BATTLE CRIES ON THE HOME FRONT

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BATTLE CRIES ON THE HOME FRONT
Violence In The Military Family

Edited by

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Dedicated to the Memory of Peter Neidig,
Whose Research on Domestic Violence in
the Military Community Paved the Way for Others

DISCLAIMER

The views, opinions, and findings contained throughout this book are those of the authors and editors and should not be construed as official Department of Defense positions, policies, or decisions, unless so designated by other official documentation.

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FOREWORD

Recent decades have produced substantial evidence that violence in the American family is both widespread and damaging. Following Kempe's initial studies of child abuse in the 1960s and Straus' national surveys of family violence in the 1970s and 1980s, more focused research has examined the impact of violence on the victims, offenders, and society at large. More recent research has evaluated a variety of interventions aimed at the reduction of violence and the treatment of both victims and offenders. In response to the women's movement and increased societal awareness of these issues, services for victims of family violence have been established and expanded nationwide.

With the increased attention accorded family violence by the research community and mass media, it is surprising that violence in military families has received so little attention. Given the demographic composition of the military, the unique stresses experienced by its members, and the value and emphasis placed on aggression in military training, one might expect violence rates among military families to be exceptionally high. In spite of this, military families have been largely ignored by family violence researchers. With few exceptions, spousal-violence and child-abuse research in military families has been limited in its scope and focus.

Peter and Judy Mercier's unique collection addresses this gap in the literature. This book brings together current research on violence in military families, making an important contribution to the literature on family violence. It contains research from all major branches of the military and confirms the fears many researchers have long shared–that those entrusted with our national defense are also engaged in a critical battle at home.

The research included in this book offers more than documentation of the problem; it summarizes what we know about effective family violence intervention and prevention among military families. It illuminates a once hidden problem and takes the first critical steps toward a solution. In doing so, it offers us hope that all military families may one day enjoy peace at home.

Dianne Cyr Carmody, Ph.D.
Old Dominion University

PREFACE

Battle Cries on the Home Front: Violence in the Military Family is a collection of social science research on domestic violence in the military. This collection attempts to define, both theoretically and conceptually, and explore issues of domestic violence as they specifically pertain to the military family. The studies contained herein use contemporary qualitative and quantitative research and may focus on the occurrence, prevalence, or risk factors for domestic violence found in four military branches–Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, and Navy.

This project begins to fill the void of published research on domestic violence in the military. Though researchers have actively been engaged in studying domestic violence for the past 25 years, little of it has been specifically targeted on the military population. What research has focused on the military is scant and only sporadically published in professional journals. Thus unlike research on domestic violence in the general population that has been widely anthologized (e.g., *Physical Violence in American Families: Risk Factors and Adaptations to Violence in 8,145 Families* edited by M. A. Straus, R. J. Gelles, and C. Smith; *The Social Causes of Husband-Wife Violence* edited by M. A. Straus and G. T. Hotaling; *Intimate Violence: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* edited by E. C. Viano; *Battered Women: A Psychological Study of Domestic Violence* edited by M. Roy), this collection is *unique* as it is the *first compilation* of research on domestic violence as it affects the military population.

OVERVIEW OF CONTENT

Battle Cries on the Homefront is divided into three sections with an introductory chapter intended to provide a brief explanatory survey of domestic violence in the military family. Each chapter in the collection reports findings from empirical research or posits new theoretical explanations for violence in the military family. Section One deals with issues related to wife battering in the military. All of the research in this section is recently completed, never before published, and diverse in approach. Section Two includes readings pertaining to child abuse in the military. Of the three chapters in this sec-

tion, two are reprints. Section Three addresses prevention and treatment issues regarding domestic violence in the military. One of the three chapters in this section is a reprint.

Due to a lack of previously published research on domestic violence in the military, contributors frequently cite the same sources and studies. Our hope is that this collection not only contributes to an understanding of domestic violence in the military but also precipitates interest in the field and future studies on family violence.

PROJECTED AUDIENCE

This collection is likely to interest researchers, students, and professionals in the fields of social work, health, family counseling, criminal justice, sociology, human services, and psychology. Though domestic violence has become an issue of national attention, its causes, effects, and occurrence in the military community has been neglected. Therefore, these studies may enhance both professionals' and students' understanding of the issues and dynamics particular to domestic violence in military families and offer them the most current literature for future research in this area.

This book could also serve as a resource for those working with military families, especially those in family advocacy programs, or civilian social workers with military clients. Likewise, medical practitioners and other health professionals may also find research on domestic violence important in their work.

Battle Cries on the Home Front: Violence in the Military Family could easily be adopted as a textbook or supplementary reader for graduate-level work in violence against women, marriage and family, military sociology, social theory, contemporary social problems, social psychology, family therapy and counseling, women's studies, victimology, criminal behavior, and social work. Finally, this text seems a suitable resource book for all college and university libraries with programs in criminal justice, sociology, and psychology.

P.J.M.
J.D.M.

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Finally, we say, "Thanks, Petey." Your love, patience, and understanding allowed us to devote hours of family time to this project without parental guilt.

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Section II: Child Abuse in the Military Family

Section III: Prevention and Treatment of Domestic Violence in the Military

BATTLE CRIES ON THE HOME FRONT

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: VIOLENCE IN THE MILITARY FAMILY

PETER J. MERCIER

Over the past twenty-five years, domestic violence has come out of hiding. Americans have come to see that wife battering and child abuse are more extensive than previously realized. Few of us can ignore the media's regular coverage of high-profile cases of domestic violence, particularly when either the victim or the perpetrator is a sports or Hollywood celebrity. As such high-profile cases surface, the general public might agree wholeheartedly with Daniel Saunders' (1992, p. 208) assertion that "the view of the family as a haven in a heartless world has been tempered in recent years by the knowledge that it is often a place of great cruelty."

Although accurate data have been somewhat obscure and difficult to obtain, researchers estimate that over one-half of the couples in relationships–whether marital or cohabitive–in the United States will engage in some type of physical violence during their lifetime (Langley & Levy, 1977). In any given year, over two million wives will be physically battered by their husbands (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980; Saunders, 1992); similarly, nearly three million children will be reported to social service agencies as victims of abuse and other forms of maltreatment (McCurdy & Daro, 1993). Consequently, social scientists have been gathering information on the incidence of wife battering and child abuse in attempts to develop prevention and treatment programs.

Research has identified specific subpopulations within the larger society that have differing needs and require specialized attention in dealing with the social problem of domestic violence. One such subpopulation is the United States armed forces. Although domestic violence statistics comparing civilian and military families are limited, relevant literature suggests that military

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families are at a particularly high risk for family violence because of assorted demographic variables and various stressors affecting the family unit (Montalvo, 1976; West, Turner, & Dunwoody, 1981; Neidig & Friedman, 1984; Schwabe & Kaslow, 1984; Neidig, 1985; Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985; Waldo, 1986; Cantos, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1993, 1994; Pan, Neidig, & O'Leary, 1994a, 1994b; Mercier, 1996).

Because of the self-policing nature of the military and its desire not to let outsiders in, the real problem of domestic violence in the military has been difficult to assess. On January 17, 1999, however, the television news magazine "60 Minutes" may have opened the proverbial Pandora's box when it suggested that the rate of spousal assault in the miliary is significantly higher than the national average. Moreover, its report alleged that the military routinely fails to punish service members who are perpetrators of extreme cases of domestic violence. In support of its assertions, "60 Minutes" reviewed Pentagon records from 1992 through 1996 and found that 50,000 military spouses were victims of domestic violence, a rate five times higher than the civilian population when compared to Justice Department records for the same five years. The report further indicated that less than 5 percent of military batterers are ever court-martialed.

The "60 Minutes" segment created a tempest of debate during that following week–a congresswoman from New York, Carolyn Maloney, announced plans to introduce legislation mandating harsher punishment for military personnel convicted of domestic violence. The commander of the U.S. Army Community and Family Support Center in Alexandria, Virginia, strongly disagreed with the coverage presented by "60 Minutes," claiming that substantiated cases of spouse abuse in the Army have declined 15 percent in the past five years (Rice, 1999). Although this telecast contributed to an increase in dialogue among those who believe there may be a problem and those who do not, it neither addressed factors associated with domestic violence nor discussed preventative methods.

While research suggests that the occurrence of domestic violence spans age, income, and educational boundaries, these and other factors, such as work-related stressors, appear to affect the frequency of abuse (Straus et al., 1980; West et al., 1981). Age may be a contributing factor in occurrences of domestic violence. Generally, the younger the spouses, the greater the chance of aggression: the rate of violence for a couple who are 30-years-old or younger is more than twice that of the 31 to 50-year-old group. In the military, over 55 percent of active duty males are 30-years-old or younger as compared to 25.1 percent of the males in the civilian population (West et al., 1981; Elder, 1988).

Evidence also suggests that families living at lower socioeconomic levels experience higher levels of domestic violence (West et al., 1981; Elder, 1988).

According to Straus et al. (1980) and Gelles and Cornell (1990), low family income, in addition to age, characterizes wife abuse. More than one-third, 37 percent, of the lowest pay grades of E-1 to E-4 are composed of soldiers 30-years-old and younger who are married (West et al., 1981; Elder, 1988). Therefore, because of age and economic status, the military may be a subpopulation with a higher risk for domestic violence (West et al., 1981).

Studies indicate that in addition to age and socio-economic risk factors, military families are at a particularly high risk for family violence as a result of additional demographic variables and family stressors (e.g., dissatisfaction with one's employment status, responsibility for raising a family) which are habitually associated with wife abuse in the general population (Montalvo, 1976; Neidig & Friedman, 1984; Schwabe & Kaslow, 1984; Neidig, 1985; Sonkin et al., 1985; Schumm & Hammond, 1986; Waldo, 1986; Cantos et al., 1993, 1994; Pan et al., 1994a, 1994b). Moreover, military members may experience other tensions, such as long deployments and family separations, as well as the stress associated with financial and work-related pressures (West et al., 1981; Neidig & Friedman, 1984; Sonkin et al., 1985; Waldo, 1986; Eastman, 1988; Griffin & Morgan, 1988; Mercier, 1996).

West et al. (1981) note the prevalence of work-related and financial pressures in military members within the pay grades of E-1 to E-4. Typically, service members in low pay grades hold subordinate positions. They have limited control in work settings and are generally subjected to orders from other higher-ranking service members. Rarely asked to make suggestions for improvements in their work place, they are continually subjected to conditions that they may find undesirable yet are incapable of changing (Neidig & Friedman, 1984; Sonkin et al., 1985). Recent pay scales for the ranks of E-1 to E-4 reveal low annual incomes: from $11,113.20 for an E-1 with less than two years of service to $17,204.40 for an E-4 with more than six years of service (Mace & Yoder, 1998). These figures indicate not only low starting pays, but also limited potential for salary increases. Though this income range only reflects base-pay (military members may receive other financial allowances such as sea pay, submarine pay, basic allowance for quarters, basic allowance for subsistence, or variable housing allowance), military families headed by an E-1 to E-4 member may suffer financial hardships.

Though it is likely that no one single factor causes domestic violence, multiple risk factors may increase the risk of abuse in the military family (West et al., 1981). Most military families, at one time or another, experience family separations, serious financial pressures, isolation from family and peer support systems, and frequent moves. Moreover, the demographic makeup (young adults, with low status, who are on the lower end of the socioeconomic scale) of military families closely parallels that of violent families in the general population; thus, military families may be particularly vulnerable to incidences of domestic violence (West et al., 1981).

Current research suggests that stress, although strongly related to marital violence (Farrington, 1986; Neidig, Friedman, & Collins, 1986; Julian & McKenry, 1993), does not cause spouse or child abuse (Straus, 1992). Other research (West et al., 1981; Neidig & Friedman, 1984; Sonkin et al., 1985; Mercier, 1996) implies that family separations as a result of temporary duty assignments or deployments and financial and work-related pressures associated with low pay grades are stressors which may encourage violence in men who are already at risk of physically expressing anger. Arguing that the military ethic has always emphasized mission accomplishment over individual needs, Neidig and Friedman (1984) advance the notion of the military as a group of individuals who are prepared to fight during war. This is the military's primary concern; family welfare is secondary. The term "dependent," which refers to wives and children of active duty servicemen, tends to reinforce a pejorative image of military family members not actively engaged in the mission. Borrowing a Navy adage, Neidig and Friedman (1984, p. 114) remind us that "if the [Navy]...had wanted [a sailor] to have a wife, they would have issued [him] one."

MILITARY FAMILY ADVOCACY PROGRAMS

The establishment of family advocacy programs in the U.S. military are designed to respond to family violence. An increase in family advocacy programs has paralleled the public's growing concern with child abuse and wife battering, coupled with doubts that strategies and resources for coping with these problems were adequate. For the military community, family abuse not only poses a serious threat to family life but also compromises preparedness by reducing the readiness and performance of individual military members.

When media attention focused on the increased number of children who were being abused by their caretakers, Congress passed the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974. This legislation established national programs to protect children. In 1981, the Department of Defense (DOD) designed directives in accordance with congressional mandates. These required that military services establish and operate programs that addressed child and spouse abuse. The DOD directives defined specific categories and types of child and spouse abuse, mandated that each military service establish a central registry, and required the reporting of all such incidents to the respective service's central registry (Department of Defense, 1987; McNelis, 1988).

The Air Force Program

In response to Congressional passage of the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act of 1974, the U.S. Air Force predated DOD directives by organizing the first official Child Advocacy Program Regulation in 1975, with the medical service given the primary responsibility to administer the program. As the title suggests, the program was initially designed to address issues of child abuse. However by 1985, the Air Force had expanded the Family Advocacy Program, broadening its scope to the prevention of family maltreatment, which included wife battering. With Congressionally designated funding, the Air Force hired outreach workers to implement prevention and education services. In the course of doing their jobs, outreach workers identified family problems and made referrals to Air Force treatment staff (Mollerstrom, Patchner, & Milner, 1992).

The overall goal of the Family Advocacy Program is to enhance the health and well-being of Air Force families so that military members can fully concentrate on their assigned duties and job performance. Air Force Regulation 160-38, entitled "Family Advocacy Program," assigns specific tasks for all Family Advocacy Programs. These include identifying, reporting, assessing, and treating families with exceptional medical or educational needs, children who are at risk for injury, and families that are experiencing maltreatment (Mollerstrom, Patchner, & Milner, 1992).

The Army Program

The Army's program was conceived primarily as a medical program; however, the approach was broadened to cover social aspects. The original directive (AR 600-48), issued on November 26, 1975, made the Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel directly responsible for program implementation. Under the directive, a child was defined broadly as a dependent younger than 18 years (Blanchard, 1992).

The program was subsequently placed under the auspices of the Army Community Services (ACS) program in October, 1978. At the headquarters level, the Surgeon General was required to support the program in providing health services, establishing a system for collecting data on cases of maltreatment, and supervising the medical and psychosocial aspects of identifying, preventing, and treating abuse. Ultimately, the Army's program was expanded to include spouse battering in accordance with Army Regulation 608-18.

Currently, the ACS has overall responsibility for managing the Army's Family Advocacy Program. Medical treatment personnel, Army lawyers,

military police, chaplains, and other Army staff personnel work with local Child Protective Service agencies to ensure that Army families receive help. The program identifies, reports, treats, prevents, and follows the progress of abuse incidents. The services that are offered include community education and awareness, primary prevention efforts to enhance good parenting and family communication, crisis intervention, emergency shelter, and counseling (Blanchard, 1992).

The Navy Program

On February 4, 1976, the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery issued BUMED instruction 6320.53A, providing policies and guidance to establish a Child Advocacy Program within the Navy Medical Department. This program serves both Navy and Marine Corps personnel. The need for a Navy-wide child advocacy program with centralized control and guidance became apparent after the proliferation of local initiatives at base medical facilities. By 1975, all 14 regional navy medical centers had developed child maltreatment policies or advocacy regulations (Blanchard, 1992).

The BUMED instruction outlined procedures for protecting children who were abused, neglected, or abandoned. It further directed commanders to ensure that services for children receive careful evaluation and monitoring, consistent with approved local standards. The Navy Surgeon General had responsibility both for the Child Advocacy Program and for establishing a headquarters Child Advocacy Committee to supervise the entire program. Along with overseeing the program, the central committee was responsible for establishing and maintaining a central registry of confirmed cases of child abuse and neglect and for conducting rate analysis and future data retrieval (Blanchard, 1992).

Similar to the Air Force and Army, the Navy expanded its program in the mid-1980s, and the Child Advocacy Program became the Family Advocacy Program after the Secretary of the Navy signed SECNAV Instruction 17523A. The Navy Family Advocacy Program addresses the prevention, identification, intervention, treatment, followup, and reporting of child and spouse maltreatment (Blanchard, 1992). The Navy's program includes the following assumptions:

1. Family violence occurs within all communities, including the Navy community.
2. Family maltreatment and abuse are disruptive and interfere with the work performance of the service member and thus with the mission of the Navy.
3. Family violence and neglect are incompatible with the high standards of professional and personal discipline required of Navy members.