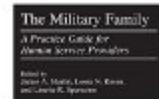


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

James A. Martin, Leora N. Rosen, Linette R. Sparacino, eds. *The Military Family: A Practice Guide for Human Service Providers*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000. xix + 282 pp. \$64.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-275-96540-2.

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Published on H-Minerva (December, 2002)



Duty, Career, and Family Life Within the Ranks

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The Military Family is a collection of research articles organized by theme into four parts: “Culture and Conditions,” “Unique Aspects,” “Family Advocacy,” and “Children and Adolescents.” Contributors include current and former researchers for the American armed forces, primarily from the Air Force and the Army, who view the challenges within military families from the perspective of life course, risk, and resilience theory. The life course perspective fosters the expansive nature of the book, which ranges from childhood to retirement, while illustrating various “stressors” or “pressure points” in balancing work and family demands. Within this framework, the intersections between military culture and the civilian community are made evident by the fact that nearly 70 percent of military personnel and family members reside off post/base. Unfortunately, the work omits the feminist perspective that the military represents a “warrior culture” while ignoring core values stressed within the military such as honor, courage, and duty.

“Culture and Conditions” entails a discussion of the development and demographic characteristics of the All Volunteer Force. This section averts the tendency to treat the military as if it exists in a vacuum by the inclusion of Pryce’s “The Citizen-Soldiers” and Russo’s “Military Spouse Employment,” though it would be enhanced by the inclusion of research relative to command climate, financial security, military pay, and credit. More discussion of geographical isolation, social context, fear of

career impact, and disciplinary actions would also have aided an understanding of the uniqueness of military culture.

“Some Unique Aspects” focuses primarily on deployments and combat stress. Physical risk and family separation receive extensive exploration, with research again limited to Army personnel and families. This section would be enhanced by a discussion of the variety of deployments among the services, including the significant differences in duration, timing, and types of duty. For example, the inclusion of an assessment of the impact of deployments within the Navy community would be beneficial.

“Family Advocacy Issues” is the weakest section of the compendium. This section relies heavily on secondary research, Department of Defense data, and program directives. Brannen’s “Understanding Spouse Abuse in Military Families” ventures into advocating batterer treatment programs within the service branches. “Children and Adolescents” is the best of the collection. The chapters examining adolescence and the adult children of military families by Ender and Jeffreys are especially informative and enlightening. The afterword does not sufficiently address programs, policies, and research within the other service branches.

In numerous respects this a fine collection of research articles concerning the military family. However, it would be enhanced by chapters detailing the challenges associated with single parent families, widows, survivors,

and wives of retirees.

The summary and implications at the close of each chapter include brief notations rather than specific guidance for human service providers, and the guidelines do not represent appropriate translation of research for practitioners. For example, Wolpert's "Military Retirement" simply recommends treating a military retiree with dignity and honor, while Bell's "Providing Family Support During Deployments" fails to recognize domestic violence in response to "stressors" such as marital problems, independence, and family roles, making its recommendation to foster open communication questionable because it neglects the potential health and

safety issues for military family members. Brannen's "Understanding Spouse Abuse" recommends the development of collaborative agreements for batterer intervention programs without recognizing the need for prevention and intervention partnerships.

Still, the cumulative effect is a significant contribution to the understanding of the challenges faced by military families, and its importance is due to the outsourcing and privatization of formal support functions from the military to the civilian sector. It should be of interest to researchers and practitioners seeking research data concerning the unique nature of military families.

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Citation: Christine Hansen. Review of Martin, James A.; Rosen, Leora N.; Sparacino, Linette R., eds., *The Military Family: A Practice Guide for Human Service Providers*. H-Minerva, H-Net Reviews. December, 2002.

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