basic tenet of American citizenship (clearly, here, citizenship was gendered male). The President's words echoed those of Robert McNamara's several months earlier in his speech to the educational broadcasters: "The Negro serviceman has been loyal and responsible to his country. But the people of his country have failed in their loyalty and

⁸¹ Lyndon B. Johnson: "Letter to the Speaker of the House Urging Prompt Action on the Civil Rights Bill," 12 March 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28729>; Johnson, *The Vantage Point*, 178.

responsibility to him." The Civil Rights Act of 1968 passed a few days later and Johnson signed it into law on April 11.⁸²

Conclusion

Almost through stubborn willpower alone, Lyndon Baines Johnson made the Great Society and Vietnam run in confluence during his administration. But, the two streams could not be held back from their diverging paths, and in early 1968 their power broke the President. On March 31, looking exhausted and forlorn, the once towering president looked into the camera and told the American people he would not seek reelection that November. After mounting casualties, the broken promises of a corner turned or a "light at the end of the tunnel," and the January Tet Offensive, finally turned American opinion against Johnson's Great Society and the war. Moreover, Americans could no longer see the benefits that were tied to martial obligations—for so long the boundaries of the liberal imagination. The logic of masculine citizenship that was first articulated in *One-Third of a Nation*, and later on in "The Moynihan Report," shaped government policy from 1963 until 1968. But by then, most Americans wanted nothing to do with military service.

By 1968, the longest era of conscription in US history was on life support. To paraphrase the historian Robert K. Griffith, Jr., the very war that would ultimately end the draft was ironically the reason the draft remained functioning until 1973. "How to End

⁸² Lyndon B. Johnson: "Letter to the Speaker of the House Urging Enactment of the Fair Housing Bill," 5 April 1968. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=28785>; McNamara, Denver Speech.

the Draft,” the title of one congressional study, became the perennial question after June 1967, when the induction authority portion of the Selective Service Act was set to expire. Sensing the mounting opposition to the draft, but believing the draft necessary to continue the fight in Vietnam, President Johnson created a commission of his own to study draft reforms. The National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, usually called the Burke Marshall Commission after its chair, recommended that the nation keep conscription, but it also argued that reforms to Selective Service were needed. In particular, the Commission recommended ending most deferments and creating a centralized Selective Service bureaucracy.

Although the President issued a statement supporting those recommendations, many, including Burke Marshall himself, believed that the entire study was a farce, commissioned to delay any major overhauls and force Congress to renew the existing Selective Service Act. The fundamental changes that policymakers in the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations attempted to make between 1963 and 1968 in pursuit of their vision to make military service more integral to masculinity, citizenship, and in preparing men for a life of productive breadwinning, would inform the policy debates over what to do with the draft, and, eventually, how to end conscription.⁸³

⁸³ Robert K. Griffith, Jr., *The U.S. Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force, 1968-1974, Army Historical Series* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1997), 11; Robert T. Stanton, et. al., *How To End the Draft: The Case for an All-Volunteer Army* (Washington, DC: National Press, Inc., 1967); National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, *In Pursuit of Equity: Who Serves When Not All Serve?* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967).

CHAPTER 3:

ULEASHING THE MANPOWER RIVER

A Dam on a River

By the end of 1966, there were over 385,000 American troops in Vietnam; a year later there were over 100,000 more. In the summer of 1967, draft calls crested over 30,000 a month. By relying on the draft, President Johnson chose the path of least resistance in his escalation of the war. Calling up the reserves would mean mobilizing fathers and men with stable careers—in short, breadwinners—a path that Johnson believed would prematurely turn the public against the war. Americans lost faith eventually, and in fact, the year 1967, the same year that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara toured the country to talk about Project 100,000, marked a turning point in public opinion on the war. Half of the American public now believed Vietnam to be a mistake and even more had lost faith in their national leaders. In 1968, those views were going to harden.¹

Shifting opinions of America's war in Vietnam were connected to other changing attitudes and beliefs in the late 1960s. For some men, the antiwar movement inspired alternative ways of proving one's masculinity—"Girls Say Yes To Boys Who Say No"—even if they were still as sexist as the old ones. Also, the credibility gap over Vietnam eroded faith in the decades-old assumption that military service should be a crucial step

¹ Mark Atwood Lawrence, *The Vietnam War: A Concise International History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 112; George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*, Second Edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 174.

in a man's life, one that would give him the requisite masculine character to lead a productive life as breadwinner and head of household. Even the aspirations—a single-income family with a male earner and a wife at home—were becoming more fantasy than an attainable reality at this point.

While members of the Johnson Administration continued to pursue policies informed by those older assumptions, others began to mount a critique of government run, consecutive life planning—military service *then* family and career—as wasteful overreach and antithetical to individual liberty. As Bruce K. Chapman, a conservative editorialist for the *New York Herald Tribune*, wrote, “The myth that ‘the Army builds men,’ insofar as it relates to the draft, should... be debunked.” Chapman argued the only feeling that the draft inculcated into draftees was “the desire to get out as soon as possible.”² Like a dam on a river—a recurring metaphor in conscription debates—the draft blocked the natural flow of young men’s lives, forcing some men to go to college when they might not have, others to get married and have children sooner than they might have, and forcing those men who did get drafted to put off marriage, family, and a career. But, more than just calling for an end to compulsory military service, a growing coterie of conservative thinkers began to ask why military service had to be such a disruption, why it couldn’t be more like a career.

In the late 1960s, as Americans debated the draft issue, concerns over the male breadwinner and the American family became the fulcrum in a war over the meaning of citizenship. The first chapter uncovered an understanding of citizenship that saw men's

² Bruce K. Chapman, *The Wrong Man in Uniform: Our Unfair and Obsolete Draft—and How We Can Replace It* (New York: Trident Press, 1967), 77.

martial obligations as both linked to, and supporting of, men's marital roles: fulfilling your obligation to your country would make you a better breadwinner, husband, and father. Benefits and rights, duty and obligation marked the boundaries of the liberal imagination.

This chapter recounts a competing formulation of citizenship, one that privileged personal liberty and individualism as paramount, and its proponents expressed an unfailing belief in the free market, not government, as the most competent arbiter and protector of those rights. In the late 1960s, these competing notions of citizenship vied for supremacy. This was a war that often eschewed typical left-right political divisions. It pitted generals against economists and service secretaries against their chiefs of staff, while at the same time uniting New Leftists and right-leaning libertarians. It was also a war that nobody won, for in spite of their significant efforts, the advocates for a citizenship based in individual liberty and the free market could never shake the language of obligations and duty free from the American imagination, even while the successfully dismantled the institutional state mechanisms that made that contract enforceable. This chapter is the story of why Americans still talk about military service with the language of obligation, sacrifice, and duty to country long after they stopped believing that those ideals applied to them personally.

To those who valued individualism and smaller government, the growing welfare state—and the military's central role in producing worthy recipients of its benefits—dehumanized and emasculated young men. Drawing upon broader anxieties about masculinity and a stifling culture of conformity that they believed government fostered,

anti-draft conservatives began to argue that conscription made military service incongruous with an American way of life. One editorial in a Republican newsletter worried that although more Americans had their material needs met, “they are plagued by a vague anxiety and lack of fulfillment.” The paper called for “a new emphasis on individualism, consciously directed toward so (*sic*) modifying and channeling the irreversible forces of contemporary society as to create new opportunities for individual self-expression and development.” The editorialist called it “creative individualism,” and he was adamant that large government programs failed “to enable the individual who so desires to play a meaningful role in voluntary, fraternal, and community associations.”³ Compulsory military service stifled the volunteer spirit.⁴

According to Chapman, in his anti-draft monograph entitled *The Wrong Man in Uniform*, “The psychic rewards” of military service “are largely undercut by the draft. A serviceman’s pride cannot help but suffer when other men are conscripted to do the work he does by choice.”⁵ Forced to live and work in a military world built for conscripts, career-oriented military men could not provide the quality of life he owed to his family as breadwinner. “At present,” Chapman argued, “we are still afflicted with an attitude of

³ Elliot L. Richardson, “Beyond The Marlboro Man,” *Ripon Forum*, Vol. 3.5, (May 1967).

⁴ My understanding of political culture in this era is informed by K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture*; Grace Elizabeth Hale, *A Nation of Outsiders: How the White, Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Doug Rossinow, *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and The New Left in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

⁵ Chapman, *The Wrong Man in Uniform*, 77.

austerity...in which one-termers and careerists alike must live.”⁶ In a country defined by abundance and consumerism, austere living conditions and paltry earnings provided draft critics with ample evidence that conscription was out of step with American values. Moreover, they charged that draftees received training that was “useless to a man in his civilian career, for draftees are not the men on whom the military lavishes its famed training programs.”⁷ To these critics, the civilian economy provided solutions: if Americans wanted to improve military life, the military would have to be dragged into the marketplace—and consequently, military service made more like a career.⁸

Finally, the shift to the All-Volunteer Force dramatically changed family policies in the Army and the Marine Corps, and during the transitional period away from the draft, Army leaders and their Marine counterparts began to articulate divergent visions for effective family policy. The Army, by far the largest force, and therefore most affected by the new volunteer environment, began to see family satisfaction as an important element of retention. This is not to say that Army policymakers suddenly became pro-family at the dawn of the 1970s, or that they were altogether thrilled by these new developments. The adage, 'If the Army wanted you to have a wife, it would have issued one to you,' still characterized how most men in command felt in those years of transition. The Marine Corps, which had spent much of the post-World War II era

⁶ Chapman, *The Wrong Man in Uniform*, 121.

⁷ Ibid., 77.

⁸ On consumerism and citizenship, see Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004). On how consumerism and abundance shaped military service in Vietnam, see Meredith Lair, *Armed with Abundance: Consumerism & Soldering in the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). On conservatism, welfare, and gender, see Chappell, *The War on Welfare*.

defending its very existence to Congress, to the other services, and to successive presidents, also saw the new AVF as an existential threat.⁹ Although the Marines never relied on the draft in the way the Army did, the new AVF meant increased competition in the recruiting pool. One Defense Department study, conducted between 1971 and 1973, suggested that only about ten percent of male civilians interested in joining the military would make the Marine Corps their first choice out of all of the services. Although they never struggled with recruiting like the Army did in the 1970s, the Marines would have to make changes to compete in a tighter market.¹⁰

Within this new environment, each branch took different paths to sell their particular service in the marketplace. Importantly, moreover, the American public began to view them differently. While the Army sold opportunity, the Marines doubled down on appeals to men who wanted to have their manhood tested at an elite level. The Marines began to see the family, women, and other "feminine" influences as a threat to their warrior culture. The Marines would continue to fight these battles for the rest of the century.

The Ripon Society and the Ideological Origins of the All-Volunteer Force

It has become axiomatic that Richard Nixon saw ending the draft as a political opportunity in the 1968 presidential election, and being a master at political opportunism, he seized upon it in the waning days of the campaign. But what made 1968 different?

⁹ Aaron O'Connell, *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Study data found in Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1976), 57.

Other presidential candidates on both sides of the political spectrum—Adlai Stevenson in 1956 and Barry Goldwater in 1964—had tried to make an opportunity out of ending the draft, but the idea failed to gain traction. Vietnam is clearly a major factor, but even though Americans were turning on the war, support for the draft was still strong at the time of the election: a Gallop poll conducted in the first week of 1969 found that sixty-two percent of Americans favored continuing the draft and only thirty-one percent supported a volunteer military.¹¹

Still, an unusually tight election forced Nixon to try anything he could. But, unlike when Stevenson tried in 1956, or Goldwater in 1964, Nixon could tap into a robust anti-draft movement— not one that started on the political left, but one that began among a small group of young, liberal-leaning Republicans called the Ripon Society. The Ripon Society would gain influence with a cadre of Republican congressmen, the "Wednesday Group," so-called because they met for lunch on Wednesdays. When Richard Nixon appointed the Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force, often referred to as the Gates Commission after its chairman, former Secretary of Defense Thomas Gates, members of the Wednesday Group and the Ripon Society joined neoliberal economists who were popular among Ripon's members, namely Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan, to write the document that would allow Nixon to end conscription in America.

To these critics, the draft was a part of a wider campaign to reform the government and the people's relationship to it. The draft became a touchstone for two

¹¹ Flynn, *The Draft*, 237.

particular concerns within certain Republican circles. The first was the fear of a growing welfare state under the War on Poverty and Great Society, which Republicans believed undermined individual liberty. As is often the case with oppositional political movements, sometimes the ideas the Ripon Society proposed to counter liberalism were more aspirational than substantive. Instead of a welfare state, the members of the Ripon Society argued for an “opportunity state,” which they described as a government that encouraged men to volunteer for national service rather than forced them to serve, that embraced bureaucratic reforms to maximize efficiency, and that could capitalize on technological innovations. Second, many of these Republican critics were young, and they genuinely chafed under systems that encouraged conformity. They called for “creative individualism,” inspired not by government programs, but by “something from within...[to] inspire awareness that there is no greater satisfaction for any individual than in the development and exercise of a talent or skill.”¹²

Although the Ripon Society was formed in 1962, the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963 and the nomination of Barry Goldwater as the Republican candidate for president a year later gave the group greater purpose and direction. Like Americans of all political stripes, Ripon members were deeply moved by Kennedy's aspirational politics of voluntary service to country, and they were profoundly shaken by his tragic death. Their signal statement that they sent out to all Republican members of Congress on January 6, 1964, at the beginning of the '64 election season, echoed the moderate politics that Kennedy's long-time advisor Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. championed in his midcentury

¹² Richardson, “Beyond the Marlboro Man.”

treatise, "The Vital Center": "We believe that the future of our party lies not in extremism, but in moderation. The moderate course offers the Republican Party the best chance to build a durable majority position in American politics."¹³

Headquartered in Cambridge, right on Harvard Square, the Ripon Society set out to make conservatism, and the Republican Party, the intellectual center of American politics, and they soon started hammering out those ideas in the *Ripon Forum*, their semi-monthly newsletter. Befitting a group that was inspired by JFK, the Ripon Society branded itself as the voice of youthful, smart, and politically active Americans. Over the course of the next decade, the Ripon Society would become an intellectual home for center-right, libertarian-leaning politicians. The *Forum* would publish critical and engaging articles about issues that mattered to young people— student activism, higher education, civil rights, and, most importantly, Vietnam and the draft. The draft in particular became a signature issue, and the *Forum* would become the site for Republicans interested in honing a serious conservative critique of conscription in America.

In the December 1966 issue, the *Forum* published a new vision for military service. Calling the draft an injustice of "first prominence"—alongside racism and urban poverty—the editors of the *Forum* urged "the Federal Government to eliminate the draft...and to establish a 2.7 million man volunteer army." Instead of a burden to be foisted upon young men, they argued that military service should be more like a career—one that would provide a sufficient salary and benefits for men to comfortably support a family. "Good wages," they argued, "unquestionably are an important inducement, and

¹³ "A Call to Excellence in Leadership," in Lee W. Huebner and Thomas E. Petri (eds.), *The Ripon Papers, 1963-1968* (Washington, DC: The National Press, 1968), 5.

previous surveys of public opinion made by the military cited low pay as a major reason for the relative unattractiveness of the military life in the eyes of civilians.” Comparing first-term enlistees’ wages to “Rumanian peasants on a collective farm,” they argued that conscription created a system in which a man simply could not afford to provide for his family: “If a man does make a career out of the service he and his wife frequently find themselves living in unattractive military communities...Psychologically, such an environment cannot help but have an influence on a potential careerist’s attitude toward the services.”¹⁴

The *Forum's* call for a volunteer military was released two months before the publication of the Burke Marshall Commission’s report, “In Pursuit of Equity: Who Serves When Not All Serve?” which President Johnson ordered to quell growing criticism of his draft policies. In a year that would end up having the most draft inductions—over 382,000 in 1966— for the entire war, the *Forum* argued that the Commission was a political farce, meant to shore up Johnson and the Democrats' flank before the midterm elections, not to seriously consider reforming the draft. Tongue-in-cheek, the editors commented, “Undoubtedly the distinguished members of the Commission are sincere in their desire to find ways to improve the draft system,” but then pondered why the “distinguished” members had only met twice since they were empaneled. They mused, “Perhaps the very skilled staff men have gleaned information

¹⁴ “Politics and Conscription: A Ripon Proposal to Replace the Draft,” *Ripon Forum* Vol. 2.9 (December 1966).

and opinions from knowledgeable people on all sides of the draft question” in such a short time.¹⁵

Of course, the editorial staff of the *Ripon Forum* could not have known for sure what the Johnson’s true intentions were when he commissioned the study. But, recall that in chapter two, Burke Marshall himself believed that the Commission was a farce, ordered by Johnson to kill time and force Congress to renew the draft. Political theater or not, the Commission’s recommendations to reform the draft, including consolidating the Selective Service System into a national office and ending most deferments, were well within the boundaries of cold war liberalism’s vision for the draft and male citizenship. The commissioners never questioned the underlying premise that a man, if called, should serve in the military. Instead, they focused on the inherent inequities of the system, and the present problem posed by the baby boom population surplus—"who serves when not all serve?"

They also acknowledged the broad-based appeals for ending the draft, citing The National Council of Churches, which favored abolishing conscription, and the United States Youth Council, an umbrella organization for 35 youth groups, as evidence that opinion against the draft was growing. Members of the United States Youth Council polled its members and found that sixty-one percent favored moving to a volunteer military.¹⁶ Yet, in the view of the Commission members, the underlying assumptions about service, duty, and citizenship were sound, the problem was that there were too

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ National Advisory Commission on Selective Service, *In Pursuit of Equity: Who Serves When Not All Serve?* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1967), 12.

many people, and not enough equitable ways to defer the people who the military didn't need.

To the editors of the *Ripon Forum*, however, the Commissions' assumptions *were* the problem. "Few people truly favor the present practice of conscription," they argued. The editors appealed to youth, "Particularly in the undergraduate community—where the draft is subject to fraternity bull-sessions, student government polls, and 'New Left' petitions—resentment is high." Indeed, the problem was the very structures that liberals worked so hard to construct in service of the gender order: "Careers must be planned, wives courted, and courses selected, all under the shadow of uncertainty of the draft." While most draft reformers focused on two alternatives, a national lottery or expanding the notion of obligatory "national service" to include other options, like VISTA or the Peace Corps, the *Forum* editors likened the former to a perverse game of "Russian roulette," and believed the latter was unfeasible due to the enormity of the manpower pool. There simply could never be enough VISTA, Peace Corps, or other service jobs for the number of eligible citizens of draft age.¹⁷

Being frequently libertarian in orientation, the editors also objected to expanding compulsory national service because it would necessitate a massive growth of the federal government. Drawing upon well-rehearsed cold war arguments, they wrote that time—two years of compulsory service instead of a lifetime— was the only difference between government-mandated national service and Communism. Finally, they asked whether women would be compelled to serve in some capacity. The draft aside, they asked, if the

¹⁷ "Politics and Conscription," *Ripon Forum*.

government was going to compel its citizens to perform what would essentially be social service functions, shouldn't women have to too? And, if so, would that be fair to men, a percentage of whom would still be required to fight in the time of war?¹⁸

Now, even as late as 1967 the Ripon Society was a tiny movement within the larger Republican Party. In an article published in June, the *Boston Globe* estimated that their membership was “not much more than 1,000.”¹⁹ Ripon’s unorthodox positions also put it at odds with the broader Republican coalition: the members advocated for a guaranteed income through a negative income tax plan, supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and were warning their fellow Republicans of “creeping Reaganism”—by which they meant a raft of complaints including anti-intellectualism, the rise of celebrity politicians, and a more conservative turn for the Republican Party— as early as 1965.²⁰

But in the *Ripon Forum*, these liberal-leaning Republicans were able to slowly hone their opposition to the draft, using themes that were drawn from broader conservative critiques of the welfare state, of taxation, and of government intrusion into the “free market.” First, they argued that the draft was an infringement on liberty and antithetical to a free society. Rehearsing old arguments about continental vs. British ideas about conscription, they argued that the postwar peacetime draft smacked of “Napoleonic” ideals and “Prussian virtues.” Conversely, “in Britain and the United States impressment has always been seen as unjustifiable except when the security of the state

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Fred Pillsbury, “Full-Time Chief for Ripon Society: Big Doings in Only 2 Small Rooms,” *Boston Globe*, (25 June 1967), 6A.

²⁰ The phrase “Creeping Reaganism” would accompany nearly every story about the former president of the Screen Actors Guild after 1965, when Reagan began to gear up for the California governorship.

required it."²¹ Second, citing the work of economists associated with the University of Chicago, namely Walter Oi, the editors argued that the draft was, in effect, a tax on the young men who had the misfortune of getting conscripted. The draft-as-tax argument would gain particular traction among Republicans and disaffected Democrats within the context of the rising cost of the war in Vietnam and expanded social welfare programs associated with the Great Society in the late-1960s. And, third, they argued that the draft produced an inferior product: a costly military, with high turnover, and poorly motivated troops. Although these arguments did not explicitly reference families, or breadwinners (remember that most Ripon members were young, many of them still in college or law school), the Ripon Society's critique of the draft foreshadowed the core tenets of what would become the "family values" agenda later on.²²

The Wednesday Group

Opponents of the draft made strange bedfellows, and although The Ripon Society represented a central node in a growing network of Republican organizations opposed to the draft, the young members of Ripon were willing to make alliances with all political stripes to end conscription. For example, in 1967 Ripon co-founder Bruce K. Chapman helped form the Council for a Voluntary Military, which brought together groups from the entire political spectrum, including the far right Young Americans for Freedom and

²¹ "Politics and Conscription," *Ripon Forum*.

²² As Robert Self argues, "The conservative definition of 'family values' represented an antiwelfare-state ideology. It was consistent with attacks on social democracy, the emphasis on market-based policies, and a general advance of neoliberalism—meaning a 'new' version of classical liberalism's idea of free markets..." *All in the Family*, 10.

the leftist Americans for Democratic Action. By declaring all other political issues off-limits (including the Vietnam War), the Council for a Voluntary Military provided a forum for a lively debate among thinkers and activists interested in ending conscription, including Sanford Gottlieb of the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy, James Farmer of CORE, and Milton Friedman, the University of Chicago economist who, at that time, was perhaps the most influential voice on the right in the debate over ending the draft.²³

One rising Ripon member was Stephen Herbits. Like other young men in the 1960s, Herbits had to make calculated life choices in the shadow of the draft and the war. He graduated from Tufts University in 1964 and worked as a congressional staffer in Washington DC before entering Georgetown Law in 1967. Although Stephen Herbits opposed the draft, he was not a member of a leftist group like SDS, and, like, many Americans at the time, he disdained protestors in particular and radical politics in general. Herbits wasn't even a staffer for antiwar congressmen; he considered himself a lifelong Republican when he went to work for Congress, and he found a home with a group of Republican representatives who began meeting for lunch on Wednesdays to discuss political strategy and the direction of the party.²⁴

²³ Russell Freeburg, "All-Volunteer Army Urged by New Group," *Chicago Tribune*, 19 May 1967, A11; Neil Sheehan, "Draft is Uniting Right with Left," *New York Times*, 22 May 1967, 17.

²⁴ The overall trend in the historiography on the antiwar movement has been towards more nuance than earlier, more journalistic, accounts that tended to focus on the sensational, whereas more recent works have tried to put the Vietnam antiwar movement in a broader historical context. Still, the historiography remains overwhelmingly focused on the political left. For a sense of this more recent trend, see for example, Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the*

In May 1966, this group of 25 congressmen began pressuring the Democratic chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, L. Mendel Rivers, to open an investigation into inequities in the draft and the broader Selective Service System. At this point, the members of the Wednesday Group were still supportive of the draft, in theory. According to one statement they released in early 1966, "A decision to abolish the draft, even if only in peacetime can come only after the most exhaustive investigation on its potential impact on the military preparedness of the nation." Even though the draft was becoming more unpopular, they argued, "a decision on its continuation should not be based on its degree of popularity."²⁵ Democratic Chairman Rivers eventually relented to growing (and bipartisan) pressure to hold hearings, but most observers agreed that Rivers never really intended to rock the boat. 1966 was shaping up to be a tough midterm election year for Democrats and no Democratic leader wanted to open the floodgates on the Vietnam question, or the draft, in this political climate. So, the hearings were short, the tone supportive, and the conclusion was to continue the course with Lewis B. Hershey remaining at the helm of Selective Service.

After the unsatisfactory conclusion of the Armed Services Committee's hearings, the Wednesday Group went to work on their own study of the draft and alternatives to conscription, hiring Stephen Herbits as a researcher. Toward the end of 1967, after the

Vietnam Era (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990); Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003); John Prados, *Vietnam: The History of an Unwinnable War, 1945-1975* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2009); Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle For America's Hearts and Minds* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 2002).

²⁵ Quoted in Robert Semple Jr., "Pressure to Change Draft is Gaining in Washington," *New York Times* (30 May 1966).

Burke Marshall Commission released its report, the Wednesday Group published its findings in a short monograph titled, *How to End the Draft*. Written by Vermont Congressman Robert T. Stafford and four other Republican congressmen, *How to End the Draft* was endorsed by seventeen other members of Congress, including Robert Taft, Jr., and a young Representative from Illinois named Donald Rumsfeld. In the book, the Wednesday Group put forth a plan to reduce draft calls dramatically, ultimately transitioning to an all-volunteer military within five years.

How to End The Draft echoed Ripon appeals for an “opportunity state” and “creative individualism,” all rooted in the same anti-welfare-state arguments first made in the *Forum*. First, conscription is antithetical to a free society and personal liberty within it. Liberal proponents' proposals, the authors argued, “rest on a misunderstanding of what democracy is all about,” that even in times of national emergency, conscription was “evil,” and any form of compulsory national service is “unnecessary and repulsive.” The Wednesday Group advocated a departure from the very convictions that drove liberal policymaking in the postwar era. They dismissed interpretations of citizenship as a balance between rights and obligations. They concluded, dramatically, “If our society ever reaches the stage that its needs cannot be met through the free commitment of its people, then our society is doomed.”²⁶

Second, using language that revolved around notions of liberty, choice, and the free market, they argued that conscription was the equivalent of a tax on young men. Because military pay was so low, a man drafted into military service faced an

²⁶ Stafford, et al., *How to End the Draft*, 10-11.

"unnecessary hardship," placing him at a disadvantage with his peers who never served. "The difference is a hidden, implicit tax," one the group argued that all should bear—not by universalizing service—but by increasing military pay and benefits for volunteers.²⁷

And yet, the Wednesday Group could not shake the deeply ingrained belief that military service was somehow transformative for men, that military life offered a path to salvaging men who might not make it in society otherwise— even when that belief directly contradicted their positions. The difference was that whereas liberals felt that there was something inherently special—even mystical—about serving ones' country in uniform, conservatives saw the transformation as more transactional, and better managed through the cold supply-and-demand rationale of the market. Instead of "confusing" military pay scales, the Wednesday Group advocated a simpler salary structure, replacing costly enlistment bonuses "with the application of supply and demand economics which would provide for promotion or pay increases on the basis of a job well done."²⁸

The transformational language about military life was still there, but the change was less metaphorical and more practical. For instance, the Wednesday Group recommended, "A significant expansion in the in-service training opportunities for technical skills... a broad program similar to available civilian apprenticeship programs could be established." They argued that the military's unique ability to train people should be expanded "to include such civilian career categories as construction, brick laying, heating engineering, electrical engineering, public utility maintenance, etc."²⁹ Using

²⁷ Ibid., 42-3.

²⁸ Ibid., 106.

²⁹ Ibid., 71.

census survey data, the Wednesday Group pointed out that young men (between ages 16 and 34) viewed military service as both an opportunity and a burden. Although respondents believed that military promised a steady job, the chance to be a leader, and good retirement benefits, most also believed it meant lower pay, less chance for advancement, and less autonomy. Young men were also generally concerned about what the Wednesday Group awkwardly described as "the interesting nature of the work," by which they might have meant combat.³⁰

The tensions between the "rational" language of the market and the stubborn belief that military service was somehow transformative were most apparent where the Wednesday Group addressed the question of African American service in a volunteer military. Critics of an all-volunteer force pointed to the already higher proportion of African Americans serving in the Vietnam-era military, as compared to their overall share of the population. And, while this disparity evened out as the war dragged on (because manpower officials, reacting to political pressure from civil rights groups, worked assiduously to correct it), in 1967, when *How to End the Draft* came out, the over-representation of black men in uniform was front-page news, and this fact was a major point of contention between civil rights leaders and policymakers in the Johnson administration.

But in the view of the members of the Wednesday Group, the high number of African Americans serving in uniform was a simple function of the market. They correctly pointed out that one major reason that there were more black men in uniform

³⁰Ibid., 64.

was that African Americans reenlisted more often than white soldiers. Moreover, black men volunteered for hazardous jobs in higher proportions than their overall share of the population, thus contributing to their outsized share of combat casualties in Vietnam. But, whereas one could point to the intangibles of masculinity and soldiering—recall the words of the black ex-Marine from chapter two: "For some goddamned reason I believed that the U.S.M.C. made a man out of anybody. And I wanted to be a MAN more than anything in this whole goddamned world"³¹ — as an explanation for why black men gravitated toward the military, the Wednesday Group argued instead that the military simply provided a job opportunity that was unavailable to black men in the civilian world.

While the Wednesday Group was adamant that "military services should not be operated for the purpose of offering a better life to those in society who are deprived of the opportunity to share meaningfully in the nation's prosperity," they could admit that the realities of racism in America distorted the functions of the market. Directly contradicting their stated belief that the military should not be involved in social engineering, the authors countered those who argued that a volunteer military would increase the number of African Americans in uniform by saying, "There is nothing wrong with the fact that military service in an all-volunteer Army might offer some Negroes better living conditions, better education, more secure employment, a better chance of assuming responsibility, and a more dignified life than the civilian economy can offer." They concluded, "It is not our military system which should be condemned for offering a

³¹ Quoted in Estes, *I AM A MAN!*, 166.

chance to the Negro, it is the civilian sector of our society which should be condemned for failing to allow the Negro to share fully in the fruits of America's prosperity.”³²

Now if some of this has the ring of familiarity, it is because when the Wednesday Group envisioned a program to implement these ideas, they looked to Project 100,000 as an example. To the Wednesday Group, Project 100,000 was a useful analogy because it proved that mental and health standards could be lowered, and that those recruits could still perform their jobs once they had undergone remedial training. The overall “quality” of recruits that a volunteer military could attract was a major sticking point in the debates over a volunteer military. “The evidence,” they wrote, “is overwhelming that such special training programs could significantly increase enlistment, and thereby reduce draft calls, while at the same time in no way jeopardizing the effectiveness of the military services or the national security.”³³ The question of military services' worth to a man or the broader society was “not a question directly relevant to this study. What is relevant,” they argued, “is the degree to which a special training program can bring up to acceptable military standards a number of young men who wish to enlist in the armed services but who cannot today meet the qualifications established by the Department of Defense.”³⁴

Ironically, these congressmen argued that Project 100,000 betrayed the very goals of its creators by creating two standards—one for draftees and one for volunteers. Remember that Secretary McNamara had originally envisioned an enlistment program for marginal men to enter the military *voluntarily*: the precursor to Project 100,000—the

³² Stafford, et al., *How to End the Draft*, 14-15.

³³ Ibid., 80.

³⁴ Ibid.

Special Training Enlistment Program, or STEP—was originally meant to provide extra training and education for men volunteering for service. The irony, of course, is that Congress put the brakes on STEP because too many congressmen, including some members of the Wednesday Group, were opposed to using the military for social engineering. Now, two years later, these same congressmen criticized Secretary McNamara for creating Project 100,000 instead of STEP, which lowered standards for draftees, but not for enlistees. To McNamara and other liberals in the Johnson Administration, Project 100,000 still matched the loftiest goals of the Great Society. But, to the Wednesday Group, it was "abhorrent to think that a young man who attempts to enlist in the armed services and is rejected is nonetheless subject to the draft."³⁵

While the Wednesday Group decided that the question of whether there was inherent value in military service for men, and by extension for society, was irrelevant to the discussion, there were other Republicans who made that claim central to their argument against the draft. One particularly well-connected anti-draft reformer was Bruce K. Chapman. Chapman had made a name for himself in conservative circles through his regular editorials in the *New York Herald Tribune*. A founding member of the Ripon Society, Chapman would spend the latter third of the twentieth century within earshot of the halls of power in Washington. He would go on to found the Discovery Institute in 1990 with his Harvard roommate (and fellow Ripon member) George Gilder, the economist whose work was synonymous with the "supply-side" economic theories of the Reagan years.

³⁵ Ibid., 78.

In 1967, at about the same time that the Wednesday Group published their monograph, Chapman published his own book on the inequities of the draft, titled, *The Wrong Man In Uniform: Our Unfair and Obsolete Draft--and How We Can Replace It*. Chapman's book was the culmination of months of research he conducted for his recurring editorials on the draft for the *Herald Tribune*. He also conducted several interviews with members of the Wednesday Group while writing the book. Chapman even tapped Representative Thomas B. Curtis (R-Missouri), a member of the Wednesday Group and future co-chair of the Gates Commission, to write the introduction.

Whereas the Wednesday Group's monograph lacked polish and could have used a better editor, Chapman's practice with crafting polemical editorials in the *Herald Tribune* made his book a superior piece of political writing. He wasted no time eviscerating what he thought were baseless shibboleths about military service. Chapman, who never served in uniform, scoffed at the idea that "the Army builds men." Of the "many old veterans" who "cherish the memory of what benefits military discipline brought them," Chapman opined that they were suffering from amnesia.³⁶ Chapman argued that the type of training that most draftees got would be "useless to a man in his civilian career, for draftees are not the men on whom the military lavishes its famed training programs." Instead, the drafted soldier learns "to suffer boredom endlessly, to take orders, to feel responsibility only for a tight and small area of assignment, to take their pleasures on the run and where they can."³⁷ And to the question of "duty" or responsibility to country, Chapman reserved

³⁶ Chapman, *The Wrong Man In Uniform*, 77.

³⁷ Ibid.

the most disdain. To the liberal proponents of compulsory national service, he sneered, more convincingly than any disgruntled vet:

There is something about such an argument that has a fashionable, democratic tone in the speech of a politician or between the covers of a weekly magazine. But from the perspective of any Army post it is most palpably foolery, for if there is a military establishment, it is made of up career officers, not draftees. Draftees are the lowest caste of a caste-conscious estate and wield no influence whatever, and heaven help us if American liberty from undue military influence rests on their helpless shoulders.³⁸

To Chapman, military service was at best a nuisance, and at worst an immoral appropriation of a young man's time by an overreaching government. "Men who have been through basic training in most areas of the modern American military know," Chapman concluded, "Boot camp is designed to make soldiers out of civilians; except by accident, and that rarely, it does not and cannot make better civilians of civilians. Any argument that it does is freighted with ignorance, quarter-truths or fraud...."³⁹

What a close reading of these texts shows is that a growing number of younger members of the Republican party, all self-described intellectuals of the right, developed a robust critique of the draft, not in 1968 or '69, when the war was becoming politically untenable for politicians on both the right and left—but as early as 1965 and '66, when Americanization of the war effort was just beginning. In developing this critique, one can see the seeds of arguments that would later be convincing to those in power, especially Richard Nixon: the idea that conscription was antithetical to liberty, the

³⁸ Ibid., 78.

³⁹ Ibid., 98.

notion that the draft constituted a "hidden tax" on thousands of young men, and that the military could be better and more efficiently served through free market solutions.

Helping nurture these ideas were broader concerns, felt by many Americans, about the family, the breadwinner, and masculinity. The arguments that were used to critique the draft were rooted in the same ideological concerns over the growing welfare state. The same free market principles—which the draft thwarted—would provide a blueprint for the conservative vision for strengthening the male breadwinner and families in the late 20th century. The draft placed an enormous burden on young men who might not be ready to make consequential life choices—to go to school, to marry and have kids, to enlist rather than be drafted according to the needs of the military, or to go into a draft exempted career. Conversely, for those who were drafted it meant putting off school, or vocational training, or on-the-job experience, for two years—meaning a loss of wages, time gaining experience and seniority in a job, or waiting to go to school. This is the crux of the "hidden tax" argument. To these conservatives, the free market was the proper arena for making men better providers, husbands, and productive members of society, not through compulsory service to the government. The Selective Service System circumvented the free market by forcing young men to make choices dictated by the whims of government bureaucrats, and not according to supply and demand. Using the language of the market, draft critics argued the system was inefficient because it made short-term "employees" out of soldiers, resulting in high turnover, low job satisfaction, and little incentive to make military service a career.

Liberal supporters of the draft would argue that the draft was meant to take young men, before they took on the burdens of having a family or a career, and give them an experience that would make them better men in the long run. They envisioned a young man's life as a series of manageable steps. For example, Undersecretary of Defense Alfred Fitt described the draft as fundamentally about molding men for a cold war world:

What I am talking about when I think of using the military as an instrument of social reform is the intelligent use of our resources when we have decided—quite independently of any social considerations—that we need an armed force of so many million men.... So we've made that judgment, for the moment at least, that we ought to have three and a half million men in uniform. As long as we have reached that judgment, then I am eager to explore ways in which the men that pass through the Armed Forces can be made better citizens for the long haul and not just for the period of two or three or four years during which they are in uniform. This isn't such an exciting and controversial goal.⁴⁰

The head of Selective Service, General Lewis Hershey, whose disdain for 1960s youth culture and contempt for draft protestors was no secret, much to the chagrin of his more politically sensitive bosses in the Johnson administration, also appealed to the transformative effect military service had on young men: "A lot of these kids need nothing in the world but regularity in their living. And a realization that there is a God in Heaven and that they aren't running everything."⁴¹ To Hershey and Fitt, the military was the perfect place to mold young men into productive breadwinners and patriarchs of their family, but to conservative anti-draft reformers, the draft represented an obstacle, nothing more.

⁴⁰ Fitt Oral History, LBJ Library, 13

⁴¹ Transcript, Lewis B. Hershey Oral History Interview, 15 December 1970, LBJ Library, 29.

Citizenship in the Balance: Richard Nixon and the Draft

During his 1968 acceptance speech for The Republican Party's nomination for president, Richard Nixon did not mention the draft once, and his "secret plan" to end the war was still very much a mystery. The Ripon Society always viewed Nixon coolly and its members overwhelmingly supported Nelson Rockefeller in the primaries. The *Ripon Forum* took the members' temperature after the convention—and opinion on Nixon had only gotten colder. On the topic of Vietnam, 45% of Ripon's membership believed Nixon did not have a "clear-cut" vision for American victory; only 26% believed he was even knowledgeable on the subject.⁴² In their tepid endorsement of Nixon a month after the convention, the Forum's editorial board chided Nixon for his lack of candor on the war: "Any man who wants to lead the country during the next four years should have a position on it."⁴³

Representatives from the Ripon Society attended the Republican Convention that year, but it is unclear if any members had any official role. Ripon created a bound "biography" before the convention, entitled, *Ripon's Republican Who's Who at Convention '68*, which it distributed to delegates and convention-goers. In the introduction, written in the days before the convention, the authors remained hopeful that the party would adopt some of their positions, especially concerning the draft.⁴⁴

⁴² *Ripon Forum*, Vol. 4.10 (October 1968), 17.

⁴³ *Ripon Forum*, Vol. 4.9 (September 1968), 22.

⁴⁴ The Ripon Society, *Ripon's Republican Who's Who at the Convention '68: A Biographical Directory of Delegates to the 1968 Republican National Convention at Miami, Florida, August 5-8* (Cambridge: The Ripon Society, 1968).

Ripon members certainly celebrated when the Republican Party added a plank to its platform officially adopting the position that the United States should move to a volunteer military "when military manpower needs can be appreciably reduced." Still, the Ripon people knew what party platforms represented, calling them at best "a statement of principles," and at worst, "a propaganda piece designed to help win an election." And like Richard Nixon's own opportunistic and vague musings on the draft in the months between the convention and the election in November, the plank was light on details. However, what was significant is where the plank was inserted into the platform—not in the section on foreign policy, or the one titled "The Individual and Government," or even the section on national defense. The Republican Party announced their support for ending the draft in the section on "Youth," right alongside the plank calling for reducing the voting age to 18 from 21.⁴⁵

The draft plank reflected the Ripon Society's contention that people were quietly opting out of the traditions of their parents. The strands of the sexual revolution that would become a potent political force in the 1970s were being tightly braided together in the late 60s. Ripon members sensed these shifts, and appealing to the youth of America became an ongoing strategy for reform-minded Republicans—those who wanted the draft abolished, but found the draft card burnings and protests unsavory. The *Ripon Forum* called it "sad" that so many youths found it necessary to protest the system using "anti-republican methods." But, they still agreed that "hundreds of thousands of

⁴⁵ The Ripon Society, *Convention Biography*, 15-17; Republican Party Platforms: "Republican Party Platform of 1968" (5 August 1968), Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=25841>.

American youth" had little choice when their only options were between "duty to country and obedience to their deepest moral beliefs."⁴⁶ As the baby boomers came of age in increasing numbers, reformist Republicans saw an opportunity. The *Ripon Forum* ran an entire issue dedicated to youth, the problems confronting America as the largest generation ever came of age, and, of course, the potential to harness that generations' votes for political power. Many Republicans began to see the voting age and conscription as twinned issues.⁴⁷

The Republicans added the plank in 1968 not because Nixon wanted it—candidate Nixon would not come out against the draft until October, a month before the election—but because many Republicans in power, some associated with the Ripon Society, others who were members of the Wednesday Group, had been advocating for it for years. The political left animated much of the broader Vietnam antiwar movement, including spectacular protests that were directed at the Selective Service System and the draft. But the anti-draft movement spanned the political spectrum. Religious groups, libertarians, and "vital center" politicians in both the Republican and Democratic parties formed a loose coalition around the draft issue, often disagreeing on tactics, and usually operating from differing—even contradictory—political philosophies. As scholars of this era have rightly pointed out, Nixon's support for ending the draft was pure political

⁴⁶ *Ripon Forum*, Vol. 4.10 (October 1968), 14.

⁴⁷ On the strands of the sexual revolution, see Beth Bailey, "Sexual Revolution(s)," in David Farber (ed.), *The Sixties: From Memory to History* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

opportunism, borne out of an unpopular war.⁴⁸ But by 1968 it was not a vague or nebulous afterthought—or worse, to establishment Republicans at least, an idea cooked up by the radical left. The idea to end conscription was ripe for Nixon to pluck because reformist Republicans had spent years cultivating and circulating it within the halls of power.

Nixon narrowly defeated the Democratic candidate Hubert Humphrey in 1968, and he did so in large part by appealing to the "forgotten Americans," the great "silent majority," who worried about issues like law and order, which they saw breaking down in America's cities. Nixon's clear appeal to white resentment of government largesse during the War on Poverty, the Great Society, and liberals' commitment to civil rights, shocked and dismayed many in the moderate wing of the Republican Party. They were especially vexed by the racist subtext of these appeals. The Ripon Society, which pointed to the disastrous Goldwater campaign as a catalyst for their movement, expressed hope that Nixon would take steps to expand the base of the Republican Party, not continue appealing to disaffected white voters, the so-called "Southern strategy." Ripon's president at the time, Lee Huebner, wrote in the December 1968 issue after the election, "We have consistently called for a revitalized Republican Party which would have greater appeal to young people, poor people, blacks, and also the independent suburbanite, the so-called "front lash" voter."⁴⁹ Another editorial in the same edition stated that Mr. Nixon tried "to ride the backlash tide," but he "almost floundered in the powerful 'front lash' undertow."

⁴⁸ Bailey, *America's Army*, 2; Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 22.

⁴⁹ *Ripon Forum*, Vol. 4.12 (December 1968), 19.

Appeasing one group at the expense of another had consequences, they argued, "When Mr. Nixon decided that 'justice' was too controversial a word to be included in his discussion of 'law and order,' he could hardly expect its omission to escape unnoticed."⁵⁰

For its part, the Ripon Society still remained committed to helping the new Republican administration enact an agenda that, in their words, forwarded "progressive policy recommendations based on identifiable Republican themes."⁵¹ Values such as decentralization, voluntarism, and self-help would guide the Ripon Society under Nixon's first administration. And, when the time came for the President to turn his attention to the draft, the Society was ready with more than just policy proposals and advice from afar. Ripon member Stephen Herbits' landed a spot as the youngest member (by a generation) on the Gates Commission, which would advise Nixon to end conscription and move the country to a volunteer military. After this, he returned to Congress as a staffer to help the administration shepherd the AVF through the legislative process, and eventually he became the Pentagon's "special assistant" in charge of the All-Volunteer Force.⁵²

Although some called Herbits the "token" student, ostensibly put on the Commission because he had "skin in the game" as a man of draft age, he was no accidental choice. Herbits was a player in the growing conservative intellectual movement to end the draft. Not unlike Daniel Patrick Moynihan's early break in government with *One-Third of a Nation*, Herbits' contribution to *How to End the Draft* provided him with the necessary credentials: five congressmen, all members of the

⁵⁰ *Ripon Forum*, Vol. 4.12 (December 1968), 3.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 66-7.

Wednesday Group, wrote to President Nixon recommending Herbits to the Commission.⁵³

As one scholar of the All-Volunteer Force put it, when Nixon commissioned a study on ending the draft, he may not have wanted to "stack the deck" with supporters of ending conscription, but he certainly stacked it with intellectuals "cut from the same cloth."⁵⁴ As others have noted, the Gates Commission was chock-full of economists of a certain flavor. Commission members Milton Friedman and Alan Greenspan, and their respective advisors, made for a Venn-diagram of University of Chicagoans and Ayn Rand followers with a remarkable amount of overlap. But, the co-chairman of the Commission, Congressman Thomas Curtis, was a member of the Wednesday Group, and a signatory to *How to End the Draft*. Although the Gates Commission certainly represented a diverse set of backgrounds, intellectual training, and political stripes, anti-draft reformers from the Ripon Society's orbit were overrepresented, and it would soon become apparent. Undersecretary Alfred Fitt (who was kept on in his post at Manpower during the transition between administrations) called the commissioners, and Friedman in particular, "fanatic opponents of the draft." In a memo to the new Secretary of Defense, Melvin Laird, he warned, "My concern is that the economists (whom I respect greatly as a general rule) with the President's ear do not stack the deck against a thoughtful, careful objective study of the problem."⁵⁵

⁵³ Robert T. Stafford et al. to Richard Nixon, 11 March 1969, Rostker Archive (L0040, L0039).

⁵⁴ Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 66.

⁵⁵ Alfred Fitt Memo to Melvin Laird, 29 January 1969, Rostker Archive (G0260).

Although there were several notable differences, the Commission's report looked an awful lot like *How to End the Draft* and the Ripon Society's proposal before that. The Gates Commission quickly and summarily dismissed any notion of obligation or duty as a component of citizenship. "Compelling service," the Commissioners wrote, "through a draft undermines respect for government by forcing individuals to serve when and in the manner the government decides, regardless of his own values and talents."⁵⁶ The Commissioners wrote that conscription was the equivalent of a tax—an unfair burden placed on an unlucky segment of the population. While not all taxes are "immoral and undesirable," the Commission argued, "What is of questionable morality is the discriminatory form that this implicit tax takes; and even more, the abridgement of individual freedom that is involved in collecting it."⁵⁷ Individualism and choice, over obligation and sacrifice, marked this auspicious document on the transition away from the draft.

Faith in market efficiency also guided the Commission's recommendations, but the Gates Commission veered off course from previous anti-draft arguments on pay, military benefits such as housing, commissary privileges, and other fringe benefits. Whereas earlier anti-draft reformers advocated "civilianizing" military pay and benefits packages, which included increasing base pay (or salary) and dialing back the myriad enlistment bonuses, clothing allowances, and varying pay increases for types of duty (hazardous duty or combat pay, for example), they nonetheless understood that there were certain aspects of military life that fundamentally differed from civilian life. For

⁵⁶ *Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, 14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

example, the Wednesday Group pitched increasing the budget for on-base construction and off-base housing allowances so that servicemen could "live with their families in comfort and convenience."⁵⁸ They also called for increasing educational benefits for service members, and even extending those benefits to military family members. The Gates Commission, in stark contrast, advocated gutting these programs in favor of lump cash payments to service members. They recommended against "general increases in such benefits or in income-in-kind items of pay" because they "would be an inefficient means of compensating military personnel." They went on, "Providing compensation in cash has an inherent advantage...it allows each individual to decide how he or she will use whatever he earns."⁵⁹

The Military Weighs In

Meanwhile, Department of Defense officials and military brass were not happy that the President had commissioned a civilian-led study on what they considered a military matter; they were especially furious that it was filled people who were ideologically opposed to conscription. Defense Secretary Laird initially sided with Alfred Fitt and others who wanted to keep the draft, and Laird made it known to the President that he preferred DoD to handle any further study into ending it. President Nixon disagreed, and in order to avoid any more dissenting views from getting aired in the press, Nixon began replacing people who disagreed with a volunteer military— a message to everyone else to get in line. In short order, he dismissed Lewis Hershey, who

⁵⁸ Stafford et al., *How to End the Draft*, 67.

⁵⁹ *Report of the President's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*, 63.

had served as the Director of Selective Service since 1940, and Roger T. Kelley replaced Alfred Fitt as Undersecretary of Defense for Manpower.⁶⁰

DoD objected most to the Commissions' views on military quality of life and policies concerning families. To the cost-conscious economists on the Gates Commission, the separate world the military created for its service members and their families on sprawling bases—barracks, family housing, commissaries, dining facilities, libraries, schools, hospitals, baseball diamonds, and movie theaters—was an inefficient use of government expenditures and a massive perversion of the free market. Military officers' objections were based upon three basic assumptions about military service and military life. First, they almost universally rejected the notion that military service could be equated to a job in the civilian sector. Even for those who chose to make a career in the military, serving in uniform was a calling, not a vocation. This belief put military leaders at fundamental odds with most anti-draft reformers, from the Ripon Society to the Gates Commission.

Second, based upon their own internal studies of first term enlistees, DoD policymakers concluded that in a volunteer system, expenditures for housing, morale, welfare, recreation, and education would have to be significantly increased, and not traded for larger cash payments to first term enlistees. Finally, military officials rejected the language and ideas that underpinned the anti-draft reformers' arguments. While they were certainly comfortable with words like "efficiency" and other econometric terms, ideas like personal liberty and freedom of choice frightened them—these were ideals that

⁶⁰ Griffith, Jr., *The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*; Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*.

the US military was sworn to protect, but that were antithetical to the hierarchical, disciplined world of the uniformed services. Military officials would turn frequently to the language of duty, obligation, service, and patriotism to combat what they perceived as the creeping language of the market. These assumptions would guide the Department of Defense through the turbulent years between 1969 and 1973.

Within this framework, the Department of Defense came to some very different conclusions than the Gates Commission on how to achieve zero draft calls and implement a volunteer military. At the same time that the Gates Commission's study was underway, DoD began its own internal study. In fact, the Defense Department had been conducting studies on enlistment motivations and draft influences since the early days of Project 100,000. So in a sense, Defense policymakers had a head start on the President's Commission. When Secretary Laird replaced Alfred Fitt with Roger Kelley as manpower undersecretary, Kelley ordered the services to come up with their own plans for operating in a volunteer environment. This seemingly innocuous decision would actually have a major impact on how each service would pursue recruitment policy going forward—indeed, how the services would convey their own image and purpose to the nation— which will be a major subject in the next chapter. For now, what is striking is that most of the services responded to Kelley's order as if the all-volunteer force was never going to happen. The Navy did not even bother to ask their research division to study the issue. The Marines did the bare minimum to comply, shuffling some personnel around in their manpower office to form "Task Force Project Volunteer," but there is no

evidence that the taskforce ever met, let alone produced anything of substance. The Army, however, took this matter very seriously.⁶¹

The Army actually began a secret study of the feasibility of a volunteer force in 1968, under the direction of then-recently appointed Chief of Staff General William Westmoreland. In the custom of the era to not call reports by their official name, but instead to refer to them eponymously with their chief author, the Career Force Study was usually referred to as the "Butler Study" after its author, Lt. Col. Jack Butler. The study focused on four areas: quantity, quality, cost, and social implications. On all four, the Butler Study offered conclusions that were grim. Unlike the Gates Commission (and indeed all of the AVF studies written in the 1960s), the Army couldn't ignore the Vietnam War. The Wednesday Group, the Ripon Society, Bruce Chapman's book, and the Gates Commission, all made calculations on troop levels, reserve strengths, voluntary enlistment, and reenlistment rates under the assumption that "things would go back to normal" after the war. But, in 1968, with several hundred thousand troops committed to fighting in Vietnam, this wishful thinking was a luxury the Army could not afford.

The Butler Study issued conclusions that reflected the three fundamental assumptions widely held among officers about military service. Attracting quality soldiers in sufficient numbers, retaining them for multiple enlistments, required expensive inducements and benefits to take care of soldiers and their families while they served their country. Given the increasing unpopularity of the war, Army brass concluded that it was improbable that they could get enough qualified volunteers without the draft as

⁶¹ Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 146-48.

a motivating factor. Moreover, the Butler Study concluded with the widely held belief, at least in military circles, that military service should remain a requirement of citizenship, not a personal choice. To serve in the military was to answer a calling, not simply applying for a job. According to a historian of the all-volunteer force, "Most [career officers] believed that continuation of the draft was essential to preserving the tie between the American citizenry and its army."⁶² To sever that link would be catastrophic for the future of the Army, in the view of military officers.

With the still secret Butler Study and the president's public decision to convene a civilian commission as context, the Army complied with Undersecretary Kelley's request, and began PROVIDE (a particularly strained acronym—even by military standards—that stood for PROject Volunteer In DEFense of the nation), which was yet another volunteer force feasibility study. PROVIDE was more optimistic than the Butler Study, but the conclusions were basically the same: the Army would need to spend more money on improving quality of life for soldiers and their families in order to recruit and retain a quality force. But, the Army immediately classified the report SECRET and sat on it. Now, whether this was because Secretary Laird did not want members of the Gates Commission (especially those high-profile economists that had the President's ear) angry at the fact that the Army had an ongoing study parallel to their work, or because General Westmoreland and his advisors remained unconvinced that an end to the draft was likely is hard to tell. There is evidence for both: although the Gates Commission had only been convened a month before PROVIDE was finished, Laird and Kelley knew that its

⁶² Griffith, Jr., *The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 19.

recommendations were going to differ radically from the Army's. On the other hand, Westmoreland remained an outspoken critic of a volunteer military for the rest of his time as chief of staff. As late as 1971, Westmoreland was telling the press, "We are not sure that an all-volunteer force is possible."⁶³ Westmoreland was not alone, the Association of the United States Army, the Army's chief lobbying organization, released a scathing takedown of the Gates Commission report, calling the whole premise of allowing men to choose whether or not to support their nation during a time of war "sheer folly."⁶⁴

Military officers and the men working in the Department of Defense could never shake their conviction that military service was an obligation, one that required sacrifice, but one that could also provide benefits for soldiers and their families. These men also believed that the president would never seriously consider implementing the Gates Commission recommendations while American troops were still fighting in Vietnam. This point cannot be stressed enough: military officials were unwavering in their belief that the discussion to end the draft was a symptom of the current political climate, and that once the unpopular war in Vietnam was over, they could forget about the free market rhetoricians who sought to transform military service from a calling into a job, and the draft could be salvaged, restoring the language of obligation, duty, and sacrifice. As late as 1975, Robert F. Froehlke—the Secretary of the Army during those crucial transition years 1971-73—was giving speeches around the country stating that he believed the

⁶³ Quoted in "Straight Talk from the Chief on the Modern Volunteer Army," *Army*, Vol. 21 (May 1971), 12. AVA Collection, Box 1, USAMHI.

⁶⁴ Protecting the Free Society: An AUSA White Paper on Proposals for an All-Volunteer Armed Force (Washington, DC: AUSA, 1970), 2. See also, Griffith, Jr., *The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, 17-19.

decision to end the draft was politically motivated, and that “it will again be time to revert to the draft” before the end of the decade.⁶⁵ Froehlke and many others who were involved in the transition to the All-Volunteer Force went to the grave thinking that a return to conscription was right around the corner.

Uncharted Waters

Within this new environment, each branch took different paths to sell its particular service in the marketplace, and, importantly, the American public began to view them differently in fundamental ways. While the Army sold opportunity, the Marines doubled down on appeals to men who wanted a challenge. As one *Time* reporter awkwardly put it in the winter of 1970, the Marines were out to “claim greater eliteness.” That same reporter quoted an unnamed general who said, “We will continue to take a hard line.” At a time when the Army began to relax grooming standards, this same general grunted, “We think we can get 200,000 volunteers, cut their hair and shave their faces. It will be a challenge, but maybe it's the only one left.”⁶⁶ When the Army started offering signing bonuses to recruits, the Marine brass scoffed. In 1971 alone, the Army allocated nearly \$40 million to improving the quality of life for enlistees; that same year

⁶⁵ Remarks of Robert F. Froehlke to the Meeting of the State Bar of Wisconsin, 21 February 1975, AVA Collection, Box 1, USAMHI.

⁶⁶ Quoted in “Humanizing the Military,” *Time*, Vol. 96.25 (21 December 1970), AVA Collection, Box 16, USAMHI.

the Marines earmarked a paltry \$15,000 and barked, "We don't promise you a rose garden!"⁶⁷

At the same time, the Marine Corps' advertising budget went from just under \$1 million in 1971, to over \$7 million the next year.⁶⁸ The Marines worked hard to play up the distinctions between the services, and the press took the bait. Newspapers began chronicling a "war" between the Marine Corps and the Army. One typical article began with the juxtaposition, "The Army is trying to sell the good life; the Marine Corps is pushing the tough." The Marines were all too happy to capitalize on the Army's struggles to find a message. In response to the Army's new campaign slogan, "Today's Army Wants to Join You," the Marines leaked correspondence between Headquarters, Marine Corps and their Manhattan ad agency, J. Walter Thompson, to the press, with fresh pitches such as: "If you've got it and want to stand with the Marines, you'll be welcome. But don't kid yourself, nobody's joining you, you are joining us."⁶⁹ In the spring of 1971, General Leonard F. Chapman (no relation to Bruce Chapman), the Commandant of the Marine Corps, went on a speaking tour around the country, timed to coincide with the new ad blitz. He echoed the new slogan in Oklahoma City: "nobody's joining them, they'll be joining us."⁷⁰ Another reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* quoted Chapman, "We're a tough club to join, a tough team to make. And that's exactly the way we're

⁶⁷ For comparison, the Navy allocated \$1.2 million and the Air Force set aside \$4 million. For more figures on money allocated in FY 1971 by each service, see Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 160.

⁶⁸ Richard Connolly, "What's Behind Those Armed Forces Ads?" *Boston Globe* (6 June 1971), A1.

⁶⁹ Fred Farrar, "Marines Seek Only the Tough: Take dig at Army," *Chicago Tribune* (10 May 1971), A8.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

going to keep it. No compromises, no shortcuts, no promises except one—they'll be Marines.”⁷¹

Within a context where each service had to vie for recruits in a tough marketplace, the Marine Corps successfully sold a narrative of Army softness and Marine toughness to the media—a narrative that had wider gendered consequences. While the Army pursued policies to “Offer the Good Life to Get Volunteers,” as one headline in the *Chicago Tribune* put it, the Marine Corps cultivated an image of austere living, toned bodies, and hard discipline.⁷² A Marine's singular purpose was to train for and fight in combat; every Marine was a rifleman, not a doting husband bouncing babies on his knee. Benefits—for enlistees and for their families— or anything that smacked of “the good life” were feminizing distractions within the masculine culture of the warrior.

The Gates Commission allowed Nixon to make good on his vague campaign promise to end the draft, but it also achieved the primary objective of the anti-draft reformers, who had spent years honing a vision for a military subsumed into the wider free market and framing military service a choice rather than an obligation. Although nobody knew it at the time, that last change was a radical and lasting departure. This was unclear at the time because, although the language of personal liberty and individual freedom won the debate over the draft, military policymakers continued to believe this was a temporary change, brought on by the immediate politics of the 1960s and the

⁷¹ Ernest Furgurson, “Marines Fought for Elite Status—And They Plan to Maintain It,” *Los Angeles Times* (19 May 1971), B7.

⁷² William Anderson, “Army Offers Good Life to Get Volunteers,” *Chicago Tribune* (12 April 1971), 10.

Vietnam War. More importantly, members of the military establishment would continue to speak about military service using the language of duty, sacrifice, and obligation.

Americans started to believe that they had the freedom to choose whether or not they served in the military, but while they did not believe notions of duty and obligation applied to them personally, they still understood other people's service in those terms. How would the military navigate the marketplace stuck between those conflicting ideals of obligation and duty on the one hand, and liberty and freedom on the other?

If military policymakers wanted nothing to do with personal liberty and freedom of choice, what happened to that language? As the next chapter will show, women, feminist groups, and their allies in congress picked up the language of liberty and choice, and they effectively wielded it in the coming decade to expand women's roles in the Armed Services, and women's rights within the military community. Women's rights groups seized the personal rights and liberty rhetoric that anti-draft reformers used to usher in the AVF and used it both to advance women's equality, but also to fight off repeated calls to reinstate male conscription. To a certain degree— although the divisions were never clear-cut— the competing vocabularies of liberty, rights, and equality versus duty, obligation, and sacrifice took on new gendered meanings, which were then deployed in the battle over gender roles in the coming decades.

CHAPTER 4

MAKING ENDS MEET IN THE ALL-VOLUNTEER FORCE

Friction on the Margins

As Americans experienced sweeping the social and cultural changes of the 1970s—to gender roles, to the status of the breadwinner, and to the shape of the American family—the military struggled to keep up while it underwent a revolution of its own, with the end of the draft. The gendered assumptions of policymakers structure institutions through policies and procedures—which are slow to change—and friction occurs when gender roles don’t conform to those structures.

The story of Sharron Frontiero, an Air Force lieutenant, and her husband Joseph Frontiero, a veteran who was attending college on the GI Bill, is a case study in friction. Lieutenant Frontiero was the primary breadwinner in her marriage, but she could not claim her husband as a dependent. Moreover, Air Force regulations (indeed, regulations in all of the services) were written assuming that men served in uniform and women were housewives, so the Frontieros could not even live together on base, and Mr. Frontiero was not entitled to the medical care officers’ wives enjoyed. Wives of servicemen were automatically deemed “dependents,” but the Air Force bureaucracy could not comprehend the idea of a man being dependent upon a woman. Lieutenant Frontiero took the Air Force to court in December 1970 to prove that Mr. Frontiero relied upon her income and benefits—that a “Mr.” could be a dependent. Air Force lawyers argued that it would be an administrative burden to count men as dependents, given that there were so

few men married to women in uniform. The Air Force's argument—which boiled down to “too much paperwork”—convinced the judge, and the Frontiers lost their case.

On appeal, a district court panel of judges concurred with the lower court's decision, thinking it reasonable that Congress would conclude that husbands are usually the breadwinner and wives usually dependents, and that denying claims that did not conform to this convention could save the military administrative expenses and manpower. The power of gendered policies was expressed through an appeal to cost concerns, and that appeal won out in an era of belt tightening and making ends meet.¹

But then the ground shifted under the military. First, shortly after the Frontiers lost their appeal in federal court, Congress passed the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), declaring equality under the law for the sexes. Within this context, when most legal and political observers thought the amendment would be ratified by the states, the Supreme Court took up the Frontiers case in *Frontiero v. Richardson*. Citing Congress's recent passage of the ERA, the Court ruled 8-1 in favor of the Frontiers, which meant that the military now had to treat men and women equally with regards to questions of dependents and benefits. *Frontiero* forced military policymakers to begin confronting their gendered assumptions that only men wore uniforms and only women wore aprons.²

¹ Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 113.

² *Ibid.*, 113-17. Stiehm points out a bitter irony, arguing that the passage of the ERA actually prevented the majority from ruling that equal rights for women was guaranteed by the Constitution. Three of the eight Justices wrote a different opinion, choosing not to concur with Justice William Brennan's opinion that strict scrutiny should apply to sex discrimination. Justice Potter Stewart wrote that because Congress had just passed the ERA, the Court should not act “prematurely and unnecessarily,” and subvert the ratification process playing out in the states.

Second, with the end of the draft, which had provided the military with a steady supply of young, single men for service, officials now confronted a growing number of married personnel, both men and women. Finally, like the Frontiers, most of these new families were not “traditional.” By the early 1970s, more than half of all women between 18 and 64 engaged in work for pay. One in three married women worked—as did half of all African American women worked. The number of dual income families also grew in the military community, and while most working married women were civilians, the number of married female servicemembers continued to grow. By 1978, 40% of military spouses (male and female servicemembers married at roughly the same rate, but since males comprised the overwhelming majority of the total force, most spouses were female) either worked in the civilian economy or were in the military themselves. As military service became more entangled with family affairs, recruitment and retention became linked to family welfare and satisfaction.³

Shifting work patterns and changing demographics happened at a time of widespread economic tumult and amid calls to downsize the military. For the military, this meant doing more with less. For wives in the military community, making ends meet meant struggling to live and work in a world that was not made for them. Marriage rates grew most rapidly in the junior enlisted ranks (pay grade E-4 and below) in the 1970s. Because pay was so low in these ranks, these young enlisted families required dual

³ Office of the Secretary of Defense, Personnel and Readiness, *Population Representation in the Military Services* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2004).

incomes in order to survive, which for women often meant pulling double duty at work and at home. But as military policymakers sought solutions to the problem of doing more with less, they began to see wives as an untapped source of free labor. Decision makers hailed these “volunteers” as a way to both cut costs and expand services to soldiers and their families. As wives grew frustrated with a military that increasingly demanded their free labor, but could still not provide the services necessary to meet their family’s basic needs, they turned to outside sources for help. At any given time in the 1970s, between 20 and 30,000 families qualified for food stamps and other forms of government assistance, many thousands more lived below the poverty line.⁴ Mirroring civilian society, military marriages increasingly ended in divorce in the 1970s. As divorce laws changed around the country, more couples chose to call it quits rather than struggle to make ends meet together.

Many wives found allies in the women’s movement. Indeed, the story of wives in enlisted families illustrates what the historian Robert Self has argued persuasively in *All in the Family*: that our popular story of second-wave feminism typically confuses its cause and effects. It wasn’t the women’s movement that opened the job market to women; in order to feed their families, and to make ends meet, women had long ago started working for wages. Instead, feminists were spurred to action in order to provide remedies for a labor market that wasn’t suited for the needs of women, especially not for working mothers. It was women, like those wives in the military community, who were

⁴ “Small Percentage of Military Families Eligible for Food Stamps,” General Accounting Office (Washington, DC: General Accounting Office, 1983), Rostker Archive (G1366). In the media, the numbers were estimated to be much higher, ranging from 50,000 to 100,000.

already frustrated with the competing demands of wage work and family work—the double day—that gave the second wave its momentum. This chapter incorporates the crucial story of military families into the history of feminism in the 1970s.⁵

As feminism and military family issues intersected in the seventies, mainstream activists had to make choices about the direction of the women's movement. Many leaders and rank-and-file members of the large national organizations, such as the National Organization for Women (NOW) and the Women's Equity Action League (WEAL), were introduced to activism during the antiwar movement, a movement that was still active in the early 1970s. To perhaps a majority of them, the military represented patriarchy: it subjugated women and it was anathema to women's liberation and equality. Yet, NOW and WEAL chose to help military families and women in uniform over the objections of their vocal peace and antiwar constituents. In doing so, they joined a broader coalition of activist organizations and allied members of Congress. This chapter contributes to recent scholarship that complicates the argument that second wave feminism fractured in the 1970s over race, class, and polarizing issues like abortion and homosexuality. This growing body of scholarship suggests that women's groups were quite savvy at building coalitions to achieve advancements for women. The story of military wives and mainstream national groups like NOW and WEAL suggests women's

⁵ Recently, while some historians have complicated our understanding of second wave feminism by pulling it into conversation with other historiographies, others argue that we should move away from “waves” altogether. Beyond Self's *All in the Family*, see Lee Ann Banaszak, *The Women's Movement Inside and Outside the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Gilmore, *Feminist Coalitions*; Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*; Rymph, *Republican Women*.

rights activists were more than willing to jettison ideological purity in pursuit of the twin goals of full gender equality and equal access to the workplace.⁶

The military of 1970 and the military of 1979 were fundamentally different institutions, and not only because the draft ended in 1973. As working women fought to carve out space in the public sphere, they transformed all-male institutions like the military. At the beginning of the decade, barely 1% of the armed forces were women; by 1979, that percentage was 7.6. A more dramatic shift occurred in military households: for those women who were wives of servicemen, nearly seventy percent were homemakers in 1970; by the end of the decade, fully half of all wives worked outside the home—surpassing civilian women. American women entered the workforce for many reasons, not least of which was the declining power of the male breadwinner to provide a family wage. And as they entered these gendered spaces, they changed the American legal system, public institutions, and the work place— even notions of what was possible for men and women in Americans’ imaginations. Military policymakers struggled to keep pace with these rapid changes. Policymakers clung to the idea of the traditional family, with a wife at home dutifully maintaining the household, volunteering in the base community, all while the man did the work of defending the nation. In the early 1970s, these assumptions caused friction on the margins; by the end of the decade the family

⁶ Gilmore, *Feminist Coalitions*, particularly Marisa Chappell’s chapter, “Demanding a New Family: Feminist Consensus in the 1970s Full Employment Campaign.” Also, see Alice Echols, *Daring to Be Bad: Radical Feminism in America 1967-1975* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989).

was the number one concern of military commanders, their civilian leaders, and lawmakers in Washington.

An All-Volunteer Force... of Wives

As policymakers in the Department of Defense and each of the services began studying how to succeed with a volunteer military, they quickly rejected the recommendation of President Richard Nixon's Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force (the Gates Commission) to cut funding to quality of life programs, improvements to on-base housing, and other so-called fringe benefits. The Gates Commission wanted to substantially increase pay for first-term enlistees in lieu of in-kind benefits, but DoD began to understand that for a volunteer structure to work, policymakers would need those fringe benefits to entice soldiers to reenlist. The Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel (ODCSPER), in a point-by-point response to the Gates Commission, wrote unequivocally: "The Army feels that the recommendations which the Commission states are not essential for an all-volunteer force are in fact necessary to develop this force."⁷ As DoD studied the opinions of enlisted personnel and officers, both those stationed in America and overseas, policymakers began to realize that instead of cutting benefits and increasing lump cash payments, more benefits and higher pay would be necessary in order to recruit and retain quality volunteers. The forecast was clear: in order to succeed,

⁷ ODCSPER Analysis of The Gates Commission Report, USAMHI AVA Coll., Box 10.

the military would have to provide soldiers and their families with access to programs designed to improve their quality of life.⁸

Demographic data on military families during the early-to-mid 1970s are fragmented and unorganized, but what follows is a rough sketch of the changes. In 1967, only about 41% of military members were married, but that number steadily rose: first because of tightened draft deferments that made it harder to avoid service because marriage or having children; then because the US moved to a national lottery in 1969, marriage deferments ended altogether; and finally due to the transition to the AVF in 1973, marriages grew to 56%. By the end of the decade, 59% of servicemen and women were married. More marriages created structural problems for the services: for example, the Army estimated it would begin the first year of the AVF with a housing shortage of about 130,000 units, housing shortages would plague all of the services for decades to come.⁹

For the Army in particular, the most serious problem was not so much how many people were getting married, or even where to house them, it was who was actually getting married. The 1970s Army saw a dramatic increase in marriage among the junior enlisted ranks—those in the pay grades E-4 and below (the names for each rank varies from service to service, but pay grades are uniform across the DoD. “E” stands for

⁸ For more on the early AVF studies, see Griffith, *The US Army's Transition to the All-Volunteer Force*, especially his discussion of the 1968 “Butler Study” and the PROVIDE Study in chapter two.

⁹ DAHSUM 1971, 55.

“enlisted” and there are nine enlisted pay grades.).¹⁰ In part, this happened because in order to help offset recruiting shortfalls, the Army began enlisting men with multiple dependent children in August 1973 as just one of many policy changes made to bolster sagging recruiting numbers. A close look at the numbers reveals that in the early stages of the transition to the AVF, E-4s and below had almost 500,000 dependent children living under their care. From 1975 to 1977, the percentage of married E-3s in the Army went from 25% to 38%; for E-4s, rates went up from 43% to 54% during the same period.¹¹

The DoD, however, did not officially recognize these marriages: E-4s and below were not entitled to on-base family housing, subsidized off-base housing, commissary privileges for families, family medical care, or defrayed moving costs. Those circumstances would lead to problems, but DoD could not stop enlistees from marrying

¹⁰ Memorandum to Secretary of the Army from Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, “Sustainment of the Volunteer Army,” (17 August 1973), USAMHI, AVA Coll., Box 7.

¹¹ On marriage and dependent statistics see Edna Hunter and Lucile Cheng (eds.), “A Report on the Military Family Research Conference: Current Trends & Directions” (San Diego: Family Studies Branch of the Naval Health Research Center, 1977); Morrison, et al., “Families in the Army: Looking Ahead (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 1989); *Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare Appropriations for 1971 Part 6: Subcommittee on Departments of Labor and Health, Education, and Welfare and Related Agencies Appropriations, Committee on Appropriations, 92nd Cong. 1st Sess. (May 1970).*

Until the late 1970s, the military did not have reliable data on families. To fix this problem, the Army began paying the RAND Corporation and its growing legion of social scientists to study the problem. From roughly 1977 through the 1980s, RAND published countless studies on military families.

As Bernard Rostker points out, one way to track the Army’s paucity of data is to look at how the DAHSUM is structured. In 1971, the DAHSUM didn’t even mention families, but by 1978 they had incorporated a “Quality of Life” section, that was largely dedicated to family and community issues. Indeed, Rostker’s own book on the AVF, which is encyclopedic on almost every single aspect of military life during this time period, skips the majority of the 1970s in his section on families. Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 579.

(recall that the Supreme Court had ruled in 1967 that marriage was a fundamental right in *Loving v. Virginia*), nor could they technically stop junior enlisted personnel from moving their families from duty station-to-station—even overseas. As a sign of what the hardship entailed for these unrecognized families, in Europe families organized “under four” clubs (for E-4-and-below families) to pool money to buy cooking utensils, pots and pans, and other durable household items, passing the used goods along to the next family once they rotated back to the states.¹²

More military families became dual-income families as family work patterns in the United States changed in the 1960s and 70s, especially for working class and lower middle class families. For these Americans, a “family wage” was only possible if two earners were bringing in an income—and for women, this meant pulling double duty at work and at home. By the early 1970s, more than half of all civilian women between 18 and 64 engaged in work for pay. One in three married women worked— and half of all African American women worked. Military wives actually began the decade less likely to be working than wives in civilian society, but they quickly joined their civilian counterparts in the workforce. In 1970, while civilian wives’ employment was 41%, only 30.5% of military wives worked. But by 1979, military wives surpassed civilian wives in labor participation, at 50.2% and 49.4% respectively.

The growth in military wives’ labor participation is remarkable given the number of unique obstacles military life created for military wives when compared to civilians. Military wives had to move frequently when their husbands changed duty stations.

¹² “Making Ends Meet in Europe Is Tough for GIs,” *Stars and Stripes* (1 March 1971), 10.

Because they had to move every couple of years, working wives had spotty employment records, and they could not keep a position long enough to get promoted. They often worked in jobs that did not have retirement benefits or pensions, but even if they did, they could not stay with a company long enough to enjoy those benefits. In large part due to the distinctive qualities of military life, military wives were also more than twice as likely as civilian wives to be unemployed, and to be unemployed for longer spells than their civilian counterparts. Moreover, unemployment for married women is often tied to whether there are young children in the family. 75% of military families had children, 3/5 of whom were under age 6; compared to about half of all civilian families having children, and only 2/5 of those were below school age.¹³

The military was slow to adapt to changes within the family, so junior enlisted families turned to government assistance programs for relief. In March 1970, the military began allowing personnel to use food stamps at its more than 300 base commissaries. DoD had to issue this order because there was actually a lot of confusion about whether military personnel could even legally apply for food stamps. Despite the confusion, that year over 12,000 military families were using food stamps, and DoD estimated that as many as 32,000 families were eligible. Until 1973, sympathetic stories about draftees supporting their families on food stamps were a mainstay in the press, but what was once reported on as a moral outrage quickly became an outrage of a different kind in the AVF. In 1975, a headline in the *Chicago Tribune* asked, “GIs Licking System with Food Stamps?” and quoted a Republican Congressman, Representative Paul Findley, who said

¹³ Allyson Sherman Grossman, “The Employment Situation for Military Wives,” *Monthly Labor Review* (February 1981), WEAL Coll., Box 78, Folder 6.

“It is ridiculous for one agency of the federal government to pass out welfare benefits to persons employed full-time by another agency of the same government.” Democratic Senator John Stenos “expressed amazement” that people who got paid so well “should turn to ‘welfare.’” In a general response to such charges, an Army counselor at Fort Meyer pointed out that “a typical food stamp user is a private [E-1] with a wife and two children.” For reference, an E-1s pay would bring in about \$384 a month. In today’s dollars, that’s roughly \$1,700 a month that a young private would have to support his or her family of four. Recall that the families of E-4s and below were not eligible for housing, medical care, moving expenses, or on-base shopping privileges. But to Congressman Findley, military families on welfare represented “a dramatic example of the extent to which the food stamp program has moved from its original objective.” To those families, it demonstrated that the military was failing to take care of its own.¹⁴

Each of the services approached quality of life issues from different philosophies, and these early choices would have an enormous impact on how the Army and Marines pursued family policy in the coming decades. It is important to remember, also, that these formative decisions were made in an environment of austerity. One particularly bleak Army report, written at the outset of the decade, stated, “Curtailement, consolidation, withdrawal, retrenchment, adjustment, [and] constraint” would be the watchwords for the Army and chart the direction in the coming years. The Army had a head start because it

¹⁴ Arthur Siddon, “GIs Licking System with Food Stamps?” *Chicago Tribune* (25 November 1975), 4; for comparison in language and tone to the draft era, see Robert Dobkin, “GI Families on Welfare Rolls,” *Boston Globe* (14 October 1969), 29; “Needy G.I. Families to Use Food Stamps at Commissaries,” *New York Times* (7 March 1970), 30.

began building the infrastructure for family and community programs as early as 1965, with the creation of Army Community Services (ACS). While the Marines did have a program called Marine Corps Community Services (MCCS), ACS was always significantly larger in size and scope than MCCS. Still the overall trend for both was growth. In general, these programs and the services they provide to the troops and their families all fall under the umbrella of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR).

Although married soldiers and soldiers with children became the norm in the post-World War II era, officials did not think families were a “problem” until a larger number of women with children began serving in the military. Servicemen were far more likely to have dependents than servicewomen (in 1977, 57% to 22%, respectively), but women in uniform and military families were two sides of the same coin in the minds of policymakers.¹⁵ Policy documents show that in the minds of military officials, the categories “woman” and “soldier” were not compatible, although “woman” and “family” were. Even mundane policies echoed these gendered stereotypes. For example, an explanation for changes to PX hours in the early 1970s stated, “For the soldier unable to get to the PX during the day, the closing time was extended to 2100 hours once each week. The married soldier especially appreciated this action, because he now had a chance to go shopping with his family.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Martin Binkin and Shirley J. Bach, *Women and the Military* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1977), 56.

¹⁶ Willard Latham, *The Modern Volunteer Army Program: The Benning Experiment, 1970-1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1973), 48; USAMHI AVA Coll., Box 21.

Nowhere was the interchangeability of “woman” with “family” more evident than in the roles policymakers created for military wives in the volunteer era. In order to keep costs down, each service expected wives to staff on-base programs, as volunteers. This went beyond the longstanding tradition of officer’s and senior enlisted men’s wives volunteering their time for social functions. The Army’s plan for ACS reflected how military officers and policymakers envisioned divisions of labor within military households. Commanders expected wives to volunteer their time to staff community service programs.

Military planners created a new history of volunteerism, with women as its central actors. In the *Army 75 Study*, a forward-looking think piece written by ODCSPER in 1968, women’s roles as domestic helpers blurred with women’s growing role as uniformed personnel, all in the name of defending the nation:

Throughout our history, women have taken an active part in defense—fighting the Indians, in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War I—in all these she served in an informal role, but in World War II she integrated into the regular services of the United States and has developed into an integral part of the modern Army. With the passage of the Women’s Armed Forces Integration Act in June 1948, the fourth stage in an evolutionary development was reached. The first stage saw women, mainly family members of military personnel, as unpaid volunteers. The second involved women as civilian employees of the armed services, and the third, as volunteers serving in temporary or quasi-military units. Now they are members of the permanent military establishment.¹⁷

The authors of the report characterized these stages as an evolutionary process, but really they were occurring in at the same time. The authors believed, “The world of tomorrow

¹⁷ *Army 75 Personnel Concept Study*, prepared by Battelle Institute under contract to Personnel Studies and Research, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, USAMHI, AVA Coll., Box 17. For more on the *Army 75 Study* and its place in the longer history of women in the Army policy, see Bailey, *America’s Army*, 141-142.

must have the participation of women in the realm of ideas; ideas that center on the conservation of life, the improvement of living conditions, the channels to reach order in the world.” This is a striking statement from an institution that’s entire purpose is to make war. They conclude, “These feminine assets can be utilized in direct contribution to the primary mission of the Army.”¹⁸

In a very real sense, the military was beginning to incorporate families into the military structure. In fact, the Army codified this “tradition” and incorporated “volunteering” into its official regulations. Army Regulation (AR) 608-1 outlined “the procedure for establishing and operating an Army Community Service (ACS) Program at Army Installations.” On the first page of the fifteen-page regulation, the Army plainly states the necessity for volunteers using the language of volunteerism and the market: “The concept of using volunteers is to insure that services furnished are responsive to the needs of the consumer. The volunteer will serve as an important link between the population served and the official military organization. Therefore, a volunteer corps will be formed (primarily of Army wives) to assist military personnel in operating the ASC Center.”¹⁹ That old saw from World War II about giving women non-combat jobs to free up men to fight was updated for the AFV—only this time it was the wives who were expected to do the menial work. The order clearly stated that volunteer wives were there to “reduce the man-hours consumed by commanders, staff officers, and the individual soldier seeking appropriate sources of assistance to resolve complex personal

¹⁸ *Army 75 Personnel Concept Study*.

¹⁹ AR-608-1, pp. 1-1 (1 June 1975), CMH Military Family Collection. The parenthetical reference to wives is in the original.

problems.”²⁰ AR 608-1 instructed unit and base commanders to “actively encourage the recruitment, training, use, and retention of a volunteer corps.” In addition to providing “commanders with information and guidance relating to problems affecting the welfare of military families and single servicemen,” the regulation encouraged commanders to recruit “volunteers from a wide segment of the population,” and to make “special efforts” to “insure that minority groups and wives of military personnel of all grades are represented.”²¹ The regulation covered every detail pertinent to staffing and running an ACS program, even including volunteer uniforms. Wearing volunteer uniforms was “strongly encouraged,” and its design—“The uniform is a two-piece, teal-blue dress made of washable material”—left no doubt that when Army policymakers imagined volunteers, they saw wives.²²

Army policymakers would continue to rewrite its history to place the “volunteer” at its center. As Secretary of the Army Howard Calloway said in his 1973 keynote address to the Association of the United States Army, “The Army has set out to provide security for this great country, to keep our global commitments, to stand ready to face an aggressor on a moment’s notice—and to do all this with an army of volunteers.” The AVF was a bold new challenge, he told the audience gathered at the Sheraton-Park Hotel in Washington, DC “No nation in history... has tried to meet such massive and complex

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

commitments without compelling people to serve, through one form of conscription or another.”²³

In the early years of the AVF, the Marines did not have a codified system for volunteer wives, although the expectations were the same. As the Marines often do when they don’t have the institutional capacity to function independently, they rely on the Navy. As early as 1965, Navy wives had organized a wives association, and in 1970, Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Chief of Naval Operations, made wives’ input somewhat official when he instituted the Navy Ombudsman Program to give wives a voice in Navy policies that affected families. Although families stationed on larger installations near naval bases benefited from the program, Marine families would not become official members of the organization until 1988.²⁴ According to Betty Sowers Alt and Bonnie Domrose Stone, two military wives who co-wrote books about military family life, “When a woman marries a military man she moves into his world and is pressured to conform and perform as a ‘good’ military wife.”²⁵ For the wives of Marine Corps officers at the command level, Sally Hunter Jerome’s *The Marine Corps Wife* was the go-to manual well into the late 1990s, even though it was published in 1955—and with advice that was tailored to a different world than the one most women inhabited in the late 20th

²³ Howard H. Calloway, “Keynote Address Before the Association of the United States Army” (15 October 1973), USAMHI AVA Coll., Box 21.

²⁴ “Guidelines for the Spouses of Commanding Officers and Executive Officers,” Guidelines Series (Washington, DC: Navy Wifeline Association, 1994); Marine Corps Archives, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., Coll., Box 35.

²⁵ Bonnie Domrose Stone and Betty Sowers Alt, *Uncle Sam’s Brides: The World of Military Wives* (New York: Walker and Company, 1990), 4.

century.²⁶ Larger Marine bases would have a volunteer wives association, such as the Key Wife Program at Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina, which started in the late 1970s.²⁷ In 1980, the Marine Corps attempted to convince wives to talk to their husbands about reenlisting with a glossy mailer entitled “Seven Good Wives...of seven good men.”²⁸ But the Marines wouldn’t codify their volunteer program, The Key Volunteer Network (almost always called the Key *Wives* Network), until 1993, after the first Gulf War.

At the dawn of the AVF, military planners hoped to harness the work of women in order to stretch productivity, to save the “man-hours” of servicemen and officers. Policymakers believed they could increase their reliance on the labor of women because wives were simply expected to volunteer. The military’s use of wives’ labor was clearly meant to cut costs within a context when the military began operating within the structures of labor market competition. But, in this case the structures of the labor market worked against the wishes of policymakers, because the late 1960s and early 1970s saw a marked erosion of the male breadwinner and a dramatic rise in women working for pay.

These changes would reverberate beyond the military community and shape the relationship between military service and gendered obligations of citizenship in America. Even in the absence of a draft, men’s service—and men’s service alone—retained its connection with older ideas about obligation, duty, and sacrifice. Women could volunteer to join the military in an ever-expanding number of fields, wives could volunteer their

²⁶ Sally Hunter Jerome, *The Marine Corps Wife* (New York: Harper, 1955).

²⁷ “Guidelines for the Spouses of Commanding Officers and Executive Officers.”

²⁸ “Seven Good Wives...of seven good men,” (unknown publisher) (1980). Copy of mailer in possession of the author.

services, labor, and time to staff on-base facilities and programs, and some women could volunteer to be both a mother and a soldier. The Department of Defense, each of the service branches, and several mainstream feminist groups could speak about those advances in women's voluntary service in terms of progress—and they all frequently would. But, women's work—in uniform and as wives and mothers— was always seen as less than, or subordinate to, the work of men. The cultural belief that men were obligated to protect the nation remained long after the United States dismantled the state mechanisms to compel that service.

Indeed, the gendered lines of obligation that were once drawn by the Selective Service System and the state were redrawn within the services along occupational specialties. The strides that women made in the 1970s were undeniable: by 1977, 92% of Army military occupational specialties (MOS) were open to women. But only men could serve in the combat arms (infantry, artillery, and aviation), and men fiercely guarded those sharp distinctions between combat roles and support roles. As Jim Webb, a former Marine infantry officer, a future Secretary of the Navy, and a senator, wrote in 1979, “There is a place for women in our military, but not in combat. And their presence at institutions dedicated to the preparation of men for combat command is poisoning that preparation.” Webb was speaking about the recent decision to allow women into the service academies, and he lamented that politicians had turned the military into “a test tube for social experimentation.” He blamed “equal-opportunity specialists, women's rights advocates, and certain members of Congress [who] have prided themselves on the areas of the military they have ‘opened up’ to women.” He worried that the Carter

administration would open the combat arms to women, and to those who believed that women had a duty to share in the burdens of citizenship—“that it is sex discrimination to require men only to fight”—Webb argued that history disagreed: “Equal does not mean the same.”²⁹

Webb’s article, and others like it, shows that the very idea of volunteering became an expression of gender, and in ways that would become increasingly contentious as the decade wore on. Although both men and women ostensibly volunteered for service after 1973, Americans in and out of uniform held firm to the belief that it was women who volunteered, but that men were somehow obligated. After Congress passed the ERA, the services began studying how male and female soldiers would feel about opening up all military occupations to women. The Army Research Institute found that although women felt that the Army should afford them an opportunity to serve in direct combat jobs, they were less supportive of being compelled to serve in those jobs. A majority of men and women believed that women should be trained to use offensive weapons systems, but opinions diverged when asked if women should be allowed to serve in combat jobs where using those weapons would be a necessity (61% of women approved, while 53% of men disapproved). Interestingly, when the question of a hypothetical war was posed, more men than women believed the United States should compel women to fight in combat. In the polling data, political scientist Judith Hicks Stiehm saw a coherent pattern developing: “Men’s roles and requirements seem to be taken as given. Women in general are seen as able to do some of men’s roles. Some women are seen as able to do all of

²⁹ Jim Webb, “Women Can’t Fight,” *Washingtonian* (1 November 1979).

them, and some believe they should be allowed to do so. But women wish to serve as volunteers. As military personnel, they expect to be expected to do their jobs, but neither women nor men seem ready to coerce women to do all the things men are coerced to do.”³⁰

Within military families living on bases, expectations, on volunteering were shaped not only by gender but also by class. Class differences in the military are compounded by rank, and the rift between officer and enlisted families was stark. By law officers must have a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university, and in general they hail from more affluent backgrounds than enlistees, who usually only have a high school diploma (or equivalent) when they join. Policymakers within the military are always officers, although command-level senior enlisted personnel (Sergeants Major in the Army and Marines) serve an advisory role. In part a reflection of their class backgrounds, in all periods of the twentieth century officers were also more likely to be married, and their spouses were less likely to work outside the home than enlisted spouses. According to Stone and Alt, the two military wives who wrote several books together about life in a military household, “[Officers’] wives... were not generally employed outside the home, so it was a time of hats, white gloves, and fashion shows. The officers’ wives were in step with their civilian sisters who graced the pages of hometown society pages with their teas, balls, and social functions.”³¹ To be sure, the lifestyle that they describe was only attainable for the wives of senior officers, but there was an expectation among officers’ wives from all ranks that their husbands’ status came

³⁰ Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*, 91.

³¹ Stone and Alt, *Uncle Sam’s Brides*, 44.

with certain privileges. The wives of junior and senior officers were always a part of the informal institutional structure of major bases and installations: wives provided an avenue for families of more junior personnel to communicate concerns or grievances to the chain of command at informal gatherings and social events.

Enlisted personnel and their families definitely did not share the same backgrounds as the officers in charge of them, and this created friction. According to Carolyn Becraft, a former military officer as well as the wife of an Army officer in the 1970s and 1980s, base commanders simply expected enlisted wives to work at the commissary, the PX, or the Officers' Club.³² In the AVF, the gulf between officers and enlisted grew wider: compared to draftees, volunteer enlistees in the 1970s came from poorer backgrounds and were less educated. In the 1970s, a new lieutenant took home roughly double what a private made in pay. Junior officers of all ranks were entitled to housing, and their families enjoyed healthcare and on-base privileges. DoD did not even recognize that junior enlisted families existed.

Enlisted personnel often came from the poorest families: while only 5 percent of American families had incomes under \$2,900 per year, nearly double the percentage of Army enlistees came from such families. And for many families, military service did not improve their lot in life. 53% of enlisted families earned less than \$10,999 a year, compared to 40% of all American families.³³ Military families were also very young compared to civilians. Importantly, and reflecting broader trends in education levels

³² Carolyn Becraft interview with author, 8 December 2016. Notes from interview in possession of the author.

³³ Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 76.

among the lower class, the wives of enlistees were more educated than their husbands. On the officer side, for comparison, forty percent of wives had college degrees; four-fifths had some post-secondary education.³⁴

When policymakers began studying what military families needed in the All-Volunteer Force, they asked their wives first. They turned to officers' wives clubs to solicit their members' opinions at informal gatherings over coffee or lunch. In the summer of 1972, the Department of Defense focused on one group in particular—the wives of military doctors. A major concern as the United States shifted away from the draft was how to get qualified medical personnel to serve without coercing them into uniform. The so-called “doctor draft” was a hotly debated issue among the several commissions discussed in chapter three, including the Gates Commission. In 1972, DoD solicited the opinions of over 1,500 doctors' wives from all of the services, with the exception of the Marines (because the Marine Corps does not have medical personnel; it relies on the Navy for doctors, nurses, dentists, and enlisted medics, called corpsmen). To policymakers, the calculus was simple: “Because only 10% of present Service doctors plan to stay permanently, ways must be found to make military medicine attractive to more men as a career. For a man to be happy in the Service, his wife and family must be happy also.”³⁵

However, when policymakers compiled the survey data, they found that the life that most officers' wives were living wasn't all white gloves and fashion shows. Instead,

³⁴ Ibid., 126.

³⁵ Memorandum for the Honorable Robert F. Froehlke, Secretary of the Army, from Richard S. Wilbur, M.D., 10 August 1972, USAMHI, AVA Coll., Box 6.

doctors' wives complained that life in the military made them feel like second-class citizens. The wives believed that their husbands' rank afforded them privileges and benefits, but the military was not doing enough to enhance their special status. According to Betty Lou Wilbur, the wife of Undersecretary of Defense for Health and Environment Dr. Richard Wilbur, the study showed that "the wives feel their husbands' pay, housing, professional prestige, respect from the community, cooperation from ancillary help, and opportunity for career planning are all less than they would have in a civilian medical practice."³⁶ Doctors' wives expressed that they expected a certain level of living standard, prestige, and respect from the community that the military simply was not providing.³⁷

Policymakers believed that women were homemakers and the primary consumers for the family, and those beliefs drove military priorities for families. The front lines in these early battles for the hearts and minds of military families were sites of feminine consumption on base—the commissary, the PX, and the laundromat. As the military moved into the marketplace, the effort to provide modern comforts to military households was coupled with a customer-oriented approach to serving service members and their families. In March 1972, the Army created a commissary advisory council comprised of retirees, widows, and wives to advise base commanders on "such operational matters as stockage, pricing, quality, operating hours, employee courtesy, and sanitation." Efforts were made to improve commissaries, PX's, and other retail facilities to "make them more customer oriented." Patterns of consumption during the 20th century were gendered, and women were the primary targets of the effort—by grocery chains, retailers, advertisers,

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

and, importantly, local policymakers—to shape those patterns in the United States. To recall the title of historian Tracey Deutch’s book on gender and consumerism, Army planners were literally trying to build a “housewife’s paradise” on bases in the 1970s (See image below).³⁸

Military planners’ vision for women’s roles was not limited to the commissary—but it was constrained nonetheless to traditional notions of femininity. A telling example of how policymakers conceived of gender roles lies in how the Army conducted the Fort Benning Experiment from 1970 to 1972. Under the auspices of the Modern Volunteer Army Program, Army policymakers set up test sites at key installations around the country to figure out how to best transition to the AVF. Policymakers had to think through how to, in their words, “attract and increase the enlistment of able men and women, raise the quality of Army life, and improve professionalism throughout the rank and file.”³⁹ Army brass expressed concern over family issues, and saw family satisfaction with Army life as essential to retaining quality enlistees, especially in the lower ranks. During the Fort Benning Experiment, employees at base retail outlets were required to attend new customer relations courses. PX hours were extended, and for the wives, the Army happily unveiled a new fabric shop and sewing center, including congressionally authorized permission to sell fabric in bulk by the bolt to Army wives. To the Army,

³⁸ Tracey Deutch, *Building A Housewife’s Paradise: Gender, Politics, and American Grocery Stores in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

³⁹ Brigadier General Willard Latham, *The Modern Volunteer Army Program: The Benning Experiment, 1970-1972* (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, 1974), iii.

“The morale of the soldier and of his family is closely connected to the quality of food, commissary, laundry, and clothing services provided by the military.”⁴⁰

These changes may seem trivial, but when the Department of Defense or any of the service branches make even subtle changes, the economic effects can be enormous. Chapter two told the story of major corporations that set up vast training facilities near military installations to take advantage of programs like Project Transition, which provided resources to make connections between soon-to-be discharged GIs and jobs in the private sector. In the post-World War II era, the military was a big player in the “consumer’s republic,” and military families—like their civilian counterparts—were committed consumers by 1970. In the early 1970s, the Post Exchange (PX) system comprised the third largest retail chain in the United States, behind Sears and JC Penny. Commissaries generated \$1.6 billion in annual receipts, a total that equaled or surpassed all of the largest food retailers at the time.⁴¹ As historian Meredith Lair argues, after the Korean War, “PX’s were increasingly designed to replicate—and eventually surpass—the retail opportunities American civilians enjoyed....” Keeping the military “armed with abundance” was big business.⁴²

The kinds of changes the Army implemented in the early 1970s in order to improve family life reflected how policymakers understood gender roles both within the military community and the wider American society. Not only did the Army increase funding for family programs that involved traditional notions of women’s work and

⁴⁰ DAHSUM 1972.

⁴¹ Henry Scarupa, “Uncle Sam’s Discount Houses,” *Baltimore Sun* (8 November 1970), M11.

⁴² Lair, *Armed with Abundance*, 149.

interests—shopping, sewing, and laundry— they also implemented policies that assumed women were not working outside the home, and therefore should have lots of spare time on their hands. Paradoxically, more and more wives were asked to do “volunteer” work in order to run the very programs the Army was supposedly implementing on their behalf. And as officers, policymakers made decisions that were informed by their privileged class backgrounds and status within the military hierarchy.

This is not to say that these improvements to quality of life went unappreciated, or that these new facilities and programs went unused. Many women in the military community loved the increases in modern clothing being offered at base exchanges; they enthusiastically bought those congressionally approved bolts of bulk fabric. But as the new volunteer military headed into the uncharted territory of the 1970s, better customer service at the base PX, or a sewing center, or a new bowling alley, were only marginal improvements to families struggling to make ends meet.

The High Stakes of Military Divorce

Of course, on top of having to “volunteer” their time to staff on-base programs, military wives were busy—quite busy, in fact— and not just with the shopping, sewing, laundry, childrearing, and their other domestic duties. Making ends meet in the military, as in civilian society, strained marriages, often to the breaking point. In the United States between 1960 and 1990, the divorce rate doubled. Within the military, although divorce rates differed across each service, and some military jobs (those occupations, mostly in the combat arms, that did not conform to standard “business hours” or required long

periods of separation) traditionally had higher rates of divorce, the overall divorce rate in the military roughly mirrored that in the civilian world.⁴³ But, recently divorced military wives, many of whom had been married for years to a serviceman, were shocked to find out that after getting divorced they weren't entitled to a share of his military retirement benefits, health insurance, or even social security. Divorce also meant giving up on-base shopping privileges, the savings from which helped struggling families to make ends meet. This was especially galling within an environment where the military increasingly relied upon the volunteer work of wives to make their community support system function. Finally, and more so than former wives in the civilian world, military wives frequently amassed spotty employment records because the Army required frequent changes of duty station. Having to start over every couple of years condemned many working wives to the bottom rungs of the employment ladder, making it likely that they could not compete for promotions and raises.

Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that military families—and wives, in particular—were at the epicenter of the battles over changing divorce laws in the United States. Divorced military wives started writing to their elected officials in Washington, and they soon found a sympathetic ear in Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder from Colorado. Schroeder, who was elected to Congress in 1972, ran a grassroots campaign without a lot of national Democratic Party help. She campaigned on a platform of ending the Vietnam War, protecting the environment, creating affordable housing, and family issues. Schroeder believed that every mother was a working mother, and that government

⁴³ Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 163.

policies failed to account for women in the workforce. On her advocacy on behalf of workingwomen, Schroeder once said, “The view of men as breadwinners and women as wives and mothers,” continued to shape policies in government and the private sector. Those views “mirrored... legislative policy that [put] women at a disadvantage, discriminat[ing] against them in the workplace, and undermin[ing] their economic security.”⁴⁴ Although she was joining a small, but increasingly powerful group of feminist women in Congress—notably Patsy Mink, Bella Abzug, and Shirley Chisholm—she was the first woman to enter Congress with two very young children, aged 2 and 6. Always charming, she had a habit of signing her name to official memoranda and government documents simply as “Pat,” with a large “P,” inside of which she drew a smiley face.⁴⁵

If a high profile working mother in Washington wasn’t scandalous enough, Schroeder turned even more heads when, in her freshman term, she lobbied for an available slot on the all-male Armed Services Committee. Schroeder saw military policy as one vital avenue for making a difference for all American women and their families. She recalled learning a lesson early on in her congressional service: money was pivotal to making policy work, and she found out that the Armed Services Committee had the largest discretionary budget in all of Congress. She later remarked, “From what I had observed, it seemed to me the committee often justified its actions in the name of

⁴⁴ Patricia Schroeder, Andrea Camp, and Robyn Lipner, *Champion of the Great American Family* (New York: Random House, 1989), 22.

⁴⁵ See Papers of Patricia Schroeder, Boxes 128 and 129.

defending women and children and yet it never bothered to ask women and children what they wanted.”⁴⁶

Schroeder was encroaching on territory that was defended by men who were unabashedly sexist and committed to keeping women out of their boys club. The chairman of the committee, F. Edward Hébert, the long-serving southern Democrat (from Louisiana), told Schroeder that she didn’t deserve the seat because she had never served in the armed forces. “How can you serve on the committee,” Representative Hébert asked, “You have never been in combat.” Schroeder, who had done her homework on each member of the committee, dryly replied, “Then you and I have a lot in common.” Hébert was not a vet, nor were most of the other men on the committee. Schroeder persisted and finally won her seat.⁴⁷

Not long after Schroeder took up her seat on the Armed Services Committee—a position, by the way, that Chairman Hébert made Schroeder literally share with the only African-American member of the committee, Ron Dellums, because “women and blacks were worth only half of one regular member”⁴⁸— she began getting letters from widows and divorced wives of civil servants, members of the military, and Foreign Service officers. These former wives believed that by taking care of the household, supplementing the family income with odd jobs on base and in the surrounding community, and volunteering their time to the military—in other words, by living the

⁴⁶ Schroeder, et al., *Champion of the Great American Family*, 25.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Quoted in History, Art & Archives, U.S. House of Representatives, “Schroeder, Patricia Scott,” <http://history.house.gov/People/Detail/21313>.

double day—they had been partners with their husbands in serving the nation and that they were entitled to a share of the benefits.

The story of Frances Winans illustrates what many divorced women faced. In 1946, Frances married Gilbert Winans, who was recently commissioned as an officer in the Navy. In the beginning of their 26-year marriage, Frances “looked forward to being his wife and helping him advance his Navy career.” She recalled being active in the Officers Wives Club, in addition to her duties as “a traditional housewife and full time mother” of three. But when her husband went to Vietnam in 1969, he fathered a child with a Vietnamese woman. Nonetheless, Frances stayed with her husband until he retired from the Navy, and she remained quiet about the child and her husband’s infidelity because she worried it would negatively impact his career. Gilbert would eventually retire from the Navy as a captain in 1979, but on Christmas Eve in 1976, Captain Winans walked out on Frances and their kids. Even though she knew her family would be cut off from the benefits of a senior officers’ family living in a military community, she had no choice but to file for divorce. Her family now destitute, she had no job skills or experience, and no prospects. Because Captain Winans deserted his family, a judge awarded alimony and child support, but not enough to support her family. The money certainly helped, but Frances would struggle to make ends meet for the rest of her life.⁴⁹

Hazel Coon was not so lucky. She spent 21-years married to her husband, a career military officer named LeRoy Coon. When he retired from the Navy, Mr. Coon took a job working for the military PX system, which required him to move to Dallas.

⁴⁹ Patricia Schroeder Papers, “Former Spouses Files- 1980s,” Box 128.

Mr. Coon told his wife he would move down from Virginia alone first, ostensibly to get settled before sending for her and their three children. Instead, he filed for an uncontested divorce in a Dallas courthouse—Mrs. Coon was not present, and was not informed of the proceedings. Although Texas was a community property state, Hazel got nothing because Mr. Coon was not required to declare his military pension as income or as property to be divided. Women like Hazel Coon and Frances Winans believed that they should be entitled to some of the retirement that they felt they helped to earn, given that the military required their unpaid labor to run on base services and military obligations made it next to impossible to maintain a career. Military life put them at a disadvantage in divorce: most did not have marketable job skills, and those women who did have work experience had spotty employment records, since their husbands had to move frequently. When they got divorced they often found themselves among the ranks of the poor, unskilled, usually unemployed, and forgotten.⁵⁰

To Schroeder, people like Frances Winans and Hazel Coons were victims of a system that refused to change with the times. Institutions were failing to keep up with the economic, social, and sexual revolutions that Americans were experiencing. Beyond Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 and the promise of the ERA to bring equality for women, Schroeder sought other avenues to change government policy to be responsive to the needs of workingwomen. She partnered with the Association of American Foreign Service Women (AAFSW), a wives club for the spouses of Foreign Service officers, who were beginning to organize around retirement benefits and Social

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Security. As the wives of diplomats and State Department officials, they were expected to entertain foreign dignitaries, organize social functions, attend official events, and, like military wives, volunteer their time to the Foreign Service community. Indeed, until 1972, Foreign Service wives were officially graded on their service and those grades impacted their husbands' performance evaluations. And yet, if after even decades of marriage, the couple divorced, the wife got nothing for her work, and worse, had no marketable skills or employment record at the end of it.⁵¹

In 1977, Schroeder introduced several bills on behalf of former spouses of Foreign Service officers, military personnel, and civil servants that would mandate that state courts divide up retirement benefits using a formula based on the number of years of marriage. A formula was necessary to attack the disparities between states in divorce proceedings, and the rise of "forum shopping," where men would avoid divorcing in states with more liberal laws, and instead found states in which he could get a favorable ruling.

Opposition to the bill was fierce, often vitriolic. Retired Foreign Service officers and military servicemen, along with their lobbying organization, the American Retirees Association (ARA) argued flatly that divorced women deserved nothing. In the words of one retired officer, "We reject out of hand that the wife contributed to the earning of retirement benefits." Another officer told Schroeder, "A woman with a tear in her eyes can get more than a man with his arms and legs shot off."⁵² The ARA sent out mailers to its members, ginning up anger through appeals to racism and homophobia. One "case"

⁵¹ Schroeder, et al., *Champion of the Great American Family*, 98-100.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 102.

the ARA alerted its members to involved a white “active duty commander stationed in Wash DC” The ARA claimed his wife walked out on him and their four children “to live with an influential Black Man working in the area.” ARA claimed that the woman only asked a modest amount in alimony initially, but the “Black Man” encouraged her to sue for more and to go after his future retirement benefits. The ARA missive concluded that the commander probably did not stand a chance because “most courts in the area [were] manned by black judges.” Another “case” involved a married Army couple. Upon his retirement as a colonel, the man’s wife “left him to live with her Lesbian Lover.” This “lover” then convinced the divorced woman that “she was entitled to half of her husbands’ retired pay,” and that she should sue for it so that “the two could live on it, happily ever after.”⁵³

Ultimately, many members of Congress opposed the bill. Of course, congressmen also drew federal pensions once they retired—a point that ARA lobbyists made sure to drive home when they made the rounds on Capitol Hill. One of the co-directors of the ARA, William Parker, wrote to his members to remind their representatives, “The Bill requires Retired Military Men to divide their Retired Pay with a Former Spouse, and once the Retired Service Member is hooked, it continues until death. The Former Spouse can take it into a new marriage, thus a new (male) spouse lives off of the Retired Pay of a Retired Service Member. What do you think about that?? What will your Congressman think when he retires and it happens to him as well??”⁵⁴ Schroeder held out hope that a group of legislators, comprised almost exclusively of older married men, would remain

⁵³ ARA Mailer, Papers of Patricia Schroeder, Box 129. Emphasis in the original.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

impartial and debate the bill on its merits. But the possibility that they too might have to share their pensions if they divorced in the future proved too big a hurdle—the bill never made it out of committee.

For divorced spouses, the situation had to get much worse before it got better. Two Supreme Court cases raised the stakes: the 1979 *Hisquierdo v. Hisquierdo* case, which held that state courts had no jurisdiction over federal pensions for railroad retirees, and the 1981 *McCarty v. McCarty* decision, which ruled that state courts could not divide up military retirement pay or pensions. The latter decision, however, left the door open for congressional action: according to Justice Harry Blackmun’s opinion for the majority, “We recognize that the plight of an ex-spouse of a retired service member is often a serious one...Congress may well decide...that more protection should be afforded a former spouse.... The decision, however, is for Congress alone.”⁵⁵

Feminist congresswomen relied on women’s rights groups to keep the pressure on other members of Congress. Women’s rights groups like NOW, and also groups interested in advancing civil rights and liberties, such as the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), came to the defense of women serving in the military early in the 1970s. These groups initially made their biggest impact through the courts. When the ACLU began their Women’s Rights Project in 1971, the organization made the subject of women in the military a focal point. The Women’s Rights Project sought to eliminate gender-based discrimination through legal action, and the ACLU helped on several

⁵⁵ Ibid., 103.

landmark court cases involving the military during the 1970s and 80s, including *Frontiero v. Richardson*, *Rostker v. Goldberg*, and *McCarty v. McCarty*. Choosing to fight gender discrimination battles in the courts was a high stakes gambit: win, especially at the Supreme Court level, and the ramifications would be national; lose, and the movement could be set back a generation.

The ACLU joined forces with other groups interested in women's rights to form the National Coalition for Women in Defense (NCWD), a lobbying group that worked to influence members of Congress and DoD policymakers, and to provide resources to women in the military community. NCWD brought disparate women's rights groups to the table to work together on helping women in the military, often bridging vast ideological differences. The two big women's groups in NCWD—NOW and WEAL—did not see eye to eye on fundamental feminist issues or on how best to secure women's rights through political action. Although NOW and WEAL were both liberal feminist groups, or groups with members who believed that equality could be achieved through securing individual rights, WEAL was started in 1968 by members of NOW who thought that education and economic discrimination should be the national focus, not what they considered excessively divisive issues, particularly abortion. As feminist scholar Lee Ann Banaszak argues, “While some individuals became active in both groups, WEAL's membership generally held a less expansive view of what feminists should seek to change.”⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Banaszak, *The Women's Movement*, 76-79.

As these different women's groups began to work together for women in uniform and the wives of servicemen, they found unity in the twinned goals of women's access to the workplace and labor laws that addressed the specific needs of women. Feminist groups that formed coalitions to fight for military women echoes what Marisa Chappell has recently argued, that despite the fractious nature of feminist politics in the 1970s, there was actually quite a bit of agreement among women's rights groups that their focus—both at the grassroots and as a lobbying strategy— should be working to open up the labor market to women. Chappell writes, “By the 1970s, each of these groups [NOW and WEAL] had come to see full employment as a necessary, though not sufficient, foundation for women's economic advancement.”⁵⁷

These national women's groups also had to convince their members that helping service women and women married to men in the military was a worthwhile pursuit. Feminists in the women's movement bitterly disagreed with one another over the subject of war and the military. Because many women who were involved in the feminist movement of the 1970s started out in the antiwar and peace movement of the 1960s, there was an underlying assumption that anything to do with the US military was suspect. Carolyn Becraft, who ran WEAL's Ford Foundation-funded “Women in the Military” project in the 1980s, recalled that WEAL's leadership was very wary of her project because many rank-and-file members did not want their organization to be associated

⁵⁷ Marisa Chappell, “Demanding a New Family Wage: Feminist Consensus in the 1970s Full Employment Campaign,” in Stephanie Gilmore (ed.), *Feminist Coalitions: Historical Perspectives on Second-Wave Feminism in the United States* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 262.

with an institution of war.⁵⁸ And Becraft's "Women in the Military" project was no small endeavor, either. Budget documents reveal that this program often accounted for roughly one quarter to one third of WEAL's operating budget in the 1980s. She recalls having to often assuage the concerns of wary board members during her time at WEAL.⁵⁹

Many feminists viewed the military as *the* institutional manifestation of patriarchy; others simply felt that war and women by nature were incompatible. Even after the Vietnam War ended, many women's groups remained opposed to women in the military and called upon the memory of that divisive war to make their point. For example, the national group Women for Racial and Economic Equality (WREE) refused calls from NOW and WEAL to join in supporting their efforts in *Rostker v. Goldberg*, a court case that challenged the constitutionality of draft registration for men only. In a letter WREE circulated to other women's peace groups, it stated:

We do not believe that young women want the right to die in war, the equal right to kill their sisters and brothers in other countries, the right to become equal to the Lt. Calley's of this country. As the Viet Nam war showed, the right to fight and die is reserved overwhelmingly for poorer and working people—for those who do not have the opportunity to go to school to train for 'exempt' occupations, who do not have the money to flee the country, who do not have the connections to get a 'desk job' or officer's rank. This type of de facto discrimination does not promote equality for or among women, but rather would increase the burden on those who already bear more than their fair share of unemployment, low wages and poor education opportunities, especially Black and other minority women.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Carolyn Becraft interview with author, 8 December 2016.

⁵⁹ For example, see Women's Equity Action League Records, 1967-1990, "Weal Budget 1984," MC500, Folder 32.

⁶⁰ Women for Racial and Economic Equality, "WREE OPPOSES THE DRAFTING OF WOMEN" (January 1980), Women for Racial and Economic Equality Coll., Box 4, Military Draft and Women, 1978-1980 Folder.

While NOW and WEAL came to the aid of women in the military in the 1970s, and as many other groups began to view the issue of women in uniform as a civil rights issue—one that related to opening up the workplace to women—groups like WREE and those more closely aligned with the broader peace movement, remained steadfastly opposed.

The *McCarty* decision—in which the Supreme Court ruled that military retirement pensions were not divisible in divorce proceedings—galvanized women’s rights groups and they quickly mounted a fierce lobbying campaign in Congress. Ex-Partners of Servicemembers for Equality (EXPOSE), which began as an informal gathering of a few ex-wives writing support letters to Patricia Schroeder, filed for recognition as a nonprofit lobbying group. The group would quickly grow to over 5,000 members.⁶¹ WEAL campaigned under the slogan, “Service Wives Deserve Better!” It argued, “According to an unwritten code, the military spouse serves her own military term.” Wives, widows, and divorcees deserved protection and compensation for their years of work, WEAL insisted. The organization highlighted two main concerns: equity and adequacy. Military pension policy ignored women’s contribution as homemakers and as volunteers in the military community—work that was essential for bases to function. WEAL argued that adequately dividing resources earned over the course of a military marriage was an issue of equality for those who had, though unpaid, served the nation in roles that paralleled men’s service to the nation.⁶²

⁶¹ EXPOSE Newsletter, May/June Issue 1985, Papers of Patricia Schroeder, Box 51.

⁶² Women’s Equity Action League Records, 1967-1990, “The Military Retirement Income Equity Act,” MC500, Box 78, Folder 35.

The high court's decision had wide-ranging effects: in states like Arizona, California, and Texas, which viewed all earnings as joint, or communal property, *McCarty* threatened to create a logjam within the courts of divorced men wanting to cut their wives off from the retirement money. The National Military Wives Association (NWMA) portrayed a grim picture for ex-wives: "The day the divorce decree becomes final she loses all medical, PX, commissary, and CHAMPUS [healthcare] privileges even if she is seriously ill and without her own health insurance." NMWA argued that wives were essential to the military mission, that their labor made military bases function, and that Congress needed to pass a bill that recognized spouses' contributions to the military.⁶³

In April 1981, Pat Schroeder introduced a bill, co-sponsored by Republican Senator Mark Hatfield of Oregon, to reverse the *McCarty* decision. The bill revisited her original idea to create a formula for courts to use when dividing pensions, based upon the number of years a couple was married. For former spouses who were married for at least 20 years, they could retain their medical, PX, and commissary privileges. It also allowed ex-spouses to keep their healthcare coverage for as long as they remained unmarried. This time, the bill made it out of committee: The Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act passed as an amendment to the Department of Defense Authorization Act in September 1982, and went into effect the following year.

In the 1970s, NOW and WEAL chose their battles carefully and stuck close to their mission to open access to the workplace and change policies that were created for a

⁶³ Women's Equity Action League Records, 1967-1990, "National Military Wives Association, Inc. Press Release," MC500, Box 54.

male breadwinner economy. In this struggle, the military was too large, and too important, an institution to overlook. In the high stakes battle over military divorce, WEAL and NOW took a risk in coming to the aid of military wives—by helping women who were closely associated with an institution of war, they risked alienating their antiwar peace constituency. The leadership of NOW and WEAL could reason that they joined the fray because these women were largely victims of that institution. Feminists, and their allies in Congress, could not ignore the plight of military families because their fight was caught up in the fundamental struggle of the second wave: reshaping the public sphere to accommodate women.

Women in the Military and the Problem with Progress

In the mid-1970s, military officials began to realize that the demographic changes brought on by the AVF were here to stay, so they turned their attention to finding solutions. The problem was that until they were confronted with this growing crisis, nobody had thought to study military families. From 1975 to 1980 each of the services, with the notable exception of the Marine Corps, contracted legions of social scientists to study families. In September 1977, the Navy hosted a “Conference on Current Trends and Directions in Military Family Research” in San Diego. At the conference, the conversations ranged widely, but the civilian social scientists quickly realized that military policymakers were mostly interested in the narrow question of how families have impacted the military mission. The former Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Zumwalt (now retired), presented at the conference. He began his talk opining,

“The line officer who pulls ahead of the average is one whose wife makes him better able to understand the problems of military life.” Admiral Zumwalt believed that military family research should focus on how the family could be made to support the military. Another speaker, a general in charge of the Army’s Human Resources Directorate, went a step further and argued that the military was a total institution: “It is not merely a job, it is not merely a work place; and all members of the soldier’s family are members of the Army.”⁶⁴

Perhaps recognizing that military policymakers might be operating from outmoded understandings of gender roles, the civilian researchers at the conference tried to redirect the conversation. Reuben Hill, Regents Professor at the University of Minnesota, made an important observation: “The family cannot be co-opted unless the family can co-opt the military. The military seeks ideally to make the family instrumental to its mission of developing and maintaining an effective combat-ready body of fighting men mobile enough to be deployed anywhere in the world when needed.” The services, Hill argued, believed that “wives and children of married personnel should be socialized to subordinate their individual needs and desires to the good of the service to minimize any family claims on the time and presence of the husband-father.” But, he concluded, “It is clear that the military has little understanding of the stubborn resistance that families

⁶⁴ Edna J. Hunter and D. Stephen Nice (eds.), *Military Families: Adaptation to Change* (New York: Praeger, 1978), x.

can build up to sabotage such unreal expectations. Without more quid pro quo, the families of married professional servicemen may defeat the military system.”⁶⁵

The lunch speaker, a female sociologist from Wayne State University, went even further. She asked if the military men in the room (and they were all men) had been looking at the problem backwards: “Throughout the conference, participants have been talking about the integration of women into the military... Why are we only talking about women’s integration into the military? Why don’t we talk about the fact that men also have to become integrated with women?” While the conferees ate their lunch, she deconstructed widely-held notions of sex difference—men, like women, have a range of physical capabilities; men miss work for long stretches of time, just like new mothers on maternity leave; men also experience monthly hormonal cycles in ways that are similar to women’s menstrual cycle—and argued that much of their perceptions of difference were socially and culturally constructed. She concluded, “The problem, then, should be expressed in terms, not of integrating women into the military, but of integrating men into a new kind of military situation.”⁶⁶

In the second half of the decade, as more women entered the service, and as more wives of servicemen entered the workforce, policymakers, military officials, and members of congress wrestled over how military service would square with woman’s traditional station in the family. The ERA cast a large shadow over these debates. Policy officials in all of the services were convinced that ratification was just around the corner,

⁶⁵ Edna J. Hunter and Lucile Cheng, “Report on the Military Family Research Conference.”

⁶⁶ Ibid.

and they made decisions on the status of women accordingly. Military officials could—and often would—speak about the year-over-year increases in enlisted women and officers serving in uniform, or the growing number of occupational fields available to women in the same kind of progressive language that characterized most discussions of women’s advancements in society more broadly during the decade.

Military officials brought that upbeat language of progress to a special congressional hearing in 1977 on the status of women in the All-Volunteer Force. When Robert Nelson, Undersecretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, testified before the Joint Economic Committee, he proclaimed in his opening remarks, “Our leadership recognizes that women provide a significant manpower resource that can perform a vital role in today’s Army. The Army has been at the forefront in the utilization of women.” And the Army, like each of the other services that also testified that day, pointed to substantial increases in women’s service across the board. Nelson asked that a litany of progressive steps that the Army had taken be entered into the record: in 1971, married women were allowed to enlist; 1972, ROTC was opened up to women; 1974, women began getting “weapons familiarization training” on the M16; in 1975, the Service Academies began admitting women; and in 1976, basic training (including weapon’s training) became identical for men and women. But, despite five years of “progress,” increased access did not mean equal access or opportunity, and on this point, at a time when the ERA still looked likely to pass, the optimistic language of progress turned into apprehension.

When the chairman of the Joint Economic Committee, Senator William Proxmire, pointed out to Undersecretary Nelson that from 1972 to 1976, the number of women in the military as a whole increased from 45,000 to 109,000, but that in the Army, policymakers' forecasts for the remainder of the decade suggested that the utilization of women would plateau, the apprehensions over women in uniform overtook earlier optimism and talk of progress. And as many members of Congress—Democrats and Republicans—believed the ERA's ratification to be assured, they executed their oversight role with that in mind. Senator Proxmire asked Nelson why it seemed that the Army was taking a pause. Nelson admitted that numbers were plateauing, but he insisted, "I don't believe that we have reached a firm plateau from which we will not move." Instead, he argued that the Army "had come to a point where we feel we must examine the results of changes we have made over the past 4 years, which...has quadrupled the number of females in the Army." Undersecretary Nelson's response echoed a frequent concern among military policymakers about what effects more women in uniform would have on the services. Nelson turned to his Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Maj. Gen. J.P. Kingston, who concurred, telling Proxmire, "Senator, the key to this is the statement that Secretary Nelson made where we are currently. We have a number of studies ongoing in which we are looking at where we should go from here." Proxmire persisted with this line of questioning, but they kept giving the same answer—the Army would have to get back to them once it were finished studying the problem.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ *The Role of Women in the Military: Hearings Before the Subcommittee on Priorities and Economy in Government of the Joint Economic Committee, 95th Cong., 1st Session* (Statements of Robert L. Nelson, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower

These military apprehensions over women in uniform were rooted, most fundamentally, in beliefs about women's traditional roles in the family— notions that men often referred to through innuendo, as if everyone would know what they were talking about, but for which they usually lacked empirical evidence. A common belief that dogged women in the service as far back as World War II was that women only joined the military to find a husband.⁶⁸ But survey data on the AVF showed that most women actually joined for the same reasons as did most men: money and job skills. Rather than finding a man, women instead found that they could make more money wearing a uniform than they could in the civilian economy, regardless of their education level. In fact, the military was one of the only professions in the country where the “wage gap” disappeared for women over time.⁶⁹

Policymakers also fretted endlessly about pregnancy, even after the services stopped forcing women out of the military if they got pregnant. The issue of pregnancy became an argument for restricting women's roles in the services. Military officials believed that women took more time off than their male counterparts—and not just for pregnancy; men frequently offered menstruation and other vague references to women's bodies as evidence for this claim. Again, labor statistics proved that these fears were unfounded: women lost, on average, one tenth of one day a year due to menstruation. And, when military sociologists began studying women's issues in the late 70s, they found out that it was men who missed more days out of the year, because men were more

and Reserve Affairs and Maj. Gen. J.P. Kingston, Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, US Army).

⁶⁸ Meyer, *Creating GI Jane*.

⁶⁹ Binkin and Bach, *Women in the Military*, 32.

likely to desert or be absent without leave (AWOL), more likely to abuse alcohol, and more likely to use drugs than women.⁷⁰

Entrenched perceptions about women's roles as nurturers and mothers were a major hurdle to women's advancement in the services. An Army Research Institute study conducted on service members' opinions in 1975 found that men *and* women believed that women who entered into "nontraditional" fields (those outside of the medical or clerical fields) were "pushy, masculine, troublesome, unattractive, and hard." Even among those women who were already serving in nontraditional fields, only 60 percent had "a lot of respect for women who go into nontraditional MOSs." A majority of men and women in uniform believed that "a woman in the Army will use her femininity to get away with as much as she can."⁷¹ WEAL and other organizations tailored their lobbying efforts to combat these beliefs. An information kit put together by WEAL in 1979 stated, "Women are entering military service in greater numbers than ever before and seeking access to many of the military's 'non-traditional' occupational specialties.

In this endeavor as in any other, women should have equal opportunity, and public policy should be free of myths and biases about women's 'proper' place or women's abilities."⁷² WEAL's efforts for women in the military echoed the goals of the broader feminist movement: "In the military services, in the academies, in the Department of Defense, women—whether civilian or soldier—should have equal access to employment and educational opportunities, share equally all the responsibilities of

⁷⁰ Ibid. Also, see Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*.

⁷¹ Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*, 91.

⁷² Women's Equity Action League Records, 1967-1990, "Women and the Military: A WEAL Kit." MC500, Folder 14.

citizenship, and have an equal voice in the life and death decisions that determine our relations with other countries.”⁷³

From 1971 to 1979 women as a percentage of the overall armed forces shot up from 1.3 percent to 7.6 percent.⁷⁴ Yet, while the need to make ends meet in the marketplace pushed the services to recruit more women, culture and gender traditions shaped which jobs were available to women, set quotas in specific jobs, and put ceilings, which differed in each service, on how many women could enter the military each year as enlistees and officers. When the Department of Defense was challenged to treat women more equally with men, policymakers dragged their feet, usually offering vague opinions about how expanding the use of women into a new sector might have unforeseen consequences, frequently questioning whether the “American people” even wanted women in new fields. Yet each time a new field opened up, each time a restriction on women was lifted, each time a service raised a cap on women serving, policymakers spoke about changes in positive, progressive terms. Lost in the language of progress was the fact that it was usually external forces—the work of groups like the National Coalition for Women in Defense and of women serving in uniform who challenged policies in court—that forced the military to change.

Compared with 1970, the United States military ten years later was a fundamentally different institution. The end of the draft in 1973 and the move to the AVF altered the primary mechanism for accessioning people into the services, and this in turn

⁷³ Ibid., emphasis in original.

⁷⁴ Bailey, *America's Army*, 133.

altered the demographic composition of the military. In 1973-74 the AVF saw an immediate spike in marriages, and by the end of the decade the marriage rate stood at 56%. Women's participation in the military also grew from 1% of the overall force to almost 8% at the end of the decade. And although the military had long ago grown accustomed to men with families, the families of the 70s were different: first, they were younger, with most of the new marriages occurring in the junior ranks—marriages that DoD did not recognize or support with increased pay, housing, or on-base privileges at the commissary and PX. 75% of these “unauthorized” married couples had kids. Second, many of these families were dual-income households and the number of working spouses (overwhelmingly wives) would grow during the decade, surpassing the rate of civilian dual-income households by 1979.

The military failed to adapt to these changes, and in many cases, officials pursued policies that exacerbated them. To be sure, the deck was stacked against the institution, which began the decade mired in a spectacularly unpopular war—a war that would tarnish the image of the military for a generation. The 1970 edition of the DAHSUM, the Army's annual historical review, bluntly stated: “The reader of the foregoing will have found a definite theme in Army operations in fiscal year 1970, one that took its lead from national trends. Whether the subject is funds, personnel, strength, training, combat, casualties, construction, research, development, procurement, or production, the tendency was toward reduction.”⁷⁵ Certainly budgets were important, but persistent beliefs about gender roles and family structure also shaped how policymakers confronted these

⁷⁵ DAHSUM 1970.

challenges. Ill-informed (because they never thought to study family issues before) and blinded by their privileged positions, military officers implemented policies for “traditional” family patterns, in which the husband worked and the stay-at-home wife could “volunteer” her time to the military community. Frustrated with an institution that was not made for them, military women—those in uniform and those married to servicemen—sought help from outside, finding allies in the women’s movement.

By the end of the decade, the country was deeply divided over changing gender roles and the question of women’s equality. The ERA, which once enjoyed bipartisan support, was fast becoming a touchstone in the fight over family and tradition—and the military stood front and center in this debate. Women entering the workforce and the bedrock principle of gender equality led feminist groups and their allies to rally around military families and women in uniform. But, by the end of the decade, the specter of the draft and the question of women in combat forced mainstream feminist groups like NOW and WEAL to take a more controversial step for women’s equality—even if the draft meant forcing women into an institution that many of their members considered antithetical to women’s liberation.

Feminist groups were pitted against archconservatives like Phyllis Schlafly, whose grassroots organization, the Eagle Forum, used the threat of drafting young women as a central argument against equality for women. Standing in front of the Armed Services Committee, Kathleen Teague testified on behalf of Schlafly’s group—and a woman’s “right to be treated like American ladies.” She argued for a return to binary distinctions between men and women, “Servicewomen are not fungible with

servicemen...Motherhood is not fungible with fatherhood...Our daughters are not fungible with our sons. The drafting of wives is not fungible with the drafting of husbands.” She concluded, “Our young women have the right to be feminine, to get married, to build families, and to have homes. Our daughters should not be deprived of rights which every American woman has enjoyed since our country was born.”⁷⁶

Drafting mothers and daughters, and the perceived damage that having women compelled to serve in the military would do to traditional gender roles, proved to be the final nail in the coffin for the ERA. In 1980, the Republican Party pulled support for the Amendment from their platform; meanwhile the RNC ousted the few remaining feminist women from the Party leadership.⁷⁷ But these dividing lines, so easy to see in the apocalyptic pronouncements of Schlafly and her compatriots, became muddled for policymakers, servicemembers, and families in the 1980s. Concerns over the family would remain the backdrop for wider political debates in America, but how to best protect the family from the social, cultural, and economic changes happening in American would move feminist groups, fundamentalist Christians, military families—even the different service branches—in revealing, often unpredictable, ways in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*, 287.

⁷⁷ Rymph, *Republican Women*, 228.

CHAPTER 5

FAMILY MATTERS AND THE MEANINGS OF MILITARY SERVICE

Strengthen the Family, Strengthen the Nation

In his first Inaugural Address, President Ronald Reagan gave a bleak assessment of the state of the nation: “These United States are confronted with an economic affliction of great proportions. We suffer from the longest and one of the worst sustained inflations in our national history. It distorts our economic decisions, penalizes thrift, and crushes the struggling young and the fixed-income elderly alike. It threatens to shatter the lives of millions of our people.”¹ For many of the millions of Americans who voted for Reagan, it was the breakdown of the traditional family and decaying morality—not impersonal macroeconomic forces—that were to blame for America’s woes. For them, the past decades’ ideological battles over gender became intertwined with the economy. As those economic troubles deepened, they affected families in and outside of the military community.

The realignment of the global economy in the 1970s made single-income (i.e., male-breadwinner) families increasingly unrealistic for most Americans, and gender roles began shifting accordingly. More often, women went to work out of economic necessity, but the women’s movement provided political momentum, gave women a set of political

¹ Ronald Reagan: "Inaugural Address," January 20, 1981. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43130>.

demands, and provided a language to articulate them. But religious and social conservatives argued that feminism and women's increased participation in the workforce were undermining the "traditional" family, and conservatives' concern for that institution fueled a backlash toward the women's rights movement. Reagan tapped into these anxieties, deploying a narrative of familial rebirth and regeneration to capture the White House: strengthen the family, strengthen the nation.

The military had a role to play in this political narrative, in large part because the Armed Forces historically stood as a symbol of national strength and pride. Reclaiming that history from the ash heap of Vietnam became a project of the New Right. Yet in the trenches, as the politics of the family collided with bread-and-butter needs in the military community, ideological positions became murky. Oddly enough, in the 1980s Army, conservative anxieties over the family combined with the insights of second wave feminism to address concrete economic and quality of life issues in the military community.²

At the dawn of the 1980s, the Army was in bad shape; the Marine Corps was faring only slightly better. Just as in civilian society, the dramatic shifts in gender roles, sexuality, and culture had transformed the services. The growing worries over women's

² Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, A History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 263-280. An excellent example is the movement to stop the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) from being ratified. See Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). For a broader look at changing demographics in American families, see Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, *Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 203-237. On the politics of the family, see Self, *All in the Family*; Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline, 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 18-19.

rights and gender roles that animated the rise of the New Right in the civilian world also seeped into policy discussions in the Army and the Marine Corps. However, even though each service pursued policies within the same political and economic context, policymakers in each branch interpreted the meaning of family values in wildly different ways.

In the 1980s, Army officials turned to families as a means to stabilize their institution. Army officers realized that spouses—overwhelmingly women—were no longer conforming to the traditional roles envisioned for them in the past. And as more women were taking up soldiering, they were not giving up their roles as mothers and wives. Spurred on by the rise of an organized, grassroots movement made up of Army wives, the Army began to embrace families. Policymakers created new services and programs to ameliorate the frictions between family life and military life, even as the shape of families was evolving, and women's roles in the Armed Forces were expanding.

The Marines, however, looked at these changes with increasing alarm. When the Department of Defense ordered the services to eliminate restrictions on the number of women serving and other barriers to women's full participation in the military, when the Army started seeing increased numbers of junior enlisted personnel with dependents and started to expand family welfare programs to take care of those dependents, current and former Marine officers recalled older beliefs about the nature of military service as an exclusively masculine pursuit. Rather than partner with families, as the Army would explicitly do in the 1980s, the Marines harkened back to the good old days of the draft, and declared that military life and family life were incompatible.

Both the Army and the Marine Corps inhabited a political universe between ascendant Christian evangelical groups and New Right political activists on one side, and on the other side a coalition of women's rights groups and increasingly vocal Army wives who drew inspiration from those women's groups.³ But while they shared the same political and economic context, several key distinctions between the Army and the Marines made policymakers in each service see that context through different lenses. Importantly, the Marines did not experience the same demographic pressures that the Army had. At the beginning of the 1980s, 59% of the Army (officers and enlisted) was married, compared to only 34% of all Marines. Marines also had fewer children, in large part because the Marines were more aggressive in separating pregnant women and single parents on the grounds that parental obligations conflicted with the demands of the Corps. Compared to the Army, Marine Corps life was particularly punishing on marriages. In 1980, the divorce rate (per 1,000) in the Marine Corps was double that of the civilian population. While the civilian divorce rate would plateau in the eighties, and while the divorce rate for the entire DoD roughly mirrored the civilian population, divorces in the Marine Corps would increase by 77%. This trend was worse in the junior enlisted ranks: among first term enlistees, the divorce rate rose by a staggering 117% in the same period.

³ Army wives' relationship to the wider women's movement echoes Dorothy Sue Cobble's argument that feminists in the late 20th century proposed "policies that would help women combine wage work and family life and enhance their control in both spheres." Rather than choose one over the other, women sought to adapt "work patterns, norms, and practices of the work world itself" to conform to women's needs. *The Other Women's Movement*, 122. I also agree with Jennifer Mittelstadt's contention that military wives practiced a feminism that had less to do with political, social, and cultural issues, and more to do with "liberal individual feminism's economic plank." They were not interested in critiquing patriarchy and family roles, or in identifying with feminism at all, for that matter. *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 134.

Consequently, the Marines never built a family support system on anywhere near the scale of the Army.

But the Marines would soon realize that the demographic pressures that they worked hard to avoid were only delayed. The DoD increasingly took cues from the Army on family policy, making Army family policies, DoD policies. Under pressure from their bosses at the Pentagon, in the 1980s Marine policymakers were forced to recruit more women and to make more accommodations for married Marines and for those Marines who had children.

“Like So Much Extra Baggage:” Army Wives Fight Back

As the economic turmoil of the 1970s continued unabated, military families found it extremely difficult to get by. Military compensation in the AVF was a complicated mixture of monthly wages and fringe benefits, or ways the military compensated personnel “in-kind” through benefits like healthcare, allowances for housing, and the GI Bill. Married servicemembers were entitled to move out of the barracks and receive additional monthly income for housing. Spouses and children were also eligible for healthcare, and families could shop on base at the commissary and PX. By 1980, a young married private could expect to bring home \$681 a month in base pay and allowances for housing (for comparison, an unmarried private received \$501 and could not live off base)

but rising inflation meant that this money would not go as far as it would have even five years earlier.⁴

Stateside, the Army admitted, as many as a third of first-term enlistees at one base, Ft. Bragg, N.C., lived in sub-standard housing. Such problems were compounded for those serving overseas. The declining value of the dollar in Germany pushed many Army families to the brink. The Beard Study, a 1977 report that was highly critical of the state of the Army, discovered wives and families living in poorly heated homes, sharing bathrooms with multiple households, and paying prices well beyond market rate. Wives complained that rent was too high, some reporting cases where German citizens were renting at 50% to 100% less than they were for equivalent housing. Wives described frequent shortages at the PX and Commissary and poor quality food. One wife reported:

The meat products have often been defrosted and refrozen several times. Often the meat is tough or spoiled. Fresh produce is rare and there are frequent shortages (no flour for 2 1/2 months, no sugar for 6 weeks at Christmas time, no orange juice, etc.). The milk is frequently sour and the cartons leak. Produce and eggs are not fresh and when the commissary is properly stocked it results in panic “buying sprees.”⁵

Soldiers and their families took to moonlighting at fast-food restaurants or as baggers at the base PX. Others applied for food stamps. To combat the rise in Army poverty,

⁴ Tom Morganthau, David C. Martin, and Michael Reese, “GI Joe Can’t Make Ends Meet,” *Newsweek*, (31 March 1980), 31. For year-by-year comparisons of military base pay scales (including Basic Allowances for Housing, or BAH) for married and unmarried servicemembers, see “Military Pay Charts,” *Defense Financial and Accounting Services* (updated 7 February 2017), <https://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/payentitlements/military-pay-charts.html>

⁵ “An Analysis And Evaluation of the United States Army: The Beard Study,” prepared by Jerry Reed, appendix, U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Status of the All-Volunteer Armed Force: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel*, 95th Cong. 2nd Sess., 20 June 1978, 305-7. Hereafter referred to as “Beard Study.”

officers' wives clubs and Army social workers opened food pantries to distribute necessities like noodles, baby formula, and extra clothing for children. Some base commanders opened their mess halls to families with kids. Clearly, the Army lacked a coherent strategy for handling the rising number of soldiers with families.⁶

In 1979 and 1980, the DoD and Congress took significant steps to address quality of life and compensation issues for servicemembers and their families, especially in the junior ranks. The Defense Authorization Bill for FY 1981, which went into effect 8 September 1980, resulted in an 11.7% pay raise for servicemembers and changed the housing allowance from a flat rate to one that varied based upon local rent costs. One amendment to that year's appropriations, the Nunn-Warner Amendment, also authorized E-1s through E-4s to begin receiving family separation pay. These increases in compensation and benefits were certainly welcome relief, but they fell far short of the mark, and most families still needed two incomes to survive.⁷

Even as families were struggling to put food on the table, the Army demanded more from them. As discussed in the previous chapter, Army Community Services (ACS) was tasked with providing services and support to Army families, and ACS was staffed with volunteers. Recall that the Army even encouraged the volunteers to wear uniforms, and the uniform's description—"a two-piece, teal-blue dress made of washable material"—made it clear who policymakers had in mind for such volunteering.⁸ However, the Army's effort to provide more social services to soldiers and their families

⁶ Strasser and Nater, "West Germany: GI's on the Dole," 52.

⁷ DAHSUM 1980; Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 71; Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 502-3.

⁸ AR-608-1, pp. 1-1 (1 June 1975), CMH Military Family Coll.

within a system that relied upon unpaid volunteers to do much of the work created a spiraling staffing crisis: the more services the Army provided, the more volunteers and volunteer hours that were required to staff those functions. Such demands placed enormous pressure on working mothers.

Making matters much worse, in 1978 the Army fundamentally changed the scope of ACS's mission. For years, ACS "volunteers" had provided members of the Army community with information and guidance, usually giving people referrals to offices within the military that actually provided services. For example, when families had to pack up and move due to a change in duty station, ACS would make sure that the family was referred to the base's relocation assistance services.⁹ But in 1978, ACS moved from this indirect role to act, instead, as a service provider. ACS was now responsible for staffing a wide range of services: from intervening in child and spousal abuse situations, to financial planning and debt counseling, to providing childcare services. Already chronically short on "volunteers" because more wives were taking paid jobs to provide for their families, ACS struggled to keep up with demand. Yet the Army continued to squeeze free labor out of wives: in 1980 ACS had 4,873 volunteers who worked a total of 487,321 hours. Those numbers ballooned year after year, so that in 1983, ACS had almost 8,000 volunteers working nearly 2 million hours. From 1982 to 1983 alone, there was a 105% increase in volunteer hours. These "volunteers" were overwhelmingly spouses, and those spouses were almost always wives.¹⁰

⁹ Army Community Service (ACS) Report, c. 1983, CMH Military Family Coll.

¹⁰ Ibid.

The types of services that ACS witnessed a growth in demand reveal the kinds of problems facing military families. Despite the recent pay increases Congress had authorized for 1981 and 1982, one ACS report noted that debt counseling increased 210% in FY 1983. Fully half of all counseling seekers were junior enlisted personnel; and if E-5s and E-6s are included, those ranks constituted almost 90% of debt cases handled by ACS. The report speculated that in addition to a lack of pay raises, the higher demand was a function of the increase in ACS staff and volunteers trained to provide services, and the fact that spouses were having a hard time finding paid work. If the report's authors thought that there might be any connection between those problems, they did not say.¹¹

In the years after ACS expanded its mission, the Army saw annual growth in the use of services, which the Army counted as a positive development: more families were getting the help they needed. By maintaining the volunteer model that the Army adopted in the early 1970s, increasing services without having to divert "man hours" from uniformed personnel to staff these programs made this a win-win for the Army. But, for the thousands of wives on bases across the country and around the world, these demands put up serious roadblocks to pursuing a career or a life outside of the military community.¹²

Wives' frustration with the Army had reached a boiling point by the end of the 1970s. It wasn't only economic issues: as one military social worker put it, "You get a lot of women saying, 'I'm only a dependent,' putting themselves down like that. When she

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

tries to do something—hold a job, further her education—it’s difficult... resentment builds.”¹³ When women sought support, they met an Army bureaucracy that was nonresponsive and at times, callous. One woman, the German-born wife of an Air Force sergeant, went to the base psychiatrist complaining about being depressed. The psychiatrist “gave [her] some Valium and told [her] to get a job.” If wives wanted to change this culture of indifference, they were going to have to take matters into their own hands.¹⁴

As early as 1978, the authors of the Beard Study noticed “a growing undercurrent of political activity within Army wives, especially as they perceive that the Congress and the Executive Branch is doing less for them each year.”¹⁵ Chapter four portrayed the work of feminist groups, and their allies in Congress, to build economic opportunities for women in the workforce—both women working in the civilian economy and women who wore the uniform— or to secure more equitable divorce terms for women who chose to leave their military marriage. But, for those who wanted to stay in the Army community, what to do? In the early 1980s, more than 340,000 soldiers were married, and more than half of their spouses worked for a living. With more women entering the ranks, many dual-career families were actually “dual-Army” families, so that by 1985 one in ten Army families was headed by parents who both wore the uniform. Single-parent Army families also grew modestly from 39,900 in 1979 to 40,400 in 1985. When mom *and* dad reported for duty, who was watching the kids? Many of these people did not want out of the

¹³ Quoted in Weinraub, “Army in Europe.”

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ “The Beard Study,” 309.

Army, and some probably realized that the civilian world offered nothing better, but they still wanted the Army to work for them. They were the women who told the Beard Study the horror stories about “declining health care, poor quarters, inadequate PX and commissary support,” but who still expressed “deep patriotism and firm commitment to support their husbands.”¹⁶

Army wives clubs—which had existed for decades at larger installations—became key sites for women’s activism in the military community. For years, wives clubs would welcome new families to the base and provide new wives with a sense of belonging. According to a family manual published in 1979 by the *Army Times*, “Traditionally, wives clubs hold regular social events—monthly luncheons and business meetings, weekly bridge sessions, bowling leagues and golf teams, sometimes formal dances with the husbands.”¹⁷ For senior officers’ wives, these clubs recaptured “a little of the grandeur of past tradition with an occasional fancy dress ball or dinner tables aglitter in crystal and silver,” according to one nostalgic account. But for the wives of more junior officers, this was an infuriating waste of time. As Bonnie Stone and Betty Alt, two former military wives who write about family life in the military, recall, “the double whammy of feminism and the uneasy economy... effected catastrophic changes in wives’ club participation. In today’s volunteer military the young officer’s wife, with perhaps a better education than the older wives or career aspirations of her own, is rattling this two-

¹⁶ Morrison, et al., *Families in the Army*; John A. Wickham, Jr., *White Paper 1983: The Army Family* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983), hereafter referred to as “The White Paper;” “The Beard Study,” 309.

¹⁷ “Handbook for Military Families,” supplement to *Army Times* (18 June 1979).

hundred-year-old social cage by refusing to devote her life wholeheartedly to interminable social events.”¹⁸

As some younger women began to see the wives clubs as venues to discuss making changes within the Army, many wives of career officers still wanted to maintain the patriotic spirit of volunteerism that made programs like ACS possible, and some wondered whether the growing number of women working for pay would ruin these more traditional wifely pursuits. For women in the older generation, some of whom had lived in the military community for decades, their sense of identity was an extension of their husbands’ rank and status, and their sense of purpose within the military world was tied to volunteer work. Their source of pride threatened, these wives of career officers looked at this younger group of wives with increasing alarm.

Since the mid-1970s, the younger board members of the Army Officers’ Wives Club of the Greater Washington Area (AOWCGWA) batted around the idea for a symposium for wives, but they could never come up with the money. But in October 1979, the board finally voted to allocate \$3,000 for a symposium and created a steering committee, selecting wives from bases around Washington.¹⁹ Perhaps sensing the need to address the conflicting feelings about wives’ roles in the military, the board selected Joanne Patton, wife of Major General George S. Patton IV and former head volunteer of ACS, to chair the steering committee. Patton herself remained committed to the idea that

¹⁸ Stone and Alt, *Uncle Sam’s Brides*, 42-4.

¹⁹ Ron Bury, Ed van Vranken, and Elwood Hamlin (eds.), *The Army Family: Analysis and Appraisal, Proceedings of a Symposium, October 11-12, 1980* (Washington, DC: Association of the United States Army and the Army Officers’ Wives Club of the Greater Washington Area, 1980). Hereafter, referred to as 1st Symposium.

wives could find fulfillment doing the kinds of volunteer work that she had spent her life doing, and she worried that the feminist movement cast “the image of the housewife-community volunteer” as “archaic.”²⁰ But if Patton represented the old guard, then AOWCGWA stacked the rest of the steering committee with members of the new order. Betty Ryburn was divorced and had a PhD in family therapy; Terry Rosander, Anita Wooten, and Joyce Ott all had master’s degrees; and each of these women had successful careers outside of the home.²¹

The committee decided they would hold a one-day workshop to brainstorm ideas for a larger symposium. They titled the workshop “The Army Wife—1980, a seminar... for her... about her...” and the committee let Joanne Patton give the opening remarks. She used the forum to remind the attendees of the ongoing crisis facing American families. Patton said that military families stood at the center of national concerns about military readiness in a time of national crisis. The workshop, she noted, provided an opportunity for wives of servicemen to “take stock” of their evolving roles, both in the home and in society, and to ask what role wives might have in the Army of the future. She reminded the attendees of the traditional roles women took on as Army wives, but she also alluded to a future in which women might begin speaking up for themselves as circumstances changed.

In contrast, Joyce Ott chose to speak to the workshop participants about working wives and the unique challenges that they faced as they navigated the civilian workplace.

²⁰ Quoted in Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 133.

²¹ Program, *The Army Wife—1980, a seminar...for her...about her*, (April 1980), CMH Military Families Coll.

She believed that the military—like civilian institutions—was failing to adjust to women entering the workforce. In the margins of her typed remarks, she scrawled reminders to herself to mention some of the ways that military families were struggling to make ends meet: “100,000 military families are eligible for food stamps;” and later, “40% of all enlisted wives work and 1/5 of all enlisted men hold a second job.” A military wife, Ott argued, shared a lot of similarities with her civilian contemporary, but she also faced two unique problems: mobility and intense social pressure. The first was a function of military life: families were regularly uprooted to change duty stations. Because military life required mobility, Ott said, “the wife has to start over, resettle, search, pound the pavement, rewrite her resume, be re-interviewed, etc.” The second problem, social pressure, she described as a product of the insular culture of military bases. Ott noted that workingwomen tread through “little clouds of disapproval” from commanding officers, who expected wives to continue the “long tradition of non-working wives” and remain committed to volunteerism. Most galling to working wives, to military officials a wife who focused to her own career was a drag on her husband’s. Ott argued, “Today there are still commanders who say, ‘You cannot have this job unless your wife is free and willing to support you in your efforts.’ A wife who hears this message realizes that the Army has some very definite control over her life.” Commanders were not the only ones to hold this sentiment: Ott believed that when wives worked, “There is often resentment by the community for the wife who works and leaves them to do the non-paying jobs that must be filled. They often feel she is taking from the community without contributing.” And as

ACS went through dramatic restructuring in the 1980s, the pressure to volunteer would have been fierce.²²

While the steering committee gave proper deference to Joanne Patton and her more traditional views at the planning workshop, Joyce Ott's recommendations set the tone for the upcoming symposium. She asked three important questions in her lecture at the workshop that delegates would grapple with later that year: "What is going to happen to the concept of the military family? What can we do to help both husband and wife blend their careers? How can we help those who want to use volunteerism as a stepping stone to help her career?"²³ Her preliminary answers called for building stronger communities, promoting wellness, and working toward partnership between families and the military. Importantly, she also saw these relationships as having reciprocal obligations: "as wives accept our husband's career, and accept that we are part of the military community, then we have obligations and responsibilities to that community, just as the military has responsibilities and obligations to us in the form of medical care, commissaries, PX privileges, recreational facilities and general support. We must realize that there is a mutual relationship."²⁴ Finally, she called upon wives to take an active role in fighting for change.

In June, AOWCGWA sent out a call for delegates to attend a symposium on the Army family. The invitation was sent to every Army wives club in the world, every

²² Joyce Ott, "The Army Wife—Her Career: Hers—Or His & Hers!" CMH Military Families Coll.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

brigade commander, and every chaplain's office. Some 200 wives and 150 observers and facilitators paid the \$70 registration fee, which included the cost of the symposium packet, plus "one continental coffee, two lunches, one banquet and coffee breaks." They converged on Washington, DC in October, to participate in "a *safe* platform for the identification and discussion of issues facing the Army family 1980."²⁵

Over the course of the two-day symposium, Army wives identified thirteen areas for improvement. Most importantly, the wives wanted to make the lines of communication between families and the chain of command more uniform and reciprocal. Communication was "informal and often fragmented," leaving wives feeling "abandoned and powerless to participate in those decisions which affect[ed] their lives."²⁶ A major point of contention was the frequent relocations that the Army required of its personnel. While they conceded that mobility was a necessary part of life in the military, wives demanded more power to participate in the decision-making process. They proposed that the Army give them a six-month notice prior to relocation, and a modest increase in financial compensation for moving expenses. Even though nearly sixty percent of military wives were working (seventy-one percent among junior enlisted wives), the transient nature of military life meant that wives frequently had to terminate employment, and families had to pull their kids out of school and sever already tenuous ties to local community networks each time their husbands changed duty stations. To assist with these regular transfers, wives proposed the creation of "job opportunity

²⁵ 1st Symposium, emphasis in the original.

²⁶ 1st Symposium.

centers” to provide job counseling and the appointment of an on-base liaison who could cultivate career opportunities in the surrounding community.²⁷

The delegates devoted a considerable amount of their attention to quality of life issues. They requested improvements to the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Uniformed Services (CHAMPUS), a hybridized health care system in which military families utilized both military medical facilities and sub-contracted private-sector health services for their healthcare needs. Where and when families received care depended upon the needs and resources of the military, rather than the reverse. This convoluted system resulted in waiting lists for on base care, as well as a lack of stability and continuity of healthcare, because families rarely saw the same doctor twice. When private-sector doctors either didn’t take CHAMPUS, or when CHAMPUS only covered part of the bill, out-of-pocket expenses made quality care a fiction for many families. The delegates requested improvements to on-base housing and higher allowances for those who lived off base and overseas. Finally, they wanted improvements to on-base childcare facilities. Citing the increase in single parents, dual-military families, and families in which both parents were employed, they requested Army-wide uniformity in childcare services and facilities and subsidies for low-income families.²⁸

At the symposium, delegates confronted a system that required women to sacrifice their needs and desires for the demands of the Army. They rejected the entrenched mindset a wife’s identity in the military community was an extension of her

²⁷ Ibid. Employment figures from “Families in Blue Study” Women’s Equity Action League Records, 1967-1990, no date, MC500, Box 78, folder 6.

²⁸ 1st Symposium, 14-17.

husband's rank. This belief reinforced policies that made them feel like second-class citizens and the delegates explicitly demanded more control over their lives. Echoing the social transformations of the 1970s, specifically the changes in women's roles, they declared, "As social, economic and educational roles change for the American woman, there is an expectation by women that institutions will recognize those changes and address them in a manner which is constructive to both the individual woman and the organization."²⁹ Wanting to carve out an identity separate from their husbands, the wives demanded that the Army stop referring to them as "dependents" and work toward "increased recognition... that the Army spouse is an individual [and] not an extension of the service member." Finally, they wanted the Army to eliminate the pressure on wives to volunteer for on-base functions.³⁰

The Army's response to the symposium was mixed. On the positive side, the Chief of Staff, General Edward "Shy" Meyer, had delivered the opening remarks— an implicit endorsement of the wives' actions. The Army also created the Family Liaison Office (FLO) within the Department of the Army. Importantly, the Army mandated that an Army spouse would serve as director of the FLO, and it created a position in the office of the Deputy Chief of Staff. The Army established the Family Life Communication "hotline," a 1-800 number that spouses could call for support. General Meyer also issued

²⁹. Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 10-11.

orders to stop using the term “dependent” in all policy papers, directives, publications, and orders, and instead, replace that term with “family member” or “spouse.”³¹

But in the wake of the symposium, the Army did little to address specific quality of life issues, such as housing, healthcare, and childcare. Removing the term “dependent” was meaningless if family members still felt, as one Army wife put it, “like so much extra baggage.” According to a study the National Military Wives’ Association (NMWA) released in response to the 1980 symposium, this feeling was not unfounded. Officers stationed at the Army War College in Carlisle, PA, reported that the “role their wives played in volunteer work, social functions and contributions to their husband’s careers were routinely mentioned in their Officer Evaluation Reports.” The report cited one officer, who asked, “How else could we keep them doing all of those things?” Wives sent the NMWA excerpts from their husbands’ evaluations, which explicitly rated officers on how willing their wives were to contribute to the social life of the military installation and staff on-base programs. Under pressure from the NMWA and the new co-directors of the FLO, Carolyn Becraft and Emily Cato, the Chief of Staff issued a new policy statement supporting the right for a family member to seek employment without adversely affecting their spouse’s duty station, promotion, or command assignment. He also began taking steps to create job centers and other resources for working spouses³²

³¹ Frances Mason, “Recap and Preview—Army Family Symposium 1980-81, CMH Military Family Collection; a copy of the order on the use of “dependent” is printed in the 2nd Symposium.

³² Unnamed delegate, quoted in Amelia A. Newcomb, “Army Wives: Finally an Appreciated Sector of Military Life,” *Christian Science Monitor* (22 February 1983), 20; Women’s Equity Action League Records, 1967-1990; “National Military Wives Association Report,” c. 1981, MC 500, Box 54.

After the 1980 symposium, the delegates and organizers realized that momentum was crucial to achieving concrete improvements on quality of life issues. Having lived under a paternalistic system for years, the organizers also knew that the surest way for their plans to succeed was if Army policymakers thought they had come up with them on their own. According to Carolyn Becraft, the wives were keenly aware that grassroots organizing at local bases would allow them to make change without objections from the Pentagon. Organizers reasoned that local commanders, who had enormous leeway in how they ran their posts, would be more receptive to suggestions from local wives. These commanders could then forward their recommendations up the chain of command, which they would eagerly do because “taking care of families” provided a unique way to highlight the good work being done on their installations, adding to the commanders’ prestige.³³ Adopting this grassroots approach, delegates returned to their communities and held local symposia at major installations, such as Fort Carson, Fort Sill, Fort Meade, Carlisle Barracks, Fort Bragg, and at the American base in Panama. At Carlisle Barracks, wives convinced the Army War College Commandant, Major General Jack Merritt, to form a task force to examine ways to increase awareness of the needs of spouses.³⁴

Heartened by the success of their local efforts, but frustrated with the pace of policy changes in Washington, organizers kept grassroots organizing at the forefront of the agenda for the 2nd Army Family Symposium. The steering committee put Dee Hahn-

³³ Interview with Carolyn Becraft, 8 December 2016.

³⁴ Carolyn Becraft and Emily Cato, “Family Action Committee: A Progress Report,” CMH Military Family Coll.

Rollins, a community organizer, in charge of creating workshops and training sessions for the delegates. Prior to the symposium, thirty wives underwent an intensive 2-day training program so they could facilitate the workshops. Held in October 1981, again in Washington, DC, the second symposium focused on grassroots action through training, education, and problem solving. The Symposium's Family Action Committee underscored their bottom-up strategy: "[Delegates] left... challenged to return home to share their training with both volunteer groups and the official Army structure... Real change begins at the bottom in our local communities and works its way up the chain of command."³⁵

Once again, General "Shy" Meyer gave the opening remarks, but even though many high-ranking Army officials attended the symposium, the delegates turned their attention inward. While the first symposium was a forum for dialogue between families and the Army, the second symposium focused on training community organizers. The three workshop titles were "Recogniz[ing] and Affirming Our Strengths and Assets," "Identifying Effective Communication and Leadership Skills," and "Utilizing Steps in Problem-Solving." In between workshops, lunchtime and banquet speakers gave informative presentations on professional volunteerism, transitioning to the job market, "How to Develop a Successful Grassroots Family Program," and how to access existing support programs through the Wives' Associations and the Chaplain's Corps. Underscoring the wives' desperate need for career development, "Transitioning into the Job Market" was the most popular presentation, a point the Family Action Committee

³⁵ Ibid.

highlighted several times in its report to the Chief of Staff. According to responses in a survey that the Family Action Committee passed out to the 300 delegates, the overwhelming majority thought the second symposium succeeded in developing skills and providing valuable information. Most felt encouraged and inspired, and most responded ‘yes’ to the question: were they “Grateful to be included?” (Three delegates wrote emphatically in the margins of the survey, “I deserved it!”).³⁶

By the next year, the symposia organizers had transformed what began as a semiformal gathering of wives into the makings of a permanent annual event. They enlisted and gained the support of key policymakers, they instantiated themselves into the Office of the Chief of Staff, and they even created a logo to use on literature: a stick-figure family of four embracing each other to form a circle (see image below). The Family Action Committee became a permanent nonprofit lobbying group, called the Army Family Action Council. The 3rd Army Family Symposium attracted more than 500 delegates—including, for the first time, husbands of service women. Demonstrating their continued commitment to the success of the symposia, the Army sent officers who were in charge of managing family programs as delegates.³⁷

In the symposia, delegates’ demands were not radical: they wanted a stake in the system. And through the family symposia, women laid the groundwork for institutional change. The wives, who gathered from all over the world in Washington, DC demanded uniform and reciprocal lines of communication with Army commanders. They wanted more control over their lives, particularly the right to seek meaningful employment.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ *Army Families, Special Issue: The Symposium*, CMH Military Family Coll.

When the Army decided it was time for a family to move, wives wanted to know when, where, and for how long. They wanted to be treated as partners, not dependents—not like so much extra baggage. They asked for improvements to housing, medical care, and childcare. One Army wife, and a delegate at the second symposium, remarked, “I’m so happy to know that the family is beginning to play an integral role in today’s Army.”³⁸

As Army wives organized at the grassroots level, their efforts dovetailed with the advocacy work of the larger military family associations, like the NMWA (as a sign of the times, NMWA changed its name to the National Military Families Association, or NMFA, in 1983), and that of their partners in national feminist groups like WEAL, which continued to expand its lobbying efforts on behalf of military women in the 1980s. Indeed, for some military wives, the experience with grassroots organizing for family benefits spurred them to get more involved in feminist political action. After successfully helping to organize the wives’ symposia, Carolyn Becraft went to work for WEAL as the director of their new Women in the Military Project.

The Women in the Military Project initially began in response to the 1981 “womanpause,” the Army’s brief experiment with recruiting fewer women, at the beginning of the new Reagan Administration. Funded by a massive grant from the Ford Foundation, the project quickly grew beyond the goal of opening up more opportunities for women in uniform, to include the goals of economic security for military spouses, and to encourage more citizen participation in defense policy. Becraft was asked to run the

³⁸ “LADYCOM Survey Results,” *LADYCOM* Vol. 9, No 7 (Overseas Edition) May 1977, CMH Military Family Collection; 2nd Symposium.

project because of her unique background as a former military officer, as an Army wife and current co-director of the FLO, and because she had written a master's thesis in the late 1970s on the effects of the women's movement on military spouses. According to Becraft, WEAL thought she was an ideal candidate because she "spoke the language" of the military, and she could lobby the DoD as an insider.³⁹

Through the Women in the Military Project, WEAL began a concerted lobbying effort on behalf of all service wives throughout the Department of Defense at the same time that Army wives were beginning to find traction through the symposia. WEAL pushed the DoD to adopt policies that reflected the needs of working mothers. WEAL distributed tens of thousands of fact sheets to members of the military community, informing them of their rights, as well as to members of other women's advocacy groups. It developed information packets for lawyers who represented military family clients. And it enlisted the help of their membership to write letters, send postcards, and call their elected officials.

One major focus was unemployment relief. Unemployment among military wives far outpaced civilian wives in the 1980s—in 1985 the unemployment rate for military wives was 17.8 percent, which was more than triple that of the national average. Due to WEAL's efforts, President Reagan signed Executive Order 12362 allowing spouses who held government jobs overseas to go to the front of the line when they sought

³⁹ Carolyn Becraft Interview with Author (8 December 2016). See also, Women's Equity Action League Papers, "WEAL's Women and the Military Project: A Five Year Review," Carolyn Becraft, 1986, MC 500, Box 58, folder 1.

employment upon returning to the United States. WEAL estimated that between 1983 and 1986, over 2,000 spouses entered the Civil Service as a result of EO 12362.⁴⁰

In 1985, Carolyn Becraft successfully lobbied for a seat on the DoD Spouse Employment Committee, which put a senior WEAL staff member in a prominent policymaking position at the Pentagon. Becraft recalled that her two main goals at WEAL were to get families better resources, make it easier for women to get higher paying jobs, and to expand the role of women in the military more broadly. Of course, these goals echoed those of the wider feminist movement to open the workplace up to women. Becraft would continue to work her way up the food chain at the Pentagon. In 1993, she would become Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for family and community support, and in 1998 she became Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs.⁴¹

Focus on the Family

By 1983, the grassroots organizing of Army wives had spread throughout the Army's global network of bases. Early that summer, President Ronald Reagan appointed General John A. Wickham, Jr. to be his next Chief of Staff of the Army. General Wickham was a safe choice for the job. One of Wickham's associates described him as "steady and unflamboyant... personable, but not a back-slapper." Despite Wickham's education at West Point and Harvard, former Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger

⁴⁰ Women's Equity Action League Papers, "WEAL's Women and the Military Project: A Five Year Review," Carolyn Becraft, 1986, MC 500, Box 58, Folder 1.

⁴¹ Becraft, interview with Author. See also Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 145.

described him as “no scholar... but he’s very well read.” A devout Christian, Wickham once chided a colonel for swearing during a meeting, and ordered him to “never, never, never” use foul language in front of him again. Those close to Wickham did not think he planned on any major overhauls of Army policy, believing instead that he would chart a steady course. His record underscored his caretaker status: no major doctrines, publications, or manuals bore his name. Other than his “killer instinct” on the squash court, according to Schlesinger, Wickham was as unassuming as a boy scout.⁴²

Yet, immediately after assuming command of the Army, General Wickham went to work on a major review of the Army’s policies toward families. Just two months after he assumed command, Wickham published the *White Paper on the Army Family*. Twenty years later, another Army Chief of Staff called it the “most salient single initiative... with respect to Army families” in the institution’s history.⁴³ In the *White Paper*, General Wickham underscored the reasons why the Army needed a focused policy: “Once a private matter, [the family] is now an organizational concern. Geographic mobility, changing family structures and the recognition that competition between family and organizational needs can be destructive to both parties...” required action.⁴⁴

Before elevation to CSA, Wickham served as General Meyer’s deputy, so he was privy to the changes already underway as a result of women’s activism. He cited their

⁴² “No. 2 Man in Army Picked by President To Be Chief of Staff,” *New York Times* (16 March 1983), A13; B. Drummond Ayres, Jr. “Chief of Staff of the Army,” *New York Times* (12 May 1983), A17; Robert C. Toth, “Role of Religious Faith at Pentagon Raises Questions, Doubts,” *Los Angeles Times* (30 December 1984), A4.

⁴³ Erik K. Shinseki, “The Army Family: A White Paper,” Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army, Washington, D.C. (2003), iii.

⁴⁴ Wickham, “The White Paper,” 1.

efforts as the impetus for change, noting the “political sophistication of Army families that organize at the grassroots level to form self-help and advocacy groups.” Attuned to changing attitudes in society and within the Army, he recognized that their advocacy was an outgrowth of the rights consciousness of the recent past, stating “today’s families are also a product of the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.” Citing the civil rights and women’s movement, as well as consumer activism, he argued that families had “internalized the questioning, activist nature of these movements [and have become] adept at identifying their problems and advocating for their common needs.”⁴⁵ He stated that American values had shifted after the Vietnam War, and an all-volunteer military, which relied solely upon recruiting to fill its ranks, could not survive without adapting. For the Army, the bottom line was, “when a tug-of-war occurs between a military family and a military organization, the family usually wins.”⁴⁶

While the need to recruit and retain qualified personnel demanded that Army leaders move away from their ad hoc approach to family policy, General Wickham elevated it a moral issue. In the opening paragraphs of the *White Paper*, he wrote, “As an institution, the Army has moral and ethical obligations to those who serve and their families.” As soldiers were charged with defending the nation, Wickham believed, the nation incurred a moral debt to them. That debt, he believed, extended to their families: “The nature of the commitment of the servicemember dictates to the Army a moral obligation to support their families.” He grounded these reciprocal obligations in a moral

⁴⁵ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 14. On the Army’s problems with recruiting in the 1970s and 80s, see David R. Segal, *Recruiting for Uncle Sam: Citizenship and Military Manpower Policy* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1989); Bailey, *America’s Army*.

philosophical framework, underwritten by the existence of a social contract between the individual and the community: “The impact at the societal level is our American tradition of blending the responsibility of each individual for his/her welfare and the obligations of the community to its members.”⁴⁷ Although the All-Volunteer Force had been founded upon market principles, and the Gates Commission (President Richard Nixon’s commission to study alternatives to the draft) rejected moral arguments rooted in the rights and obligations of citizenship, in his *White Paper* General Wickham called on the power of these older verities.⁴⁸

The need to balance the obligations of citizenship with its rights, Wickham argued, compelled the Army to renew its commitment to strengthening families. To join the Army was to enter into an unlimited liability contract: a life and death bargain. Soldiers’ commitment to that obligation— “their willingness to not only train, but to deploy and, if necessary, to fight” and die— mandated “corresponding obligations of support for Army families.” Wickham argued, “Such commitment is best engendered if soldiers view the Army as a total institution with a high purpose—a fraternal organization where the welfare of its members has a high value.”⁴⁹

The *White Paper* also reflected a national mood of concern over the weakening traditional family. To the values voters who elected Ronald Reagan, families were the building blocks of society. In the past, Americans had often cast their imagined national community and its institutions in terms of family. As far back as World War II, when

⁴⁷ Wickham, “The White Paper,” 12.

⁴⁸ *The President’s Commission on an All-Volunteer Armed Force*; Bailey, *America’s Army*, 32-33.

⁴⁹ Wickham, “The White Paper,” 13.

Norman Rockwell painted his iconic renditions of Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms, he used images of family to convey a lofty sense of national purpose. But, in the early 1980s the metaphors of family and nation took on a different meaning. The loss in Vietnam, the social and cultural upheavals of the 1960s and 70s, economic decline, the Iran hostage crisis, and challenges to traditional mores all evoked expressions of American identity as a family in crisis. To many, the very survival of the nation required action, and, in the *White Paper* General Wickham charted a course for the Army family. Fusing the language of family with its national institutions, he wrote, "Soldiers and their families gain through the Army a sense of common identity. They come to view the Army as providing for their total basic needs in exchange for total commitment."⁵⁰ The reciprocity of that statement was implied, although later Wickham made the connection explicitly: "In fostering interdependence between the family and the Army, we are again looking at the Army as an institution...It is not a we/they situation, it is us-- US as in U.S. Army."⁵¹ These discursive nuances elevated the *White Paper's* significance in this context. The Army *was* a family, and its foundation, Wickham concluded, rested on guaranteeing wellness and nurturing a sense of community.

The *White Paper* touched off a flood of support from around the country. The national headquarters of the Boy Scouts of America sent a letter congratulating General

⁵⁰ Ibid. On metaphors of family and national identity, see Robert Westbrook, *Why We Fought: Forging American Obligations in World War II* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Books, 2010). On the politics of family and crisis, see Zaretsky, *No Direction Home*.

⁵¹ "The White Paper," iii.

Wickham on “this bold and innovative step.”⁵² Pat Schroeder, in her capacity as chairwoman of the House Select Committee on Children, Youth, and Families, wrote to the *Army Times* to express her support for Wickham’s “personal commitment” to family matters. General Wickham received dozens of letters of support from legislators, policymakers, members of the clergy, veterans, and the public, many of whom Wickham personally responded to warmly.⁵³

Dr. James Dobson of Focus on the Family, an evangelical Christian organization dedicated to promoting “traditional” family values, also took notice. Beginning in the late 1970s under the Carter Administration, Dobson became an influential voice from the Christian Right to politicians and policymakers. When Ronald Reagan rode into office with the help of a vocal and energized “moral majority,” Dobson’s influence grew. He first met General Wickham in December 1983 while in Washington, D.C. attending a National Prayer Breakfast. Dr. Dobson gave General Wickham a signed copy of his recent book and Wickham gave Dobson a copy of the *White Paper*.

Although General Wickham was raised as an Episcopalian, his faith was re-forged during his time serving as a battalion commander with the 1st Cavalry Division in Vietnam. His born-again experience came one fateful night in 1967, when his battalion’s position was infiltrated and overrun by elements of the National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese regulars in the Quang Ngai province. Severely wounded by rocket shrapnel and small arms fire, and struggling to remain conscious, Wickham lay in a

⁵² H. Bruce Ayars to Wickham, (7 September 1984), Papers of John A. Wickham, Jr., Correspondence 1982-1986, Box 1, Folder A; USAMHI.

⁵³ Papers of John A. Wickham, Jr., Correspondence 1982-1986, USAMHI.

foxhole and prayed to God to take care of his family and to give him strength to keep his battalion safe. It would be another several hours before a medevac helicopter could land and take him to an aid station. General Wickham believed that God had answered his prayers that night and he took this religious experience with him throughout the rest of his Army career.⁵⁴

General Wickham, a self-described “man of great faith, but quiet faith,” quickly developed a close personal relationship with Dobson, the energetic and outspoken evangelical leader. In correspondence between the two, the General soon dropped the formalities in his letters, referring to Dr. Dobson only as Jim. And, although Dobson always referred to Wickham by his rank, he nonetheless expressed “a definite sense of camaraderie and Christian brotherhood” with the Chief of Staff. Whenever Dobson and his wife traveled from their Los Angeles home to Washington, Wickham insisted that they stay with him and his wife, Ann. After 1984, Wickham would ask Dobson to serve as an advisor on several committees that focused on Army family policy.⁵⁵

For Dr. Dobson, serving the Chief of Staff provided a great opportunity to influence policymakers at the highest levels in Washington. On his way back to California from a conference with General Wickham and other high-ranking commanders at the Pentagon in the spring of 1984, Dobson took the time to write a letter to his followers in Focus on the Family. “Dear Friend,” he began, “Shirley and I are on an

⁵⁴ Anne Loveland, *American Evangelicals and the US Military, 1942-1993* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1996), 275-295.

⁵⁵ Wickham to Dobson, (2 December 1983) and Dobson to Wickham, (7 December 1983), Papers of John A. Wickham, Jr., Correspondence 1982-1986, Box 3, Folder D. For Dobson’s involvement on Army family policy, see Special Subject Files, Box 51, Task Force on Soldiers and Families, USAMHI.

airplane at this moment, having just spent three valuable days in Washington, D.C.” He shared with his followers his delight that “General Wickham, a committed Christian whom I respect highly,” had taken up the task of strengthening families.⁵⁶ His excitement was understandable, for meeting General Wickham in 1983 was also fortuitous: Dobson had just incorporated the Family Research Council, a new lobbying venture with the mission to advance the three “F’s”—Faith, Family, and Freedom—in public policy.

While General Wickham was a man with a strong personal faith in Christ, he was no crusader like Dobson. As the Chief of Staff, he seemed acutely aware of his need to tread carefully on matters of church and state. In spite of the Christian brotherhood General Wickham shared with the members of Focus on the Family, Wickham’s vision for strengthening families was capacious enough to allow for solutions that directly contradicted the agenda of the Christian right. He understood that young families in the Army community could not subsist on the salary of a junior enlisted soldier, and this meant that spouses—overwhelmingly women— would have to work outside of the home. He aggressively lobbied Congress to fund daycare facilities for the children of these working mothers, a radical proposition to President Reagan’s evangelical allies.

To be sure, Wickham willingly allowed his evangelical Christian beliefs to influence Army policy. According to the minutes of one meeting of the Advisory Task Force on Soldiers and Families, Wickham went so far as to ask, “In what ways can we strengthen the role of the Church in the Army?” At the same time, Wickham frequently rebuffed Dobson’s more overt attempts to inject fundamentalist Christian teachings into

⁵⁶ Dobson to Focus on the Family Members (May 1983), Papers of John A. Wickham, Jr. Correspondence 1982-1986, USAMHI.

Army policy. For example, Focus on the Family produced a film called *Where's Dad?*, in which the importance of fatherhood was discussed in terms of “traditional” values and Christian teachings. General Wickham saw the film as an important tool in his efforts to improve family life, but he made the Army edit out all references to Christianity, faith, or spirituality prior to its adoption for circulation. General Wickham knew where the line was, and he made sure not to cross it. In other meetings, whenever a committee member offered a solution that would implicitly endorse a sectarian counseling service for families, General Wickham would overrule the suggestion as “inappropriate.” According to one scholar on evangelicals and the military, General Wickham was a “Christian *in* the military,” not a “missionary *to* the military.”⁵⁷

General Wickham’s concern about the stability of families in the Army certainly stemmed in part from his religious faith. But his own personal experience as a child in a military family may have also spurred him to action. In an oral history conducted a few years after he retired, Wickham describes how his family was broken up because of his father’s service in World War II. He recounts living with a guardian for a time while his father served in the OSS in China and Turkey. Citing a “lack of stability in my personal life,” Wickham recalled, “The breakup of [my] family was, I think, a factor that

⁵⁷ Loveland, *American Evangelicals*, 295 (emphasis hers). Loveland was paraphrasing another evangelical Christian military leader: Major General Clay T. Buckingham. For Loveland’s discussion of *Where's Dad*, see 274-293. For Wickham’s quote on the Church and overruling religious leaders, see: John A. Wickham Jr., Papers, Special Subject Files, Box 51, Task Force on Soldiers and Families, USAMHI.

influenced me early on in the importance of family programs.”⁵⁸ General Wickham’s faith and his personal experiences as a child who grew up in a family broken apart by the hardships of military life are crucial to understanding the *White Paper*.

The *White Paper* took the goals of wellness, partnership, and community and called for concrete mechanisms for achieving them through policy. Realizing that disparate agencies were executing incongruent policies, General Wickham ordered the implementation of the Army Family Action Plan (AFAP). Wickham turned to Carolyn Becraft and several women who were key players in the symposia to draft the AFAP. Sitting around Becraft’s kitchen table, these symposium veterans took the same framework from the 1st Symposium and made it Army doctrine. AFAP made the symposiums a mandatory, Army-sanctioned event that demanded total commitment by commanders around the globe. The original AFAP identified sixty-five “issue areas” that affected wellness, partnership, and community. They were broken down into the four major themes of relocation, medical, family support and role identity, and education and youth—themes taken nearly verbatim from the agenda of the 1980 symposium.⁵⁹

The AFAP implemented several immediate changes. Families would now be consulted on the design, construction, and maintenance of on-base housing. The enforcement of housing quality standards was taken away from local commanders and

⁵⁸ Interview with General John A. Wickham, Jr., interviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Jose M. Alvarez, US Army Military History Institute, Senior Officer Oral History Program, Project, 1991-1, 1-2, USAMHI.

⁵⁹ “The Army Family Action Plan,” Community and Family Policy Division, Human Resources Development Directorate, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel, Washington, D.C. (8 January 1984); Interview with Carolyn Becraft, 8 December 2016.

centralized. Building upon the gains of the family symposia, which won women the right not to have to “volunteer” for Army activities without fear of adversely affecting their spouse’s careers, the AFAP created several methods for providing compensation for those who chose to volunteer. It improved access to educational resources for family members. Finally, the AFAP created a system of accountability, requiring issue areas to have timelines for progress and completion, and it placed a Department of the Army-level agent at its head. It mandated annual conferences at major installations where families could voice their concerns. According to the AFAP’s website, as of 2008, 589 issues have been taken up by the AFAP. These issue areas have resulted in 95 changes to legislation, 137 changes to Army policy, and 153 improvements to Army programs and services.⁶⁰ Anticipating the release of the Army Family Action Plan, 1984 was declared “The Year of the Army Family,” a year dedicated to forging new partnerships.

We Didn’t Promise You a Rose Garden

For senior officers in the Marine Corps, the new family programs in the Army were a diversion from the military’s primary focus to train for war. For the Marine Corps in particular, these critics saw benefits for families—indeed, even the concept of Marines having families—as feminizing distractions that broke the Corps’ concentration on building a warrior culture. Within that culture, Marines also thrived on an ethos of doing more with less—and family programs were an expensive line item in a Spartan budget.

⁶⁰ Army Family Action Plan. “Does AFAP Work?” Accessed 20 November 2011. http://www.arfp.org/skins/arfp/display.aspx?ModuleID=8cde2e88-3052-448c-893d-d0b4b14b31c4&Action=display_page&ObjectID=9cfaa53a-6153-4c39-8e14-dff127c24c73&AllowSSL=true%2ctrue.

The Marine Corps charged through the recruiting crunch of the 1970s, not by making life in the Corps easier but by appealing to young men who wanted their masculinity tested at an elite level. Even when recruiters struggled to find their coveted “few good men,” Marine brass dragged their feet each time the Department of Defense issued quotas for increasing the number of women or asked them to open up more fields in which they could serve.⁶¹

In fact, current and former Marine officers were the driving force in a wider discussion about the direction of the AVF and whether it best served the national security needs of the United States. These critics worried that the military was being transformed into a social institution, more concerned with providing welfare and equal opportunity to minorities and women than with training warriors to fight and win the nation’s wars. They believed that war fighting was a masculine rite, an ancient and noble tradition, and they viewed America’s post-Vietnam political culture as an existential threat to that way of life.

Although it was the branch that relied the least on the draft, ever since the Gates Commission the Marines worried about what changes a volunteer military would bring to their institution—particularly regarding the role of women. In 1972, on the eve of the move to the AVF, a policy paper that circulated among Marine officers in the Office of Manpower and Reserve Affairs identified women as ***The Problem*** (emphasis in original). They witnessed the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment that year and worried, “Pressure is mounting from many sides for the Armed Services to provide complete equal

⁶¹ On Marine Corps culture in the 20th century, see O’Connell, *Underdogs*. For recruiting in the 1970s, see Bailey, *America’s Army*.

opportunity for women. The inevitable passage of the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) into law will bring this problem to a head.”⁶²

But, as the decade wore on, and ERA’s passage became less “inevitable,” the Marines renewed their push to restrict women’s service. Marine officers took a hard line against the expanding roles for women into the services and other developments that they considered to be feminizing, like marriages and dependent children. In the press, and in policymaking, they made a direct link between women and families and the struggling AVF. In this discussion, women and so-called social welfare programs became symbols of America’s declining military prowess.

When the new Reagan Administration came to power, many Marines believed that America would return to a more muscular foreign policy—and some hoped that this would spark a broader conversation about women in the military. Policymakers at Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) closely monitored the Army shortly after Reagan’s inauguration, when the Army’s manpower division quietly started a “womanpause,” a mysterious order to “level off” the recruiting of women. But, when word of this “pause” leaked out around Washington, DoD moved quickly to quell fears that the military was backtracking on women’s progress—or worse, that they were secretly planning to return to an all-male draft. For instance, Congresswoman Pat Schroeder fired off an angry letter to Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger demanding to know why the Army was reversing course, stating, “I can’t help but feel that a hidden agenda to return to the draft

⁶² Position Paper, “Expanded Utilization of Women in the Marine Corps” (November 1972), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Women Marines Policy, 1972-79, Box 2.

lurks behind the recruitment freeze facade.”⁶³ Responding at Weinberger’s request, the Secretary of the Army, John O. Marsh, urged Schroeder to ignore the media coverage that gave the impression that the Army had stopped recruiting women, telling the Congresswoman, “I assure you that no such policy change has been made.”⁶⁴

Marine officers’ hopes were soon dashed when, after the “womanpause” scandal blew over, Secretary Weinberger ordered the services to report on any remaining institutional barriers to women serving. Rather than rolling back the hard fought gains of the 1970s for women’s equality, the Reagan DoD was doubling down on “Equal Opportunity.” In June 1981, Weinberger issued a memorandum titled, “Equal Opportunity for Military Members within the Department of Defense,” which defended “military equal opportunity (EO) and affirmative action programs” as essential to fulfilling America’s national security commitments. He also ordered all of the services to redouble their efforts to increase opportunities for qualified women.⁶⁵

But, according to a DoD internal report, fully six months later, the Marine Corps had been “generally unresponsive” to the memo requirements. HQMC argued that the Marines had reached “the maximum level” of women without compromising their high state of combat readiness. When DoD asked for clarification on how they arrived at that conclusion, the Marines declined to share their reasoning. Defense officials wrote, “They seem to feel that their policy restrictions are a natural and rational extension of existing

⁶³ Schroeder to Weinberger, 2 June 1981, Marine Corps Archives, Women in the Military Policy 1980-82, Folder 1 of 4, Box 2.

⁶⁴ Marsh to Schroeder, 7 July 1981, Marine Corps Archives, Women in the Military Policy 1980-82, Folder 1 of 4, Box 2.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

law which restricts women from combat roles.” In fact, the so-called “combat exclusion rule,” as well as the statutory restrictions on women serving aboard combatant naval vessels, had long provided the Marines with cover in their efforts to limit expanding women’s roles. Marine policymakers reasoned that the primary mission of the Corps was to conduct amphibious warfare from naval ships, and because of this unique mission, the Marine Corps categorized 72% of all enlisted billets as combat positions, closing them off to women. By comparison, less than half of the Army’s total enlisted billets were categorized as combat positions. The DoD memo bluntly concluded, “we are left to conclude that this is an institutional attempt to restrict women from service in the Marine Corps.”⁶⁶

The rising number of women in the ranks was linked with the growing number of families in the minds of policymakers, officers, and senior NCO’s. That female servicemembers were significantly less likely to have a family than their male counterparts seemed irrelevant to the discussion. According to the 1978 Beard Study, so-called because it was conducted by Congressman (and, importantly, a still-serving Marine officer) Robin Beard, “Most NCO’s [Non-Commissioned Officers] resent women in the Army (in any role) and perceive that females are intruding in the all male institution of war.” Although officers in general were more open to the idea of women

⁶⁶ Frank Carlucci, “Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments: Institutional Barriers to the Utilization of Women in the Military (14 January 1982), Marine Corps Archives, Women in the Military Policy 1980-82, Folder 1, Box 2. On the “womanpause,” see Bailey, *America’s Army*, 172; Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 564-67. On combat versus non-combat billets in the services, see Binkin and Bach, *Women and the Military*, 22-30; Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*.

serving than the NCO's were, both sides agreed that increased marriages and more children were unnecessary distractions—and that they were related entirely to women:

The main debate on female soldiers centers around the effects of pregnancy and the disposition of children on operational readiness. This set of problems, coupled with those brought about by the radical increase in the number of junior enlisted persons who are now married, are causing commanders to ask philosophical questions of whether or not the Army is a fighting machine or a social welfare institution. Most supervisors feel the Army cannot effectively do both.... Collectively commanders and NCO's agree that too much of their time is being drained by social welfare and reform activities to the point that operational readiness is being impacted.⁶⁷

The study revealed a pattern of belief among commanding officers and policymakers in which more women required more social welfare, and more social welfare attracted more women. Army policies created a spiraling cycle in which “women's roles and influences on the Army plus the increase in married soldiers [had] dictated that the Army provide more social services.”⁶⁸

Of course, by “social welfare” and “reform activities” they meant women and family problems. Later in the report, the connection became clear: “Despite the progress that women have made the combat arms unit commanders are skeptical of how women will perform their jobs in battle and are concerned about the question of female pregnancy and single parent dependent care.” Without citing any concrete numbers, the report charged, “There is a high incidence of pregnancy among women serving in the Army. Many single women are having children while on Active duty.” Without thinking to ask who these women might be having sex with, or whether their male partners bore any responsibility for these children, the report blamed for the rise in single parenthood

⁶⁷ “The Beard Study,” 140-41.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 255.

and its threat to unit readiness entirely on women: “As social mores have changed and women feel free to act as single parents the unit commander is frequently faced with finding a replacement for the female soldier during the period of maternal leave and, of greater significance, worrying about the care of the child during alerts, mobilization and training.” Finally, the report made clear that unit commanders believed family problems were women’s problems even when both parents wore the uniform, concluding “In some cases the female soldier is married to another soldier and during alerts the couple shows up with their children. Although these problems may appear to be minor in scope they will expand proportionally to the female population in the Army.”⁶⁹

When he testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee about his recent study, Congressman Beard argued that his experience in the Marine Corps provided him with insight into the social welfare problems facing the Army, and the military more broadly. When asked about how the Army dealt with married service members serving overseas, Beard responded with his experience in the Marines: “I go on active duty every year and I have seen this situation in the Marine Corps, too.” He continued, “There are quite a few unmarried individuals with children, mothers in the military, which is more and more an increasing problem.... Everyone I talked to who has to live with the situation says it it [sic] just unworkable because the mother’s responsibility is to her child and that is where she shows her responsibility. Therefore, it conflicts with the combat readiness of that unit.” His response showed how firmly entrenched gendered notions of

⁶⁹ Ibid.

womanhood and motherhood were, and how women as soldiers did not fit those notions.⁷⁰

In his report, the Congressman and Marine officer worried that “the composition of the Army personnel force is gradually changing. Women’s roles and influence on the Army plus the increase in married soldiers have dictated that the Army provide more social services.” These changes put the Army at a crossroads over its identity: “Is the Army a fighting machine or a social rehabilitation institution?” What some Army officers were starting to consider a strength—the ability to provide opportunity, training, a paycheck, and benefits—was considered by others to be a liability: “Since the Army has recruited personnel on the basis of employment, benefits, and education, the mission of the Army has become diluted by a shift from military issues to social concerns.”

To these critics, women’s work—in uniform and as wives and mothers— was always subordinate to the work of men, and the cultural belief that men were obligated to protect the nation remained long after the United States dismantled the state mechanisms to compel that service. As historian Jennifer Mittelstadt argues in her book on the military and the welfare state, Congressman Beard’s concerns were made more dangerous at a time when social welfare programs were under assault, when critics equated welfare with women. In this environment, military policymakers who believed that warfighting and soldiering were masculine pursuits began to worry that if, as

⁷⁰ “Statement of Hon. Robin L. Beard, Representative in Congress from the State of Tennessee,” U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, *Status of the All-Volunteer Armed Force: Hearing before the Subcommittee on Manpower and Personnel*, 95th Cong. 2nd Sess., 20 June 1978, 6.

Mittelstadt put it, “ the volunteer army carried the stain of welfare, it might not survive.”⁷¹

It was within this context that former Marine infantry officer (and future Secretary of the Navy), Jim Webb, wrote his scathing manifesto in the *Washingtonian*, as discussed in the last chapter. Webb’s article set the tone for the Marines in the fight over women and families in the military during the 1980s. Webb believed that the military had been turned into a liberal “test tube for social experimentation,” beginning during the Vietnam War, when “whiz kids” in the Johnson Administration, namely Robert McNamara, created Project 100,000. America’s latest experiment, according to Webb, was women in the military. He charged “equal-opportunity specialists, women’s rights advocates, and certain members of Congress” with foolishly priding themselves on the work they had done to open up new areas of the military to women. The military was a man’s world, Webb argued, and not only would the mere presence of women would destroy that world, these efforts would psychologically scar women who tried to compete in it:

I have a recurring vision when I watch these women on the [U.S. Naval] Academy grounds in their sterile uniforms, making their way into adulthood inside a harsh, isolated man’s world. I see them ten or twenty years from now, finally deciding that they did indeed lose something, something more intangible than mere femininity, which many of them yet retain. Perhaps it is something as simple as having had to find their womanhood inside of a world of men, studying men’s deeds, learning a man’s profession, suffering taunts from men who feel they are invading a totally masculine world.⁷²

⁷¹ Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 75.

⁷² Jim Webb, “Women Can’t Fight,” *Washingtonian* (November 1979).

Webb lamented that women were in danger of losing the attributes that he believed defined their sexuality, and worried that “breaking barriers” and “moving along the fabled cutting edge of social change” might not be enough to sustain them.⁷³

Webb concluded that military commanders were growing worried about women in the military. Citing conversations he had with the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Robert H. Barrow, Webb said officers in HQMC were “deeply disturbed over the effect of sexual mixing” in the Marines.⁷⁴ In fact, earlier that same year General Barrow moved to clarify the Marine Corps’ positions on marriage, and later on pregnancy. Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1300.8L acknowledged that the importance of family unity, but that service in the Marines “by its very nature involves family separation.”⁷⁵ A few months later, in August, the Commandant modified the standing order pertaining to pregnancy. MCO 5000.12A stated that although DoD policy “precludes the involuntary separation of service women on the sole basis of pregnancy,” the Marines new policy bluntly stated, “The fact of pregnancy or parenthood does not entitle women Marines to special treatment or consideration....”⁷⁶

While the Army was beginning to forge a new partnership with families, HQMC continued to enact policies that offered little comfort for Marines with dependents. And those policies had their desired effect, especially on women: in FY 1981, an astonishing 42% of women failed to complete their first enlistments in the Marines. The Marine

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ MCO 1300.8L (2 January 1979), Marine Corps Archives, Women in the Military Policy, 1980-82, Box 2, Folder 3.

⁷⁶ MCO 5000.12A (30 August 1979), Marine Corps Archives, Women In the Military Policy, 1980-82, Box 2, Folder 3.

Corps commissioned a study on factors affecting women and attrition rates, and they found that pregnancy was a primary motivator. The report's author, Marjorie H. Royle, charged that the Marine Corps' unsympathetic policies toward families were causing qualified women to leave the service before they otherwise would.⁷⁷

In her exhaustive study, which took nearly four years to complete, Royle uncovered some revealing findings: women who took a discharge when they became pregnant were “clearly more traditional in their views of women’s roles” than those who chose to stay in the Marines. Importantly, she found that married women were much more likely to choose to get out than single pregnant women, which was obviously a problem for the Marines, but a choice that clearly reflected the inherent disadvantages of single motherhood. As long as the single mother chose to stay in the military, she was entitled to medical care for herself and her child, and she enjoyed a stable income—benefits that she would likely lose if she took a medical discharge. For married women who became pregnant, the choice to leave was often influenced by pressure from their husbands, who usually wanted them to leave the service. The report concluded, “Pregnant women who remained interested in the USMC seemed to be good workers caught between a rock and a hard place.” These women experienced higher levels of job-family conflicts because “their supervisors wanted them at work and their husbands wanted them

⁷⁷ Marjorie H. Royle, *Factors Affecting Attrition Among Marine Corps Women* (San Diego: Navy Personnel Research and Development Center, 1985), 1, Marine Corps Archives, Studies and Reports Coll., Box 253.

at home. They solved this conflict by leaving the USMC, although they might have preferred to remain.”⁷⁸

Royle’s recommendations to the Marine Corps were clear: in order to reduce attrition, she suggested that policymakers enact policies to help Marine mothers to more effectively combine motherhood and a Marine Corps career. The report listed access to childcare, assistance with facilitating cooperative childcare arrangements with other Marine mothers and families, and giving more consideration when assigning single mothers to new duty stations. More importantly, though, the report argued that the Marines needed to change the attitudes of their male supervisors toward women in the military. The Corps also needed to focus on sex education in order to “decrease the pressures driving women into an intense relationship with one man that could lead to early marriage and pregnancy.” The report asked men in the Marines to make a lot of changes, but in the end, Marjorie Royle echoed the widely held belief that women were the gatekeepers in sexual relationships. The Marine Corps could provide instructions to prevent unplanned pregnancies to both women and men, but it was up to women to “make thoughtful choices concerning dating, marriage, and parenthood.”⁷⁹

Although officers at HQMC seemed concerned enough about the high attrition rate to commission the Navy’s research division to conduct the study, it did not seem to have any effect on policy. During the tenure of the new Commandant, General P.X. Kelley, the Marine Corps continued to revise its policy on single parenthood. Once again, the Marine Corps stated that it would not make special exceptions for single Marines with

⁷⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

children when assigning duty stations. Moreover, if a Marine could not find someone to take custody of the child when he or she deployed, that Marine would be discharged for being unable to perform his or her duties. As General Kelley assumed his position as Commandant in 1983—the same year that his counterpart in the Army, General Wickham, penned the *White Paper* on the Army family—the Marines held fast to their belief that families were not welcome.⁸⁰

The DoD and the Politics of the Family

Under General Kelley and his successor in 1987, General Alfred Gray, policymakers at HQMC continued to pursue strategies rooted in the belief that families were detrimental to the mission of the Marine Corps; to be a warfighting institution prepared to deploy at a moment's notice anywhere around the globe. The Marines' position became increasingly at odds with the rest of the military, as the Department of Defense began looking to its largest branch—the Army—as well taking cues from the White House for answers pertaining to military family issues. The *White Paper* and the Army Family Action Plan provided DoD with a useful blueprint, in part because General Wickham had found a way to bridge the growing political divide between those who wanted government institutions to adapt to a changing American family, and those more conservative groups who saw the “traditional” family under siege.

In the middle of the 1980s, this was fortuitous, because despite the fact that Ronald Reagan owed much of his political rise to the potency of conservative political

⁸⁰MCO 1300.8N (5 August 1986), Marine Corps Archives, Alfred Gray Papers, Box 58.

activism, members of the New Right, including James Dobson and Focus on the Family, were growing frustrated with the administration and its seeming inability to quickly reorder society along conservative Christian values.⁸¹

Sensing this growing impatience among his base, but unable to get Congress to go along with the New Right's agenda, President Reagan looked to Executive actions in his second term to signal his administration's commitment to families. On 2 September 1987, Reagan issued Executive Order 12606 on The Family, creating "Family Policymaking Criteria" that all government agencies, including those in the Defense Department, had to use when "formulating and implementing policies and regulations that may have significant impact on family formation, maintenance, and general well-being." Before any policy decision, policymakers at the Pentagon now had to ask, in the words of the order, "Does this action by government strengthen or erode the stability of the family and, particularly, the marital commitment?" The order promised to address the concerns among the Religious Right that the government was eroding parental authority in the home, that government assistance programs fostered dependency, and that government was to blame for the decline of the male breadwinner.⁸²

EO 12606 was a statement to the Religious Right that Reagan understood the federal government to be the single largest threat to the traditional family. In his State of the Union address a few months later, President Reagan put the order into the context of his wider agenda for his second term:

⁸¹ Self, *All in the Family*, 395-6.

⁸² Ronald Reagan, Executive Order 12606—The Family, 2 September 1987, CMH Military Family Coll.

Let's ensure that the Federal Government never again legislates against the family and the home. Last September I signed an Executive order on the family requiring that every department and agency review its activities in light of seven standards designed to promote and not harm the family. But let us make certain that the family is always at the center of the public policy process not just in this administration but in all future administrations. It's time for Congress to consider, at the beginning, a statement of the impact that legislation will have on the basic unit of American society, the family.⁸³

In that speech, Reagan went on to excoriate “failed big government” programs such the War on Poverty and welfare programs that fostered dependency, which he argued “has become the one enduring heirloom, passed from one generation to the next, of too many fragmented families.”⁸⁴

Of course, presidents sign Executive Orders all the time, and they vary widely in their scope, purpose, and effect. Sometimes they are impossibly vague: the same year that Reagan signed the EO on the Family, he also signed an order expressing his belief that “federalism,” as expressed by the framers of the Constitution, should be the guiding principle for the working relationship between the federal government and the states. Sometimes EO’s are very specific: EO 12619, signed 24 December 1987, told federal workers to leave after a half day, in observance of Christmas Eve. At first, the EO on the family seemed like nothing more than the President issuing a political expression of sentiment for the traditional family to mollify concerns among his political base.⁸⁵

⁸³ Ronald Reagan: "Address Before a Joint Session of Congress on the State of the Union ,," January 25, 1988. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=36035>.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ronald Reagan: "Executive Order 12612—Federalism," October 26, 1987. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33607>; “Executive Order 12619—Half-Day Closing of Government Departments and Agencies on Thursday,," December 24, 1987.

But, within a political climate where Americans of all stripes were debating the meaning of family, Reagan's order took root, particularly in the Department of Defense. A year after EO 12606, DoD issued a department-wide directive on the family. The directive, referencing the President's order, implemented criteria to safeguard the "rights and autonomy of DoD families" in all policymaking decisions. Acknowledging that DoD policies, and the policies of each individual service, had a profound impact on families, the DoD decree blended the spirit of Reagan's EO with language from the Army's evolving philosophy on families, stating that personnel and their families needed to be provided "a quality of life that reflects the high standards and pride of the Nation they defend," and that the best way to achieve this goal was through forging meaningful partnerships between the DoD and families.⁸⁶

Building upon the commitments made by the Army four years earlier, the Pentagon now recognized that it had a primary responsibility for the welfare of its members' families. The DoD directive included childcare, private and public sector employment assistance for spouses, education support for families, substance abuse prevention programs, and resources for "spiritual growth and development."⁸⁷ Family wellbeing was now DoD policy, and the Secretary of Defense began demanding accountability from each of the services.

Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=33851>.

⁸⁶ Department of Defense Directive, Family Policy, Number 1342.17, 30 December 1988, CMH Military Family Coll.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Near the end of the Reagan Administration, the Marines were certainly losing their war over the direction of the All-Volunteer Force, but they were not going to go down without a fight. Two months after the President issued EO 12606, buried in a report on the “Progress of Women in the Marine Corps,” commissioned by the Commandant, General Gray, Marine policymakers again expressed their concerns about family affairs. The report said that the growing number of families, women Marines, working spouses, and single parents, were forcing base and installation commanders to devote too much time to childcare issues. The report sketched out the evolving debate among policymakers, and many officers agreed with the Army’s position that family quality of life and satisfaction were directly related to retention. But others held firm, arguing that the Corps should not be providing social benefits for Marines or their families. Drawing a line in the sand, some officers stated categorically that the Marine Corps “is not responsible for providing child care at all.”⁸⁸

When the Marines issued the report to the public in the spring of 1988, the press focused on the newsworthy fact that General Gray expressly recommended that the Marine Corps not expand women’s roles to include embassy guard duty or to train women pilots. When asked why he did not see a need to expand women’s opportunities in these areas, General Gray barked, “If it isn’t busted, why fix it?” Later that year,

⁸⁸ United States Marine Corps, Report on the Progress of Women in the Marine Corps (Washington, D.C., 1988), Marine Corps Archives, Studies and Reports Coll., Box 253.

however, the Secretary of Defense, Frank Carlucci, would publicly overrule Gray. The Corps began opening those fields to women in October.⁸⁹

But, while the news media was focused on the pressing issue of women's roles in the military, Marine policymakers at HQMC quietly began making plans to fix the family problem, once and for all. The Marines' secret plan, code-named "Operation Gold Band," would soon rock the military services and the nation. Finding themselves hemmed in by the Army, the Department of Defense, and the White House, the Marines were going to go down fighting.

⁸⁹ "Marine Commandant Rejects Increased Roles for Women," *UPI* (26 April 1988), Richard Halloran, "Marines Try to Make the Corps Better for Women," *New York Times* (7 November 1988).

CHAPTER 6
COLD SHOWERS: THE MARINES, MARRIAGE, AND
READINESS INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

Shutting Down the Cold War

Often times, when Congress has a particularly contentious problem to tackle, it appoints a non-partisan commission to do the heavy lifting. On behalf of the American people and their elected officials, the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission, first in 1988, and again in 1991, 1993, and 1995 made hard decisions about the US Military after the cold war. “America’s security agenda is being rewritten,” wrote the BRAC Commission, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact. The Commission expected that by 1995, the Army would have six fewer divisions, the Navy would retire nearly 100 ships, including one carrier and two carrier air wings, and in the Air Force, 10 fighter wings would be wiped off the books. Between 1990 and 1995, the Armed Forces would shed about 22% of its members in uniform, and nearly half came from the ranks of the Army alone. The Department of Defense would also close 330 military installations, and another 130 would be “realigned,” or consolidated to eliminate redundant functions. In the 1970s, the defense budget accounted for roughly 25 cents per every dollar the government spent; by 1995 DoD spent about 13 cents on the

dollar. Beginning in the late 1980s, but really accelerating in the 1990s, the United States took dramatic steps to shut down the cold war and reap a peace dividend.¹

Although downsizing the military was primarily a function of the breakup of the Soviet Union and its satellite states, these changes took place among other significant discussions about shrinking the size and scope of the federal government. As elected officials, policymakers, and influential Americans became increasingly alarmed about government spending and the federal debt, they turned to the language of the business world, and its focus on efficiency, streamlining, and cost cutting, for explanations. In Ronald Reagan's first term, he surveyed thousands of business leaders from around the country for advice on ways to reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy, and how to root out waste and inefficiency in government. Within this context, programs whose worth could not be explained in the cold cost-benefit metrics of the market came under close scrutiny. As Jennifer Mittelstadt put it, "A bipartisan consensus for cutting welfare and setting stricter rules for recipients set the context" for the military's downsizing efforts. When George H. W. Bush took the reins of power from Ronald Reagan, the military had already begun a process of downsizing, privatization, outsourcing, and capitalizing on technological innovation to reduce the cost of American security.²

But for military families, the "new world order" was reminiscent of the austerity politics of the 1970s. The renewed calls to reduce the size of the All-Volunteer Force also

¹ Department of Defense, *Base Closure and Realignment Report* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1991), 15; Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 639-44, David S. Sorenson, *Shutting Down The Cold war: The Politics of Military Base Closure* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 1.

² Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 173.

occurred at precisely the moment when the language of personal responsibility was at its most potent in American political discourse. In the 1990s, Americans would witness the “end of welfare as we know it.” Critics—including senior officers within the Marine Corps—of policies that provided benefits for military families tapped into those broader conversations, arguing that the military was creating artificial incentives for junior enlistees to marry and have children. Within this environment, military families found themselves confronting a logic of “reducing dependency” on a system that had only really been functioning for about a decade.

These critics were not entirely wrong: family benefits became so generous in the 1980s that the military essentially subsidized heteronormative, traditional families at a time when civilians were opting out of those family patterns. Imagine the typical unmarried lance corporal (E-3) in the Marines. She likely would have been in the service less than two years, and in 1990, she would be making just shy of \$850 a month. This may not seem like much, but she would have also lived rent-free in the barracks, eaten three meals a day at the base chow hall, and enjoyed medical and dental care free of charge. If this lance corporal got married, she immediately saw a \$300 bump in pay each month, and she could move out of the barracks. Her spouse would be entitled to medical care and could take advantage of the commissary and other on-base services. If this new military couple decided to have kids, those children would also be covered under the military’s healthcare plan. The extra cash each month was certainly not enough to support a family, but to a 19 or 20-year-old lance corporal, the bump in pay, not to mention the

added freedom of moving out of the barracks—which meant a regular break from 24-hour military supervision and discipline—motivated many to take the plunge.³

Then in August 1990, Iraq invaded the Kingdom of Kuwait in the Persian Gulf. Kuwait's borders made Iraq all but landlocked, and Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, citing the dynastic borders of the Ottoman Empire, and wanting more ports for his country's oil industry, felt that Kuwait belonged under Iraqi rule. The United States disagreed, and in 1991 it led an international coalition to oust Saddam's army from the tiny gulf kingdom. Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm, known popularly as the Gulf War, became the first combat test for the All-Volunteer Force. It also put to the test all of the family programs and support functions that the military had created in the 1980s. Fears about whether a volunteer military could handle major combat operations, going all the way back to the 1970s and the Beard Study, the highly critical report on the Army published in 1977, seemed to be proven unfounded, and the Gulf War was hailed as a resounding success.

The actual shooting part of the war only lasted about 100 hours, but the buildup to the conflict and the ensuing peacekeeping operations required that hundreds of thousands of troops be away from home for months at a time. During the Gulf War era, American troops deployed far from their garrisons, leaving their families behind on sprawling military bases, and military policymakers became concerned about readiness.

“Readiness”—the ability to effectively recruit and train an army to deploy into an

³ “Military Pay Charts-1949 to 2017,” *Defense Finance and Accounting Service* (7 February 2017), <https://www.dfas.mil/militarymembers/payentitlements/military-pay-charts.html>.

operational theater— became a watchword in the 1990s. The renewed concerns about readiness were a symptom of a military institution under duress.

In the name of readiness, family policies became an operational issue, and, ironically, this revolution in military family affairs began in the least family friendly of all the services: the United States Marine Corps. To the Marines, who staked their reputation on being America’s “force in readiness,” marriage and dependent children posed an existential threat—to both the mission and to their masculine warrior tradition. Beginning with General Alfred Gray, who served as Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) from 1987 until 1991, Marine policymakers aggressively sought solutions to these challenges, including banning first term enlistees from getting married and dramatically reducing entitlements and benefits for married personnel and their families.

But even in a political environment that seemed primed for slashing benefits and entitlements, the Marines’ attempts to put the brakes on marriage failed. The other services, and the Department of Defense (DoD), deemed that families were too important to the health of the AVF. And yet, snatching victory from the jaws of defeat, Marine policymakers succeeded in altering the relationship between the military and families. In the wake of their failed attempt to make the Fleet Marine Force single- and dependent-free, the Marines decided to expand the concept of “readiness” to include families. In contrast with the 1980s, when first the Army, and later the entire Department of Defense, fostered a partnership with families as a means to strengthen the AVF, the Marines militarized family policy, cementing families into the broader operational structures of

the military. The other services would follow the lead of the Marines into the 21st century.

Seizing the Initiative

Ever since the beginning of the AVF, the Marine Corps pursued a conscious policy of making marriage and having a family difficult, especially for women. For example, it was the last branch to stop involuntarily discharging pregnant women, and it only stopped this practice when it became clear that it was no longer defensible in court. Every Commandant to serve after 1973 reaffirmed the Corps' hardline position, through written orders, that a Marines' commitment to the Marine Corps came before any family obligations. In the 1970s, the combination of a grueling deployment schedule—first term Marines (or those Marines who were on their first enlistment contract) spent over half of their first tour overseas, usually aboard naval ships— and antifamily policies worked to keep marriage rates at around 30%, or roughly half the rate the Army was experiencing. But in the 1980s, the DoD embraced the Army's approach to quality of life for servicemembers and families, which forced the Marine Corps to offer higher pay and more benefits to married Marines. Consequently, the marriage rate rose dramatically, so that by 1992, nearly half of the Marine Corps was married, had dependent children, or both.

The idea to restrict marriages among first term enlistees initially began to circulate around the halls of Headquarters, Marine Corps (HQMC) during the rocky tenure of CMC General Gray. The Marine Corps was at the center of several scandals

that dogged the Reagan Administration in its last years, particularly when Marine Colonel Oliver North was convicted for his role in the Iran-Contra affair, in which the United States illegally sold weapons to Iran in order to fund right-wing counterrevolutionaries in Nicaragua. Under General Gray, it was also revealed that several high- ranking Marine officers were using military aircraft at El Toro Air Station for their own personal use.

A talking paper from December 1989 entitled, “Involuntary Separation of Junior Grade Enlisted Married Marines” began making the rounds among key policymakers within HQMC. In these early conversations, policymakers pondered the legality of it all—Could they just kick out married enlistees? Did statutes restrict this, or DoD policies? Even if they could get the Secretary of the Navy to approve changes to regulations, would those changes stand up in court? Policymakers turned to Marine lawyers from the Judge Advocates General (JAG) office for advice. The JAG reasoned that any attempt to involuntarily separate a married Marine would violate the 5th Amendment due process guarantee. The JAG lawyers worried whether the courts would consider “junior grade enlisted married Marines” to be a suspect class, much like being a particular race or having a certain religious affiliation, which would force a judge to apply strict scrutiny to the case. The lawyers reasoned that “Married Marines” would probably not be a suspect class, but that “junior grade enlisted married Marines” might

be, because classifications based on age is a suspect category. The JAG also pointed out that the court had long ago ruled that the right to marry was a fundamental right.⁴

The policymakers at HQMC quickly dropped plans to kick out all junior enlisted married Marines, but they pressed forward with other ideas. In the summer of 1990, the Director of Manpower Plans and Policy Division for the Marine Corps, Brigadier General J. M. Myatt, penned a manifesto of sorts to his civilian boss at the Pentagon, Kim McKernan, who was a Deputy Secretary of Defense for Force Management and Personnel. In the memo, entitled “Seizing the Initiative,” General Myatt suggested declaring war on entitlements and military social welfare programs, arguing, “we manpower folks have got to get out front—and cease just reacting” in the coming decade. General Myatt saw the focus on quality of life issues as having unintended consequences.⁵

Likening manpower policy to a bowl of Jell-O—“If you disturb it at one location, you shake it all over”—he thought that a sturdy manpower policy should be built upon the foundations of readiness. Marriage and dependents, in General Myatt’s view, constituted the biggest threats to the stability of the force. He argued, “Virtually every OSD [Office of the Secretary of Defense] policy or law encourages service men and women to get married. In the days prior to the All Volunteer Force, housing, BAS, and household effects moves were limited to corporals (E-4) with over four years military

⁴ Talking Paper, “Involuntary Separation of Junior Grade Enlisted Married Marines” (20 December 1989), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

⁵ Brigadier General J.M. Myatt to Deputy Secretary Kim McKernan, “Seizing the Initiative” (7 June 1990), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

service.” He yearned for the days when “there was no financial incentive for the marriages to occur....” And he lamented the changes of the past decade: “The situation has changed today. We furnish housing, we provide household effects moves, we provide additional financial incentives that are making it too easy for *young* service members to get married.” The time was now, Myatt wrote, “to make some fundamental legislative proposals that would limit benefits to those service members who are more mature and prepared for the additional responsibilities.” That last point— maturity— would become a recurring theme in the Marines’ fight to restrict marriages.⁶

General Myatt’s manifesto did nothing to persuade the Deputy Secretary, but among the Marines at HQMC, it was a call to arms. Frustrated with rising numbers of dependent children, a marked increase in marriage among junior enlisted Marines—and a sky-high divorce rate to cap off those trends—HQMC continued exploring options to curtail marriages by arguing that entitlements incentivized marriage, and this was a drain on the budget. They saw an opportunity later that year, when the Department of Defense planned to convene its next Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC).⁷

In 1990-91, the 7th QRMC decided to tackle a particularly vexing issue: policymakers looked at reforming the military pay structure to give pay increases for promotions rather than for time in service. In other words, the QRMC asked whether the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 714. Ever since 1967, the President of the United States has had to submit a review of military compensation to Congress. Despite their regular intervals, these reviews are quite odd in the sense that they do not have a specific set of goals or parameters; they have no recurring agenda items. These commissions also do not produce policy directly, but the reviews call upon lessons learned from past policies, and they frequently impact legislation and other policy decisions down the road.

military should reward performance or longevity. The Marines interpreted this proposed agenda as an opportunity to talk about all types of compensation that were not directly tied to promotion or merit—particularly benefits to servicemembers with dependent children and spouses. The Marines prepared a brief for the Executive Director of the QRMC, in which they expressed their concerns with the rising number of dependents and the growing impact on manpower costs and readiness. They suggested that entitlements for married Marines should be equalized with what single Marines received, and that any benefits that encouraged marriage or having children should be withheld until the service member reenlisted for a second tour. Although the Marines who briefed the QRMC remarked that their ideas were “well received,” the Executive Director shot down their suggestions, arguing that marriage entitlements were beyond the scope of the agenda and he “perceived this to lack of political viability.”⁸

Angered at the QRMC for failing to discuss the pressing issues of families and compensation, the Military Secretary to the Commandant (or, MILSEC—the Commandant’s senior advisor and chief of staff), ordered the Manpower Department at HQMC to brainstorm a new approach. The officers in the Manpower Department began circulating a think piece entitled, “Conceptual Policy to Discourage Marriages Among First Term Marines.” This document bounced around the Manpower Department and the Office of the Fiscal Director of the Marine Corps. As more policymakers added their input, the think piece evolved into the Marine Corps’ first genuine attempt to understand

⁸ Concept Paper, “Reserving the Privileges of Marriage for the Career Force” (11 March 1993), Marine Corps Archives, First Term Marines and Marriage 1992-1995, Box 40.

the reasons why junior enlistees wanted to get married, and to explore what policymakers could do, in their words, to identify “possible courses of action that can be taken which may be successful in delaying the decision” to marry. To figure out “the problem,” as they described it, the think piece posed several questions for policymakers to chew on: were first term enlistees getting married earlier in life than civilians? How did the military compensation system serve as a motivator? Some of the questions bordered on navel gazing: “Is the problem sociological?” the think piece asked, and, “Are Marines driven to start a family to replace the family structure left behind when they enlist?” But, up to this point, Marine policymakers only assumed that entitlements were to blame for the rise in marriages. The think piece asked policymakers to move beyond hunches.⁹

The manpower people also asked practical questions about what could be done to address the problem. Could they “thwart” the problem through an educational campaign? Could there be a way to encourage Marines to not get married, creating incentives to remain single rather than relying only on methods to discourage the choice? Would these hypothetical ideas require legislation? And, finally, they considered the overall effect on recruitment and retention. Each year, about 5% of all new recruits who joined the Marines were already married. That overall number was relatively small, but to the recruiters who were struggling every single quarter to reach their quotas, 5% could be the difference between hitting their goal and falling short of the mark.

⁹ Think Piece, “Conceptual Policy to Discourage Marriages among First Term Marines” (October 1990), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marine, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

The think piece represented a truly earnest effort on the part of policymakers in HQMC to try to understand the military's changing demographics, and throughout this process, the Marines kept returning to the longer history of the AVF, and the choices that the other services made in order to attract and retain personnel. "Over the last 17 years," this document noted, "the entitlements within the military compensation system have expanded to remain competitive with the civilian sector to motivate the service member toward a rewarding career in the military service." But, the Marines surmised, those entitlements also inadvertently incentivized marriage, especially among the younger Marines.¹⁰

The bottom line for Marine policymakers was, "We must make a concentrated effort to educate and 'change the expectations' of those we recruit." They began to sketch out a program for deterring marriages during the first term of enlistment, beginning the moment a potential recruit walked into a recruiting office, and continuing at intervals throughout a Marines' initial tour. Recruiters would "educate" the potential recruit "on the responsibilities of being a Marine—emphasizing that the primary responsibility requires immediate worldwide deployability." The "acquisition" of dependents would "hamper" the ability of the Marine to fulfill these duties. They suggested that recruits should sign a pledge in their initial enlistment contracts:

I have been counseled that my first enlistment in the Marine Corps makes me available for immediate worldwide deployment, without notice. I agree to remain single during my first enlistment. Failure to maintain this agreement may disqualify me from reenlisting and further military service.¹¹

¹⁰ Ibid., emphasis in the original.

¹¹ Ibid.

While brainstorming ways to continue educating Marines during their first tours, one idea that seemed to gain traction among these senior policymakers was the possibility of using the wives of senior enlisted Marines as a way to steer junior Marines away from the perils of marriage. They reasoned, “These women have lived through the hard times and can add personal perspective that may be enlightening.”¹²

But as the think piece continued to circulate around HQMC in late 1990 and early 1991, the suggestions got progressively more punitive. Some suggested withholding allowances for housing from E-4s and below if they failed to notify their commander in advance of getting married. The authors wrote, “Although we conclude that a commander cannot deny a Marine the fundamental right to get married, the notification would serve as an opportunity for the command to ensure that the Marine is properly counseled.” This last part was a thinly veiled threat—in the Marine Corps, the term “counseling” is often used as a euphemism for a tradition called incentive--or individualized--physical training (often called “I.T.,” as in “the junior Marine got IT-ed for insubordination”).

“Counseling” in this sense would mean that members of a junior Marine’s chain of command (this duty would usually fall upon his or her enlisted superiors, rarely officers) would take turns making the junior Marine “reconsider” their decision to get married through various forms of physical punishment. Generally, for minor infractions, these “counseling,” or “IT sessions” would entail doing pushups or cardiovascular exercises to the point of exhaustion (often referred to as “pushing” or “thrashing”). For refusing to

¹² Ibid.

follow the commander's wishes, as would be the case if a junior Marine violated the proposed no-marriage pledge, the punishment could be much worse.¹³

Operation Gold Band

The Gulf War provided several lessons for the military in general, and the Marine Corps in particular. The war in the Persian Gulf served not only as a first major combat test of the All-Volunteer Force, one in which the Marines played a significant role, but it also put family assistance programs to the test in wartime. Unlike the Army, the Marines had not institutionalized its family support programs during the past decade. Deployed Marines and their families soon found that the few resources the Corps offered were woefully inadequate.

Second, women in uniform proved that they could capably serve in a warzone and perform their duties under the stress of a combat environment. The Gulf War renewed debates on the question of women in combat, and, as was the case in past debates, policymakers tended to see the broader issues of women in the military and the question of families were seen as two sides of the same coin. For his part, CMC Gray remained a vocal critic of expanding women's roles, and his gruff, direct manner when speaking on this issue did not sit well with many in Washington. In this context, as General Gray's tenure as CMC was coming to an end in 1991, the Secretary of the Navy and the President had a choice to make regarding the direction of the Corps. As members of

¹³ Ibid. For more on punishment in the Marines and how physical punishment (short of actually striking someone) is used in recruit training, or boot camp, see Ricks, *Making the Corps*. On the role of violence within Marine Corps culture, see O'Connell's chapters, "A Harsh and Spiritual Unity" and "First to Fight in the 1950s," in *Underdogs*.

Congress and Americans across the country, who watched from their living rooms as the war unfolded on CNN, began to question the gendered assumptions that had barred women from combat, the next Commandant would have to navigate these troubled waters more carefully than General Gray.

Finally, to Marine combatant commanders, as well as policymakers at HQMC, what might have been an opportunity to invest in family programs became proof that families did not belong in the Corps. “Family readiness,” according to an article published in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, the professional journal of the Marines, shortly after Operation Desert Storm, “appears to have priority over military readiness in many areas. Particularly in a time of shrinking budgets, the family support requirements placed on the Marine Corps, the Marine, and the families themselves are costs out of proportion to the benefits received.” This was a familiar claim: The Marine Corps was in the business of warfighting, and families were an unwanted distraction.¹⁴

Echoing the growing consensus at HQMC, the *Gazette* article argued that the time was “ripe to evaluate current personnel policies and, for the long term benefits of all concerned, to propose a revision: Junior Marines should not have dependents.” Without the “distractions” that spouses and children caused, “The Marine Corps can again become an adventure and a way of life, not just a paycheck.” Bold and decisive decisions were required in an era of shrinking budgets. Better to cut out families than sacrifice funding for war fighters.¹⁵

¹⁴ Major Laura J. Brush, “Another Case of Less is More,” *Marine Corps Gazette* (April 1991), CMH Military Family Coll.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Back when General Gray was elevated to Commandant, his recommendation for the post had come from none other than James Webb, who had worked his way up to Secretary of the Navy during the waning days of the second Reagan Administration. Webb expected Gray to return the Corps to its warrior roots— to focus on war fighting and to stay out of the cultural politics of the day that Webb disdained. When Gray's term was up in 1991, President George H.W. Bush nominated Carl Mundy to be the 30th Commandant of the Marine Corps. In contrast to the rough-around-the-edges General Gray, who was (and still is) the only CMC to have his official portrait taken in his camouflage battlefield uniform, General Mundy was the shining example of a poised, polished, and professional Marine officer. One recently retired Marine major general said at the time, "We have been blessed to have [Mundy] coming up now. Marines have always had the propensity to bring up the right guy and at the right time." The *Los Angeles Times* gushed, "Mundy, 55, who has a phenomenal memory, is considered one of the most articulate, intelligent and polished Marines in the Corps. His friends say he may be one of the most affable men ever selected as commandant." With his square jaw and sharp intellect, most thought that General Mundy would steer the Marine Corps away from controversy, and put it on the right course in an era of increased inter-service rivalry and shrinking budgets.¹⁶

But under the new Commandant's direction, HQMC quickly returned to the question of marriage among first term enlistees. On November 4th 1992, the Director of

¹⁶ John H. Cushman, Jr., "Activist General in Line for Top Marine Post," *New York Times* (5 June 1987); George Frank, "New Marine Commandant is 'Right Guy at Right time,'" *Los Angeles Times* (3 June 1991).

Human Resources at HQMC sent out a memorandum entitled, “Point Paper: Initiatives to Restrict First Term Marriages Below the Grade of Sergeant,” soliciting feedback from department heads in the Combat Development Command, Manpower and Reserve Affairs, and the Office of the Chaplain. On the routing sheet (a cover sheet that directed mail and documents to the various departments within HQMC, before the advent of the Internet), the Director apologized for “short fuse” on this task (referring to the short amount of time he was going to give his subordinates to work on it), but stressed that he needed their input no later than November 13. Normally, a Marine officer would not apologize for asking for a quick turnaround, but during the first half of November, this was a big ask. With Veteran’s Day on the 10th, and more significantly the Marine Corps Birthday celebration on the 11th, during early November Marines generally do not get much done. But on this request there would be no grace period for the planned celebrations; the Assistant Commandant wanted it on his desk no later than the 13th.¹⁷

Probably because there had been personnel turnover with the new Commandant, the point paper rehashed much of what was said in the 1990 “think piece,” but with some new updates from the JAG. At this point, in late 1992, JAG was convinced that any attempt to restrict marriage would face a challenge in court on constitutional grounds. JAG also reminded HQMC that any change relating to pay would require legislation and concurrence with the other services. Since the original think piece, the Marines had also contracted the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA, the Navy’s version of the RAND Corporation), to study the causes of rising marriages among first term enlistees. CNA

¹⁷ “Headquarters Marine Corps Routing Sheet” (4 November 1992), Marine Corps Archives, Marriage Among First Term Marines Coll., Box 40.

confirmed that marriage had grown steadily since 1980, when it stood at roughly 30%; by March 1992, 49% of Marines were married or had dependents. Counter to Marine policymakers' assertion that benefits caused more marriages, CNA argued that the increase in average age of Marine recruits in an all volunteer force, as well as the steady increase in base pay during the 1980s, were the primary contributors to rising marriage rates. Still, CNA did not offer any real solutions, arguing it was "difficult to find policies or procedures that the Marine Corps could utilize to influence or reduce the rise in dependency rates without negative repercussions on morale and without antagonizing Congress." Yet policymakers insisted that they needed to take action to cut manpower costs. In 1992, married junior Marines alone cost the Marine Corps roughly one quarter billion dollars annually, with housing costs being the biggest single expense.¹⁸

Policymakers again tried to reach out to the other services, floating a new idea that they believed might garner support: a bachelor incentive bonus. Essentially, the Corps would pay a stipend to Marines who chose not to get married during their first enlistment. The other services were still not interested, and the Marines concluded, "Although they understood the benefits of a single first term force, to a service they contend that they're 'family oriented.' They also believe this cause is politically unfeasible and they will therefore not support the legislation required to change the

¹⁸ Aline Quester, Memorandum for the Director, Manpower Plans and Policy Division, Manpower and Reserve Affairs" (30 June 1992); Point Paper, "Initiatives to Restrict First Term Marriages Below the Grade of Sergeant" (6 November 1992), Marine Corps Archives, Marriage Among First Term Marines Coll., Box 40.

current array of entitlements.” The paper ended, “Without joint service support we don’t have a prayer of getting legislation restricting entitlements approved.”¹⁹

Despite all of the red flags, CMC Mundy gave the green light for “Operation Gold Band” (OGB). OGBs mission was to “develop a program to reduce, then eliminate, sponsored dependents for corporals and below.” The operations order was written in the standard 5-paragraph format that all American military units use when planning military operations. The “Commander’s Intent” —who in this case would be the Commandant—stated:

I want to reserve the privilege of marriage for the career force in order to enhance readiness and deployability. Manpower savings from dependent entitlements will be used to maintain end strength and programs. Therefore, policy, and in some instances law changes, are required. We must stop assessing individuals with dependents, educate first term Marines about the disadvantages of acquiring dependents, and lastly—establish an enforcement mechanism to ensure Marines remain single/dependent free. Monetary enforcement mechanisms will have the greatest impact. A good faith effort to make quality of life improvements for the single first term force will add weight to the main attack.²⁰

Using verbs and action phrases usually seen in combat operations orders, the OGB op order consisted of six phases. Phase One was already completed in the fall of 1992, when each of the department heads in HQMC met with their counterparts in the other services to discuss ending entitlements for married personnel and moving to a dependent free first term force—which all of the other services roundly rejected. Phase Two, codenamed “Psyops,” would begin with the CMC publishing an order explaining the Corps’ rationale

¹⁹ Point Paper, “Initiatives to Restrict First Term Marriages Below the Grade of Sergeant” (6 November 1992), Marine Corps Archives, Marriage Among First Term Marines Coll., Box 40.

²⁰ “Operation Gold Band” (c. Jan 1993), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

for pursuing a single first term force. Simultaneously, the Marine Corps recruiting command would begin reducing, and then eliminating, married accessions over a two-year period. Phase Three would see the implementation of a training regimen “to educate young Marines to the disadvantages of early marriage.” In Phase Four, HQMC would pursue legislative changes to entitlements. Phase Five, which the op order dubbed “Preparation of the battlefield”—a euphemism to describe a battlefield tactic, in which an attacking force lobbs artillery and mortars onto an objective prior to an assault— would mark the rollout of the “signing statement” each recruit would be required to sign in boot camp, which consisted of a promise not to get married during the first enlistment. Finally, Phase Six would “establish and promulgate a date (pending legislative enactment) past which Corporals and below in the first term of service who do not have dependents will no longer be eligible for dependent entitlements.” Only the commanding officers of each department inside HQMC were briefed on the op order, and once it was published, those key decision makers were ordered to remain silent until the Commandant gave the “voice command” to implement Phase Two.²¹

After four years of studying the issue of first term marriages, an effort that spanned the terms of two Commandants, the United States Marine Corps stood poised to abandon ship on the rest of the services. The Marine Corps intended to escape the wave of changing family demographics and their implications—by altering the policies that they believed had created those changes. In the late 1980s, faced with rising marriage rates, increased costs from entitlements, shrinking budgets, and personnel turmoil, the

²¹ Ibid.

Marines had begun with an unequivocal position: they would kick all married first term Marines out of the Corps. This position slowly evolved into the final strategy, which included a mixture of counseling, incentives and disincentives, and a deliberate plan to phase out the accession of married recruits.

When they initiated Operation Gold Band, the senior Marine officers at HQMC knew that they had no support from the other services—each one firmly stating that their organizations were “family oriented”—nor could they count on support from the Department of Defense. Legal council advised them that much of their proposed plan would require major changes to legislation (which the JAG characterized as politically unfeasible), or would be subject to constitutional challenges in court with uncertain outcomes for the Marine Corps. Marching orders in hand, the Marines at HQMC moved out.

Cold Showers

Before he gave the command to begin Phase Two of Operation Gold Band, General Mundy ordered the Director of Manpower and Reserve Affairs to draft a training program for use both at the recruit training depots and when new Marines joined their permanent units after basic training. The Manpower office created an instructional video entitled, “Marriage and the First Term Marine,” which depicted a young Marine meeting with a chaplain about his decision to get married. In the proposed script, the young Marine tells the chaplain that his fiancé, Teresa, is only 17-years-old and is still in high school in his hometown in Iowa. After listening to the Marine tell his story, the chaplain

levels with the young man, “Lance corporal, I’m gonna be honest with you. From everything you’ve told me, I’m led to believe that you and Teresa could have a wonderful life together. However, I think your timing may be a little off.” The chaplain goes on to remind the Marine that he could expect to be deployed 40-60% of his first tour, not including the time spent in the field, away from home and family, training in preparation for deployments. The chaplain warns the Marine, “I’ve seen a lot of Marines bring their young wives to live in small apartments or trailers in this area. Jobs are scarce, there may be a child to take care of... the husband’s away most of the time...loneliness sets in...the wife begins to feel more and more confined... and before you know it, the wife, increasingly disenchanted with military life, begins to question why she ever got married....” In part a reflection of demographics within the Marines, but also in part a reflection of the way policymakers’ gendered assumptions shaped policy, all of the instructional lessons and materials pertaining to marriage cast the Marines as men, thus assuming that Marines—in the days before marriage equality— only married women.²²

The training video and the accompanying lesson plans would walk young Marines through several errors they might make during common stressful situations in a military marriage, such as financial hardships, separation and deployments, and frequent moves due to changes in duty station. The training literature pointed out that immaturity might cloud judgment, as young Marines likely wanted everything at once. Using the metaphor of buying a car that they cannot afford (a trope in enlisted military culture), the

²² E.T. Gomulka, “Marriage and the First Term Marine,” Script (c. 1993), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

instructional lesson reminded Marines of the “hidden costs” when they married impulsively. The lessons also warned Marines that infidelity was all too likely, explaining that “because military couples experience numerous separations and moves, their number of social contacts are greater than their civilian counterparts. With an increase in the number of social contacts comes an increase in the potential for meeting someone with whom you have more in common than your current spouse.” The lesson warned, “In circumstances in which partners meet a number of people in the absence of their spouse (e.g. during separations), the potential for infidelity is higher among military couples than civilians.” Finally, the instructional lessons pointed out that many military marriages were not the first marriage for one or both partners, and that new spouses often came with kids from a previous marriage. That, also, could cause trouble, for “children from a previous marriage generally predispose ‘blended families’ toward divorce.”²³

In these instructional lessons, policymakers began to sketch out three core lessons for junior Marines who wanted to get married. The first, “Don’t Rush It!,” reflected heteronormative assumptions that portrayed men as Marines and women as trouble. “Many Marines are tempted to marry to have a regular sex partner, to escape from barracks or shipboard life, with the illusion that they’ll make more money, or perhaps because they got someone pregnant. However, most Marines who marry for these reasons end up as ‘statistics.’” Second, Marine policymakers urged those who wanted to get married to “consider the advantages of a religious marriage,” pointing out that while half of American marriages end in divorce, that number dropped to 20% among those who

²³ Ibid.

“worship together regularly.” And third, policymakers urged Marines to enroll in a marriage preparation program, which HQMC would begin developing later that year.²⁴

In the first week of August 1993, after he felt that HQMC had sufficiently prepared for the next phase, General Mundy issued an ALMAR, or an order to “All Marines,” entitled ALMAR 226/93: FOSTERING RESPONSIBLE MARRIAGE CHOICES FOR FIRST TERM MARINES. ALMAR 226/93 also gave the signal to begin Phase Two of Operation Gold Band. In the days before Twitter and social media, it took almost a full week for the press to catch wind of the bombshell order. During his national broadcast on the 11th, *NBC Nightly News* anchor Tom Brokaw broke the news to America in his signature drawl: “It’s been a busy day at the Pentagon, where the Marines today surprised everyone with a new policy on who they’ll take in the future. Marriage is out if you want to be one of the few good men or women to join the Corps.” NBC then rolled a clip from a Marine Corps TV ad, one with the tagline, “The Few, The Proud, The Marines,” before cutting to NBC News reporter John Dancy, who quipped, “Add to that ‘the single.’” ABC and CBS also covered the news of the order on their evening broadcasts.²⁵

²⁴ Ibid. See also: “Lesson: Marriage and the First Term Marine” (Washington, DC: Marine Corps Human Resources Division, 1993), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

²⁵ “Marines Want Unmarried Recruits,” *NBC Nightly News* Transcript (11 August 1993), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

In the narrative portion of the ALMAR, General Mundy admitted that “quality of life measures... succeeded in attracting the high caliber force we presently enjoy,” but that those measures had also caused the marriage rate to rise. Because 40% of the entire first term force was married, Mundy explained, the Corps confronted several growing problems. First, married Marines were entitled to more resources than were those who remained single, but only 10% of first term enlistees reenlist for another tour. Second, too many Marines’ marriages ended in divorce. On this point, Mundy wrote, “The problems associated with a failing marriage, a marriage whose fabric is being torn by our operational/deployment tempo, or the difficulties of making ends meet on a junior military salary in locations where the cost of living can be especially high, can be overwhelming to a young Marine.” A failing marriage, in turn, affected a Marine’s performance and often required the attention of the Marines’ chain of command.²⁶

The rest of the ALMAR laid out a timeline that reflected the one proposed in the OGB op order. Beginning in FY 1994 (or October, which was only two months away), the number of married recruits would be restricted to less than 4%. That percentage would be cut in half the following year, and by FY 1996, the Marine Corps would no longer accept married recruits. The educational program that HQMC created in the months leading up to the order would be rolled out that fall at the two recruit training depots, and the continuing education programming would roll out in that winter.

General Mundy also ordered that first term Marines would have to “consult” with their commanding officer before marriage, although he made sure to point out that this

²⁶ ALMAR 226/93, August 1993, Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

policy was not to be construed as “a requirement to obtain permission to marry.”

“Rather,” the Commandant wrote, “it is an opportunity for the Marine to get counsel on one of the single most important decisions of his/her life, and benefit from the advice of seasoned Marines who have experienced military family life.” Finally, General Mundy ordered that all Marines who still chose to marry after their “counseling” would be required to attend marriage workshops, and that their spouses would be “highly encouraged” to participate.”²⁷

General Mundy, who possessed a keen intellect and political acumen, and who by most accounts was perhaps the brightest man to ever serve as Commandant, must have anticipated that there would be political fallout in Washington and pushback from the Pentagon, perhaps even criticism from the White House. But he did not anticipate how severe the reaction would be: ALMAR 226/93 did not last 12 hours after it was broadcast on the *Nightly News*. Secretary of Defense Les Aspin swiftly ordered Mundy to rescind the order, and he publicly chastised the Commandant for “blindsiding” the President of the United States at a Pentagon news conference the next day. President Bill Clinton, who recently suffered an embarrassing setback with the military over the issue of gays in the military, doubtless wanted to regain his footing as Commander-in-Chief. At the news conference, General Mundy was forced to apologize in front of the cameras, stating, “I did not adequately inform my civilian superiors of the policy that I was putting forth... It’s not one of my prouder moments in history here. I would...try not to do it again.” Many thought that Clinton was going to fire General Mundy, but forcing a sitting

²⁷ Ibid.

member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to publicly apologize and rescind an order seemed to mollify the President, and Mundy was allowed to remain on as Commandant.²⁸

Initially, members of the media could barely contain their glee over what they soon began referring to as the “marriage flap,” and dozens of columnists and editorialists quickly capitalized on the Marines’ embarrassment. The *Washington Post* reported: THEY CAN WED, BUT THE CAN’T HIDE with a farcical accompaniment, dubbed the “Nuptial Crime Report.” The urge to use alliterations—marines, military, marriage—proved irresistible to writers in newsrooms around the country: an op-ed in the *New York Times* read MARINE MADNESS; The opinion section of the *Dallas Morning News* said, “Marital Mix-up: Marine Directive was Ill-Conceived;” The cover of the *New York Post* read MARINES’ MARRIAGE STORM. Several papers asked the obvious question, including the *St. Louis Dispatch*: “The Few, The Proud, The Single?” Others asked less obvious ones. The *San Bernadine Sun* asked, “Does Gen. Mundy Need a Cold Shower?” The inspiration for that question may have been none other than Congresswoman Patricia Schroeder, who, in her trademark snark, lampooned the Commandant when she heard about the order. Putting the whole debacle perfectly into its 1993 context, Schroeder asked, “If they [first term Marines] are not allowed to be homosexuals, and they are not allowed to be married, what are they supposed to do, take cold showers?”²⁹

²⁸ Art Pine, “Top Marine: Left Clinton in Dark,” *Los Angeles Times* (13 August 1993).

²⁹ All headlines and accompanying articles can be found in the “Clippings” folder in the Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

After the initial levity died down, a wave of sober critics swooped in to pooh-pooh those reporters who didn't seem to be taking things seriously. Leonard Larsen, a syndicated columnist, admonished "the pack media and flap-jawed politicians" for bashing "an order recking of common sense." Several columnists of this ilk pointed out that restricting marriages could save the Marine Corps—and, by extension the taxpayers—lots of money. Military officials—retired and currently serving—penned op-eds in defense of the Commandant. Commander E.T. Gomulka, Chaplain to the Marine Corps and author of the script for the planned instructional video on the dangers of marriage, wrote an op-ed in the *Chicago Tribune* entitled, "Marines Strive to Save Marriages." In it, Commander Gomulka took aim at Congresswoman Schroeder in particular, who, in addition to the "cold showers" comment, came down hard on the Marines for this order both as a part of her ongoing fight for women's equality in the services and as a continuation of her advocacy for women married to service members. Gomulka wrote, "As a chaplain who has had to deal for years with marriage problems of military personnel, and as one of intensely involved in recent efforts to enhance the quality of married and family life in the Marine Corps, I take strong exception to comments made by [Schroeder]." ³⁰

Jim Webb, who was an outspoken critic of "social welfare" programs in the military, also weighed in, and, as usual, the former boxer (he once boxed Oliver North while the two were attending the Naval Academy in the 1960s) pulled no punches.

³⁰ Leonard Larsen, "Reality Discounted in Flap Over Marine Order," *Jacksonville Daily News* (18 August 1993), Commander E.T. Gomulka, "Marines Strive to Save Marriages," *Chicago Tribune* (21 August 1993).

Webb's *New York Times* op-ed, entitled "The Military is Not a Social Program," began with his trademark bravado: "Our society is becoming ever more divided between people of thought and people of action. Thus, it is not surprising that a wide array of politicians and commentators found the order by the Marine Corps Commandant that would have limited enlistments to unmarried recruits an object of easy derision." Webb reserved much of his seething criticism for the President, but he also took aim at Pat Schroeder, of whom he sneered that her only claim to "military expertise" came "from having gone to Armed Services Committee Meetings for two decades."³¹

As a Marine infantry officer during Vietnam who also served as Secretary of the Navy under Reagan, Webb offered his professional interpretation of the order through the lens of ongoing concerns about the size and role of the military in the post-cold war era. He argued, "The country and the other military services should listen to General Mundy. He is not harking to the past but informing us of the realities of the future." Webb asked his reader to think of the broader role of the US military: "The greatest challenge as our military weans itself from its NATO role and shapes its forces for the future will be to build and sustain a highly maneuverable and cost-effective fighting force. This will require planners to go against the grain of many recruitment policies that gave us the all-volunteer military." Webb saw a straight line between the "remarkable family benefits that include free medical care, housing, day care, counseling services, commissary and

³¹ James Webb, "The Military is Not a Social Program," *New York Times* (18 August 1993).

PX privileges and generous early retirement” and the rise in marriage (and divorce) rates in the Army and the Marines.³²

Whether or not Webb’s insights were correct, he varnished his interpretation with sexist convictions about the dangers of feminizing social policies and their impact on his beloved manly institutions. In Webb’s gendered logic, the choices came down to stark binaries: “If offered the choice between two people of equal talent, one of which needs only a bunk while the other requires full family benefits,” who should the Marines pick? “To put it another way,” he continued, defending the Commandant, “if one is given the awesome task of providing the best defense a specific sum can buy, should he be faulted for wanting to put the money into troops and weapons rather than into dependents and day care centers.”³³

Indeed, current and former high-ranking officers—and Americans of all stripes—flooded General Mundy’s office with letters of support. Although Mundy took pains to personally answer correspondence from those he considered close friends and allies, his office was so inundated with support that he quickly came up with a form letter to use in response to correspondence that came from everyday people from around the country. To Anthony Romano “and family,” of Manassas, VA., who expressed support for the General’s order and asked Mundy for an official picture “with a statement written to [his] 8yr son Curtis,” who wanted to join the Marines when he was old enough, Mundy

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

dispatched a form letter.³⁴ In part, it read, “Be assured that my intent is not and never was to prohibit marriage in the Marine Corps, but rather, to provide our young Marines the opportunity to learn about and think of the implications of marriage before they decide to take one of the most important steps in their lives. At any rate, good things will come of this initiative for not only the Marine Corps, but all the Services.”³⁵

Through Mundy’s correspondence, a picture of his rationale for the marriage ban comes into focus. More than the budgetary concerns and the operational considerations of America’s “force in readiness,” General Mundy saw ALMAR 226/93 most fundamentally as a pro-family measure—indeed, this is how most of the supporters who wrote to Mundy saw it, too. The general saw the statistics that revealed what Marine Corps life did to young families with astonishment and deep concern: while the divorce rate for the entire military roughly mirrored the civilian divorce rate, the Marine Corps had experienced a 77% increase in divorces among enlistees between 1980 and 1993, a time when the divorce rate in the civilian population had actually stabilized. The increase in divorce was even higher (95%) for all enlisted Marines, and if one singled out first-term Marines, the percent increase jumped to 117% over that same period.³⁶

ALMAR 226/93, and the training programs that HQMC developed in the early months of 1993, were tailor-made to address these issues. Mundy and the other

³⁴ Anthony Romano to General Mundy, letter (15 August 1993), Marine Corps Archives, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr. Coll. Box 56.

³⁵ C.E. Mundy to Anthony Romano, letter (24 August, 1993), Marine Corps Archives, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr. Coll., Box 56.

³⁶ Lesson Plan, “Marriage and the First Term Marine” (Washington, DC: USMC Human Resources Division, 1993), Marine Corps Archives, Manpower and Reserve Affairs: Marriage Among First Term Marines, 1992-1995 Coll., Box 40.

policymakers at HQMC were certain that the combination of immaturity among junior enlisted personnel, entitlements that the military automatically gave to married personnel (which incentivized marriage but still condemned too many families to poverty), and finally, a deployment schedule that guaranteed families would be separated for 40 to 60% of the first four years of enlistment, had translated into a doubling of the divorce rate in the 1980s. For these Marine leaders, to do nothing was not an acceptable course of action.

“Married to the Corps” and the Politics of Readiness

The Clinton Administration had come down so hard on the Marines because, for Les Aspin and President Clinton, the marriage ban was one too many crises to juggle at the same time. The first crisis came shortly after Clinton was sworn into office in January 1993. During this period the military was in the middle of fundamentally restructuring and downsizing, and the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Commission had just recommended another round of closures that March, its third such recommendation since 1988. Clinton and Aspin were also planning to unveil a major overhaul of the force structure in September, part of an attempt to make good on the President’s campaign promise to reduce the cost of the military. Second, the administration had just waged a very costly political battle with the Joint Chiefs of Staff over the status of gays in the military, which it had lost. Not insignificantly, the Commandant of the Marine Corps happened to be the most vocal member of the Chiefs of Staff to oppose lifting the ban. When this very public dispute came to a head the same summer that General Mundy issued the ALMAR, the President was left with “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” a compromise

that nobody was happy with—not the President, not military policymakers, and certainly not those in the gay community. Finally, the new Administration also had to contend with the ongoing fight over women’s roles in the military, an issue that many policymakers—and members of the public—intrinsically saw as linked to the issue of marriage. Even though the Commandant wasn’t actually banning marriage, that’s what it sounded like to too many in Washington and around the country. Many people agreed with Congresswoman Schroeder when she bluntly accused the Marines of being anti-family and anti-women’s rights. Amid all this, General Mundy’s order was a casualty of context.³⁷

Still, amid all the fury over ALMAR 226/93, and just days after he was publicly admonished, General Mundy believed that he might have been handed a small victory. Secretary of Defense Aspin called for a DoD-wide study into issues facing junior enlisted personnel who chose to get married. The study would answer questions about whether the military’s salary and benefits structure actually encouraged first-term enlistees to marry, whether the services provided enough support to those married personnel, and whether first-term marriages affected readiness and deployability. Policymakers in HQMC had to feel vindicated—these were precisely the questions that the previous Commandant, General Gray, had wished to put on the agenda at the 7th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation two years earlier, only to be shot down by the Commission and the other services.

³⁷ Rostker, *I WANT YOU!*, 654-660.

Ultimately, the DoD study was a blow to the Marines' position, however. The exhaustive 600-page report—which one general likened to “hitting a gnat with a sledgehammer”—concluded that there was “no direct, clear, meaningful and statistically valid relationship (positive or negative) between marital status and readiness.” The authors of the report concluded that “trying to become a warrior, spouse, and perhaps a parent simultaneously is a real challenge,” but that most people could figure out a way to make it work. Finally, in what was certainly directed at the Marine Corps in particular, the report concluded that the military services needed to “do a better job of helping our junior members, both married and single, meet the challenge.”³⁸

In fact, this is exactly what General Mundy did. Shortly after Operation Gold Band blew up in the faces of policymakers at HQMC and ALMAR 226/93 was rescinded, the Marines did an about face on family policy. Like the Army a decade earlier, the Marines struck out to build stronger bonds of partnership, wellbeing, and community between families and the Marine Corps. But unlike Chief of Staff John A. Wickham, Jr., whose priorities in the 1983 *White Paper* and the ensuing Army Family Action Plan (AFAP) revolved around the ideas of wellness and reciprocity, the Marines, under General Mundy, made family policy priorities about readiness and mission accomplishment. If the Corps could not beat family problems by restricting Marines from having them, then families were going to have to join the Corps.

In the September 1993 issue of *The Marine Corps Gazette*, the Commandant published his own “white paper” of sorts. The article, entitled, “FOCUS on the Military

³⁸ Eric Schmitt, “Military Marriage Seen As No Threat,” *New York Times* (16 December 1993), A23.

family: The Fifth Leg of the MAGTF,” signaled the Marine Corps’ new posture on families in both its scope and its tone. The MAGTF—or, Marine Air Ground Task Force—is the basic organizational structure for any Marine Corps unit tasked with a mission. Essentially embedding the family into the Corps’ combined arms warfighting doctrine, Mundy charged, “Like any one of the other four elements that comprise our combined arms teams, the fifth element has a certain interaction and interdependency with the others, but also, a requirement for a level of independence in sustaining itself if it is to contribute to the overall effectiveness of the Corps.” Whereas the Army’s General Wickham would have agreed that families and the military had mutual obligations to provide wellbeing in exchange for support, the Marines seemed to be integrating families into the force structure. “Today,” Mundy wrote, “family members outnumber those of us in uniform. The tremendous responsibilities military spouses shoulder, and the immeasurable contribution many make relate directly to our operational effectiveness. The Marines and Sailors of our Corps are able to respond to whenever and wherever needed largely because of the support structure at home.”³⁹

To take wellbeing and support and make them about readiness and mission accomplishment also allowed the Marines to mitigate growing concerns in the Army, the

³⁹ Carl E. Mundy, Jr., “FOCUS on the Military Family: The Fifth Leg of the MAGTF,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, (September 1993), CMH, Military Family Coll. The entire September issue of the *Gazette* was dedicated to articles about the “Marine Family,” with features not only from the Commandant, but the Commandant’s Wife, Linda, the wives of other senior general officers, such as Zandi Krulak, whose husband, Lt. General Charles C. Krulak, would be then next Commandant, and Marie Blot, wife of Major General Harold W. Blot, who was an assistant Chief of Staff at HQMC. For the enlisted Marine family perspective, the *Gazette* asked Jeanne Overstreet, the wife of the Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps (the senior enlisted person for the entire Corps) to write about the Key Volunteer Network after the Gulf War.

Department of Defense, and, indeed, the wider society about the relationship between social welfare and dependence. Recall that the Republicans were about to ride a wave of conservative backlash in the upcoming midterms, allowing Newt Gingrich to pursue his “Contract with America.” Amid all this, and in contrast with the Army’s position on entitlements and benefits, Mundy flipped the logic of dependency: “Over time, I’ve come to realize that if there is a state of ‘dependency’ in the Corps, it comes from those of us who wear the uniform who are dependent on those who don’t. ... The dedication of Marine Corps spouses, their ability to maintain themselves when we deploy while picking up many of the responsibilities normally carried by us, and their increasing efforts and readiness to sustain each other during our deployments, are a mainstay in enabling the Corps to function effectively.” General Mundy was attuned to the political climate, and his appeals to “readiness” worked to assuage simmering fears about dependency.⁴⁰

The major Marine installations stateside, such as Camp Pendleton in Southern California, Quantico, Virginia, and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina had always had an informal network of volunteers that would provide a link between families and deployed loved ones through the deployed Marine’s chain of command. The first such network began at some point in the 1970s, at the Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point, North Carolina. And when the Marines deployed to the Persian Gulf during the first Gulf War, this loose network was all the Corps had in place to communicate information to families. This system performed poorly— so poorly, in fact, that Marine policymakers used the

⁴⁰ Mundy, “FOCUS on the Military Family.”

hardships that Marine families faced during Operation Desert Shield/Storm as a major justification for their plans to restrict marriages. While General Mundy took steps after the Gulf War to make this network (officially, the Key Volunteer Network, or KVN—although it is reflexively referred to as the “Key Wives” among the Marines) available to the entire Marine Corps, HQMC never gave the program much institutional backing or financial support.

In 1993, General Mundy institutionalized the KVN by creating the Family Readiness Support Program, which became the umbrella for both the ongoing KVN and the Marine Corps’ new Family Service Centers, which became responsible for providing services to families and Marines wherever they were stationed. To Mundy and other Marine policymakers, these new programs were about expanding the meaning of readiness beyond Marines in uniform to encompass families. “Defining readiness too narrowly,” wrote Mundy, “and applying it only to the Marines, the Corps risked overlooking the thousands who constitute the ‘Marine family,’ and whose readiness is also important.” Families were now integral to the mission of the Marine Corps, and were expected to be ready for “short or no-notice rapid deployment... in the event of war.” With typical Marine bravado, he added: “Marines can’t get ready, they have to be ready for the call. Thus, those programs embrace the entire Corps—those who wear the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor and those who do not but who are very much a part of the Corps.”⁴¹

If there was any doubt about the nature of this new relationship between the Marines and Marine families, in March 1994 the Marine Corps unveiled an orientation

⁴¹ Ibid. Also, see Linda Mundy and Bettie Cooper’s article, “The Key Volunteer Network,” in the same publication.

program for newly married couples, called “Married to the Corps.” This “Unit Sponsored, Volunteer Facilitated Orientation for New Spouses” would be run through each base’s Family Readiness Support Center. The introduction to the guidebook prepared for volunteer organizers at Camp Pendleton began with the reminder that each Marine had a set of obligations: “Every married Marine has signed two contracts. One binds the Marine to a partner, the other to a unique way of life in the United States Marine Corps. Each contract comes with its own social history, traditions, requirements and expectations.” But, the guidebook also warned the reader, “Often, the commitments come into conflict.” The goal of “Married to the Corps” was to harmonize those commitments in order to avoid having family issues affect readiness. In its own words, “Married to the Corps” wanted “to help [spouses] recognize how their military marriages are likely to be quite different from those of their parents, siblings and friends ‘back home,’ and that those marriages will take special planning and commitment.”⁴²

Once again, reflecting the persistent belief that men are Marines and women are wives, the guidebook also issued an awkward disclaimer: “For the sake of simplicity throughout this guide, spouses are usually referred to as female and the service members as male.” It then asked the volunteer facilitators to “please make the appropriate translations as necessary.” Beyond the rationale of “simplicity,” the disclaimer delved further into gender politics, offering one further justification: “The course content also emphasizes issues that are more likely to be of concern to women.” However, the author

⁴² “Married to the Corps: A Guide to Organizing and Conducting Unit-Sponsored, Volunteer-Facilitated Orientation for New Spouses,” Family Service Center Readiness Support Program, Camp Pendleton, CA, Marine Corps Archives, General Carl E. Mundy, Jr. Coll., Box 33.

left it up to the volunteers to decide which such issues the authors were referring to.

However, just to be sure that there was no confusion about the inclusion of male spouses, the gender disclaimer concluded, “The program, however, encourages the participation of **all** new spouses.”⁴³

Readiness into the 21st Century

Through all of the Marine Corps’ embarrassing struggles with family policy after the Gulf War, the Army was watching. And while Army policymakers categorically rejected the Marines’ plans to restrict marriages and move to an unmarried first term force, the Army still felt enormous budgetary pressure due to ongoing efforts to downsize the DoD. Within this environment, the Army also began worshipping at the altar of readiness. As early as October 1990, as hundreds of thousands of troops were massing in the Persian Gulf region in support of Operation Desert Shield, the Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA), General Carl Vuono, reassured a crowd of hundreds of spouses, who were gathered at the annual AFAP conference in Washington, DC. He told the audience that “today’s Army is a married Army, and we recognize the indispensable role that our families play in the readiness of the force.”⁴⁴

During the Gulf War, Army families relied upon the myriad family support programs that had been developed since the 1980s through the AFAP, which were administered through local Family Support Groups (FSGs) on each Army installation. In

⁴³ Ibid., emphasis in original.

⁴⁴ Carl E. Vuono, Address at the Army Family Action Plan Planning Conference (25 October 1990), in *A Trained and Ready Army: The Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army*, CMH Military Family Coll.

its “after action” assessments of how those services functioned, the Army concluded that the FSGs accomplished the mission. Moreover, opinion surveys of family members conducted immediately after the war revealed that, in general, military families were satisfied with the support they received during the long deployment.

But around the same time that the Marine Corps started making plans to limit marriages, Army policymakers began to change their tune. Some senior officers began to wonder: maybe our family support programs worked a little too well during the Gulf War? One brigadier general in charge of family support programs during the war felt that the Army went “overboard,” fulfilling unreasonable requests. He argued, “We got [ourselves] into a box of mowing lawns, providing transportation, babysitting, rides to the commissary and delivering groceries.”⁴⁵ While most of these concerns were described in the gender-neutral language of families, many of the so-called problems were associated with wives in particular, and policymakers’ expressed resentment that the Army was wasting time and resources doing tasks that they clearly saw as feminine (see images below). Women, especially the wives of enlisted personnel, were described as not self-reliant enough, and many policymakers believed that too many were utterly dependent upon the Army while their husbands were deployed. Within a context of heightened concerns about readiness, “dependency” became the enemy.

Policymakers’ fears about women and dependency were the product of two important developments. First, as the Army began to reap the benefits of having contracted sociologists and social psychologists to study military families, policymakers

⁴⁵ Quoted in Mittelstadt, *Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 175.

absorbed a growing concern among some social scientists that welfare programs breed dependency. As historian Jennifer Mittelstadt clearly articulates in her book on the military and the broader welfare state, “Working off of a conjoined research agenda and a powerful language of dysfunction and dependency,” researchers provided a ready knowledge base for policymakers who wanted to reduce costs by weaning women and families off support programs.⁴⁶

Second, the Army—indeed the entire DoD—was beginning to lose its long war of attrition over women in the military. As we saw in chapter four, within the context of second wave feminism and expanding women’s roles in the 1970s and 80s, military policymakers took remarkable steps to more fully incorporate women into the Armed Forces. But at the same time, they cordoned off the combat arms and fought all attempts at gender integration. To prevent women from full participation, policymakers, officers, and members of the rank and file (men and women both, importantly) relied upon widely held beliefs about women, both their respectability and fragility, as well as other deeply entrenched attitudes about the gendered nature of combat, in order to keep the combat arms a world exclusively of, and for, men.

National politicians and military officials worried about how Americans would react to seeing women serving in a combat zone, but when Americans witnessed it on their TV screens during the Gulf War, many expressed approval. Carolyn Becraft, who was a key figure in the wives’ symposia in the 1980s and who would become an Undersecretary of Defense in the Clinton Administration, said that Operation Desert

⁴⁶ Ibid., 182.

Shield/Desert Storm was a turning point for the debate over women in combat. And, although it would take two more wars in the Middle East in the 21st century to open up all military occupational specialties to women, military policymakers were on the defensive.⁴⁷

Like the Marine Corps after its failed attempt to institute an unmarried first term force, the Army turned to the concept of “readiness” to counter fears of dependency in a time of budget cuts, downsizing, and uncertainty. The theme for the 1992 AFAP Conference was “Readiness,” and the new Chief of Staff, General Gordon R. Sullivan, warned the delegates that the Army faced “substantial challenges as we continue our efforts to preserve quality of life while we reshape the Army.” While he assured the families and soldiers attending the conference that the Army remained committed to providing quality programs to families, he asked them to “recognize that we are becoming a smaller force” as the delegates debated which issues to pursue through the AFAP. The partnership that the Army forged with families in the 1980s, built around the principles of wellbeing and community, would have to be tempered for Army family programs to succeed in the future. “Through this partnership,” General Sullivan concluded, “we can develop new initiatives with innovative solutions that will make a difference in our quality of life and readiness of the Total Army Family.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Carolyn Becraft, interview with author. For more on the shifting opinions of women in combat, see Stiehm, *Arms and the Enlisted Woman*.

⁴⁸ Army Family Action Plan, AFAP Planning Conference (October 1992), USAMHI, Harriett E. Rice Papers, 1965-2001, Box 6 Army Family Action Plan (AFAP), 1990-1995.

Sullivan's successor, General Dennis J. Reimer, whose tenure brought the United States Army to the end of the 20th century, continued to treat family programs as a means to maintain the overall readiness of the force. In a memorandum entitled, "Reshaping Family Programs for the 21st Century," General Reimer remarked on a "changed world." The "peace dividends" from winning the cold war "have been consumed through budget and manpower reductions," even while deployments were up and the operational tempo of the Army had accelerated. General Reimer oversaw an Army that was 75% based in the United States, rather than overseas, and with 65% of its troops married, and with over half of all spouses working for a living. He argued, "Just as missions change in response to the environment, so must family programs."⁴⁹

"As we look to the future," General Reimer continued, "we must determine if the principles of partnership, wellness, and sense of community, contained in the original Army Family white paper, still provide the foundation required." He called upon the wealth of research the Army had amassed in the interim and deemed those prior principles to be sound, but argued nonetheless that they needed "to be augmented for the future." Reimer believed that the Army "must go farther than merely providing programs to support families; we must teach soldiers and families to care for themselves using these programs." He added a fourth principle to the original promise of the *White Paper*: self-reliance. "Self-reliant members of America's Army help themselves by using the tools provided and skills taught."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Dennis J. Reimer, Memorandum, "Reshaping Family Programs for the 21st Century" (17 April 1996), CMH, Military Families Coll.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

By the year 2000, the Army had joined the Marine Corps in defining family support as an essential component of readiness. Army planners identified quality of life for families and soldiers as one of their top three priorities (behind readiness and modernization) for the future.⁵¹ Army Family Support Groups became FRGs—Family Readiness Groups—and the Army began thinking about “holistic” approaches to quality of life, which they defined as encompassing the physical, mental, material, and spiritual needs of soldiers and their families—all in the name of readiness. As the All-Volunteer Force entered a new millennium, family life was not only compatible with military life; families had become an essential component to the functioning of the AVF.

In 2003, as the military was engaged in major conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, Chief of Staff of the Army Eric Shinseki wrote new *White Paper* on families. It was both a 20-year retrospective on the original *White Paper*, but it also served as a chance for Shinseki to renew the Army’s commitment to families. In it, Shinseki described the Army’s holistic approach to wellbeing as having four strategic goals: To Live, To Grow, To Connect, and To Serve. Expanding on these new holistic goals, he defined wellbeing as “an opportunity for service; a competitive standard of living; a unique culture, sense of community, and record of accomplishment that engenders intense pride and sense of belonging; and an environment that allows individuals to enrich their personal life by achieving their individual aspirations.” General Shinseki concluded that “the way

⁵¹ DAHSUM 1996.

forward into the twenty-first century” required an approach to family issues that was “pervasive, holistic, and proactive.”⁵²

General Shinseki’s *White Paper* was the culmination of a historical arc that began in the post-World War II era and spanned the entire remainder of the 20th century. Military service, which was once reserved for single, young men who had not yet embarked on a career or a marriage, was now a family affair. Along the way, dramatic changes to gender roles, to American’s understanding of citizenship, and to the demographic composition of the Armed Forces—as well as the unique differences between the services—shaped military family policies. The military that deployed to Afghanistan, to Iraq, and to hundreds of other places around the globe was fundamentally different than its cold war predecessor. Today, commanders, senior leaders, and policymakers in the Army and the Marine Corps devote precious time, resources, and manpower to ensuring that the needs of the families of those who serve in uniform are being met.

Families have long paid their dues, although they have not often received the credit—or compensation— they deserved. A 1992 *Air Force Times* investigation revealed that the services still expected wives to work for the military for free, and that their level of cooperation had a direct impact on their husbands’ promotions. This

⁵² Eric K. Shinseki, *The Army Family: A White Paper* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2003), 24-25. By this time, the Army was renewing its commitment to families at regular intervals. For example, in 2007 the Army would sign the Army Family Covenant, which again reaffirmed the Army’s belief that quality of life was essential to readiness.

practice flew in the face of established Army and DoD policy, and at the time, the story produced a scandal, prompting congressional investigations.⁵³

However, in recent years, because families have become so integrated into the military's readiness doctrine, the services barely even bother to delineate between who is a family member and who wears the uniform. Those families, in turn, have largely bought into their role in "accomplishing the mission." However, war—the primary purpose of the military—puts more pressure on families to pitch in. The authors of the same *Air Force Times* study spoke to dozens of wives who said they had to quit their jobs during the Gulf War because their "voluntary" commitments to the military community took too much of their time. Ten years later, in the post-9/11 era, Congress ordered the Secretary of Defense to begin providing quadrennial reports on quality of life issues in the Armed Forces. The first report, issued in early 2004, was subtitled "Families Also Serve." In it, DoD committed to working "hard to help military families deal with the stress attributable to separations and a range of uncertain war-time conditions."⁵⁴

As the vast majority of Americans have walked away from the military obligations of citizenship, military families have taken up the burden, and many families seem to have internalized that sense of duty. As anthropologist Ken MacLeish argues in his ethnography of Fort Hood, TX, at the height of the Iraq War, families and soldiers felt bound to the military through a profound sense of love and obligation. This love, he writes, is "called on to organize and reproduce military labor, animate the overbearing

⁵³ Karen Jowers, "Pressure to 'Perform,'" *Air Force Times* (16 November 1992), 39-42.

⁵⁴ Bernard Rostker, *America Goes to War: Managing the Force During Times of Stress and Uncertainty* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2007), 77.

uniformity of the ‘Army Family,’ and give meaning and purpose to horrific, violent death” during war time. Within the wider community of soldiers, families, and veterans, “Army family...does describe a transcendent, persisting, and deeply felt sense of solidarity....”⁵⁵

Today, the military provides services to families that many struggling civilian families can only dream about—access to healthcare, paid childcare, affordable housing, and a stable income. These family programs are expensive, and costs have continued to grow in the 21st century. For FY 2000, DoD allocated \$735 million to improving family programs. In 2008, the Army alone allocated \$1.4 billion as it rolled out its new “Army Family Covenant” program.⁵⁶

As this history has shown, military families continue to rely on these programs to make ends meet, but they are not immune to wider economic and political forces. In May 2018, the NMFA issued a press release condemning the Trump administration’s new budget proposal, which slashes assistance programs that help needy families—many of which are military families. NMFA argued, “family readiness is a vital component of military readiness,” and that it was “unrealistic and unfair... [to] expect military families

⁵⁵ Kenneth T. MacLeish, *Making War at Fort Hood: Life and Uncertainty in a Military Community* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 144. See also: Zoë H. Wool, *After War: The Weight of Life at Walter Reed* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁵⁶ Laura L. Miller, Bernard Rostker, et al., *A New Approach for Assessing the Needs of Service Members and their Families* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2011), 6.

to pay for their own readiness.”⁵⁷ As Americans continue to give thanks to our military servicemembers and their families through our periodic rituals of patriotism, we would do well to remember that taking care of families is a small part of the price we pay for perpetual war, because without their work, America’s mighty military machine would grind to a halt.

⁵⁷ Eileen Huck, “DoD: Military Members Will Pay for their Own Readiness,” *National Military Family Association* (24 May 2017), <http://www.militaryfamily.org/featured-news/dod-military-members-will-pay.html>.

EPILOGUE: BAKE SALES FOR BODY ARMOR

As his unit prepared to head north from Kuwait and into Iraq in March 2004, Lieutenant Christian Boggiano of New Jersey sent an email to his mom with a special request. He wanted her to go to the Jersey City Police Department—where his father was a detective—and see if the department had any old bulletproof vests lying around. His unit needed the armor to protect against roadside bombs on the way north. “We’ll use them on the doors and floors of the Humvees so when roadside bombs go off they’ll catch a lot of shrapnel,” he told his mom. His mom and dad sprang into action, and within two months state troopers and police officers collected and donated nearly 1,000 surplus vests to the Boggianos. Mary Boggiano, Christian’s mom, sent several hundred to her son and the rest to a New Jersey National Guard unit that was scheduled to deploy that summer.¹

The Boggiano family was not alone. In 2004, military families around the country mobilized and stepped into the breach created by a persistent shortage of body armor and supplies for the troops. Beyond the usual care packages filled with candy, foot powder, cigarettes and chewing tobacco, and other comfort items, families began spending thousands of dollars on body armor and other military hardware that the military traditionally issued to troops. In addition to body armor, families also purchased

¹ Robert Hanley, “Bulletproof Vests Collected to Help a Son’s Unit in Iraq,” *New York Times* (22 May 2004).

communication radios, GPS devices, after-market rifle scopes, boots, gloves, batteries, and hydration equipment to protect their family members serving abroad.²

Less than one year after President George W. Bush landed on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* to declare an end to major combat operations in Iraq beneath a “Mission Accomplished” banner, the post-invasion insurgency reached a higher level of intensity. US convoys began taking fire as they drove in cloth-topped Humvees and other “soft” vehicles. To protect themselves, troops improvised, scrounging for scrap materials and welding steel plates to trucks.

The United States failed to properly plan for the war in Iraq, and troops did not have access to the equipment they needed. Misunderstanding the scope of the insurgency threat in Iraq—and also wanting to prove to the Pentagon that their units were ready to deploy— unit commanders and supply officers had decided in 2003 that only troops in the combat arms units needed full body armor, and the Department of Defense ordered suppliers to stop production. Full body armor included plates made of ceramic that a soldier would insert into the front and back of the vest. These ceramic plates are what give bulletproof vests their bullet-stopping ability; without them, the vests only provide modest protection against lower-velocity shrapnel and flak. Troops who were not in the ground combat element were told to go without. As the insurgency grew and battle lines

² Neela Banerjee and John Kifner, “Along with Prayers, Families Send Armor,” *New York Times* (30 October 2004), A8; John Files, “Congress Backs Combat Gear Replacements,” *New York Times* (31 October 2004).

blurred, the Army discovered that it was short 50,000 vests and roughly 10,000 ceramic plates, which left policymakers at the Pentagon scrambling.³

Pushing back against reports on the shortages and public charges that the military was not ready to deploy, military policymakers adopted a cavalier attitude, dismissing valid material concerns with platitudes about the unpredictable nature of war. The Army's deputy Chief of Staff for logistics, Lt. General C.V. Christianson, told reporters, "War is a come-as-you-are party. The way a unit was resourced when someone rang the bell is the way it showed up."⁴ While at a town hall event with the troops in Kuwait in December 2004, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld gave a callous answer to a concerned soldier's question about the armor shortage, "You go to war with the army you have, not the army you might want or wish to have."⁵ Many wondered: shouldn't the United States be able to adequately supply the army it had with necessary supplies?

Military families thought so, and they spoke out. They fought back by taking their stories to the press, appealing to public figures, organizing fundraisers, and writing to elected officials.⁶ One particularly enterprising military wife named Tammara Rosenleaf started an online company in 2006 called "Bake Sales For Body Armor," which helped organize local bake sales to raise funds to purchase body armor and other safety equipment. On the site, she also sold merchandise and conducted online fundraisers by

³ Michael Moss, "Many Missteps Tied to Delay of Armor to Protect Soldiers," *New York Times* (7 March 2005), A1.

⁴ Quoted in Banerjee and Kifner, "Along with Prayers, Families Send Armor," A8.

⁵ Quoted in Mittelstadt, *The Rise of the Military Welfare State*, 220.

⁶ Jonathan Turley, "US Soldiers Lack Best Protective Gear," *USA Today* (17 December 2003). Also, see Vernon Loeb and Theola Labbe, "Body Armor Saves Lives in Iraq," *Washington Post* (4 December 2003).

selling “digital baked goods,” stock pictures of baked goods that people could “purchase” with their donations. According to archived webpages in the Internet Archive, bakesalesforbodyarmor.org raised nearly \$40,000 between roughly 2006 and 2008, which paid for 102 sets of body armor and other essential gear for men and women serving in Iraq.⁷

Coming under pressure from military families and the sustained attention to the issue in the press, Congress began to take action in late 2004. Democratic Senator Christopher S. Dodd from Connecticut introduced an amendment to the 2005 Defense Authorization Bill that would require DoD to reimburse families and servicemembers up to \$1,100— or roughly the cost of one bulletproof vest— for money they spent preparing their servicemember for deployment. According to Senator Dodd, the amendment would “reimburse soldiers, love ones, and nonprofit organizations who have dug deep into their own pockets to provide our troops with the equipment their government should have provided them all along.”⁸

The military—and the Army in particular— lobbied hard against the Dodd amendment, arguing that body armor purchased from civilian dealers did not meet

⁷ The Internet Archive’s first capture of the domain name “bakesalesforbodyarmor.org” was on 2 March 2006. The homepage for that capture stated that the company held its first successful bake sale on 11 February 2006, in Helena, Montana. The figures on donations are from the 4 December 2008 homepage capture. To see every Internet Archive capture of the domain name, go to <https://web.archive.org/web/20060601000000/http://www.bakesalesforbodyarmor.org:80/> . For contemporary reporting on the company, see Jim Hightower, “Turning Cookies into Armor,” *Austin Chronicle* (31 March 2006).

⁸ Quoted in Files, “Congress Backs Combat Gear Repayments.”

military standards and vests could be unreliable in combat. Frustrated servicemembers and their families were flabbergasted: any armor was better than no armor.

Over the objections of the military, Congress passed the amendment unanimously. The American public was growing concerned about the rising cost associated with the war in Iraq, which was already over \$100 billion by the end of 2004. If the military could not properly equip its troops, what were we spending all that money on? More importantly, the effectiveness of modern body armor at decreasing combat deaths from small arms fire was an established fact. Why wasn't the military providing this basic protection to every soldier it sent overseas?

The rollout of Dodd's proposal was painfully slow. The amendment merely earmarked funds, created parameters for who could be reimbursed, and listed which purchases qualified. Congress left it up to the DoD to figure out a system for accepting claims and dispersing funds, and it gave policymakers until February 25, 2005 to figure it out. But military officials dragged their feet, and nearly a year after Congress approved the funds, the military had no system set up and no funds had been paid out to families. Military families and servicemembers were still spending hundreds of dollars on gear that should have been provided to them. In September, Senator Dodd said bluntly, "[Defense Secretary Donald] Rumsfeld is violating the law. It's been sitting on the books for over a year."⁹

In October 2005, when the DoD's reimbursement system was finally up and running, military officials braced for a high volume of requests. But very few came

⁹ Quoted in "Soldiers Still Waiting for Armor Reimbursements," *NBC News* (29 September 2005).

through. By the end of January 2006, only thirty Soldiers had filed a claim with the Army; the Marines had processed just four requests. According to an Army claims officer, “We were gamed for a high volume of claims. And to date, it has not been what we planned for.”¹⁰ Some blamed military officials for dragging their feet from the beginning. Adding insult to injury, DoD officials banned the use of privately purchased body armor in March 2006. Why hadn’t reimbursement requests poured in?

When the military failed to provide servicemembers with necessary gear, families rightly expressed their outrage and lobbied policymakers in Congress and the military to correct the problem, but they also unquestioningly took a role in finding solutions. The desire to provide protection for loved ones serving in dangerous places spurred thousands of families to buy things that the military should have been issuing all along. Paul Reickoff, the Iraq War veteran and founder of Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, argued that by the time the US invaded Iraq, spending money out of pocket to prepare for war had become “an accepted part of the culture.”¹¹ Families had grown used to spending their own money to protect their loved ones. They expected it. They had shouldered the burden of contributing to the military mission because they had to.

Military families have assumed a complex position in the United States. The proliferation of bake sales and other crowdsourcing for body armor in the early years of the Iraq War shows how military families took on essential tasks of supporting and

¹⁰ Quoted in John Files, “Few Seeking Repayment for Gear, Military Says,” *New York Times* (30 January 2006).

¹¹ Quoted in “Soldiers Still Waiting for Armor Reimbursements.” For more on post-9/11 military family culture and how families internalize a sense of responsibility to the military and its mission, see MacLeish, *Making War at Fort Hood*; Wool, *After War*.

protecting the troops— tasks abrogated by the military itself. While some politicians and leaders spoke out about the equipment shortages and the poor treatment of troops, and many people expressed discomfort with how much military families were asked to sacrifice as the country invaded and occupied Iraq, the outrage did not cost Bush his second term and did not end the war. And military families continued to play a critical role in providing care and support for troops where the military itself and the country at large failed them.

In the broadest sense, this dissertation has explored how policy shapes gendered social roles and vice versa. The choice to keep a large standing military after World War II, and later the move to the AVF in the 1970s, pitted domestic roles and military roles against one another, and this conflict played out in the latter half of the twentieth century. How the military functions today, on a day-to-day level, is the product of decades of policy decisions that were made to address the complex relationship between families and the military. Military family, Marine wife, Army spouse—these are fairly new identity categories in American life.

Military families have joined servicemembers to comprise a fundamental paradox of citizenship in the United States. In an era when most Americans have abandoned notions of collective obligation, we praise our troops and their families for their sacrifice, and for fulfilling a duty to protect the United States. We thank them for their service. By and large, military families in the twenty-first century have accepted this new role. But vague notions of duty, obligation, and sacrifice don't offer much guidance for what

exactly we are asking of them. How much servicemembers and their families should be asked to endure is an unresolved question, even after nearly two decades of war.

From the broader public, what do we require of our citizenry in an era of perpetual war? As we continue to debate the role of the American military in the world, and whether the current All-Volunteer Force model is the most effective—or appropriate, or moral—method of fielding an army, we would do well to remember that the nature of military service has changed markedly since the days of the draft and conscription. Military service has become a family affair, and any discussion of the meaning of citizenship—its obligations, as well as its rights and benefits— in American needs to begin with an understanding of that fundamental change.

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