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## **Picking up the pieces: (re)framing the problem of marriage breakdown in the British Armed Forces**

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**Picking Up the Pieces: (Re)framing the problem of  
marriage breakdown in the British Armed Forces**

**By**

**Lynda Nicholson**

**A Doctoral Thesis**

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Loughborough University

December 2009

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## Dedication

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This thesis is dedicated to the memory of Elaine Dibbo, an exceptional lecturer and personal tutor who inspired my sociological imagination throughout my Access to HE course at Exeter College (1997/1998). Elaine believed in me and gave me hope, something I could not find or give to myself at that time. I will never forget her, or her passion for Sociology.

## Abstract

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This thesis examines the issue of marriage breakdown in the British Armed Forces in light of claims that rates are double that of the civilian population. The research is situated within the context of existing research on the relationship between the service family and the military organisation. This thesis is distinctive in that it employs Bacchi's (1999) method of critical analysis to problem framing in Governmental policy and existing discourses on service families. The objective is to show how the impact of military demands on marriage and family life are framed by the media, politicians, and academics as a problem for the military, in relation to a tension that exists between retention and divorce. Attention to the effects of service life on families is therefore embedded in policy directives, and framed by concerns over the retention and recruitment of military personnel as implications for operational effectiveness.

By re-focusing attention to the implications of marriage breakdown for service families this thesis constructs new problem frames, a key question being: what is problematic about marriage and marital breakdown for military wives? The empirical areas explored through in-depth qualitative interviews with a sample of ex-service wives from across the tri-Services are women's experiences and perceptions of marriage and family life, and of marriage breakdown in the military. This methodological approach is unique in that previous studies of service wives have focused on a single community. The voices and experiences of ex-service wives are noticeably absent in previous research, representing neglected routes to experience and knowledge that are vital to a more holistic understanding of the impact of military demands on the family.

This thesis highlights the role of emotion in the socialisation of service families which has not been made in the existing literature to date. It has been acknowledged that the conceptual boundaries between the public and private spheres are practically non-existent where the military and service families are concerned. The interface between work and home can be explained in terms of the invisible emotion work service wives perform in support of husbands' careers and the institutional goals of the military. This thesis is also distinctive in that it defines wives' work in relation to the military in terms of 'emotional labour and the two-person career'. As wives receive little recompense for this labour, responding to role appropriate emotions can have implications for the well-being of military wives, and illustrates the complex picture that emerges as to the reasons why military marriages might end.

Factors linked to issues of marital adversity were: infidelity, domestic violence and emotional and psychological abuse, the effects of a culture of alcohol, and the impact of post-operational stress. In addition, family separation was viewed as creating emotional distance between couples. Many women became very independent and adept at coping with the military lifestyle, which created problems for the reintegration of personnel into family life. Moreover, husbands that were perceived by women to be 'married to the military', in terms of an institutional and social identity, were less satisfied with their relationships.

This thesis concludes that the construct of the service family is embedded in institutional rules and regulations regarding marriage and family life, therefore current *problematizations* of marriage breakdown fail to reveal the difficulties experienced by families in navigating post-divorce family life. Non-intact families are rendered operationally ineffective, hence there are a number of consequences experienced by service families, and women and children in particular, that represent a far-reaching problem of marriage breakdown in the UK Armed Forces.

**Key words:**

Military, marriage, divorce, emotion work, emotional labour, work-family interface, organisational culture, gender.

## Acknowledgements

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I would like to express my thanks to the people who have provided a great deal of support and guidance throughout my very challenging and protracted journey. In May 1997 I announced to friends and family that I was planning to go to university and complete a research degree. At the time, I did not have the necessary qualifications to begin such an undertaking. During these past twelve years I have battled constantly with self-doubt and a lack of confidence at the enormity of this task. The completion of this thesis is therefore highly cathartic.

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Special thanks go to my family, especially my mum Karol and sisters Clair and Debra, who were my rock when giving up seemed the easiest option. I have cried buckets of tears out of frustration, desperation, lack of self-belief, and sheer exhaustion. For my husband Gary and I it has been particularly tough time, as education can be a very greedy institution. We have been immersed in intense study at the same time and, more often than not, have not even been ships that pass in the night. So perhaps we should thank each other for still hanging in there!

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## Glossary of terms

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AFF	Army Families Federation
AFOPS	Armed Forces Overarching Personnel Strategy
AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test
AVF	All Volunteer Force
CAS	Continuous Attitude Survey
CSA	Child Support Agency
DASA	Defence Analytical Statistical Agency
DHE	Defence Housing Executive
DoD	U.S. Department of Defense
KCMHR	King's Centre for Military Health Research
M Cat	Married Category
MFRI	Military Families Research Institute (U.S.)
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MWS	Military Welfare Services
NFF	Naval Families Federation
PKO	Peacekeeping Operations
PVR	Pre Voluntary Release
RAFFA	Royal Air Force Families Association
SDR	Strategic Defence Review
SPCP	Service Personnel Command Paper
TSP	Tri-services Publications
USMC	United States Marine Corps
UWO	Unit Welfare Officer

## Introduction

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Possibly the most interesting problem that I have observed is that of marital breakdown in the Services.

William H. Milroy (1996: 1)

### **Background to the thesis**

This thesis examines the subject of marriage breakdown in the British Armed Forces and, in particular, the implications this process has for wives and children. In this introduction to the thesis I discuss the context to the research and how the research questions, aims and objectives relate to existing knowledge about service families. In demonstrating my methodological and theoretical commitments I suggest how this thesis may specifically contribute to knowledge, whilst acknowledging some limitations of the research. After clarifying my position within the research process I outline the organisation of the thesis.

In March 2000 the Liberal Democrats launched new policies for the UK Armed Forces in the topical paper 'Supporting Forces Families' with reports that married strength had fallen by 22 per cent, in comparison to a fall of 8 per cent of the total strength across the tri-Services. This led to claims that family problems were creating a tension between retention issues and divorce, whereupon greater numbers of personnel were sacrificing their marriage to stay in the Armed Forces, than were leaving in order to save their marriage (Sunday Telegraph 10 February 2002). The annual publication of the marital status of UK Regular Forces by the Defence Analytical Services Agency (DASA) also led to claims in the media that marriage breakdown in the military was twice that of the civilian population, highlighting the extent to which service families were 'feeling the strain' (The Guardian 3 December 2002). Media reporting has generally focused on the negative effects of being married in the Armed Forces. Consequently, marriage breakdown in the military is constructed as a problem by the media, while politicians and policy makers vie over solutions to such seemingly private troubles.

Since the attacks on the World Trade Centre and Pentagon in September 2001 the increased demands on service families are juxtaposed with 'operational tempo': a smaller Armed Forces coping with an increasing number of global deployments (Dandeker and French 2006). More recently, a number of statements were made by the

(then) head of the Army, General Sir Richard Dannatt, raising concerns over unacceptable levels of overstretch and subsequent impact on families and marriages (The Guardian 20 January 2009). In the 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR) a connection between the problems faced by military families, and the implications this may have for recruiting and retaining personnel, became a major policy issue for the Ministry of Defence (MoD). While writing this thesis the MoD has been conducting a major policy review of the way the military supports personnel and their families (see Service Personnel Command Paper 2008, 2009).

Whilst there has been some academic research on the boundaries between work and family life in the military, and how a career in the Armed Forces impacts significantly on other family members, attention to processes of marital adversity and divorce is lacking. Previous research on the experiences of RAF wives described marriage in the military as 'obstacle ridden'. Whilst a direct question about marriage breakdown was not posed, Karen Manson (2002: 100-101) found a general acknowledgement of the potential for marital adversity and divorce. This thesis specifically aims to address this gap in knowledge about service families.

Explanations for marriage breakdown in the military have broadly focused on age at marriage, early marriage and parenthood, money problems, wives' inability to cope with demands of family and military life, and wives' dissatisfaction with military life (see Jolly 1992; Beevor 1990; Jessup 1996). However, little attention has been paid to the complexity of these issues. This thesis addresses these issues by adopting a 'What's the problem?' (Bacchi 1999) analysis to representations of family problems and marital breakdown in the military in Governmental policy and the extant literature. Such a methodological approach allows for a depth of questioning rarely applied to research in both the context of the military and relational norms for service families. In other words, what appear to be givens in much of literature about family life in the military becomes the starting point for analysis (ibid: 35). This thesis therefore places the *problematization* of marriage breakdown into question.

### **Research questions, aims and objectives**

There are two overarching research questions central to this thesis. Firstly, what is the problem about marriage breakdown in the military represented to be? In other words, marriage breakdown needs to be understood in relation to how concerns about family problems in the military are framed, or constructed. A number of further questions are

fundamental to such an analysis: Who is marriage breakdown represented as a problem for? Who benefits from such a representation? What are the effects and implications of such representations? What changes may occur and what might stay the same as a result of how family issues in the military are framed? In addressing these questions this thesis demonstrates how the media, politicians, academics and commentators on military issues frame concerns about the *rate* of divorce in the military as a problem *for* the military. Increased attention to the effects of service life on families is therefore framed by fears over the recruitment and retention of personnel and embedded in the pursuit of 'operational effectiveness'; a multi-dimensional concept incorporating diverse variables such as 'technical skills, morale, cohesion, leadership, efficiency and ultimately the fighting ability to defeat the enemy' (Harries-Jenkins 2002: 757). The concept of operational effectiveness represents the military's 'unity of purpose' and determines the benchmark to which all else is appraised (Kovitz 2003: 9).

In adopting a critical analysis of existing discourses the aim of this thesis is to provide additional insights into the social and emotional dimensions of marriage in the military, by revealing what is *not* being discussed in the literature and Governmental policy. Little, if any, attention has been paid to how marriage breakdown affects service families, particularly wives and children. The second overarching question as applied to the empirical element of the research is: what is problematic about marriage breakdown for military wives? In other words, this thesis seeks to reveal what it is about marriage breakdown in the military that is *unproblematised* in existing discourses. This thesis is grounded in an interpretivist approach, drawing on qualitative unstructured interviews with twenty women who were previously married to serving members of the British Armed Forces. The empirical areas explored in this thesis are women's experiences and perceptions of marriage and family life, and of marriage breakdown in the military; the objective being to challenge how existing discourses frame marriage breakdown as a problem and to construct new frames for analysis. Further questions therefore support this objective: why do military marriages succeed or fail, and, what happens to wives and children when a service marriage ends?

The interviews were analysed using a three-stage process: thematic, interpretive and extractive. The rationale underpinning the analysis was to look for commonalities and differences, anomalies and ambiguities, models of coping, cultural narratives, and patterns of the way people do things that link to wider discourses and narratives (see Gordon et al. 2000 and Raisborough 2006). These women's narratives were compelling,

and some were quite disconcerting and unexpected having emerged as a result of the research design, providing a richness and depth of data that might not otherwise have been possible with other methods (see May 2008). The emergent empirical material informed a critical analysis of discourses in policy and the extant literature, which are presented separately in the thesis in order to preserve the integrity and impact of the interview material on the research process. The interview material is also presented subsequent to the analysis of the extant literature as an effective way of demonstrating how these women's narratives re-frame the problem of marriage breakdown in the military. The interviews are defined as exploratory in the research process, my overall aim being to increase the chances of achieving degrees of theoretical generalisability. As the sample is not representative of the wider population, this thesis does not make claims to empirical generalisation.

### **Conceptual themes and issues**

Service families are expected to cope with a number of exceptional demands in terms of frequency and length of separations, geographical mobility and increased risk of injury or death in conflict situations. The military organisation therefore encroaches significantly on family life. Although the military has been cited as an institutional exemplar of the socialisation, manipulation and control of emotion (see Fineman 1993), an examination of the link between emotion and the military appears to be absent in the literature. Consequently, a theoretical connection to the role of emotion work in the work-family interface does not appear to have been made. This thesis is distinctive in that it offers an analysis of emotional labour performed by personnel and wives. Central to this thesis is a focus on the context of employment in the Armed Forces as unprecedented in comparison to civilian employment. The military is not just a job, an occupation or a profession: it is an institution that determines a set of cultural and social norms and values that has essentially set the organisation *apart* from the wider society.

Military culture is a key concept in understanding the impact of change and processes of civilisation in the military (English 2004: 10). Both personnel and spouses are subject to 'feeling rules' and are expected to display 'role appropriate' emotions which are shaped by military culture (see Hochschild 2003). Existing explanations for marriage breakdown in the military do not account for the impact of organisational demands on the emotional labour of service personnel and their spouses. Moreover, emotional labour is generally conceptualised as a commodity that is appropriated by employers in terms of its *exchange* value within a wide-range of occupational contexts. Emotion work

is generally perceived as a gendered concept having *use* value within the private realm (Hochschild 2003; see also Duncombe and Marsden 1993) therefore the conventional approach to emotional labour is generally viewed as work-role specific. This thesis adopts a context specific approach to emotional labour by incorporating both social and organisational contexts (see Syed 2007).

Military marriage, family life and marriage breakdown can therefore be understood within the overall ideology and feeling rules of the military institution. Hence this thesis adopts two interrelated perspectives: a focus on the context of the military organisation and a focus on gender and intimate relationships. As this thesis contends, the relationship between the concepts of emotional dependency and occupational identity, and how these cut across empirical areas of marriage and family life, is key to an understanding of the process of marriage breakdown. This thesis critically examines the social and cultural impact of the military organisation as an 'emotional arena' on marriage and the family in order to develop a deeper understanding of the emotional complexities, *as well as* the practical demands, that service families are expected to cope with.

The expectation that a military wife should be supportive, resourceful, independent, self-reliant, adaptable and accepting of a gender-based hierarchical family framework is clearly acknowledged (see Regan de Bere 2003: 98, Duhan-Kaplan 1994, Enloe 1988 and 2000, Harrell 2003, Harrison and Laliberté 1994, Macmillan 1984). Upon marriage to a member of the Armed Forces, wives are officially accepted and involved in military life (Manson 2002). Bell and Schumm (2002) go as far as to describe service wives as 'associate members' of the military. Previous research has also highlighted the invisible work women do for their husbands and the military (see Harrison and Laliberté 1994). In coping with the demands of military life wives have also been described as 'stoical and mentally robust' (see Dandeker and French 2006). Yet there is evidence to suggest that wives also suffer from high levels of stress (see Everson 2005; Giles 2005; Harrison and Laliberté 1994). A connection between 'emotional labour and the two-person career' reveals a further dimension to wives' relationship to husband's occupation.

Research on the subject of 'men, masculinities and the military' also draws attention to gendered practices operating within the Armed Forces that will, to some degree of inevitability, affect the lives of women and children (Hearn 2003; Harrell 2000; Harrison

and Laliberté 1994; Higate 2003). The extent to which a service wife is controlled by her husband's employer in terms of housing status, employment opportunities and social relationships may have considerable impact on wives' experience of marriage, marital breakdown and divorce (Harrison and Laliberté 1994). Consequently, marriage in the military may even *inhibit* divorce for many service wives (Jessup 1996). Previous research has highlighted concerns about the potential welfare of spouses and their children upon divorce (see Milroy 1996). Furthermore, existing representations of marriage breakdown in the military fail to reveal the issue of navigating post-marital family life. In revealing the problem of marriage breakdown from the perspective of ex-service wives, this thesis addresses such gaps in existing knowledge about family life and the military.

Explanations for the causes of marriage breakdown and divorce in wider society are generally the result of post-divorce studies and correlational studies. Most explanations for marriage breakdown and divorce draw on the latter (Allan and Crow 2001). A number of socio-economic risk factors are determined by comparing groups of married and divorced people, for example couples that marry young are considered to be of a high-risk group for divorce. Whilst the military facilitates the marriage of young couples, a focus on retention and divorce is associated with more mature and experienced personnel. This thesis is defined as a post-divorce study, although an objective of the research was to gain further insights into marriage and family life in the military.

Criticisms of post-divorce studies point to the potential for conflicting accounts by husband and wives (Allan and Crow 2001). However, in highlighting the nature of gender relations within marriage, previous research suggests that just as there are 'his and her' interpretations of marriage (see Barnard 1973) there will also be 'his and her' interpretations of marriage breakdown and divorce (see Amato and Previti 2003; Gager and Sanchez 2003; Hewitt et al. 2006; Walzer and Oles 2003). That experiences of marital adversity and divorce are gendered is a perspective that is also central to this thesis. In the military context, many of the social changes that are perceived to be contributing to the civilianisation of service families are gendered processes. Whilst there are limitations to post-divorce studies, an examination of how ex-service wives retrospectively frame and construct their understanding of these processes is highly relevant to this thesis.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

The thesis makes a series of key interventions for policy debates and existing empirical, theoretical and methodological literature on military marriage and family life in the British context. It should therefore be of interest to the Ministry of Defence, academic writers on military issues, military authorities, military policy makers, individual service personnel and their spouses, and the media. It should also be of interest to academics and writers in a number of research fields including organisational and behavioural studies, marriage and family relationships, gender studies, and emotion theorists.

The thesis contributes to existing knowledge by developing a critical analysis of existing discourses on marriage breakdown to identify how problem representations in military policy are interpreted by scholars and constructed as problems for the military. By exploring women's perceptions and experiences of marriage breakdown in the military such problems are re-framed in terms of how this process impacts on service families, particularly wives and children. Ex-service wives may feel less compelled to provide socially acceptable accounts of their reality, in what can be regarded as a highly personal subject (see Berger and Luckman 1971). As a group, these women also represent 'previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience' (Reinharz 1992: 44), thereby offering a different route to knowledge within the current socio-political military context that might not otherwise be visible.

With reference to the study of organisations this thesis is distinctive in its examination of the social theory of emotion in relation to the military context. More specifically, to the theoretical connection of emotional labour in relation to wives' support of their husband's career. In other words, this thesis contends that wives' work in relation to their husband's career in the military is not limited to the performance of emotion work in the private sphere. The significant blurring of the boundaries between work and home, the public and the private, the military and the family, results in wives performing emotional labour that can be appropriated by the military in pursuit of operational effectiveness.

In terms of examining processes of divorce in the wider social context this thesis adopts an approach that considers the subjective accounts of divorced people. A focus on individual perceptions as to why a marriage breaks down provides a more rounded understanding of the divorce process in conjunction with existing correlational studies. By focusing on a specific occupational group this thesis also makes an important contribution to existing knowledge on post-divorce patterns of parenting and financial

support of non-resident children. Previously, the focus of family policy has been towards the obligations of parenthood. There is some evidence to suggest that parenting in post-divorce families is shifting towards a new sense of 'moral consideration'; to do what is right rather than what is imposed (Neale and Smart 2002: 184; see also Finch and Mason 1993).

Post-divorce family life in the military context is constructed within a prescriptive gendered division of labour that restricts, if not denies, such processes of negotiation between parents. This thesis shows that patterns of employment and parenting post-divorce are context dependent. This thesis also suggests that the relationship between employment status, payment of child maintenance, and contact and responsibility between non-resident fathers and children is more complex than some research may suggest (see Bradshaw and Millar 1991; Bradshaw et al 1999; Simpson 1998; Simpson et al. 1995).

### **Researcher up-front**

The origin of this research is autobiographical and represents the culmination of an intellectual journey that began twelve years ago. My interest in the subject of marriage breakdown in the Armed Forces is grounded in my personal experience as a service wife and ex-wife, together with an interest in the impact of military culture on the work-family interface. At the time of writing my research proposal British troops were deploying to the Middle East on standby for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003. The protracted cycle of deployments and controversies that would ensue could not have been anticipated. Demands on both British and International troops in Afghanistan, Iraq and from global peacekeeping missions have never been greater in terms of longer, more frequent and more dangerous deployments especially for frontline troops.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> September 2004 I attended the official launch of the Kings Centre for Military Health Research (KCMHR) at Kings College, London. The Great Hall was filled with politicians, senior military authorities, eminent academics, journalists and other notables. As a former service wife I felt a deep sadness that it had taken such a long time for the health and well-being of service personnel, and their families, to be afforded the attention so obviously deserved. Much of the work performed by service personnel and their families is invisible, and greatly undervalued by members of the public. The UK has lagged behind the US in terms of responding to the potential risks and hazards of

military service. A shift in thinking has been required by the MoD in order that a moral obligation and duty of care is established and maintained for the Armed Forces. There is an urgent necessity for independent evidence-based research to inform military policy in order to achieve humanistic goals, that are often at odds with military imperatives.

Herein lay the deep-rooted tensions within the organisational reality of the Armed Forces; a reality that is regulated by social order and institutional mores. The impact of wider social changes on the culture and cohesiveness of the Armed Forces in recent decades has produced dichotomous opinions in military circles. Should the military be moving towards a postmodern military model whereby organisational values are more in line with the host society? Or should the military institution cling on to its traditional roots for dear life? My own position within these debates has not been easy, for I see arguments for and against both liberal and conservative perspectives. Given my personal connection to the research, undertaking an in-depth study of the military has been an extremely challenging, frustrating yet fascinating process. The hardest part of the research has been to ensure that what I have written in the thesis fully reflects this journey, and that my role as insider in the research process remains upfront.

### **Organisation of the thesis**

In the following chapter I set out some of the themes and issues that are central to this thesis. I discuss the use of Bacchi's (1999) What's the Problem? approach as an overarching method that I have applied throughout the research. Existing representations of marriage breakdown in the military are subsequently examined and evaluated. I then set about re-framing the problem of marriage breakdown within a conceptual framework of 'emotion and the military'. An examination of the relationship between emotion management and the military provides a new problem frame for understanding the context and relational norms and processes within which service families are expected to navigate.

The research design presented a number of methodological challenges which I discuss in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three I present my analysis of the extant literature by examining the relationship between the concepts of emotion management, social cohesion and military culture, and the ways in which this shapes the lives of personnel within the military context. I then discuss how changes in the wider social context have disrupted the organisational reality of the military. Processes of civilianisation in the military are constructed as problems for the military, however, the causes point

generally to gendered processes. Changes in the aspirations of service wives are said to be altering the traditional service family dynamic. During periods of social change the military's operational imperatives, combined with an organisational reality that 'needs to be different' from the wider society, create tensions and contradictions for service families that have to be navigated.

In Chapter Four I examine family life and military demands in relation to the concerns about marriage breakdown in the military. Previous research conducted between the late 1970s and 1980s on military wives has focused on wives' incorporation and relationship to their husband's job which highlighted the importance of the occupational spouse. Whilst it may be considered somewhat out of date, in view of the increased education and employment opportunities now open to women, in the context of military wives this research still carries some relevance (Manson 2002). The problematisation of marriage breakdown in the extant literature appears to be interrelated with both the changing role of the military spouse and wives' ability to cope with the demands of military life.

The findings of the interviews are then presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven, and represent three chronological phases in the life course. Narrative and thematic analysis structured around three key areas enabled a detailed exploration of participants' experiences of marriage and service family life, marital breakdown, and post-divorce family life. Firstly, within both the context of a mobile existence, distance relationships and associated job demands meant that many wives were building an emotional life apart from their husbands. Secondly, I explore the underlying processes that result in service wives opting to end their marriage. Chapter Six examines how existing discourses of marriage breakdown in the military conceal some of the reasons why marriage fails for service wives, together with some of the practical difficulties experienced in the process of divorce.

Thirdly, the experience of navigating post-divorce family life within the organisational demands of the military is explored in Chapter Seven. As wives negotiated their status from lone wife to lone mother some women were not only homeless, they had few belongings and lacked access to financial resources. Moreover, military policy has yet to move toward an obligation of parenthood for *intact* service families. The consequence for children of non-resident personnel being they were more likely to become estranged

from fathers, despite reported efforts of resident mothers to cultivate and maintain contact between children and ex-husbands.

In Chapter Eight I develop these various strands into a more integrated discussion, together with a number of key themes that emerged from the research. The overall conclusions of the thesis are presented in Chapter Nine, where I discuss some implications for sociological knowledge about the military and family policy. I also highlight specific implications for the relationship between work and the family that have emerged from the research. Finally, this thesis offers some suggestions for the direction of future research and policy for service families. I begin the following chapter by exploring some of the key conceptual themes that flow through this thesis, that I have used to analyse existing discourses and constructions of marriage breakdown in the military.

## 1. Marital breakdown in the armed forces: themes and issues

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*Hi, my name is Gilly and I am reading an article in the Northern Echo. I just saw this letter about military wives. I think it's a brilliant idea to contact people because all kinds of things might have been...might be going on that nobody else is addressing. That's all I wanted to say...and go for it. I hope you get loads of information back and that it helps your project.*

### **Introduction**

The above message was left on my voicemail not long after I began recruiting participants for the research. I did not hear from Gilly again, however, her message is indicative of the rationale for this study: what is it about marriage breakdown in the UK Armed Forces that is *not* being discussed? Central to this thesis is an attempt to reveal that which appears to be *unproblematised* in Governmental policy and existing literature as concerns about family issues in the military: the interplay between the military as an organisation/institution and relational norms and processes within which service marriages and family life are contextualised.

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the methodological and theoretical framework that underpins the thesis which I have used to examine the current gaps in existing literature about service families. This framework is then applied to a review of existing literature in Chapters Three and Four. In other words, my aim is to situate the thesis in relation to existing debates on the military and wider society. The chapter is therefore divided in two parts. Firstly, I discuss the analytical approach that can be applied to the substantive topic of marriage breakdown in the military. In the second part I discuss how this method reveals the role of emotion in the military organisation. By reviewing related concepts within the wider context of arguments made in this chapter, the thesis is able to provide a more rounded framework for analysis of the various features that impact on service families.

### **What's the problem?**

During the initial stages of the research I had the feeling that something was missing in the literature that was prompted by my insider position within the research process. As an ex-service wife I felt that much of what I was reading lacked validity, not only in terms of why military marriages might break down, but how marriage and family life in the military was managed. A one-directional focus on wives' ability to cope with the demands of military life, as representing the foundation for a successful service marriage, appeared to lie at the heart of much of the scant literature in this area. My

objective to re-identify, or re-frame, the problem of marriage breakdown was both a daunting and difficult task, mainly due to the fact that much of the research and commentaries on family issues in the military mention only briefly the subject of marital adversity and divorce. Previous explanations for marriage failure in the UK military context appear to be generally unsupported by rigorous empirical enquiry.

The subject of family problems in the military alone is worthy of independent social research. Yet despite this issue being raised in both the Independent Review of the Armed Forces (known as the Bett Report 1995) and Strategic Defence Review (1998) which have provided little detail of the perceptible problems faced by service families, the gauntlet has not been taken up by social scientists in the UK. For example, fifteen years since the publication of the Bett Report (1995) only one article has been published in the international and interdisciplinary specialist journal *Armed Forces & Society* relating specifically to UK service family issues which focused on the transition of service families to civilian life (see Higate 2001). It was difficult, therefore, to find an anchoring point for the research which is why, as I discuss in the following chapter, the research was determined as exploratory from the outset.

One issue that was evident was that media reporting of marriage breakdown, statements in Governmental policy, and by academics and commentators on military issues, appeared to contribute to how family problems in the military have previously been framed. Concerns about family issues and marriage breakdown seemed to be less of a social problem and more of a policy problem (see Bacchi 1999). In other words, family problems negatively impact on organisational 'operational effectiveness'. This seemed like a good starting point, particularly as the social implications of marriage breakdown for service families are not addressed in military policy documents or the extant literature. It is these gaps, and silences, this thesis seeks to draw out and address.

The overarching method of analysis, that I apply to the review of associated literature in Chapters Three and Four, is Carol Lee Bacchi's (1999) approach to the construction of 'problem representations' that she specifically developed for policy analysis. This approach has become a widely applied analytical tool, particularly in feminist research, to interrogate policy proposals (for example, see Hudson and Rönnblom 2006). It is also useful, as Bacchi States, when applied to "the assumptions and implications of understanding an issue offered by those who *deny* an issue 'problem' status" (1999: 13, emphases in original). As I discuss in the following chapter, one of the driving

motivations for this research was my concern for the welfare and well-being of ex-service wives and children, which is rarely examined in the extant literature and absent in military policy documents. Hence the central question to Bacchi's approach is 'What's the Problem (represented to be)?' which opens up a range of questions that are seldom addressed in research on the family and the military. Marriage breakdown can therefore be seen as a process of problematisation in existing discourses whereby, as Bacchi states, "the language, concepts and categories that are used to frame the issue affect what is seen and how this is described" (1999: 10).

So while I am not disputing that marriage breakdown is a perceptible problem, it first needs to be understood in relation to how family problems are constructed and embedded in policy documents and proposals, and the institutional rules and regulations regarding marriage and family life in the military. This is a difficult undertaking due to the terseness of attention to families in military strategy *per se*. So what is needed is a critical focus on the perceived problems associated with family life in the Armed Forces, how these problems are reported from a conservative or liberal perspective, and what is regarded as the cause of these problems and associated implications and solutions to these problems. A What's the Problem? approach also allows for a new construction of the problem of marriage breakdown by revealing some of the issues that are not being discussed in the extant literature and Governmental policy. Through the voices of research participants and their interpretations of what they presented as *the problems* this thesis re-frames existing problematisations of marriage breakdown in the military.

By analysing these problem representations, greater insight and understanding can be gained as to the context of family issues and marriage breakdown by drawing attention to the ways in which subjects are constituted within such representations. For example, a wife who cannot cope with military life will cause problems for both her husband and the military points to the individualising of problems, rather than institutional factors which may facilitate or cause these problems (cf. Bacchi 1999: 8). Such a problem frame becomes difficult to overturn and is embedded in policy as a problem for the military rather than a problem for the families involved. The government can be deemed as having a strong interest in preserving service marriages therefore any solutions to the effects and causes of family issues will be strategic, in that operational effectiveness will determine policy direction. Hence solutions to the problem will be in the military's best interests, with little change for service families. In the next section I focus on the problematisation of marriage breakdown in the military, beginning with a brief discussion on divorce in the wider social context.

### **The military and marriage breakdown**

The UK Armed Forces comprises of some 450,000 serving personnel and dependants and is often referred to as a sub-population of society; the term 'dependant' conferring a sense of recognition through husbands. In the mid 1970s, an American social scientist argued that there was much to be gained from studying marriage breakdown and divorce in the Armed Forces. As Williams states, "[a] comparative analysis of the military subset and the overall population may provide sociology with an in-depth analysis of marital status and influential variables in a homogeneous group in our society" (1976: 219). It is unlikely that anyone would now agree with Williams that the military represents a homogeneous, stereotypical group (see Cozza et al. 2005; English 2004; Ross 2002). The subject of marital adversity and marriage breakdown in the military is therefore a complex process that is little understood, which is hampered by a paucity of research in the UK context.

The publication of national divorce statistics provides a precise record of the legal ending of marriages and represents only one element of the 'social reality of divorce' (Allan and Crow 2001: 121-122). Moreover, such statistics only provide a partial picture of the frequency of marital or relationship breakdown, as data is not available on married or cohabitating couples that have separated (Flowerdew et al. 1999: 427). Trends and patterns are useful, however, they do not tell us why marriages break down or who initiates separation. There has been much sociological attention paid to the changing nature of families in the wider social context. Explanations for these changes have focused on increasing divorce rates, co-habitation, elected lone-motherhood and married women's participation in paid employment; the most popular theory being the increasing economic independence of women (Kiernan et al. 1998; Lewis 2001). Moreover, questions as to the causes and effects of divorce are guided by the need to understand why there has been such an increase in the divorce rate in the UK and other western societies, particularly during the past thirty years.

Marriage breakdown and divorce in wider society is generally regarded as a result of macro-social changes that have occurred in contemporary society. These theories tend to focus broadly on the impact of the Divorce Reform Act, women's increased activity in the labour market, and improvements in gender legislation and equality of opportunity (May 2005). Most explanations draw upon correlational data whereby a number of socio-economic 'risk factors' are determined by comparing groups of married and divorced people, for example by age, social class, education, religion, and ethnicity. Couples who marry young are considered a high-risk group for divorce, particularly

teenagers, although age may be less relevant than it was in previous times. Attitudes have changed towards pregnancy and cohabitation out of wedlock, therefore, shotgun weddings are now considered a thing of the past. As I examine in Chapters Three and Four, the military facilitates marriage and early parenthood for young couples, suggesting that indicators such as age and social class are sustained risk factors for divorce. The perplexing question is whether the demands of service family life are *causing* the breakdown of marriages. What appears to be obscured in much of the extant literature are the perceptions of individuals as to why service marriages end, and is a substantive theme this thesis seeks to address.

Additional factors, such as social and material disadvantage and reduced psychological well-being in marital and other partnership breakdown, have also been identified as risk factors for divorce in the wider social context (see Kiernan and Mueller 1999). Again, the central question to which remains unanswered is the extent to which all of these factors have caused the increase in divorce, rather than facilitated it. As Kiernan and colleagues state, “[t]he fact is that only a minority of mothers, married or solo, can combine the unpaid work of caring for a child with sufficient remunerative employment to provide the wherewithal for independent living” (1998: 10). According to Beck, the increasing instability of marriage and family life in contemporary society creates a number of uncertainties in lifestyle for women. Hence, as Beck states, “it is not social position or lack of education but divorce which is the trap-door through which women fall into the ‘new poverty’” (Beck 1992: 89, emphasis in original).

Whilst it has been argued that there have been developments in gender equality for women in the public sphere, the private domestic world of marriage and the family is still regarded as a site of inequality for most women (Arber & Ginn 1995; Sullivan 2000). In the early 1990s, Bell and Newby argued that attention needed to shift from women’s social structural inequalities, to a focus on inequalities in marriage (1991: 25-26). However, what may constitute an unequal marriage to the researcher might not have the same meaning for the researched (Harris 2006). In other words, our perceptions of marriage might change, but the ways couples negotiate power in intimate relationships might not. Divorce in the UK was relatively uncommon prior to the 1970s. However, it now appears to be an accepted and normalised process in society. A number of television advertisements even portray divorce as an event to be celebrated.

Whilst divorce might conceivably be accepted as a sign of the times in the wider social context it is perceived as a sign of failure in the Armed Forces, due to an inherent

paternalistic ethos that the military is one big family that 'takes care of its own' (Harrison 2006; Harrison & Laliberté 1994; Milroy 1996). It is also perceived as a sign of the increasing civilianisation of the Armed Forces (Dandeker 2000). The subject of marriage breakdown and divorce is one that military officials will be keen to avoid. Claims that the divorce rate has been double that of the civilian population, particularly in the Army, have existed since the early nineties (Jessup 1996). A statistical analysis is problematic, however, as it is unclear how reports citing divorce rates for the military are compiled. The variations in 'Marital Status Definitions' for the tri-Services provides an incomplete picture of marital status within the UK Armed Forces. For example, the Royal Navy (including the Royal Marines) classify personnel as single when they are separated and not yet divorced. Whereas the Army and RAF define personnel as married until they are legally divorced (see Appendix A, page 198). Neither do available statistics represent an accurate picture of service marriages that are in trouble, or take into account the number of divorces occurring when personnel have left the military (Beevor 1990; Milroy 1996).

According to Milroy, the scant evidence that existed up to the mid 1990s tended to counter the belief that there was a higher rate of divorce in the military (1996: 38). Whether marriage breakdown can be deemed an 'occupational hazard' appears a moot point. At the very least it is a view that is widely held by many serving personnel and their spouses (Jolly 1992; Manson 2002; Milroy 1996; Williams 1976). It is clear in the extant literature that UK service families are expected to cope with a number of demands in relation to military life, in terms of frequency and length of separations, geographical mobility, impact of lack of continuity in children's education, and restrictions on spouse employment. As a consequence, service marriages may well endure specific endogenous marital pressures *in addition* to the everyday stresses that confront all married couples in contemporary Western society (Jessup 1996: 39). It might be reasonable to assume that marital dissolution in the military would be greater in comparison to the wider civilian population.

Research into the career transitions of Royal Navy personnel to civilian life showed that respondents, who were divorced or separated, directly blamed their service career for the breakdown of their marriage (see Regan de Bere 1999: 116). Conversely, research on whether, mainly married, RAF personnel assumed that the Armed Forces could somehow damage marriages did not support this view. Milroy found that life in the Armed Forces was not to blame for marital adversity or divorce in service families. There was general agreement amongst participants that the military lifestyle tended to be used

as an excuse for marital difficulties that already existed, in which case the way of life would most probably amplify problems (Milroy 1996: 172-188).

A number of factors have been identified as contributory to marriage breakdown in the military. Early separation in young newly married couples can lead to difficulties whereby relationships have not had chance to gel, and are more at risk of infidelity by both partners; the impact of children on young couples when responsibilities of parenthood can overwhelm young wives who, are not only left to cope when husbands are away, are more likely to be living a long way from their families and may 'pack up and go home to their own mothers'; financial pressures can also cause marital friction if wives are not good money managers when husbands are away, conversely, husbands may spend vast amounts of money when *they* are away without a wife's knowledge; finally, wives' dissatisfaction with military demands and lifestyle generally occurs later on in life when marriages are well established. If compromises cannot be made, or do not work, then the only way forward is for the member to leave the military, or the wife to leave her husband (see Jolly 1992: 148-158). Discussions in the extant literature consequently frame family problems as creating a tension between retention and divorce.

There also appears to be certain periods since the early to mid 1980s where marriage breakdown in the military has peaked. The MoD published figures for the Army during the period 1983 -1987 inclusive, suggesting that the divorce rate was 18 per cent higher than the national average for England and Wales (Beevor 1990: 64). Demands on personnel and families from involvement in the Falklands conflict and deployments to Northern Ireland might explain this. Increased risk of injury or death in conflict situations, and the requirement to engage in combat, represent the most exceptional demands in relation to military life. In 1993 there was evidence to suggest that the rate for marriage breakdown in the Army had risen to more than twice the UK average. It is evident that the early 1990s represented a particularly difficult time for service families with defence cuts and compulsory redundancies, peacekeeping operations and deployments in the first Gulf War (Jessup 1996: 73, see also Jolly 1996).

More recently, media attention to marital issues in the military is connected with operational overstretch and deployment to combat zones. In light of the recent commitments of UK forces to Iraq and currently Afghanistan, it is reasonable to suggest that a similar trend in marriage breakdown may occur in the ensuing years. A recent report commissioned by the Royal Navy and Royal Marine's Children's Fund *The*

*Overlooked Casualties of Conflict* (November 2009) states that “the divorce rate in the Armed Forces is now double that of couples in civilian life” (p. 44). The report does not elaborate on the cause of this phenomenon or the source of the data used. However, inferences made in the report point to the impact of deployment overstretch and mental health issues.

It is not known exactly why combat experience is detrimental to marital stability, however, evidence from studies of the US military suggest that it is the *context* of military service, rather than length of service during combat deployments that is an underlying factor (see Ruger et al. 2002: 99). In addition, it is not combat stress *per se* that becomes a problem for marital relations, rather the anti-social behaviour that is associated with it (Gimbel and Booth 1994). Recent research on the US military deployed on combat or peacekeeping operations suggests that personnel who reported their marriages being ‘in trouble’ before deployment were at far greater risk of getting divorced when they returned, than those who had described their marriage as happy and stable. Therefore, it is argued that the more stable the marriage is pre-deployment, the less likely divorce will occur when personnel returned home (see Bell and Schumm 2002). Marital adversity and dissolution are perceived as one factor of the social cost of war (Ruger et al. 2002).

It is evident that little is understood *theoretically* about why military marriages might succeed or fail which is reasonable considering the lack of research in this area. The main focus tends to be whether wives adjust and cope with the demands of military life and associated tensions, however, there is a lack of focus in the literature on *how* wives adapt. Consequently, it is wives’ *failure* to adapt, rather than the notion of unrealistic expectations that has translated to military welfare policy in the past (see Chandler 1987). In other words, wives must be *helped* to adapt. As Wechsler Segal has argued, “[c]onflict between military requirements and family needs is avoided when ‘the family’ adapts to the military’s demands” (1988: 88, emphasis added). It is also evident in Governmental policy and existing literature that ‘the family’ specifically relates to wives and children and the problem, as viewed by academics and commentators, is that conflict between the needs of the military and the needs of the family is perceived to be increasing. In the next section I discuss two competing problem representations relating to ‘concerns’ about service families.

### **The tension between retention and divorce**

In 1990 the UK Defence Review *Options for Change* announced substantial cuts in the Armed Services in response to the ending of the Cold War. Inevitably, a major restructuring in manning levels was called for across the tri-Services that resulted in a large number of redundancies (Jolly 1996). This was followed by the loss of four Army battalions (frontline troops) in 2004. However, this decision has since been reviewed and the Army is reportedly undergoing reorganisation in an attempt to reduce the gap between operational deployments (The Guardian 20 January 2009). Recruitment in the current political climate, including commitments to Iraq and Afghanistan, has proved particularly difficult for the Army as the largest of the three services. The traditional recruitment pools based on locality or family tradition are reported to be somewhat thin on the ground, and the Armed Forces have had to respond to this shortage in innovative ways (Dandeker and Mason 2001: 221; see also The Guardian 12 February 2001).

Whilst the issue of personnel retention appears to concern older and more experienced personnel, recruitment and retention issues go hand in hand. If recruitment drives are successful they can be negated by failures in retention (Strachan 2002: 102). Hence in the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) 'addressing concerns about family life' is positioned within the imperative of 'improving recruiting and retention' (MoD 1998, Supporting Essay 9, para. 15, second emphasis added). The SDR sets out a plan of improvement for service families in three very brief paragraphs which entails establishing a Service Families Task Force to address some of the concerns of families to include access to benefits, health and dental care, children's education, particularly when families are posted overseas, and nursery education for all four year olds (ibid. P paras. 35-37). For the Armed Forces to retain their more mature and experienced personnel it has been reported that both standards and levels of welfare need to be improved to keep families 'on side', to avoid the military ending up like a singles club (The Guardian 3 December 2002).

Ten years since the publication of the SDR the Government is currently launching another full-scale review of the Armed Forces. The Green Paper consultation "The Nation's Commitment to the Armed Forces Community" has followed the publication of the Service Personnel Command Paper (July 2008). The paper sets out a number of cross-Government initiatives to improve access for service families to public services such as healthcare, education and housing so that they are no longer disadvantaged in comparison to civilian families. Given the media attention to the Armed Forces since the invasion of Iraq, and the continuing commitment of British troops to Afghanistan, the

Government has come under direct attack for failing in its duty of care to many personnel and their families. Such negative attention may also impact on issues of recruitment and retention. Concerns about family life are rarely viewed as concerns for individual families in that a business case approach is adopted, which detracts from the difficulties experienced by many military families as legitimate social issues in their own right. Increased attention over the last decade to the effects of service life on the UK military family is inexplicably connected to concerns that have arisen over the recruitment and retention of military personnel.

In comparison to the UK, family policy work in the US military has been afforded a much higher profile, consequently social research has been more prolific (Enloe 1988; Jessup 1996; Milroy 2001). Disruption to family life was believed to be the main reason for poor retention rates in the US military, both during and following the Korean War, and extensive family policies were developed upon transfer to the all-volunteer force in 1973 (Hickes Lundquist and Smith 2005). Harrison and Laliberté (1994) argue that increased support to US military families has been mobilised for two further reasons. Firstly, from a belief that the civil-military gap will erode the institutional identity of military members that renders personnel more vulnerable to persuasive wives and competitive employers. Secondly, the influence of second wave feminism and increasing economic pressures meant that women were now expecting, and expected, to develop their own careers; an aspiration which is, for the most part, viewed as irreconcilable with military life (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 77).

A central concern of this thesis is the assumption in much of the extant literature that military wives are becoming less involved in military life, therefore less committed to their husband's career, and the extent to which this is perceived to be creating problems for the military. The cause of these concerns over family issues appears to be placed firmly at the feet of service wives. It is often suggested that personnel may be overly influenced to leave the Armed Forces by a dissatisfied partner (Higate 2004a). As Strachan argues, "...servicemen become vulnerable to different demands, those of spouses and children, and their need for stability and continuity" (2002: 107). Subsequently, the family is becoming 'too greedy' (see Weschler Segal 1988) and contributes to such problem framing in the literature, which I examine further in Chapter Three.

Spousal attitudes towards the military are therefore very much the focus of retention issues. Rounds of Continuous Attitude Surveys (CAS) are conducted to evaluate the

effectiveness of military welfare policy. The main foci of these tri-Service surveys is to assess the extent to which the military establishments are 'keeping wives happy', due to concerns about how wives' attitudes may affect members' decisions to remain in the service. Policy driven research is conducted within a framework of operational effectiveness which ultimately dictates policy direction. These surveys, directed at military spouses, have been criticised for their poor response rate, many of which do not reach their intended destination and are unrepresentative of the population being studied. Some of the concerns and issues of the most vulnerable service families, for example young wives with young children married to low ranking personnel, may not be heard (discussion with Chief Executive of a Family Association).

As Chandler previously noted, assessing spousal attitudes to life in the military leaves little room for 'a broader and more critical assessment of the issues' over recruitment and retention to the extent that 'the nature of the job becomes ignored' (1987: 94). This perspective becomes more palpable when considering the demands of overstretch within the UK Armed Forces in the current political climate (Dandeker 2000). Despite Chandler's observations over twenty years ago, there is little to suggest there has been a shift in focus, particularly in relation to the proposals set out in the Strategic Defence Review (1998). A wife's ability to influence her husband to leave the Armed Forces is perhaps more acceptable than a decision made autonomously by personnel that is directly related to job satisfaction, rather than family problems. There may be a number of reasons why personnel wish to leave the military, for example bullying or discrimination, and family issues may be cited as the main reason in order to 'save face'. There is also evidence in both the UK and US to suggest that wives may be influencing husbands to remain in the military. For example, Dandeker and French (2006) found that despite the number of demands associated with the UK military and family life, many wives appreciated the long-term financial security of their husband's career (see also Leroy Gill and Haurin 1998).

Key issues that are highlighted in retention are prolonged absences, as a result of overstretch and marital adversity, although it is not clear what constitutes adversity. The focus in military policy seems to be on marital stability. However, it is not clear what this constitutes in the military context either. For couples at the level of intimate relationships it may have entirely different meanings. Nor does it seem particularly useful to make comparisons between the Services. Divorce rates released by the MoD in 2002 prompted the (then) Liberal Democrat Shadow Defence Secretary, Paul Keetch MP, to claim that a marriage in the Navy and RAF was twice as likely to break down than a

marriage in the Army. As I have mentioned above, statistics often present a distorted and incomplete picture in terms of comparisons with marriage breakdown in the wider social context. Comparisons within the tri-Services are just as problematic due to the differences in marital status definitions (see Appendix A, page 198).

Both family issues and marital breakdown are problems that are framed in much of the extant literature in terms of the retention of experienced personnel, the recruitment of younger soldiers and the extent to which these concerns impact on overall operational effectiveness. The context in which problems are framed is particularly important to a 'What's the Problem?' analysis (Bacchi 1999: 7). It is how the problematisation of marriage breakdown is represented in the media and by academics and commentators on military issues, in terms of retention and operational effectiveness, which *underlines* the disparities between military imperatives and family issues. The prescription for improving marital stability is embedded in directives to increase service welfare provision, hence strengthening family policy in the military (Dandeker 2000). Solutions will therefore be strategic as a result of intentional framing. In the following sections I set about constructing a new problem representation in relation to existing concerns about family life and marital breakdown in the military.

### **Emotion and the workplace**

One of the factors unproblematised in the extant literature on organisations in general, and the Armed Forces in particular, is an examination of the socialisation of emotion in the military. A focus on wives' ability to cope with the demands of military life and the family life of servicemen ignores the context, or nature of the job (see Chandler 1987 and Chandler et al. 1995). The military is not just a job, an occupation or a profession: it is also an institutionalising organisation that determines a separate set of cultural and social norms and values. Up until the last twenty years or so, the study of emotion and the workplace was largely ignored by sociologists. Recent developments in sociology have identified the significance of emotion in everyday life whereas, previously, sociologists were generally concerned with the study of rational thought. Explanations for behaviour in organisations have been dominated by rational-cognitive approaches that presented a model of the worker as "a calculative, logical information processor; and similarly motivated by logical-information-based means" (Ashkanasy et al. 2002: 317). Perceived as a physiological construct significant only to those interested in cognitive or psychosocial states of individuals, emotion was considered inappropriate to organisational life, and irrelevant to studies of groups or individuals (Putnam and Mumby

1993: 36). The emphasis in organisational studies was therefore limited to the physical and cognitive aspects of the job.

A recent shift in research on organisational behaviour has begun to focus on the way individuals manage their emotions in relation to given situations, roles or job demands. As Fineman comments, “[f]eelings shape and lubricate social transactions. Feelings contribute to, and reflect, the structure and culture of organizations. Order and control, the very essence of the ‘organization’ of work, concern what people ‘do’ with their feelings” (1993: 9, emphases in original). Emotionality in the workplace has subsequently been reappraised (Ashforth and Humphrey 1995) and largely inspired by the empirical research of American sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1979, 2003). In her exploration of the commercialisation of human feeling, Hochschild introduced the concepts of emotion management, emotional labour and emotion work.

In her study of flight attendants Hochschild (2003) found that employees not only had to deal with the physical and cognitive aspects of the job, they were also required to manage and deal with both their own and passengers’ emotions. Consequently, expressing and displaying the ‘right’ emotions was an essential part of the overall job description in order to keep passengers happy. The concepts of emotional labour and emotion work are often used interchangeably, and generally describe “the expression of organizationally desired emotions [as] part of one’s job” (Zapf 2002: 237). For the purpose of clarity in this thesis I adopt Hochschild’s (1979, 2003) original conceptions; in that emotion management refers to emotion that is managed in relation to specific roles; emotional labour refers to the act of managing emotions as a consequence of paid employment; and emotion work can be described as the effort involved in dealing with the emotions of others in private relationships.

These concepts have been utilised by a number of researchers to explore how emotion is managed within a wide-range of occupational contexts: different occupations will therefore demand different role appropriate emotions, for example distance and objectivity, suppression of emotion and feelings as strategies adopted to avoid making mistakes, remaining calm, developing team trust, and not being viewed as a loose cannon. Numerous studies have built on Hochschild’s work and include such occupations as bankers, lawyers, social workers, call centre operators, doctors, care assistants, midwives, teachers, secretaries, and nurses. In the medical profession the concept of emotional labour has been used to show how doctors and nurses are socialised differently, which affects the ways they act as qualified practitioners. Doctors

are expected to be professional, detached and objective. Conversely, the concept of emotional labour has been considered useful in looking at the nature of caring. Nurses are not only expected to deliver physical care, they are also expected to control their emotions in a professional way (Meerabeau and Page 1998).

Caring can be viewed as both a gendered and a marginalised concept. For instance, anger and aggression are emotions generally associated with men. As Meerabeau and Page note, “[t]he general absence of anger from the nursing literature may be related to its deemed inappropriateness to nursing practice, or to sanctions within a predominantly female profession on who may express it” (ibid: 303). Not only will an employer have an expectation of how nurses should behave, but society will also hold normative expectations of appropriate behaviour in relation to the role of nursing. Individual emotions and emotional experience can be viewed as context dependent, and will be shaped by social and cultural processes such as gender, race, age, and class. Emotions can also be viewed as socially constructed; how individuals live and experience emotion in everyday life, a ‘social relational dimension of emotion’ (Lupton 1998: 38; see also Jackson 1993). The required expressed or suppressed emotions can therefore be managed by individuals or employers as demanded by various situations.

Employees are required to express appropriate emotions, or suppress undesirable emotions, as part of the job. The management of emotion is therefore learnt through the performance of a number of private and public social roles. For Hochschild (2003) all relationships involve emotion management, which begins with emotion work learnt through processes of socialisation within the private realm, for example home, family and friends. The concept of emotional *labour* is associated with the public realm, whereby private emotion work is appropriated in advanced societies for capitalist gains. The emotional labour of Hochschild’s flight attendant was thus a commodity that could be appropriated by employers. Emotion work is conceptualised in terms of its *use* value within the private realm. Conversely, emotional labour is generally regarded as a commodity that can be used by employers in terms of its *exchange* value in the market place.

Role appropriate emotions are acted out, or performed, in accordance with the social rules, norms and values (feeling rules) as defined by the ideology of the organisation. Feeling rules are performed through processes of surface or deep acting, both of which involve a certain amount of duplicity between what a person is supposed to feel and how they really feel (Theodosius 2006: 893). However, deep acting is considered by

Hochschild to be more detrimental to the individual. Both serving personnel and their family members are subject to, and experience, a number of demands and strains associated with military life which can often result in high levels of stress (see Everson 2005). Underpinning this thesis is a theoretical connection to the social theory of emotion and the military organisation, which provides a useful insight into the Armed Forces and those whose lives are most affected by the institutional goals of the military.

### **Re-framing the problem: the military and emotion management**

In this section I develop a theoretical framework to argue that the Armed Forces represent significantly *more* than just a job, a perspective that is overlooked in much of the extant literature when considering the specific features of the military lifestyle. My brief attention to the emotional labour of nursing is an attempt to set the stage for an examination of emotional labour and the Armed Forces. At first glance, caring roles and fighting roles might seem poles apart in terms of job description. Whilst the National Health Service provides a system for care, the Armed Forces provides a system for violence and destruction. The military is, in essence, a 'killing machine' (The Guardian June 8 2006), an institution for managing aggression and violence (Feld 1977). Controlled aggression is an appropriate and essential display of emotion in the military. One might view the NHS and the Armed Forces, in Hochschild's (2003) terms, as the 'toe and heel of civic service'. However, both these gendered roles are socially constructed, suggesting that the roles of nurse and soldier are naturalised for women and men respectively. Hence, the image of male nurses and female soldiers may clash with cultural perceptions of gender role ideology.

Such inherently ordained work is invisible and undervalued in society, although both jobs require the maintenance of a professional approach. Maintaining professionalism is fundamental to appropriate emotion management (Kramer and Hess 2002). Acknowledgement that the role of caring work, as both paid and unpaid, lacks status in society is frequently highlighted. The lack of status conveyed to the role of laying one's life on the line, the willingness to kill and be killed for the good of one's Queen and country is not so evident. There are few civilians with personal experience of war, hence there is a general lack of understanding of the extraordinary demands placed on many service personnel, particularly those in frontline positions which is not 'a pleasant place at all' (Stewart 1994: 129).

The invisibility of the work performed by military personnel is often experienced by both active duty personnel and veterans on return from conflict situations, particularly those

suffering physical and/or mental injury. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many personnel often feel let down or misunderstood by the public and, more importantly, feel they have not received adequate support from the Armed Forces. Such feelings have been highlighted in television programmes on a number of occasions. In *Real Story* (BBC1 22/11/06) soldiers reflected on the medical treatment they had received on their recent return from Iraq. The disparity in care and welfare was highlighted by reports from both active duty soldiers seemingly cherry picked by the MoD and ex-serving personnel who had been, for the most part, medically discharged.

As I examine in Chapter Three, it has been argued that the traditional foundation of military culture is being subjected to social changes more reflective of contemporary society (see Dandeker 2000; Dandeker and Mason 2001; Jolly 1992; Milroy 1996). It is suggested that some of these changes are shifting the Armed Forces of advanced democratic societies towards a postmodern military (Moskos 2000). However, the context of the job remains the same, which sets it apart from other jobs performed by individuals in society: the fundamental role of the Armed Forces is, first and foremost, a legitimised system which manages aggression and violence (Feld 1977; Goldman 1975; Harrison 2003) and in comparison to civilian occupations, is unconventional. Employment in the military represents so much more than just a job and is often ‘a question of life and death for all concerned’ (Hearn 2003: xi).

Hence, the extreme act of loyalty, or ‘career highlight’ is to engage in combat and die for one’s country (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 1; Milroy 1996: 30). Whilst the role of chef or bandsman is not the same as frontline infantry, all personnel are expected to take up arms in the line of duty. As English argues:

The military profession lays claim to the expertise of the application of violence by a military force in the service of the state. But unlike police officers and firefighters, who are often compared to military professionals because they risk their lives in the service of society and, in the case of police, are authorised to use deadly force in some circumstances, soldiers go to their work with the deliberate intention of destroying lives and property (2004: 33).

The level of commitment demanded in relation to civilian occupations is unprecedented; no other occupation espouses such an ethos. Certain elements of the military might also be considered an ‘absolutist hierarchy’, as Smith observes, and “[s]uch an organisational type is, in principle, quite incompatible with a human-rights regime” (2002: 48; see also Alexandrou 2002; Harrison and Laliberté 2008). The Armed Forces

might therefore be viewed as an extraordinary exemplar of the institutional control of emotion. As Chandler and colleagues point out, "...military service exercises much greater control over individuals, their bodies, their emotions and their time than is characteristic of contractual employment in civilian occupations" (1995: 126). Whilst both the physical and mental elements of the military organisation have been highlighted, an examination of the performance of emotional labour in the military appears to be absent.

In a sense it is perhaps not difficult to perceive the Armed Forces as an 'emotion free zone'. The military represents a system that is highly rational and hierarchical in the Weberian sense of an ideal bureaucracy. It is perhaps within the organisation of the military that the 'myth of rationality' (cf. Olesen and Bone 1998) is presented in its extreme form; for example the display of inappropriate emotion is viewed as expressive and dangerous, thereby deviating from appropriate displays of emotion as rational and instrumental. As a participant in the current study research points out:

*You sometimes get the impression...it's almost like [pause] ...Again maybe it's the feeling side of things, the emotional side. They're [servicemen] not so good at that. May be it's because the forces don't allow for emotions in a way. I mean, someone once said to me... 'What do you do if you don't agree with an order?' I said, 'Oh you seem to think that, you know, everybody's running around giving everybody orders, snapping to attention and saluting every five minutes'. I said 'it's not like that. It really isn't'. But...when it boils down to it, you know, in the heat of battle, and someone says 'right...we're gonna go and [do such and such]'... you don't turn round and say 'well... shall we have a discussion about it?' So [chuckle] you're under fire [laughs] you know, you don't sit there and have a chin-wag about it. You go ahead and do it. And if it's wrong... then you debrief and zip up the body bags, and do whatever...There's not so much room for emotions.*

Naomi is both an ex-Naval wife and ex-Naval Officer and is referring to specific situations associated with the role of military personnel that demand emotion management, for example questioning direct orders is not consistent with the role. Whether personnel agree or not, they are not expected to question or refuse orders as part of the job function, which is fundamental to the maintenance of the hierarchical structure. It could be argued that this same rule applies to all employees. However, the context of the role in which the emotion is managed will have different consequences if these rules are broken; in the case of the military unit it could be a question of life or death.

An essential element of the organisational reality of the military has always been to keep a tight rein on emotions, a 'stiff upper lip', consequently the management of emotion has always been a formal feature of behaviour control in the military. As an organisation it

personifies, in Fineman's (1993) terms, 'an emotional arena' and is a key theme of this thesis. Both personnel and spouses will be subject to the feeling rules as defined by the norms and values of military culture, therefore both personnel and their spouses will be expected to display role appropriate emotions.

### **A contextual approach to emotional labour**

The general focus of research on emotional labour in organisations has been on frontline employees working with customers or the general public (Morris and Feldman 1996) and where economic productivity and profit is central (Olesen and Bone 1998: 315). Since the coming of the Post-industrial society the relationship between labour and machines is argued to have shifted to dealings with people rather than 'things' (Bell 1976). Clearly, as an organisation, the Armed Forces do not easily fall into this gamut, despite the fact that the workings of the military are often referred to as a machine. A legitimate civic service is provided by the military which is now more accountable to defence budgets. Policy makers are charged with the task of weighing up concerns about public expenditure for the economic and social needs of society, against the increasing costs of maintaining an effective and highly technical military organisation (Harries-Jenkins 1983). Hochschild has outlined the impact of culture and economic orientation on the emotions deemed appropriate to achieve commercial goals (Olesen and Bone 1998). However, customer satisfaction and shareholder profits do not specifically characterise the military business plan: these are not indications of the *exchange* value of emotional labour in the military. The military does not sell the emotional labour of personnel as a commodity. However, the stresses and demands of military life provide a sharp case regarding emotion work in public life.

In this thesis a conceptualisation of emotional labour and the military situates the orientation and achievement of operational effectiveness, or combat readiness, as central to the organisation, and the recipient as the nation state. In other words, feeling or emotion is shaped to social form (operational effectiveness) and offered up as a contribution to the collective good (nation state) (see Hochschild 2003: 18). Mapping the military organisation on to the conventional approach to emotional labour is somewhat problematic. I adopt Syed's (2007) distinctions between the conventional and the less examined contextual approach to emotional labour that are particularly useful in relation to the military, as summarised in the table below:

Figure 1. Emotional labour: conventional and contextual perspectives

	Conventional approach	Contextual approach
Work role	Work-role specific (people such as nurses or flight attendants)	Not necessarily work-role specific
Focus	Job content	Job context
Orientation	Externally oriented, to produce an emotional state in another person	Internally oriented: internal emotional struggle (not just surface acting)
Duration	Short term; lasts only for the duration of contact with clients	Long term; lasts as long as societal and organizational circumstances exist
Contact	Face to face or voice to voice contact with the public	Face to face or voice to voice contact with the public as well as colleagues
Affectivity	Need to produce an emotional state in another person	Not specifically aimed at producing an emotional state in others
Control	Employers control the emotional activities of employees	Society as well as the organization controls activities in employees (social and organizational acceptability issue)
(Source: abridged from Syed 2007: 184)		

As I have discussed above, the military is unconventional in terms of the overarching job description. It is also unconventional due to the scale of encroachment of the military on the private sphere of marriage and family life. The concept of control in relation to the conventional approach to emotional labour does not encompass the social embodiment of the Armed Forces in that, as a society, we expect service personnel to do their job professionally and not behave irrationally. For instance, the subject of emotion was commented on by Katrina, an ex-Army wife and research participant, who stated that in her experience it was not usual for soldiers to talk about their feelings:

*If they [the military] provide a counselling service for deranged soldiers, and I mean deranged in the widest sense... wouldn't [personnel] feel that that...emasculated them? And that would be so sad. You can't have emasculated soldiers wandering around...what would happen?*

Personnel are therefore subject to both institutional and societal influence over appropriate emotional display (see Parkinson et al. 2005). Personnel who act 'outside of the box' will be brought to public attention, for example the allegations of abuse over the deaths of young recruits at Deepcut Barracks, and reports of abuse of prisoners in Iraq. Mental health issues, such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, de-professionalise personnel rendering them unfit and no longer operationally effective for the military if

their condition is deemed untreatable. Personnel who go AWOL (absent without leave) can be sent to prison (Kovitz 2003).

The duration of emotional labour is not short term and limited to specific periods, as in the conventional approach, and there may be specific periods when increased emotional labour is required, for example during operational deployments and training exercises. The contract of employment for personnel in the armed forces stipulates 24/7/365 availability, and personnel sign up to a stated number of years commitment to the military (Regan de Bere 1999). In order to leave, a pre-voluntary request must be submitted, a substantial period of notice served and, in some cases, a financial penalty is paid. Military personnel are not able to resign at will (Kovitz 2003). The focus of the job context requires personnel to serve their country, not just their employer, which links into the long term demands for emotional labour. Personnel are expected to suppress certain emotions, such as questioning direct orders, whilst at the same time rousing certain emotions that will help them to do the job. The contextual approach is therefore appropriate to an examination of emotional labour in the military.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have set out the themes and issues that are central to this thesis. Marriage breakdown in the military needs first to be understood within the context to which it is constructed: how concerns about family issues are framed in relation to recruitment and retention and the subsequent impact on operational effectiveness. Rather than seeking to solve the problem of marriage breakdown, this thesis places the problematisation of marriage breakdown into question by opening up a new frame for analysis in an attempt to reveal the silences in military policy and the extant literature. An analysis of the role of emotion in the military contextualises the relational norms within which service marriages and family life are navigated. In other words, analytical focus on the emotional labour performed by personnel and wives constructs new representations to re-frame the issues of marriage breakdown in the military. In the following chapter I discuss how the research methodology underpins the conceptual and theoretical framework I have outlined in this chapter.

## 2. Methodology

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*It's not just the military...like the three [services]...I just don't understand [how you are going to do this]. When I was thinking about what you're trying to do... It's almost like you're going to have to do a lot of separate studies...because everybody's experience will depend upon which rank the husband was, and whether they were abroad...and sometimes which country.*

Helen, ex-Colonel's wife

### **Introduction**

The above excerpt provides a suitable introduction to this chapter. Not only do Helen's comments reiterate the heterogeneity of the Armed Forces population, she also acknowledges the diversity of experiences within the military context. Much of the research investigating family life and military demands has focused on a single service only, for example Army, RAF, and Naval wives, although Royal Marines' wives do not appear to have been the subject of, or included in, social research to date. Investigating marriage breakdown in the UK Armed Forces therefore raises implications for research design. In this chapter I set out my decisions and justifications for situating this study within a specific methodological framework. In the first section I discuss my insider position within the research process.

### **The autobiography of the question**

Prior to beginning this research I considered my own experiences as the wife of a Royal Marine, and the anecdotal evidence I had gathered over the years from myriad conversations I had had with both married and divorced Marines' wives. I wondered if similar experiences would be echoed by other ex-wives from across the tri-Services. One of my pre-conceptions was that marriage and family life, and post-divorce family life in the military, would be considered very different to civilian lifestyles. I also believed that, as marital separation and divorce represent a major route into lone parenthood, it is not a personal choice that women will take lightly (see Allan and Crow 2001 and Kiernan and Mueller 1999). A point of reference for the thesis is that I regarded participants as agents within the military system, and sought to understand how they both navigated and reflexively accounted for their life choices. I did not assume that being a wife and mother within the context of the military family was, as Morgan puts it 'automatically disempowering for women and empowering for men' (1996: 75). Whilst these assumptions were useful in formulating the research, it was necessary to suspend what I already knew. Like others, I was unsure what would emerge from the study, or whether things would actually be 'as they seemed' (see Manson 2002: 16). As I also

discovered, sometimes comparisons made with my own experience would prove 'more risky than useful' (see Beevor 1990: xix).

I had already made specific decisions about who and what my research was about, which had been framed by my own experiences and concerns for the welfare and well-being of ex-service wives and children. This seemed a fundamental starting point in relation to existing empirical research, as I believed that ex-service wives represented a group of women that could provide an important route to knowledge and understanding that might otherwise remain obscured. From the outset the research was empirically driven (*a posteriori*) rather than theoretically led (*a priori*). In consideration of the political focus on marital adversity and divorce in the Armed Forces I was attempting to make visible that which appeared unproblematised in existing discourses. A reconstruction of family issues and marriage breakdown is possible from an analysis of the problems as perceived and presented by the women in this research (Bacchi 1999). As I discuss further on in this chapter I did not have prior knowledge of a sociology of emotion at the start of the interview process, nor was I aware of Hochschild's (1979, 2003) theoretical conception of emotion management.

### **Qualitative methodology**

In contrast to post-divorce correlational studies that focus on socio-demographic risk factors in couples, my aim was to explore individual perceptions of marriage breakdown. In other words, I was concerned with subjective accounts of why military marriages end. I was also concerned with the construction of problem representations in policy and existing literature, therefore a qualitative approach was the most appropriate choice of methodology for the research. I was attempting to 'make vivid that which I believed had been obscured', therefore an inductive and flexible research design was necessary to allow for themes to develop (Eisner 2002: 136). The overall objective for the interviews was to generate data, rather than construct a pre-structured design aimed at data collection (Mason 1996). My research objective was not concerned with hypotheses testing or evaluation, but with an immense concern to understand other people's experiences and perceptions and how they interpret them (Siedman 1991: 3).

Within the overall objectives of the research I was interested in how participants would describe their marriage and experiences of family life in the military. Would these be perceived positively or negatively? Secondly, would these women blame the Armed Forces for the breakdown of their marriage? Thirdly, I was interested in the explanations offered by women who took the decision to leave their husbands, as little is

understood about who divorces who, and why. Finally, what are the difficulties of negotiating post-divorce family life? These questions formed the rationale for the interviews, the overarching question being: what is problematic about marriage and marital breakdown for military wives? The underlying principle of this question was to draw out different constructions of the problem of marriage breakdown, in contrast to the question that was fundamental to revealing the problematisation of marriage breakdown in existing discourses.

The emphasis for the interviews was to explore and probe women's accounts of their life histories - the stories they wished to share with me within their ethnographic context. Given my own familiarity with many elements of this context, I was reasonably confident their stories would not prove elusive to me (see Schwartz and Jacobs cited in Brewer 2000: 68). My main aim was to afford a setting in which women would, "...feel able to 'voice' their own experiences" (Miller 1998: 59, emphasis in original). I believed this to be a methodological strategy lacking in much of the literature about service wives, especially marriage breakdown in the military. It was clear in the literature that the voices of civilian ex-service wives are silent, although an exception appears to be Harrison and Laliberté's (1994) research on Canadian military wives.

In exploring people's perceptions of agency and constraint on their previous experiences I acknowledge that life histories are a construction of retrospective accounts. I can only study representations of experience and the stories women have told me about the experiences they have had (see Lincoln and Denzin 2000: 1061). Even though representations of experience may sometimes be the only evidence available to researchers, it is important to acknowledge that an emphasis on experience can be problematic in the research process (Maynard 1994). Difficulties and inconsistencies in memory recall of participants' biographical knowledge can impact on the research process (Gardner 2001). Recalling previous experiences through a current situation may positively or negatively alter accounts of the past, therefore, retrospective accounts that may directly relate to current difficulties should be interpreted with caution.

My objective was to place women's lives and experiences at the heart of this research. Although my approach might previously have been considered as feminist research practice, it is now viewed generally as good practice in qualitative research (Watts 2006). I agree with the position of Edwards and Ribbens in that, as "qualitative social researchers reflexively exploring everyday lives, we must continually confront questions of the nature and assumptions of the knowledge we are producing, and who we are

producing it for” (1998: 4). I had already spent many years listening to women talk freely and openly about issues that were important to them in my capacity as layperson. My desire to continue this approach is the result of a strong commitment to develop the best ethical practice in my endeavours, and to reflexively account for my own subjective position within the research process.

### **Researcher reflexivity**

My membership in certain social categories has undoubtedly led me to focus on issues embedded in my own life experiences. My position throughout this research is one of insider and outsider, as I have chosen to study elements of a sub-culture that I previously belonged to by way of my own marriage to a serving member of the UK Armed Forces. Like others who have returned to study a world they once knew intimately, I felt a sense of both distance and closeness (see Beevor 1990 and Ebaugh 1988). My familiarity afforded me a certain depth of understanding, empathy and rapport with research participants, while distance in time and education signified that my knowledge *about* my research topic was far removed from that which I have personally experienced (see Merton 1988). Establishing emotional distance from the research topic was not so clear-cut, however, and I discuss this further below.

The concept of reflexivity in social research can be described as a “continuous critical reflection on the research processes we use to produce knowledge” (Holland & Ramazanoğlu 1994: 133). Reflexivity does not and should not remove bias from our research; it can only help us to account for it. A researcher’s autobiography is an invisible strand that impacts on all elements of decision making within the research process (Miller 1998: 60). The implication for a reflexive approach is the acceptance that the relationship between researcher and researched is inseparable, and cannot be considered as objective and detached. It is an iterative process requiring deep introspection and reflection that requires me to make myself accountable throughout.

When I started this project, my level of academic insecurity was high and, as I discuss below, the emotional investment I had already undertaken prior to starting the fieldwork impacted on my sense of positioning within the research. In other words I was denying my subjectivity and, more importantly, my sense of authority as researcher within the research. By adopting a participatory, or collaborative, approach to the research I encouraged participants to offer feedback during certain stages of the research process. Upon interrogating myself reflexively, my strong emotional reactions to anything less than favourable or corroborated feedback, forced me to examine the degrees to which

this approach was a way of seeking approval from participants (Grinyer 2005). I was also aware that I could continue my life-long pattern of berating myself for getting something else wrong. Both of these answers were quite unpalatable.

### **Method of data generation**

This exploratory study addresses an under-researched area within the military context. Moreover, I was attempting to re-frame problematisations of marriage breakdown from the perspective of women as ex-service wives by asking them to tell me what they thought the problems were. An open-ended unstructured (or loosely structured) interview was therefore the most appropriate method. The term 'unstructured' is perhaps a misnomer bearing in mind the unhelpful dichotomy between the unstructured/structured interview that is so often the case in methods textbooks (Collins 1998, para. 1.3.). In the first instance I had already decided that a particular subject was worthy of investigation and I had identified a number of themes to be explored. I had also decided that an interview situation would be created, and that participants should talk and I would listen. Many of my questions would be structured within the rationale of the study. In reality, all these levels of structure were already in place as a result of my decisions and judgements (see Mason 1996).

There were few dilemmas in choosing this method. From the outset it seemed valid, bearing in mind my methodological approach to the social construction of problem representations. Given the depth of my own personal experience of the subject matter it was also appropriate to utilise a method that would moderate my influence on the research process as much as possible (see Brewer 2000 and Mauthner and Doucet 1998). I also wanted to afford participants greater control over the research process in conjunction with my pursuit of best ethical practice. The aim of using an open interview method was to encourage participants to talk freely and openly, in order to gain a deeper insight into how they understood their social world 'using language and ideas of their own' (Arksey & Knight 1999: 6-7; see also Acker et al. 1983). Hence I perceived my role as both listener and facilitator although, essentially, I wanted to create a situation in which participants would feel able to fully express their 'complex and conflicting experiences' (see Ghorashi 2005: 267). This method of interviewing was also considered to be an important feature of the research design in order to increase the chances of achieving theoretical generalisability (Mason 1996).

### **Identifying literature sources**

In keeping with the research design I was primarily concerned with identifying key issues and concerns emerging from participants' narratives, therefore in preparation for the fieldwork I analysed a broad, though not exhaustive, range of research material. This initial phase of the literature review provided the backdrop to the present study by identifying current sociological issues relevant to the research that guided general areas of interest. These included research on family issues within the social military context, for example marriage and occupational wives, the work-family interface, theories of change in families and households, marital adversity and divorce, and lone-parenting. The findings generated from the interviews subsequently instigated a second wave of literature analysis.

### **Additional sources**

During the early stages of the research process I corresponded with several people involved in military research. I also met with a researcher and an Army official who were based at the MoD in London. My conversations with the Chief Executives of two Family Associations and a visit to the SSAFA Headquarters in London were particularly helpful in identifying themes and issues. I was also fortunate to meet a married couple that had both previously served in the Royal Navy (the husband still being a member of the Royal Navy Reserves) who agreed to be interviewed, which provided a valuable dimension to the research. I have also met a large number of people throughout the research process who had 'something to say' about the Armed Forces, whether they had served themselves or were a relative of someone who had. A variety of documents, magazines and leaflets including surveys and information are widely available and accessible on the tri-Services Families Association Websites, including the Defence Analytical Services Agency (see Web resources, page 197).

It is also worth mentioning here the difficulties I experienced in obtaining access to academic research conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, that had been classified as confidential and may have proved useful to this thesis. Of particular consternation was the unavailability of a study on Army Wives by Colonel and Mrs. Gaffney, otherwise known as the Gaffney Report, which has been cited extensively in previous research since publication in 1986. I also made a number of unsuccessful attempts to access the report 'Supporting Forces Families' issued by the Liberal Democrats.

### **Study population**

Military, or service, wives can be defined as civilian women who are married to personnel in the British Armed Forces, whose lives are shaped and structured by their husband's employment and/or employer. The study population is conceptually driven and defined as ex-service wives, an appellation to describe both marital status (as either separated or divorced) and a former spouse's occupation. As Illingworth states, the sample was suitably "...representative of the phenomena of interest as opposed to the wider population" (2006: 1.6). In terms of both definitions I acknowledge, and respect, the ambiguity of such categorisations. Like Jolly (1992) I also use the interchangeable terms of military, service, and Armed Forces to encompass the Army, the Navy (including the Royal Marines) and the RAF. In doing so, I also acknowledge the individual, cultural and organisational identity of each Service.

It should be noted that participants are not regarded as spokespersons for their ex-partners, as disparity in perceptions and experiences of both marital relationships and family life may exist between couples (see Ribbens 1994). The focus is with participants' experiences and perceptions of *their* marriage, marital breakdown and post-divorce family life. However, the study does rely upon participant reports and perspectives on a non-resident father's social and financial involvement with their children. I also regarded participants as both social observers and key informants within their particular milieu (Brewer 2000).

### **Gaining access**

In deciding how to access potential participants my concerns were firstly to avoid the potentially distressing post separation period. Secondly, in doing so I might also run the risk of trying to appeal to people who wish to put the subject of marriage breakdown firmly behind them, rather than regurgitate their life story to a stranger. Adding to these concerns was my knowledge of the likelihood that ex-wives and their children may return to their original home area. I was under no illusion, therefore, that achieving a respectable sample might be difficult. I had to spread my net as wide as possible and I opted for a self-selected, or volunteer, sampling strategy. I contacted a number of newspapers, several with distinct catchments, for example Naval ports or garrison towns. I provided three channels for interested parties to contact me at the university by post, telephone and e-mail. It is worth noting that many participants used e-mail to contact me in the initial response phase of the research. In consideration of my geographical distance from the university it was necessary to work from home much of the time, therefore e-mail became an important facility for communicating throughout the

fieldwork and collaborative elements of the research process. It was also a suitable icebreaker, and often several e-mail exchanges occurred before telephone contact was made. Communicating via e-mail can often relieve some of the barriers and negative effects of shyness, and interpersonal difficulties, experienced by participants (Selwyn and Robson 1998). As I was lacking in confidence myself, I would argue the use of e-mail as an icebreaker is also of great advantage to researchers.

In total, fifteen ex-service wives responded to my newspaper requests, in some cases friends or relatives had made them aware of the project. Two snowball contacts were also made; one from a friend, and one as a result of a telephone conversation with another researcher. I also received a response as a result of sending a poster to a local RAF base, although this did present a dilemma. The decision to approach the HIVE manager at the RAF base was in lieu of the fact that I had not received any responses from ex-RAF wives at the time. I felt it necessary to move the goal posts in terms of the post-separation period. The respondent had only been separated for three months and had already received her notification to vacate her married quarter. Despite my initial concerns she was very keen to participate in the research.

Two people who responded by e-mail did not take things further following receipt of information about the study, although I was not surprised as I had doubted their authenticity. Another respondent declined after several e-mail exchanges as she was still very much embroiled in her divorce proceedings. All in all twenty ex-service wives consented to participate in the research, including two friends I had known for many years. My aim was to restrict the inclusion of personal contacts in the study as I was concerned about the difficulties I may encounter with the interview relationship. On reflection, these two interviews were probably the most difficult to effect sufficient distance so that nothing would be taken for granted by either party (see Siedman 1991). Conversely, the interview transcripts revealed my reluctance to probe sensitive subjects, for instance financial settlements and maintenance issues.

It was necessary to take into consideration the potential reasons why people might volunteer to participate in research, in that they may bring their own agendas to the interview situation (Kelly et al. 1994). I was sensitive to the fact that the research topic would most probably be both an emotive and political one for participants. Common responses were 'at last someone's taking notice' or 'it's about time something was done'. These women were keen to share their experiences and several even requested that I did not protect their anonymity, although I did not agree to this. For the majority of

participants they believed they had at last been offered a voice. One woman hailed me as a 'warrioress battling for justice' and presented me with hawk and eagle feathers. I did feel a huge sense of responsibility that I was often perceived as the spokesperson for many injustices that were felt, and this made me feel quite uncomfortable at times. However, in upholding my view that as a qualitative researcher I am also a participant in my study, I could not ignore my own biography and agenda as inherent features of the research process either.

### **Sample characteristics**

All participants are white and, unless otherwise stated, length of marriage is defined as the time of marital separation rather than by legal definition of divorce. References to an appellation as either husband or ex-husband, is dependent upon marital status within the context of the narratives. In terms of a participant's former connection to the military, for example ex-husband's affiliation to the tri-Services (Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF), status as either officer or other rank, and housing status as owner occupiers or living in service families accommodation, the sample was fairly evenly distributed, and I believed represented a suitable cross section of the military population. Additional demographics such as age, length of time married, length of time separated and divorced, parental status, and employment status suggested a largely heterogeneous sample with a diverse range of experiences (see Appendix B, page 199). Whilst ideally this was the type of sample I wished to aspire to, it was achieved more by serendipity than by design (see Brewer 2000). Again, my overall aim was to increase the chances of achieving degrees of theoretical generalisability as opposed to empirical generalisation.

### **Ethical Issues**

I believe all necessary steps were taken throughout this project to consciously follow the Statement of Ethical Practice set out by the British Sociological Association and Loughborough University. The research has been conducted overtly and the principle of consent has been applied throughout. Consent forms stating the agreement made with each person interviewed were used. Participants were made aware of the background to the research either by e-mail, by post, or face to face. I have ensured that to my very best efforts I have respected the privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of participants at all times. Participants have also been assured that further consent will be sought should publication(s) result from the study, as I became aware of the contradictions of stressing confidentiality with the permission to use data (see Siedman 1991). Participants were able to request a copy of their transcript, although only one person did so. It was made

clear to everyone that they held the power of veto and were at liberty to withdraw from the study at any time with no questions asked. I also gave participants the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym, although most were happy for me to decide. I was surprised at how difficult and sensitive a task this was.

Specific ethical issues have arisen and, whilst I do not feel this research is likely to have caused any harm to participants, it was inevitable that recalling and narrating sensitive biographical accounts might cause varying degrees of distress to some participants (see Corbin and Morse 2003). In consideration of this I designed a post-interview leaflet with the help of the university counseling service to offer sources of support if needed, which I handed to participants at the end of the interview or posted to them shortly afterwards. I believe, however, that the opportunity to talk to someone who understood their world was a positive experience, and several of these women apologised profusely for burdening me with their stories.

I was aware that in my role as researcher it is far easier for me to walk away from the interview situation, and I was mindful how this may affect participants (see Holland & Ramazanoğlu 1994: 142). I did, however, experience my own difficulties in 'leaving the field' and this will be discussed in more detail below. I have maintained contact with participants throughout the research process through newsletters, e-mails and phone calls, mainly giving an update on the research progress and enquiring into their general well being. In reciprocation I have received cards, letters and e-mails keeping me informed of news and events in their lives, for example a wedding and birth of a new baby, 'yet more problems with maintenance and the CSA', a new job and house move, and the award of a first class degree.

A final point also needs mentioning. On presenting myself as both a researcher and an ex-service wife meant that I was, or had been, at one time 'in the same boat' as participants. That I was addressing the subject in the first place generated a great deal of enthusiasm and interest. Everyone wanted to help, therefore establishing trust was not an issue. Like other researchers I faced difficulties in explaining the potential outcomes of the research (see Manson 2002). I made it clear in the detailed information I provided about the research that it was primarily for my PhD. During the interviews I was asked what I hoped to do with the research, and participants would say things like 'I know it can't do me any good now but hopefully it will help someone else'. From the outset I had never intended for the thesis to sit on a library shelf and gather dust. I also wanted to do something that could be of use outside the corridors of academia (Kelly et

al. 1994). My response to everyone who asked this question was that I wanted to write a book, publish some journal articles and compile a report of the research findings for the Ministry of Defence, SSAFA Forces Help and the tri-Service Family Associations. All I can hope is that in stating these objectives I have not misled anyone.

### **Conducting the fieldwork**

The interviews were conducted between January 2005 and January 2006 and represented an extremely challenging period within the research process. I could identify with Manson that, despite my eagerness to pursue what I believed to be a very important subject for investigation, the fieldwork was indeed 'relatively frightening' (2002: 15). I was aware of my own shyness and phobia of using the telephone so getting started was a major hurdle to overcome. A number of the interviews took several months to organise, consequently, it was far more time consuming and emotionally demanding than I could ever have imagined. In the end I drove over three and a half thousand miles throughout the UK to conduct the interviews, which proved to be a costly commitment in both financial and practical terms. When the fieldwork commenced I had no idea how many women I would be able to reach or would agree to participate in the study.

Given my methodological approach to the research the interviews were informal, due to the lack of pre-set questions steering this process. I also adopted a life history approach to the interviews, in the sense that I was asking participants to talk about their experiences within certain chronological periods in their lives (see Ribbens 1994). The validity of the research material generated by the initial interviews and relevance to the rationale of the research instilled much confidence in the research design. At this early stage of the fieldwork I considered several things that might account for this. Firstly, the subject was considered by participants to be highly significant, not just for themselves but also from a great concern for other women and children. This standpoint was also acknowledged by a number of people contacting me to lend support for the research, as the quotation at the beginning of Chapter One demonstrates (see page 12). Secondly, the opportunity for participants to tell their story provided a platform for their voices as ex-service wives to be heard. Existing methodological approaches to family problems in the military rarely address the population that are the most affected.

As I have mentioned above, the question of *when* is the right time to interview people in relation to a sensitive subject was an important consideration to the study. This issue stems primarily from an ethical concern to avoid approaching people who might be

experiencing a particularly traumatic stage in their life. It was evident from the initial interviews that both time and emotional distance was an important factor in reconstructing experiences and perceptions of marriage breakdown. Hence participants drew on a sense of deep self-reflection and I believe this insight shaped the research material significantly. As Siedman points out, “[r]econstruction is based partially on memory and partially on what the participant now senses is important about the past event” (1991: 67). As other research has shown, these women were generally very honest and open about their own failings in their relationships (see Ribbens 1994). The majority of participants had spent several years living as lone parents and were able to reflect on their experience of marriage, the ending of their marriage and their experience of lone parenthood (see Shaw 1991: 143). Hence my concern with issues of post-divorce family life represented the *present* for all of the women. I was aware that this was more likely to evoke emotive responses and was borne out in many of the interviews.

Wherever possible I explained to participants prior to meeting with them what they could expect in terms of the interview format, for example it was not my intention to ask them a long list of questions as I was interested in listening to *their* story. I wanted to know what they thought were the important issues and problems regarding family life and marriage breakdown in the military. In the majority of instances this was both understood and welcomed by participants, as the following extracts from two of the interviews demonstrate:

*No, I don't mind [talking to you] at all...and may be this might be of some help in some way. At least ...if this is some help it will be good. Whereas when I talk to friends, especially if I repeat it...it just makes me feel terrible. Why should [friends] have to listen to it? ...In a way, even though this is your research I still feel bad that, you know, I've gone on probably longer than I ought to have done.*

*It feels odd...when you think...gosh I can't believe I'm actually one of those statistics of a broken marriage. I mean, you obviously don't enter into a marriage and expect to be talking about [your divorce] but I do feel it's something that probably...we don't know enough [about]. And I don't think it's explored enough how people are... after the breakup of a marriage. If we just keep going in the way in which we are...expected to people just think, Oh...they must be fine and everything must be okay.*

There were many references to the effect that either nobody had wanted to listen to them, or no-one else could understand their experiences. As Siedman points out, “[i]n-depth interviewing often surprises participants because they have seldom had the opportunity to talk at length to someone outside their family or friends about their

experience” (1991: 66). My position as both ex-military wife and researcher meant that a certain degree of reciprocity was almost expected of me. Following one interview a participant exclaimed, ‘Oh look, now I am interviewing you!’

Whilst the research design and interview method allowed participants to talk openly and freely, it was also important that I retained some control over the interview process in order to remain within the parameters of the research (see McCracken 1988). Again, a combination of nerves and my inexperience revealed my reluctance in some instances to do this. This situation provoked a sense of anxiety for the reality of the researcher/researched power dynamic was all too apparent. I soon realised that in practice, the idea of allowing participants to talk freely is a contradiction and an ideal that perhaps few researchers are able to achieve. What was also very revealing for me in many of the interview situations was how easily I surrendered any position of status I may have established as a researcher. I often found myself completely in awe of the courage and tenacity that flowed through these women’s accounts of their stories. I did not consider how my interactions might be affected by being in the company of women who were more than a few years older than myself, moreover, in the company of former officer’s wives. It cannot always be assumed that the researcher’s authority in an interview situation is more significant than that of the researched.

Whilst I had approached the fieldwork with an aide-memoir several of the interviews were more structured. Each interview scenario was very different, and the process and context were dependent on a number of things. Essentially, I was a stranger entering someone’s home and personal space and asking them to disclose intimate and sensitive details of their life with me. I had assumed that in asking participants to tell me their life story and disclose their experiences they would be both willing and able to do so. It was apparent that several participants felt somewhat awkward about this therefore the interview became more formal. In these instances I tended to raise questions on themes that had arisen during previous interviews, thus following more of a grounded theory format (see Glaser & Strauss 1967). In the main, any questions were usually generated from participants’ responses (Siedman 1991).

It is also worth noting that in spite of these difficulties I felt that all the interview situations were secure enough for me to take certain risks. I did not feel that participants were likely to succumb to interviewer effects. I was not afraid to probe and ask the sorts of questions that textbooks on good interviewing suggest we avoid (for example, Arksey and Knight 1999). In fact participants were more than happy to ardently disagree with

me on many occasions. The majority of the interviews ebbed and flowed in the form of an oral history beginning with how participants met their ex-husband and ending with the present time, and ranged from between one to three hours in length. All participants consented to being recorded on audio-tape and, on the whole, this was not considered obtrusive.

A few problems were encountered with suitable seating arrangements and this did affect some of the recordings and transcription, my voice at times being inaudible. In several of the interviews there were distractions and interruptions including the comings and goings of partners, children, dogs, and cats; snakes in a cage, but I still struggled with that one; televisions; phone-calls; and darkness, on two occasions I had to ask people to switch the light on. Many of the interviews were emotional events. We laughed a lot, and I also went home and cried a lot. On meeting these women I politely introduced myself, showed my student identification card and we shook hands. By the time I left the impulse to give everyone a big hug was overwhelming, although I resisted. In some cases I was the one being hugged, for these women could not resist. I often left the interview situation feeling very heavy with emotion; sometimes anger and sometimes sadness and frustration. Several of these women's stories defied comprehension.

### **Researcher well-being**

Following the penultimate interview in November 2005 it was difficult to ignore the fact that I had become both physically and emotionally exhausted. The fieldwork was incredibly challenging more so than I could have possibly imagined. As previously mentioned my position in the research as ex-service wife undoubtedly afforded me an 'epistemological privilege' and represented a key factor in this study (see Stanley and Wise 1993). It helped to generate a wealth, depth and quality of material in the interviews that might not have otherwise been possible in such a relatively small sample. Almost all participants were very open and willing to talk about difficult and sensitive issues. I was ill prepared for some of the difficulties that had been faced by several participants that extended way beyond the general accounts of women's experiences as military wives in the extant literature. Even so, I had still managed to locate myself in several of these texts, particularly those from a feminist perspective, which had subsequently invoked many deep emotional reactions within me.

When I started the fieldwork I realised that I had already begun a process of detaching myself emotionally in the initial stages of the research as a way of coping with my feelings. Reflecting on this process I had gone to great lengths to deny and remove my

subjectivity and autobiographical position within the research (see Birch 1998: 182). This resulted in a tension between the researcher as objective and my methodological approach. Consequently the interview process brought me down to earth with a bump, as these two very different extracts from my field notes convey:

*I stood at the bow of the ship looking across to the approaching harbour, knowing that a complete stranger would be there to invite me into her home and was eager to talk to me. I was thinking about how everything had come together for this moment to 'be'. The years of thinking, questioning, searching, fighting, struggling, and educating myself in order to arrive at this moment. I had a Kate Winslett 'moment' when she was standing at the bow of the Titanic with Leonardo di Caprio (except, of course, that I was on my own) trying hard to resist the temptation to put my arms out and shout 'I'm the King of the world!' (19 February 2005).*

*Got home at 2am. [This interview] lasted a lot longer than I anticipated, nearly four hours in fact. I have spent most of today crying, or feeling like I wanted to cry. This interview has affected me the most so far, emotionally and psychologically. I am not looking forward to transcribing the tapes. I think this is the closest I have come to listening to my own story, and that is why I have found it so hard. I felt so desperately, desperately sorry for this woman. She needed answers from me, and I just couldn't give them to her (22 April 2005).*

I was totally unprepared for dealing with some of the sensitive and harrowing accounts, and the mirroring effect of several of the women's narratives on my own life story. Inevitably these difficulties also affected the transcription and analysis phases during the research process and these were considerably protracted. Eventually I reached crisis point and it was myself, rather than participants, who was forced to seek help and I eventually suspended my research.

The issue of researcher well-being is a separate but equally important consideration to the physical safety of researchers, something that I wish I had paid more attention to (see McCosker et al. 2001). As this next extract from my field notes demonstrates, I obviously *did* have a sense of what I might encounter from the outset:

*I was driving down to [the South West] today on my first 'field trip' avidly listening to the Jeremy Vine show on Radio 2. The topic up for discussion was the recent rape and murder of Cambridge student Sally Geeson, and the subsequent suicide of David Atkinson. He was a 31 year old Lance Corporal in the Army, and had already been associated with a number of rapes, sexual assaults and attempted abduction. He had previously spent 8 months in a military prison for an offence involving a Polish woman in Germany. The callers seemed quite incredulous that Atkinson had not been shopped to the civilian police, or at least kicked out of the Army. I thought these callers were incredibly naïve. I shouted at the top of my voice 'God, just go ask an ex-military wife...she'll tell you!' Well...the next caller must have heard me! Her name was Sarah, a pseudonym*

*no doubt, and she was an ex-Army wife. Her story was fairly extreme, and particularly harrowing, of how her husband had repeatedly raped her to the extent that she had been hospitalised. The upshot of her story was that she had wanted him prosecuted, but military officials had persuaded her to 'drop it' because she would ruin his career. She also said that her husband had told her that no one would believe her anyway. The military protect its personnel above all else (12 January 2005).*

I was far more concerned with protecting research participants and the data from *myself* that I did not think that I would need to effectively manage the impact of the research and data *on myself* (see Hubbard et al. 2001). I was also too close to the research to adequately assess the risks to researcher well-being. I believe that placing this responsibility solely on researcher and supervisor is inadequate, especially for someone like myself who has spent many years as a service wife 'getting on with it'. I am not particularly versed in asking for help until perhaps it is too late. However, some important lessons were learned that I will take forward into my next research project.

### **Data analysis**

All the interviews were transcribed verbatim and represented a very time consuming process. Ultimately, I was overwhelmed by the amount of research material that had been generated from the interviews. I appreciated, very quickly, some of the disadvantages of adopting an unstructured interview method during the transcription and analysis phases (Arksey and Knight 1999). Without prior experience of conducting primary research the task of analysing almost seven hundred pages of interview transcripts was, to say the least, a daunting prospect. These issues are compounded for a novice researcher by the overall lack of attention paid in research accounts to data analysis that, according to McCracken, is "...perhaps the most demanding and least examined aspect of the qualitative research process" (1988: 41). Indeed, such criticisms have even been extended to feminist research. Great emphasis has been placed on issues concerning reflexivity during the research process, yet a commitment to transparency seems rarely to extend to data analysis (Attride Stirling 2001; Mauthner and Doucet 1998).

Whilst my own experiences provided the impetus for the research, my decision to use a loosely structured interview technique was fundamental to drawing out similarities and differences in women's experiences within the parameters of the research. In designing a study to respect the voices of ex-service wives, as far as that is possible, I was uneasy about adopting a method of analysis that would risk chopping up the interview transcripts into thematic categories. As mentioned above, I had also found myself at the

heart of several of these women's life histories and this often proved to be an extremely powerful (and painful) experience for me. I was able to identify with Reay who acknowledges that we must "come to recognize this centrality as a strength only when it is embedded in an understanding of the weaknesses associated with being center stage" (1996: 65). I became very aware of the potential dangers inherent in my deep empathy and the (probable) effects this may have on the process of interpretation. Consequently, I felt an even greater sense of responsibility to approach the analysis with a clear head and heart, whilst at the same time acknowledging that my position as researcher cannot and should not appear detached, objective and value-free.

Analysis of the transcripts presented me with a number of dilemmas, although I was unable to ignore the ultimate goal of the research - the quest of the PhD. What I had to come to terms with is that all research is a compromise (Arksey and Knight 1999: 171). Accepting this stance is a hard pill to swallow for a novice researcher who is striving to do the right thing, hence the learning curve is a steep one. Most of the difficulties I experienced throughout the research process were mainly due to the fact that I was so keen to exclude my intuitive responses and emotionally-sensed knowledge (see Hubbard et al. 2001). Not only did it seem like I was constantly placing unworkable and inflexible constraints on the research I concluded that, like Van Every (1995), I was also slightly haunted by the ghost of positivism and the rigours of social science. It was crucial to realign myself to respect my own voice and perspective within the research process, and to acknowledge that my emotions are an important part of my cognitive and analytic research tools. This theme of emotion began to emerge in a number of ways.

I had kept both a research and fieldwork journal and accumulated a mountain of theoretical notes since the beginning of the research process. These were analysed together with the interview transcripts utilising an adaptation of Gordon and colleagues (2000) three-stage process of analysis: thematic, interpretive, and extractive. The starting point for analysis was rooted partly in questions that were raised from the literature analysis but primarily: what were the stories these women were telling me? How did these women construct their narratives? The concept of narrative is essentially about identity and agency, how decisions are made within a context of constraint or facilitation, what matters in life and how the past is interpreted through the 'lens of the present' (Mason 2004: 164-5).

What had struck me almost immediately was how a number of metaphors of action were embedded in participants' multi-layered narratives, a theme also evident from the literature analysis which appeared to be a form of emotional coping. Such metaphors, for example 'getting on with it', 'don't rock the boat' and 'picking up the pieces' revealed certain contradictions in the reconstructions of both past and present experiences. These action metaphors appeared to be concealing the experience of emotion (see Katz 1990). These responses were also often objectified in that they were attributed to a second person, for example, *you* instead of *I* 'just had to get on with it' and *they* to mean husband 'it's their job' as opposed to 'it's his job'. As Gordon and colleagues state, "[m]etaphors translate, invent and betray...[they] both conceal and reveal...clarify and confuse... tell one story whilst neglecting others" (2000: 12). In my analysis of the research material I was drawn to the stories that lay beneath the metaphors from a concern of potential discrepancies in interpretation. As Fontana and Frey observe, "[t]he use of language, particularly the use of specific terms, is important in the creation of a "sharedness of meanings" in which both the interviewer and respondent understand the contextual nature of specific referents" (2000: 660, emphasis in original). In other words, if I fail to focus on the neglected stories, would I be telling it the way it really is in terms of adequacy of interpretation (see Acker et al. 1983: 431-432).

It was at this stage of analysis that I made a connection to the role of emotion in the military. I had happened across Hochschild's work when investigating the issue of researcher well-being. I realised that what I believed to be missing from existing analysis of the military was a focus on emotion, and this truly represented a 'eureka' moment. In developing an analysis of the role of emotion in the military further questions were posed; *how* does a service wife meet the expectations and demands of family life in the military and what are the consequences if she refuses to soldier? The first stage was to look for key themes emerging from the data. I read and re-read through each transcript to generate a set of descriptive codes for the interview content. The majority of the codes emerged from four interviews, chosen for ease of process because they were shorter and more structured. Additional codes were generated with each subsequent interview. A number of themes began to emerge that could be separated into turning points in participants' lives, which inevitably overlapped to some extent. Whilst I had technically submitted to chopping up the interview transcripts each story was indelibly etched in my head and heart, and I believe I held onto the essence of each interview within this process.

The second stage of analysis involved revisiting the data to interpret and conceptualise the content within the identified themes. My theoretical connection to the emotional labour of service wives was presented to a number of the women in my research who were happy to offer feedback on my analysis of the interview material. I was suitably satisfied with the positive feedback I received as to the validity of my analysis. A conceptualising of the role of emotion in the military therefore provided the basis for a new construction of the problem of marriage breakdown in the military. The third stage of analysis is the process of selection and extraction to draw out illustrations of themes and concepts, in terms of both presenting the interview material and analysing existing research and discourses (see Gordon et al. 2000: 11-12). The rationale was to look for commonalities and differences, anomalies and ambiguities, models of coping, cultural narratives and patterns of the way people do things that link to wider discourses and narratives (see Raisborough 2006).

### **Presenting data**

The interviews are cited extensively throughout Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. In order to assure confidentiality, as far as possible, participants' details have been anonymised. Certain details have been changed, or omitted, in order to protect anonymity including geographical locations and references to family members, friends and others. Like van Every (1995) my decisions to include specific quotations have been made selectively, on the premise of how constructively they validate, or challenge, current empirical research and theoretical conjecture. When quoting from the interview data the following conventions are used: '...' indicates discontinuity in the participants' speech; '[...]' indicates that I have omitted part of what they have said for clarity and concision; text in square brackets I have added for clarification.

### **Summary**

The concern of this chapter has been to present a 'methodological audit trail' for analysis, by disclosing ways in which the decisions I have made have influenced the outcome of the research (see Seale 1999). In defending the validity of the study I have sought to engage in a high degree of reflexivity throughout the research process in order that I may account for both my personal biography and experience of the subject matter. In the following chapter I examine the problematisation of marriage breakdown in relation to the interplay between social structural changes and the organisational reality of the military. In Chapter Four I am concerned with how existing discourses frame the impact of demands on service family life. The interview material is then

presented, in relation to the analysis of existing problem representations, in Chapters Five, Six and Seven.

### 3. Emotion management, organisational reality, and social change

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[D]efence forces that met standards of political correctness would not merely be absurd; they would be a source of danger and instability.

Gerald Frost (2002: 39).

#### **Introduction**

In Chapter One I set out a theoretical framework for constructing new problem representations in relation to marriage breakdown in the military. In this Chapter I develop this framework to incorporate a theoretical connection to the management of emotion in the military. The Armed Forces have come under pressure in recent years to 'move with the times' in that military culture has attracted criticism for being old fashioned and stuck in the past (Jolly 1992; Manson 2002). Consequently, there has been much debate as to exactly how the Armed Forces can change, and what needs to remain different, in order to maintain the high levels of professionalism and operational effectiveness required.

The focus of discussion for this chapter is that family problems in relation to military policy first need to be understood as a construct of the ideology and feeling rules of the military institution. An analysis of the socialisation of emotion in the military is necessary in order to understand how relational norms for service families are contextualised. The resultant tensions and contradictions arising from processes of 'continuity and social change' within the Armed Forces it would appear that the institutional demands for emotional labour have increased significantly in recent times. I start by examining the relationship between emotion management and cohesion in the military.

#### **Emotion management and military cohesion**

In *The Managed Heart* Hochschild (2003) fleetingly refers to the emotion roused by the military so that young men will actually go 'willingly' to war and fight. This feeling, she argues, is put to civic use and, "...offered up as a momentary contribution to the collective good" (2003: 18) which begs the question: what happens if the military organisation is unable to rouse this feeling? Personnel might not be so willing to go to war. In other words, what happens when the shame of humiliation and cowardice is not enough to keep him in the 'swirl and din of combat' as running away might *not* be worse than death itself (Stewart 1994: 148; see also Kovitz 2003). What Hochschild highlights, perhaps inadvertently, is a connection between emotion and military cohesion, and

provides a further example of the appropriateness of adopting a contextual approach to studying the role of emotion in the military. Contact and affectivity, in terms of the military organisation, can be related to the context of employee-to-employee interactions (see Figure 1, page 30). These interactions are considered private and occur backstage as opposed to public front stage interaction (Kramer and Hess 2002: 67).

The Armed Forces represent an organisation where such private, or backstage, interactions are fundamental in relation to the link between military cohesion and operational or combat effectiveness. Personnel are required to manage their own feelings in pursuit of group preservation, as opposed to individual preservation. The orientation of emotion management in the military is on getting the job done with the least loss of life and injury to civilians and personnel. As Stewart comments, “[w]e are not referring to job efficiency, or meeting production quotas, or increasing the point total of a football team, but death and dying for the good of the group. That’s the essence of military cohesion. Because combat is a nasty, brutish place to be” (1994: 149).

In the current socio-political climate, the Armed Forces have been compelled to modernise employee practices. Some of these changes have been directly linked to a negative impact on military and unit cohesion: the lifting of the ban on homosexual activity and the increasing number of roles open to women in the military, controversially frontline infantry roles; and the erosion and fragmentation of military communities, which I explore in more detail below. An understanding of the interplay between emotion management and military cohesion is important here in looking at the potential for disruption to organisational reality. As Fineman points out, the ‘social sharing of emotion’ can, “...substantially redefine the emotional material and contribute to the emotional texture of the organization [whereby the]...explicit or implicit work of others symbolically recontextualizes the emotions” (1993: 217). For soldiers entering the theatre of war such an event might be felt and experienced differently if personnel did, indeed, have a ‘chin-wag’ about orders. A further example of how the social sharing of emotions can disrupt the organisational reality of the military is the long-standing perception regarding post-conflict operations, where counselling and talking about emotions has been regarded as taboo (see Wessley 2005).

Even though it is argued that the Armed Forces are currently experiencing profound historic changes the military has long been exemplary at protecting its organisational reality which is achieved, in part, through group cohesion. The construct of cohesion is defined by King as ‘the collective effectiveness of military groups in combat’ (2006: 510).

Whilst combat (operational) effectiveness can be viewed as the overarching goal of the military, hence cohesion would be expected to be at its highest level, cohesion is also demanded in non-combat and basic training units (Siebold 2007). So we may think of this as levels of cohesion. Defining how military cohesion is actually *achieved* is somewhat problematic. As Siebold points out, “[c]ohesion is not an entity or thing, nor is it easily recognized or its level readily agreed on by knowledgeable military observers” (2007: 288). A number of researchers have used the standard social psychological model to varying degrees during the past two decades to examine cohesion in the US military (Siebold 2007). More recently, a sociological model of cohesion in the British military has been developed from an ethnographic study of the Royal Marines (see King 2006, 2007).

The standard model of military cohesion is based on social integration produced by two essential elements; primary and secondary group bonding. According to Siebold, military cohesion is, “a social-relationship product or form generated by the interactions and experiences of the group members in the context of their daily military activities” (2007: 287). Primary group bonding produces the fighter through levels of sequential components; institutional, bonding before entry to the Service; vertical, bonding with leaders in basic training; and horizontal, peer bonding within smaller units. Social relationships between military members built on trust and teamwork produce the essence of peer bonding, which is reinforced by secondary group bonding to the military organisation through professional development (ibid: 288). Essentially, soldiers are willing to fight and risk their lives in the ‘swirl and din of combat’ because they have developed *informal* personal relationships and intimate bonds with fellow members: their job being to protect and watch out for each other.

In King’s model (2006, 2007) military training and established modes of collective drill and effective communication are fundamental to military cohesion, particularly in combat. If personnel are not committed to, nor understand the formal rituals and necessity of training so that they can perform their role effectively in combat deployments, peacekeeping missions or training exercises, they may be perceived as unprofessional and untrustworthy. It is only by members proving they are up to the job that trust is gained, cohesion is achieved, and personnel become integrated into the group, gaining access to more personal, intimate relationships, and informal masculine and hypermasculine rituals. Whilst King (2007) does not deny that social relations are important ingredients in military cohesion he advocates that cohesion is the product of formal training and collective professionalism, rather than informal social relationships

and intimate bonds. Both of these approaches have provoked a somewhat chicken and egg debate between the authors, however what is important to the present study is that cohesion in the military, whether achieved through formal or informal rituals, will often have a bearing on marital relationships and family life.

What is lacking in the extant literature is a discussion on the support required from service wives in the pursuit of peer bonding; the personal relationships developed through informal hyper-masculine rituals. That the military is constructed as uniformly masculine (see Kovitz 2003) has implications for the construction of gender within the service family, as I discuss in more detail further on in this chapter. The emotional labour performed by service personnel is shaped by military customs within a hierarchical organisation, which provides a system of circulatory socialisation and assimilation into the institutional goals and feeling rules of the military. Moreover, service wives have been conceptualised in much of the extant literature as being 'married to the military'. Wives are incorporated into their husband's job and have a role to play in support of husband's career and the organisational goals of the military.

Most discussions concerning the role of service wife have focused on the formal side to this role, for example the expectations associated with pre-deployment training, exercise drills, separation, courses, postings, and combat deployment. The emotional labour performed by service wives will consequently be shaped by military customs and ideology within a hierarchical organisation, a theme I examine in more detail in the following Chapter. Military cohesion is therefore achieved through the interplay of military culture (ideology) and feeling rules. Military culture, therefore, plays a pivotal role in the management of both the formal and informal rituals that contribute to military cohesion. In the next section I discuss how the role of culture shapes the emotional lives of personnel to engage with, and execute, the institutional goals of the military.

### **Military culture and feeling rules**

In Chapter One (page 26) I was concerned with the military occupation in terms of precedent, to argue that it is more than just another job. The military, as Frost points out, "...sustains a culture which has developed over time in response to practical needs, and whose special quality reflects the fact that members of the Armed Forces must expect to take lives and risk their own" (2002: 37). The military advocates 'appropriate emotional response and display' therefore military culture is a vital form of behaviour control in the socialisation of personnel. Emotion is managed through training and the hierarchy of the military organisation. Recruits are isolated from the outside world, stripped down and re-

socialised by processes that are 'ritually sealed and almost inescapable' (see Hochschild 2003: 19). They will be eager to measure up to the image of the soldier which is traditionally cultivated from 'a diet of fear and ridicule during the first month' (Beevor 1990: 15).

It is through processes of recruitment, selection, and performance evaluation that a social reality is developed, and the management of feeling becomes essential for 'achieving instrumental goals' (Putnam and Mumby 1993: 37). The systematic basic training of recruits therefore shapes emotional learning as processes of professionalisation. Recruits learn how to *become* a soldier, sailor, pilot, engineer and so on. After the initial 'shock and awe' of training recruits learn to switch off emotionally and become self-protective automatic pilots (Beevor 1990: 13). In terms of the interplay between emotional labour and military cohesion, emotions are personified in the language and symbols of members and important to the study of organisational culture (Putnam and Mumby 1993: 36). The ideology (culture) of the military dictates the norms and values (the display and feeling rules) giving social pattern to acts of emotion management in military roles.

The military represents a physical zone, where physical effort and the control of emotions are essential. The rituals of collective drill and communication expressed by King (2006, 2007) relates to how the human body is located and controlled in organisations. Such formal tasks involve controlling the body in the pursuit of military cohesion will structure emotional experiences of work. The formal roles and tasks that exercise overt and covert control of emotional displays can be understood as the emotional labour of military personnel. Military culture is therefore fundamental to the 'display and feeling rules' to indoctrinate acceptable forms of emotional responses from personnel as a form of order and social control.

The UK Armed Forces is a large-scale organisation that is capable of developing and maintaining its own internal culture, an ideology that positively depends on a need to be 'different' from the wider society (Dandeker 1999). As I have mentioned, the organisational culture of the military is far from homogenous. Each individual Service also promotes its own sub-culture, which has been established and maintained by each Service's role in relation to defence of the nation, and the different roles played out in various missions and contingencies. Accounting for individual Service sub-cultures is necessary when considering the demands for emotional labour from both personnel and their spouses. Within each of the Service sub-cultures there are a number of diverse

roles and associated demands that are pivotal to operational effectiveness framed by the overarching mission of the Armed Forces. As Sarkesian and Connor point out, the *overarching* culture directing the institutional goals of the military is “...aimed at defence of the nation and is shaped by the primary mission of war fighting” (1999: 178). Such layers of sub-cultural organisation might be understood in the following way:

Figure 2. Interconnected Levels of Organisational Culture in the Armed Forces

<b>Overarching Culture</b>	Defence of the nation and sub-national threats
<b>Inter-service culture</b>	Diversity of defence missions and contingencies as carried out by the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy
<b>Intra-service culture</b>	Diversity of roles e.g. pilot, families officer, chef, bandsman, payroll clerk, vehicle mechanic, surgeon, nurse, infantry soldier

Whilst the direct level of threat to the British nation has declined, the demands of meeting sub-national threats and increasing participation in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions post 9/11 has intensified. Such demands were not anticipated in the wake of the cuts in defence expenditure during the mid 1990s when the Armed Forces were streamlined. Hence the term *overstretch* is now widely used by military commentators, and generally refers to the length and frequency of (back-to-back) operational deployments that is fundamentally linked to issues of recruitment and retention (Strachan 2002: 102; Rona et al. 2007).

According to Karney and Crown (2007) the context of operational demands for the Armed Forces has changed significantly for the new generations of service families in advanced societies. The expected roles for spouses are tied very closely to a combination of demographic change, emerging missions, and constrained resources (Harrell 2003: 77). At the same time, service families have witnessed a number of wider social changes that place greater emphasis on individual choice, autonomy and dilution of the hierarchical model of the family (Karney and Crown 2007). As I discuss below, changes in expectations of marriage and family processes in the wider society are

perceived to be disrupting the gendered organisational reality of the military. A number of academics and commentators frame the military and the family as institutions that compete for the resources of personnel. As this thesis contends this is not particularly helpful. As a result of changes in the wider society, institutional demands have increased in recent years creating contradictions and tensions for personnel and their spouses, which I address in the following section.

### **Military culture in transition**

Since the ending of the Cold War, changes in the perceived threat to the nation have impacted on both the structure of the UK Armed Forces and mission definitions, for example increasing commitments to international peacekeeping operations (PKO). Social changes that have impacted on the military include the demands for greater equality of opportunity for both women and members of ethnic minorities, in order that the Armed Forces better reflects the society it represents. Some of these changes are also thought to arise from such influences as the feminist movement, an increase in married women's participation in the labour market, changing ideas on co-habitation and family practices, voluntary childlessness, and consumption and lifestyle changes (Manson 2002: 4; Jolly 1992). Consequently, the organisational reality of the military is disrupted by wider social forces, most notably since the mid 1990s. The degrees to which these changes can be regarded as significant within the context of continuity in military culture are hotly debated. Liberal commentators regard the changes as not significant enough, while conservatives decry how 'political correctness' has destroyed the vital ethos of the military.

The Armed Forces are one of the last public services to undergo processes of modernisation and change into the twenty-first century; a process aggravated by issues regarding the recruitment and retention of personnel, and difficulties experienced by many military families trying to establish a manageable 'work-life' balance (Bett Report 1995; Dandeker 2000; Harries-Jenkins 1983; Strategic Defence Review (SDR) 1998, Defence Policy 2001). As I discussed in Chapter One, a connection between the problems faced by military families, and the impact this may have on recruiting and retaining personnel, has become a major policy issue for the MoD. In laying down new objectives for personnel the SDR (1998) pledged 'a policy for people' incorporating an agenda to change the way the Armed Forces perceives both the personal lives of serving members and their families. It is undoubtedly the first time that personnel and family issues have been afforded such high priority in military strategy (Alexandrou 2002; Dandeker 2000; Dandeker and Mason 2001; Regan de Bere 1999).

The Armed Forces Overarching Personnel Strategy was constructed to provide a centralised Human Resource Management for serving/ex-serving personnel and their families. The policy was built on twenty eight Personal Strategy Guidelines to reflect a 'cradle to grave and beyond' philosophy, the aims of which were far-reaching. At the same time, emphasis was placed on the high standards of professionalism and core values synonymous with the military that were presenting greater challenges for operational effectiveness in contemporary times. Ultimately society would have to accept that the military needed to remain 'different' in order to maintain these imperatives. The Armed Forces are representative of an organisation that is culturally resistant to change, which can directly affect individuals particularly if the workplace represents a person's primary identity and 'reason for being' (Fineman 1993: 220). As I discuss below and in the following Chapter, the military creates and sustains both gendered and institutional identities. It is when people are seen as people, rather than the roles that are performed in the military, that the system starts to break down (Michalowski 1983: 328). Consequently, there is much debate as to *exactly* what it is about the Armed Forces that can change, without negatively impacting on military cohesion and operational effectiveness, and what it is that *should* remain different (Frost 2002; Wildman 2002).

A commitment by the MoD to improve equality of opportunity to both women and members of ethnic communities has drawn attention to the institutionalised cultural processes of the military, placing the Armed Forces under the spotlight as an employer (Dandeker and Mason 2001; Kümmel 2002; Woodward and Winter 2006). Social changes within the military context are, for the most part, externally induced through legislative pressures brought about by equal opportunities and diversity policies. The cultural lag the military are so often criticised for would suggest that social change is 'begrudgingly' accepted rather than fully embraced (Higate 2003b: 203). Women, members from ethnic communities and homosexuals, groups that have been particularly rebuffed in the past, are now regarded as an essential recruitment pool. For instance, whilst the MoD may be generally keen to recruit women to the military, the driving force may be less about equal opportunity and changing gender roles, and more to do with recruitment shortages (Kennedy-Pipe and Welch 2002).

At the same time women's full participation in the military is limited. The ban on women in frontline troops that engage in close quarter battle is legitimised in terms of damage to operational effectiveness. Incessant references to women's physical strength and

stamina, privacy issues and impact on unit cohesion are emphasised to maintain the status quo (Harries-Jenkins 2002: 759). A shift in focus from 'equality of opportunity' to 'management of diversity' within military policy highlights the construction of gender within the cultural practices of the Armed Forces (Woodward and Winter 2006). This ideology, as Woodward and Winter argue, is grounded in "...the construction of gender and female difference within the traditionally masculinist organization" (2006: 46).

The issue of homosexuals has also attracted much debate. Despite the 'decriminalisation' of homosexual activity, it is still considered incompatible with military service although there is little evidence to support this perception. The military promotes a 'don't ask, don't tell' culture with regard to homosexuality, whereby administrative discharges will be dealt to those who engage in homosexual activities (Dandeker 2000: 44). Issues of diversity and difference are perceived to disrupt the organisational reality of the Armed Forces by impacting on group cohesion and normative processes. Previous research has focused on the construction of gender and difference in the military in relation to women's role and participation in the Armed Forces (see Woodward and Winter 2004, 2006). As I discussed above, legislative pressures to improve access and opportunities for women in the military disrupts organisational reality. Women as personnel present a potential threat to operational effectiveness in terms of 'polluting or contaminating' group cohesion and the uniform construction of the military as masculine (Kovitz 2003: 6). What is less discussed, particularly in the UK military context, is how the mapping of gender in relation to service families presents a similar threat in terms of 'pollution or contamination' of the family as a threat to operational effectiveness.

### **Gender ideology and feeling rules**

Academic research on the subject of 'men, masculinities and the military' draws attention to the gendered practices operating within the Armed Forces that will often have considerable impact on those located both inside and outside this arena; women and children in particular (see Higate 2003). As Harrison (2003) has argued, it is impossible to avoid 'doing' gender and the military. The military is both a gendered and gendering institution that creates and maintains gendered identities (Barrett 2001: 97). Research on US Navy Officers demonstrates that recruits who cannot keep up with their peers. or complain about their treatment, are subjected to gendered insults (see *ibid*: 82). According to Harrison (2006) the essential and defining characteristics of military culture are unit cohesion and hypermasculinity, which create culturally constructed roles

for personnel and their spouses. The military, by its very nature, is a patriarchal institution (Connell 2002: 141).

Currently, the proportion of women serving in the British Armed Forces is around 9 per cent (DASA). Married female personnel are underrepresented by almost half in comparison to national trends (cf. TSP11 2007 with Social Trends 2006). Those that do marry are reported to marry fellow male colleagues (Milroy 1996; Newcomb 1996). A number of reasons might explain an apparent disincentive to marriage between female personnel and civilian husbands. Firstly, in a study of the US military it was found that civilian husbands earned approximately 70 per cent, in comparison to civilian husbands of working civilian wives who had not moved during the past five years (Little and Hisnanick 2007: 566).

Secondly, there has always been a sense of 'ideological awkwardness' to the position of the male military spouse, which also translates to women's role in the military in terms of the construction of gender and difference which I discussed above. It is the unspoken gendered expectations that a soldier is male, therefore the military spouse is female that makes military husbands 'politically significant' (see Newcomb 1996: 7; see also Harrell 2003). A male military spouse is not expected to perform the same informal welfare and community duties as a female spouse, or leave his job every time his wife is posted (Enloe 1988: 78). The military spouse is defined in terms of gender rather than spousehood, a role that is constructed as natural for the caretaker nurturer woman, the morale booster and comforter of the wounded (Duhan Kaplan 1994).

Thirdly, it has been argued that women in the military are not generally representative of the general population of women, particularly regarding work experiences; they are more representative of a smaller population who have chosen particularly demanding careers (see MFRI). As I mentioned above, women's exclusion from certain roles and, more specifically, those that will engage in close quarter battle with the enemy fuels a protracted debate (see Chandler et al. 1995; Dandeker 2000; Harries-Jenkins 2002). The justification of women's exclusion from these roles is by Othering and also relates to the issue of homosexuality. As Barrett states, being 'undisciplined, scattered, emotional and unreliable' is associated with the feminine. One of the justifications for the ban on homosexuals in the military was 'their lack of discipline and reliability' and perceived 'security risk' (2001: 82). It is unsurprising that non-conforming men are perceived to impact on unit cohesion and morale (Kovitz 2003).

Attention to constructions of gender and female difference, and how this shapes marriage and family life in the UK military, has received little attention. Approximately ninety per cent of personnel serving in the UK Armed Forces are male, and appear to closely match the marital status of men in the wider population (cf. TSP11 2007 with Social Trends 2006). Caution is required, as I have previously discussed in terms of marital status definitions of serving personnel, when making comparisons with the wider population. Despite this caveat, women represent the largest number of military spouses. The military is regarded, historically, as a gendered organisation whereby spousal co-operation to a traditional gender order has been tacitly assumed, if not demanded in order to support militarism and operational effectiveness (Duhan-Kaplan 1994). The term 'traditional' is often used by academics and commentators on military issues. Within the social sciences, however, it is viewed as a problematic concept in that it is socially constructed. The definition of traditional central to this thesis refers to a gendered role segregation model, such that in everyday life women's activity is restricted to the domestic and family role, while men's roles are located outside of the family.

The traditional family model is often referred to as the male breadwinner/female carer model. In Britain the concept of the male-breadwinner model was developed to reflect the Beveridge ideal of a post WWII 'societal-gendered division of labour' (Warren 2000: 351). An adaptation of this model in the military context might be that the obligation to *serve* militarism is clear for personnel, and the obligation to *care* and *support militarism* is clear for women (as wives). For male personnel, generally speaking, their position on this scale is absolute. It is not their status as breadwinners or workers which define their role within the family but their subjugation to the military. Hence, the notion of 'caring work' in the lives of personnel is not something that can be easily negotiated. It might go some way to explaining why many personnel leave early, or do not extend their service contracts for family reasons (see Jolly 1996; Regan de Bere 1999). The traditional gendered roles that are fundamental to military imperatives are challenged by changes and expectations in the wider society, which in turn threatens the organisational reality of the Armed Forces.

A conflict between occupational roles and family roles might be understood in relation to the concept of deep acting (Hochschild 2003). Both roles demand emotional expressions, or feelings, and are linked to identity discourses. It has been argued that in the wider social context the male breadwinner/female carer model, long portrayed as the bedrock of society, has given way to a more diverse view of the family, or family

'practices' (see Lewis 2001; Silva and Smart 1999). Policy rhetoric in the wider social context increasingly positions men's identities as fathers, and women's identities as workers (Lewis 2002; Scourfield and Drakeford 2002). However, as Lewis has pointed out, the gap between the erosion of normative expectations in the wider social context and how this is negotiated at the level of the family is a difficult process which may lead to the breakdown of the relationship (Lewis 2001: 22).

It is widely argued that spousal roles for women married to military personnel are 'culturally constructed' (see Harrell 2003, and Harrison and Laliberté 1994). The service family is also subjected to varying degrees of institutionalisation and paternalism (Jolly 1992). As I examine in the following sections, there is increasing emphasis amongst military commentators that military wives are now less willing to accept and conform to the demands of military life. What is less discussed, in relation to the 'endogenous factors' of service family life, is how the contradictions and tensions that arise from the perceived gap between the gender order of the military and the changing expectations of gender culture in the wider society are navigated (see Pfau-Effinger 2004).

Despite a general acknowledgement by the MoD that 'things need to change' the institutional goals of the military continue to reinforce a traditional and conservative gender ideology that is vital to military operational effectiveness. Such an expectation (re)produces both a prescriptive and normative framework that not only dictates, as Chandler points out, "what marriage is and what wives are for" (1987: 92) but promotes a milieu for male personnel to avoid engagement with, or withdrawal from, the myriad dimensions of family life and associated responsibilities. As I examine in Chapter Six, the potential ramifications of which are discernible on marriage breakdown.

### **Civilianisation of the military**

The term 'civil-military gap' is used by most commentators when referring to the levels of integration or separation between the Armed Forces and the host society: the larger the perceived gap the greater the isolation of the military institution. The civil-military gap, and the extent to which this gap is narrowing or widening, is a prevalent topic in much of the literature on the military. It has been suggested that this division with wider society has narrowed considerably (see Dandeker 2000; Jolly 1992; Milroy 1996). As I discussed above, this appears to have created fears within military circles over the survival of institutional mores and normative processes the Armed Forces depend on in order to be 'different' from the rest of society. These differences might be interpreted as 'embedded in social relations and practice' (see Kilpatrick et al. 2003). A focus on the

erosion and fragmentation of military communities is viewed as a perceptible problem, affecting unit cohesiveness and operational effectiveness, representing a major contribution to the narrowing of the civil-military gap.

The term 'military community' is used by a number of writers on military issues to highlight the military as a sub-culture (or sub-group) of society. However, the concept of community is generally perceived by social scientists to be vague and problematic. The trouble lies in the operational definition of community, and is particularly tricky in relation to the military context as there are a number of military communities to define. In Figure 2 (page 57) I discussed the layers of military culture in relation to inter and intra-cultural differences which reflect a variety of needs and interests. Notwithstanding this point, military communities can also be perceived as gendered zones, in that a separate 'his' and 'her' community exists; one for personnel and one for spouses (wives) (see Manson 2002 and Chandler 1989).

In relation to the military context, van Laar's (1999) definition of a 'sense of community' is a useful analytical tool, which looks at the creation of community through three different types of connectedness: people develop supportive relationships through social interactions with each other; people are also connected to work groups through involvement in similar tasks; and connection to an organisation through individual identification with organisational values. Having a *sense* of community consists of two elements: social support via emotional connection between community members; and identification with the community. The number of significant factors that are contributing to the narrowing of the civil-military gap can be understood in terms of the erosion of social support and identification within military communities.

Firstly, as Dandeker (2000) notes, divorce inevitably impacts on the marital composition of the Armed Forces. As I discussed in Chapter One, this issue is constructed in military policy and the extant literature as a problem for the military in terms of recruitment and retention issues. Secondly, the increasing number of service wives perceived to be entering the labour market might be viewed as a lack of commitment to the military and to the serving member, which may ultimately impact on postings and marriage. Again, this issue is constructed as a problem for the military, although little attention is paid to the gendered process underpinning this assumption. Thirdly, the growing trend towards home ownership is reflected partly from concerns for a continuity in children's education; the provision of an economic and domestic basis for post-military life necessitating a second career due to accelerated house prices from the late 1980s; and for those

personnel who prefer to establish a sharper line between work and family life in line with wider societal expectations (Dandeker 2000: 42-43). What is least talked about is how the trend in homeownership may also be in response to the privatisation of service families accommodation (SFA), which is argued to have caused widespread anxiety and loss of morale (Frost 2002). Moreover, the impact of the standard and quality of housing on service families is rarely mentioned. Evidence published on the tri-Services family federation websites suggests this is still a contentious issue for service families.

Another problem for the military, as framed by commentators on military issues, is whether private accommodation will erode community life, especially those of Army units and RAF stations that live 'within the wire' (Milroy 1996: 16). According to Jolly (1992) the trend in homeownership of service families is a positive step, in that it helps to break down the 'us and them' barrier. If service families are living in civilian communities it might be the only way to promote 'public understanding of the military in peacetime' (1992: 170). If military families become *too* civilianised through competing community identities this situation may prove particularly problematic if a civilian identity is considered to interfere with 'military duty and loyalty during crises' (van Laar 1999: 36). The fear in some circles is that civilianisation of the military community negatively impacts on the unique Service culture, which can only be preserved by keeping military and civilian communities apart from each other (Dandeker 2000: 43). What is less acknowledged is that wives and children may become isolated from both civilian and military communities, neither scenario of which is ideal for the military due to the potential for family problems to impact on retention.

Research has shown that at times when demands on military families are at their highest wives tend to rely on more informal lines of support from other service wives, family and friends (see Dandeker and French 2005, 2006). Uncertainty and emotional turbulence of deployments therefore generate an environment of chaos where emotions provide the stimulus for creating a collective of emotional labour or 'communities of coping' (cf. Korczynski 2003). Processes of civilianisation, then, are framed by academics and commentators on military issues as problems for the military. However, the impact of civilianisation on service families is difficult to establish, and a problematisation that I discuss in the next section.

### **The military and family as greedy institutions**

The impact of military demands on family life is argued to be one of the main reasons why personnel leave the military, or do not extend their contract of service (Jolly 1992, 1996; Regan de Bere 1999, 2003) which directly relates to retention issues. Concerns about stress and the psychological well-being of serving personnel prompted a number of studies in response to both peacetime and conflict deployments. More recently the focus has turned to the well-being of military families. Twenty years ago Wechsler Segal (1988) argued that both the US military and the family represent two 'greedy institutions' that compete for the resources of military families. Adapting her argument from Coser's (1974) original concept, Wechsler Segal cites the features of military life that constitute a number of demands the military makes on service personnel and their families including: regular long and short-term separations; parental absence; the potential, and frequency, for geographical moves with little, if any control over when and where; discontinuity in children's education; difficulties with access to health and dental provision; availability of and standards in accommodation; and restrictions on spouses regarding job and career prospects.

Whilst separately these issues might not be considered unique to the military, for service families they can all intersect at once. Added to this is the legitimate risk of injury or death, both in peacetime and wartime which is, inevitably, the greediest factor of all. As Wechsler Segal notes:

To accomplish its mission, the military makes various demands on service members. Although it exerts some specific normative pressures directly on family members, most pressures affecting families are exerted indirectly through claims made on service members. For both types of pressures, the family is expected to adapt to the greediness of the military institution and support the service member in meeting military obligations (1988: 80).

By the same token, Weschler Segal argues that military families have become greedier institutions due to a number of significant changes that have impacted on the family patterns of US military personnel, particularly since the 1970s and the inception of an AVF. Some of these changes represent a large increase in the number of married male personnel, particularly in junior ranks; a substantial increase in the number of female personnel on active duty, subsequently a rise in the number of married dual-service couples; and an increase in the number of lone parents with young children (ibid: 88). It has led some commentators to infer that the military institution is quite 'family friendly' (see Hicke Lundquist and Smith 2005).

In the UK context the Armed Forces have experienced similar changes in the family patterns of personnel. The number of lone parents is not generally considered 'a problem' (Milroy 1996) although this in itself suggests it is unproblematised both in military policy and existing research. Despite important changes in both US and UK military family patterns, it is the 'military man married to a civilian wife' that comprises the majority of military families. According to Weschler Segal (1988: 92) the greatest impact on the military is likely to be as a result of societal changes that affect civilian wives who are now less willing to conform to the demands of the military. How these changes are perceived to be managed at the level of the family suggests that personnel might leave if the family becomes too greedy for male personnel, families are able to cope with these changes, or marriage breakdown will occur.

The family has always been greedy for women which is able to function with a minimum of conflict so long as women accepted the traditional division of labour with good grace (Coser and Coser 1974: 99). Therefore, if wives continue to acquiesce to the demands of the military and husbands careers, as I examine in the following chapter, then greater harmony is likely within the dynamics of the service family. However, there seems to be a lack of focus on marital satisfaction, or quality of relationships, in much of the literature even though references are made to corresponding changes in the wider population. That the family is now perceived to be greedier for military personnel is regarded as both a normative and legitimate process, and welcomed by a number of more liberal perspectives on the Armed Forces (see Weschler Segal 1988: 89 and Jolly 1992). For others, however, the military should remain the 'first family' (Frost 2002). A conception of the military and the family as greedy institutions underlines the differences between military operations and family issues. The increasing acknowledgement by military commentators to the deep divisions between the military and the family is therefore hardly surprising. Little attention seems to be paid to the gendered processes that underlie such constructions, nor the emotional demands of navigating these tensions.

The shift in aspirations of military families, avidly discussed and generalised in much of the literature, focuses on the changing attitudes of military wives and an increasing desire for both economic and personal independence. That wives are argued to be withdrawing their involvement in military life is a gendered process *unproblematised* for military wives in the extant literature. In contrast, wives may be viewed as the harbingers of change in the military family structure, hence perceived as a problem for their husbands and the military. According to Weschler Segal (1988: 95) it is only when the military establishes normative patterns to adapt to family needs, thereby becoming less

greedy of families, will a greater commitment be possible, and more likely, from personnel and their spouses. However, there does not appear to be any consensus in the literature as to how this can be achieved. The agenda of the current Service Personnel Command Paper focuses on a number of initiatives to alleviate some of the practical disadvantages experienced by service families in comparison to civilian families. For example, the issues to be addressed focus on access to dental care, continuity in hospital waiting lists, and choice in children's education. One of the disadvantages in relation to service families are the working patterns of personnel which fails to get on the policy map.

Perhaps few would dispute that the military has always been a greedy institution for service wives. It appears, however, that the family is now perceived as a greedy institution for personnel. As Coser states, "[g]reedy institutions are characterized by the fact that they exercise pressures on component individuals to weaken their ties, or not to form any ties, with other institutions or persons that might make claims that conflict with their own demands" (1974: 6). Herein lay an inherent tension between retention and divorce, as competing representations over the 'concerns about family life'. It is these tensions and contradictions in the relational norms for service families that I examine in the following chapter.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have sought to develop a theoretical analysis of emotion management as applied to the military organisation. A discussion on emotion and the military is conspicuous by its absence in the extant literature and is a useful for understanding the context of employment in the Armed Forces. Military culture and processes of cohesion are determined by feeling rules, which play a pivotal role in the lives of personnel and their families. I have highlighted some of the tensions and contradictions impacting on the military organisation as a result of social changes in wider society. These processes of civilianisation are perceived to be creating problems for the organisational reality of the military; in other words, the maintenance of order and control of institutional mores. Little attention has been paid to how these processes of change and continuity are impacting on service families.

Some twenty years since Weschler Segal's (1988) recommendations that the military should become less greedy of personnel and family members, there is evidence to suggest that demands on families have become greater as a result of downsizing and increased operational commitments. These demands are juxtaposed with changes in

normative expectations of marriage and family life, in that the family is perceived to be greedier for personnel than in previous times. Consequently, the emotional demands associated with balancing work and family life are likely to have increased. It is to this discussion that I now turn to in the following chapter.

## 4. Emotion and the interface between the military and the family

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If the Army wanted you to have a wife, it would have issued you one.

Charles C. Moskos (2000: 23).

### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how changes in the wider social context have impacted on the Armed Forces. Some of these changes, for example improvements in equality of opportunity for women and members of ethnic communities, have been externally induced through legislative pressures and internally driven through shortfalls in traditional recruitment pools. In conceptualising emotion management in relation to the overarching role of the military organisation, I have attempted to create a new way of analysing the relationship between context, culture and social relations in the military. In this chapter I focus on the demands of the work-family interface for service families, which are generally perceived to have increased in recent years. The associated constructs of emotion work and emotional labour are useful tools for analysing the dynamics of the military spouse role and the overlap between the demands of the military and family life. An appropriate starting point for this chapter then is a brief discussion of the camp followers of militaries past.

### **The changing role of the military spouse**

A number of writers have highlighted the plight of service wives in bygone eras that appear inconceivable in contemporary society (for example, Bamfield 1974; Trustram 1984; Venning 2005). It is hard to imagine that wives were anything other than an essential and integral part of the military at the turn of the twentieth century. Whilst service wives no longer accompany their husbands to war zones, nurse their husbands behind enemy lines, or give birth on the battlefield, the changing role of the military spouse is central to the discussion in this chapter. In the distant past the British military was mainly composed of single men. Women as legal and common-law wives, prostitutes, cooks, seamstresses and washerwomen were regarded as camp followers who sometimes accompanied men and provided essential services to the military (Jolly 1992: 2).

For the few soldiers that were allowed to marry, wives lived in atrocious conditions and were afforded only a screened-off corner of the barrack room; rape and sexual abuse were rife (Venning 2005). The integration and acceptance of the British military spouse

arose from the reforms of the mid-Victorian Army, prompted by concerns about the emotional, physical and moral conditions of soldiers returning from the Crimean war (Bamfield 1974). Such was the state of soldiers that the Contagious Disease Acts of 1884, 1866, and 1869 subjected prostitutes in garrison and Naval towns to regular medical examination, in order to curtail the high incidence of venereal disease in soldiers and sailors. These acts were later repealed in 1886 (Trustram 1984: 116-117).

A solution to this problem was thought to lie in the institution of marriage and viewed by the military authorities as a way for soldiers to curb their excesses. These women united together and rallied around their men to offer aid and support (Macmillan 1984: 92). Women, as wives, were eventually accepted as a useful antidote to the debauched unhealthy lifestyle of soldiers. The British soldier's wife and his children were then afforded partial recognition and a measure of charity by the military authorities (Beevor 1990: 47). The move to construct the service family was in response to the notion that the married soldier could be a valuable asset; women and children could provide for soldiers what the Army could not, although the soldiers' family was always secondary to the Army (Milroy 1996: 11). At the same time, concerns were raised that the provision of housing would actively encourage marriage (Bamfield 1974: 23). There was also a great deal of reticence from the military authorities regarding the incompatibility of the military and family life (Trustram 1984). This begged the question of how to *civilise* the soldier without *civilianising* him (Milroy 1996: 8).

Despite these concerns the service family evolved and was supported by a nascent welfare system that served to institutionalise families into the military way of life. Families posted both at home and abroad were granted certain welfare provisions, for example housing, schooling and medical services, that were viewed by the military authorities as a privilege rather than as a right. By the First World War a soldier was no longer viewed as the scum of the earth and his career was enhanced by a respectable family life (Jolly 1992: 2). The Royal Navy did not afford social recognition to sailors' wives and children until after the Second World War (Jolly 1992; Macmillan 1984). Subsequently, the conditions of married service personnel improved from 1945 onwards. With the inception of an All Volunteer Force (AVF) in Britain in the late 1960s, and early 1970s, came a number of additional benefits.

The introduction of the military salary and expansion in housing provision resulted in a much higher proportion of servicemen who were marrying at a younger age, consequently the number of married soldiers increased significantly (Beevor 1990). The

provision of military housing provides incentives to early marriage and parenthood, and has always been viewed as a particular problem in military communities (Jessup 1996; Jolly 1992; Manson 2002). Marriage to a soldier or sailor has always been a prerequisite to the status of military spouse. Along with this status, came the expectation that a wife would 'know her place' as both supporter and subordinate within the hierarchy of the military system (Macmillan 1984). That the military impinges on marriage in a variety of ways is hardly surprising.

Questions have been raised by some feminists as to why any woman would want to marry a military man (see Enloe 1983, 2000; Harrison and Laliberté 1994; Weinstein and Mederer 1997). Whilst life choices may arguably be shifting in the wider society, marriage and motherhood is still considered by the majority of women to be an important part of their life plan (Hakim 1995, 2006). According to Jessup the role of wife and mother is attractive to young women who are caught up in dead-end jobs, or those with little or no employment prospects on the horizon. Early marriage in the military is therefore closely connected with 'social class and a pregnant bride', the solution being that improved education and work alternatives will deter young women from marriage (Jessup 1996: 78).

Whilst new generations of military wives are considered to be better educated than their predecessors (Higate 2004a) there is evidence to suggest that marriage and family life remains central to the plans of high-achieving young women, with motherhood being viewed as the primary role (Marks and Huston 2002). Some feminists have also questioned whether women as military wives will continue to make compromises and even sacrifices for their husband's career (see Dobrofsky and Batterson 1977 and Weinstein and Mederer 1997). The current debate on the Armed Forces, and concomitant social and cultural shifts occurring during the past thirty years or so, demands close examination. Military marriages can be described as 'tripartite arrangements' due to the encroachment of the services on marriage and family life (Milroy 1996: 88; see also Manson 2002).

By the same token, many have commented on the rising aspirations and changing attitudes of military families over this same period. These changes are said to reflect the wider society, creating a conflict of interests between the military and service families (Beevor 1990; Jessup 1996, Jolly 1992, 1996; Milroy 1996; Weschler Segal 1988). Historically, the relationship between the military and service wives is described as antagonistic (Rosen and Briley Durand 1995; Trustram 1984), despite the acceptance of

wives and families by military authorities as the solution to the problems associated with the health and well-being of soldiers. It would appear, however, that since the early 1990s wives and families are now *creating* problems for both husbands and the military.

### **The problem of wives**

In 1993 a US Commandant General attempted to prohibit the enlistment of married men into the United States Marine Corps, such was his contention that wives, especially young wives and children, were detrimental to the readiness and retention of military personnel (Harrell 2000; Karney and Crown 2007; Moskos 2000). Whilst the order was instantly retracted it prompted the US Department of Defence (DoD) to conduct a significant study into the effects of family status on first-term enlistees (Gimbel and Booth 1994: 106). In the U.K. military context similar concerns have recently been expressed, in that family problems are thought to impact on members' ability for combat effectiveness (Dandeker 2000). According to Moskos (2000: 23) an observable feature of the Postmodern military is the changing role of the US military spouse. Rather than participating in traditional social functions and supporting the military community, wives are more likely to be engaging in paid employment. This feature has also been observed in the UK whereby a lack of commitment from wives to all things military can impact on morale and cause marital problems, particularly when a wife refuses to leave her job in order that the family may remain together (Dandeker 2000: 42-43).

Part of the problem appears to be the extent to which the military is perceived to be losing control over wives; the *cause* of the problem being that wives are withdrawing from the spousal role. In the context of a postmodern military the spousal role is effectively removed. What is not clear is exactly what it is that constitutes the spousal role. Whilst it might be argued that certain aspects of the role of military spouse may have changed over the past few decades, more so in relation to the informal welfare role that Officers' wives have previously played, a conceptualisation of the emotional labour of military wives reveals that the role of the military spouse is far from removed. If anything, the demands on wives have increased significantly and wives remain an essential and integral factor in the operational effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

Recent research suggests that spousal support and a positive attitude to military life are regarded as crucial to the well-being of personnel, thus contributing to military operational effectiveness and the retention of personnel. Psychologist and service wife Caroline Limbert (2004) conducted research into the well-being and job satisfaction of

162 unaccompanied, predominantly male, personnel from across the tri-Services who were deployed on a tour of duty in the Falkland Islands. Previous research on the US and UK Armed Forces has focused on the impact of stress and well-being of military families, when personnel have been deployed to war zones (see Angrist and Johnson 2000; Cozza et al. 2005; Dandeker and French 2006), and the relationship between combat stress and psychiatric casualties (Wessely 2005). However, little is understood about the effects of stress and well-being of personnel on peacetime deployments (Hotopf et al. 2003a, 2003b; Kirkland et al. 1996). Limbert's objective was to identify the impact of stress for personnel on accompanied peacetime missions, on the assumption that potential sources of stress exist, and how individuals coped with these effects while they were away from their families (2004: 39).

Separation from home, friends and family is one of the main reasons why personnel leave the military therefore Limbert's research is highly relevant to current policy concerns over recruitment and retention. Her findings showed that almost one third of participants were experiencing psychiatric problems as significantly related to job satisfaction (Limbert 2004: 40-42). I also expected the results to show that the most significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and psychological well-being was perceived social support, given the responsibility of wives as providers of both social and emotional support. Limbert (2004) concluded that wives and families play a *vital* support role which allows personnel to get on with the job. An interesting point to arise from the research was the concerns from personnel themselves who felt they were unable to provide a supporting role to their wives whilst they were away.

In a similar vein, recent research also suggests that many personnel both worry about and underestimate a wife's ability to cope with separations and combat deployment (see Dandeker and French 2006; Spera 2009; Westhuis and Fafara 2006). Whilst Dandeker and French (2006) described Army wives as a stoical and mentally robust group, they also found that wives endured high levels of stress and relationship conflict. The gap between the 'stoicism and robustness' of wives in coping with husband absence and separation on the one hand, and high levels of spousal stress identified on the other is central to the discussion in this chapter. The constructs of emotion work and emotional labour are a useful tool for analysis in understanding the interplay between stoicism and stress.

There are few studies that have examined the impact of military life on UK spouses. Giles (2005) conducted research at a civilian general practice on a military garrison, with

the aim to understand why GP attendance rates for Army dependents were double the national average. A number of factors were identified affecting Army wives' ability to cope when the husband was home: decision making, marriage difficulties, problems with children, supporting others, and demands of husband's job. There were also a number of identifiable factors affecting wives' ability to cope when their husband was away: isolation, marriage difficulties (including infidelity), problems with children, contact with husband, support of friends and family, provision of childcare, and Army welfare support. In conclusion Giles (2005) found that Army wives appear to suffer from high levels of stress that she associated with coping ability and the constant turbulence and isolation of Army life.

A number of studies on the US military have also identified evidence of spousal stress (see Cozza et al. 2005; Everson 2005; Karney and Crown 2007; Paulus et al. 1996; Spera 2009; Westhuis et al. 2006). However there is a paucity of research that examines the psychological well-being of military wives. One exception, in the UK military context, is a study by Puckey and Kinman (2007). They measured the frequency of relocation of military wives and their relationship with self-concept, self-esteem, psychological well-being and life satisfaction. The results suggested that a level of intervention was required for psychological distress in 29 per cent of the sample. Spousal absence was considered to be the worst aspect of military life, although other aspects such as frequent relocation, coping alone, and restricted job opportunities were associated with negative features.

Despite research that acknowledges the important role that wives undertake, it is also evident that many feel consistently under-valued and marginalised within the military system (AFF Changing Attitudes Survey 2000-2001; Harrison & Laliberté 1994; Jolly 1992, Manson 2002). Recent evidence from the latest round of the tri-Services Continuous Attitude Surveys in 2008 reveals that little has changed. Military wives essentially occupy an incongruous position, often referring to themselves as 'second class citizens' (Puckey and Kinman 2007; see also The Independent 23 March 2007) and 'excess baggage' (Beevor 1990). For Harrison and Laliberté, the position of Canadian military wives is this:

On one hand, such ideologies as the importance of the military mission, the normality of traditional gender roles, the virtue of self-reliance, and the excitements of adventure and travel are ascendant in the military community and exercise significant influence on military wives. The typical military wife also believes her husband to be the only viable breadwinner; she has been taught that her non-compliance would entail serious military career costs; and she has

been geographically separated from her old civilian friends. The inclusion of wives in a diluted version of combat bonding has additionally enhanced each wife's social and emotional dependence on the military social world...But military wives are also ordinary people, who want many of the same ordinary things as civilian women – good jobs, pensions, day care, stable membership in a civilian community, gender equality, and some measure of autonomy in their lives. They aspire higher than to be appendages in a two-person career, and are tired of the military pretending that their unpaid work contributions are trivial (1997: 46-47).

Many of these observations were relevant to the women in the present study and are examined in the following chapter. The crucial point here, which links in to my discussion in the next section, is that even if wives are in paid employment, or attempting to establish and maintain a career, the emotional labour wives perform in response to the feeling rules of the military is not removed. If anything, this labour has intensified in response to operational demands that have increased in recent years, reinforcing the contradictory space between processes of continuity and change within the Armed Forces and wider society that service families are expected to navigate. The role of the military spouse is to act as an 'emotional buffer' within these processes. It is a wife's job to maintain the status quo (Manson 2002). Previous conceptions of the role of the military spouse fail to take into account the military as 'emotional arena' in terms of wives' relationship to the context of their husband's work, and I now turn to this discussion in the following section.

### **Occupational wives and emotional labour**

The military is traditionally regarded as the 'first family', hence it is often suggested that a service wife is married to the military (see Enloe 2000; Macmillan 1984). As Finch states, "[w]hen a woman marries, she marries not only a man but she also marries his job" (1983: 1). This position is not considered unique to service life, for example; vicars' wives, politicians' wives; diplomats' wives; and executive and managerial wives. Previous research has examined wives' relationship to husbands' work, and how women's lives and their unpaid labour are structured by the demands of their husband's career (see Callan and Ardener 1984, Chandler 1987, 1991; Finch 1983; Pahl and Pahl 1971; Papanek 1973). In this respect, the service family exemplifies the two-person single career pattern as described by Papanek (1973). Both husband and wife are subject to institutional demands of an employer, but only the husband is employed by the military.

A woman who is married to her husband's job is not only a good wife she is an asset to her husband's employer, who in turn benefits greatly from her incorporated labour

(Finch 1983). When a woman marries a man in the military she is expected to be resourceful, independent, self-reliant, adaptable, supportive of her husband's career and accepting of a gender-based hierarchical framework (Regan de Bere 2003: 98). In reproducing gender stereotypes the organisational reality of the military conveys a distinct notion of 'the good military wife' and what she should be doing to maximise her *exchange value* to the operational objectives of the military. The role of wives in the management of emotion has implications for the maintenance of gender ideology, despite significant shifts in education and economic opportunities for women (see Janjuha-Jivraj and Martin 2007), which is especially relevant to military wives.

According to Finch, "...being prepared to follow one's husband is a sign of the helpmate wife, who ideally should not only follow, but should do so selflessly, loyally and cheerfully" (1983: 49). What is unproblematised in the literature is the potential for a 'pinch' between what a wife should feel, and what she may actually feel about such assumptions and expectations (see Hochschild 1969). A plethora of handbooks are available to guide young women on how to be a good military wife, generally written by service wives and often in the form of memoirs and diaries (for example, Lawrence Fuller 2001; Mock 2007; Shea 1954). These prescriptive frameworks may not be as powerful as they were previously, but are still conveyed through unwritten rules. From the outset of marriage wives should accept they will play second fiddle to the military (Macmillan 1984: 91). Whilst this assumption may ring true for some military wives, Macmillan writes as a fourth-generation service family member and may well identify quite positively with this role. However, I would suggest that on the whole her observation is more representative of a model military wife that is to be 'lived up to' which can create the potential for the negative effects of deep acting I discussed in Chapter One (see page 26).

Accounting for wives' relationship to the context of a husband's job is lacking in the literature. An exception is perhaps Pavalko and Elder (1993) who examined wives' contributions and perceptions of support across occupations, differentiating between different types of spousal support. They were also concerned to examine how wives' constructed their contributions to their husband's career, a point I examine in the following chapter. In Chapter One I was concerned with the context of employment in the Armed Forces in terms of precedent. In defence of the nation and associated allies the primary function of the military is the management of forces in a state of readiness for combat; subsequently to manage those forces that are engaged in combat (Jolly 1992: 86). Hence wives are not expected to question what husbands do, nor why they

would want to do it. For example, a role appropriate emotion is to feel a sense of pride when personnel deploy to combat zones, which also extends to friends and other family members. Wives' contributions and perceptions of support of their husband's career will vary both *across* the tri-Services and *within* each Service in relation to their husband's occupational role within a career framework. In view of recent social changes it might be more appropriate to consider, as Manson (2002) has argued, the degrees to which wives are *more* or *less* married to the job. However, the emotional demands associated with this tension suggest that these demands have increased.

Research on wives' incorporation into their husband's career has tended to focus on higher-status middle and upper class occupations, suggesting that it is only in such occupations that wives provide unpaid services (for example, Finch 1983; Pahl and Pahl 1971; Papenek 1973; Pavalko and Elder 1993) although exceptions appear to be studies on the military (Harrison and Laliberté 1994; Macmillan 1984) and the police force (Young 1984). One of the features of the two-person career is occupational mobility and family migration. Even if a wife engages in paid employment there is a tacit assumption that a wife will follow her husband (Clarke and Davies Withers 2002). Whilst it may be generally accepted that, for most Western women, marital status is no longer a constraint to a woman's participation in the labour market, in terms of labour market mobility and family migration, it is women's parental status that is argued to negatively affect women's labour force participation and career development (Ackers 2004; Beck 1992; Cooke 2001). Identifying dual-career couples in the military, that are not both serving members, might be the equivalent of looking for a needle in a haystack.

Migrating families are placed in a 'triple-bind' situation: either the family migrates with possible long-term consequences to the other spouse's career; the family stay put to protect one career at the risk of another; or the family operates at a distance to enhance both careers, which may place marriages under great pressure and ultimately lead to divorce (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995: 163). Such a dilemma is surely applicable to service families in terms of occupational mobility and family migration. The Armed Forces represent one of the few organisations to transfer employees at every level, as opposed to mainly executive and managerial status (Harrison 2006). These transfers can be in the form of block postings; for example, an Army brigade will generally relocate en masse; or trickle postings, where individuals will move with their families to new units, for example the Royal Marines. Whilst there are expectations that service wives will follow husbands on all levels there may be potential ramifications for a

husband's promotion if they do not, particularly at Officer level (Weinstein and Mederer 1997b). The consequences attached to service wives' mobility are clear in economic terms: many service wives experience a weak connection to the labour market.

Previous research on US military spouses shows that frequent postings may reduce the number of weeks a wife might be in employment in any given tax year. Wives are often willing to accept lower wages in exchange for the flexibility to cope with the increased demands of military life and husband absence, or the length of time it might take to find a higher paid job before the family are posted again see (Booth et al. 2000 and Hosek et al. 2002). The upshot for any trailing wife, whether professionally trained or not, is an inability to contribute to an earnings related pension, which highlights women's economic vulnerability within a military marriage particularly if divorce occurs later in life (Harrison 2006; see also Ginn and Arber 1996). In a study of US military wives researchers also identified stigmatisation and bias from employers as one of the negative effects of the military lifestyle on work opportunities for wives. A number of other categories were also identified including frequent and disruptive moves, a range of service member absences (which can include deployment, training exercises, temporary duties and additional temporary duties), and childcare difficulties (see Werber Castenada and Harrell 2008: 394).

Whilst there is a lack of empirical research on the relationship between service wives and paid employment in the UK military context it is reasonable to assume that the situation will be similar. Many personnel are often unable to contribute to the demands of parenting especially evening and night time care, which is arguably a time when many fathers share responsibility for parenting and spending time with their children (Werber Castenada and Harrell 2008: 397-8; see also Hardey and Glover 1991). Whilst the traditional conception of family life in the military is now viewed as outmoded by many, there are a number of tensions emerging for service families (see Jolly 1992 and Milroy 1996). These tensions are viewed as a result of changing expectations of marriage in wider society and the shift towards family responsibilities juxtaposed with members' unconditional and increasing commitments to the military in the current political climate. By focusing analytic attention on the emotional labour of military wives, the vital role wives play in navigating the demands of military life and family life is revealed. What is absent in the extant literature, is the extent to which the role of military spouse (wife) has become more labour intensive emotionally.

The work-family interface is generally defined as the management of work roles and family responsibilities in terms of conflicting demands between the two spheres. It is problematic to draw a distinct boundary between work and home, or the public and the private, and more appropriate to talk of degrees of blurring. The service family is an exemplar of the blurring of such boundaries and highlights how the construct of emotional labour is a useful tool of analysis in terms of wives' relationship to their husband's work. The unconditional nature of emotion work is a gendered construct (having use value in the private realm) and is useful for examining motivations, for example wives who are 'doing it for love' suggests there are no expectations or conditions attached (Janjuha-jivraj and Martin 2007). However, in the two-person career, the construct of emotional labour is a useful tool for analysing wives work'. In other words, there may be clear expectations attached to the invisible work wives carry out in managing the tensions of military demands and family life, which I now discuss in the following section.

### **Military demands and family life**

In Chapter One I discussed the representation of family problems and marriage breakdown in relation to the problems this poses for the military, in terms of recruitment and retention and maintaining operational effectiveness. I have attempted to construct new problem representations by focusing analytic attention on the construction of gender ideologies and a connection between emotion and the military. According to Jessup, a military marriage is subject to both the *exogenous* factors most relationships are exposed to in contemporary society, in addition to the *endogenous* factors of military life. This is seen to place extreme stresses and pressures on family life that are exacerbated by military culture and institutional goals (Jessup 1996: 80) and is a perspective that is central to this thesis. However, the endogenous factors of military life so often discussed in the literature do not take account of the feeling rules of the military or the role of emotion management.

Changes in perceived threat, force structure, and major mission definition for the Armed Forces in advanced societies (Moskos 2000: 15) has significantly impacted on service families. It is argued that the current operational climate has created unprecedented times since the ending of the Cold War (Dandeker 2000; Karney and Crown 2007; King 2006). As I mentioned above, the work-family interface generally refers to the management of work roles and family responsibilities, and the greater or lesser degrees to which these place conflicting demands on employees. However, in relation to the

military much focus tends to be placed on how military wives negotiate these demands rather than personnel.

Almost twenty years since Weschler Segal's (1988) conceptualisation of the military and family as greedy institutions, research was conducted utilising this framework on UK Army families during a six month tour of Iraq in 2005 (Operation Telic 5). Dandeker and French (2006) set out to examine the extent to which personnel and their spouses experienced conflicting demands from the military and family institutions. Deployment to combat zones represents a period where work-life tensions are likely to be at their most intense. One of the main questions underpinning the study was 'how spouses negotiate drawing a line between work and family life'. It is not clear in the report whether analytic attention was focused on how personnel manage to draw a line between work and family, yet the research seems to have presented an ideal opportunity to do so. It remains a bone of contention, particularly for writers on gender issues, that research on the subject of work-life or work-family balance continues to situate women at the centre of research, without making it 'a father's business' (Kilkey 2006; Lewis and Campbell 2008; Smithson and Stokoe 2005).

Dandeker and French (2006) acknowledged some limitations to their study; the sample being relatively small and the majority of wives were based in Germany, therefore unrepresentative of the British Army overall. I would add, however, that foreign postings may encourage a *greater* dependence on both informal and formal networks of social support, particularly if husbands are away on exercise or deployment. So when work-life tensions are perceived to be at their highest, for example during phases of deployment to combat zones, emotion based resources are likely to be at their most effective. Emotion based 'communities of coping' will evolve from a sense of both fear and pride (cf. Korczynski 2003). Dandeker and French (2006) found that wives' ability to cope while personnel were away was greatly underestimated by their husbands, which highlights the invisibility of wives' emotional labour, a point I examine in the following chapter. They concluded that wives' perceptions and experiences of the work-life tensions of military life were offset by the Army salary and pension, as providing financial security for families. As Finch observes, one of the reasons why women "...continue to co-operate with the processes of incorporation [...] is the prospect that real benefits will be derived thereby" (1983: 151). It would appear then, that Finch's observation more than twenty years ago is still relevant today. However, it is not difficult to view the precariousness of this 'motivation' for military wives. As Joshi and Davies

state, “[d]ivorce disrupts, among other things, the sharing of income between spouses” (1991: 69) and an important issue I discuss in Chapter Seven.

The impact and influence of the military on service families creates a ‘unique family dynamic’ (Milroy 1996: 18; see also Chandler 1987; Jessup 1996; Jolly 1992). However, the responsibility for adjusting and adapting to such dynamics has always been placed firmly on the military wife (Chandler 1991: 67; see also Manson 2002). As I discussed above, service wives are expected to cushion the demands of military life and the demands of family responsibilities, but little attention is given as to how this process is navigated. Harrison and Laliberté (1994: 228) concluded in their study on Canadian military wives that there is *no life like it*, and their compelling research attracted considerable media attention. The authors reveal the human costs of maintaining Canada’s defence force, as the unbeknown are propelled into an ideology entrenched in traditional women’s work of ‘raising children and supporting husband’s careers’ being the fundamental priority for military wives. Their study paints a very bleak picture of the impact of military demands on wives and children, although it is not difficult to see how military culture, a corresponding work ethos, and the demands of family life can place a great strain on wives and their personal relationships. As Manson points out in the conclusion of her study of RAF wives, “...one woman’s bread is another woman’s poison so to speak; some wives cannot ‘hack it’ and become increasingly disillusioned with military life until ultimately their marriages break up or their husbands leave the air force” (2002: 255, emphasis in original).

Manson’s observation is indicative of general assumptions in much of the extant literature about the *cause* of retention and divorce issues in the military. However, I believe these issues are much more complex than they appear. Few would disagree that wives play a pivotal role in navigating the demands of military life and family responsibilities. There appears to be little understanding, however, as to how wives actually ‘hack it’ and manage the impact of the military on family relationships, nor whether it is the demands of family life in the military that constitutes the problem for wives. The constructs of emotion work and emotional labour are useful in examining the conflicting demands of the work-family interface, particularly as the perception of boundaries between the public sphere of work and private sphere of the family are significantly blurred for service families. Additional factors will include attempts to establish work and career prospects that will be compounded by husband absence, irregular duties, and the primary responsibility of caring for young children (Regan de Bere 1999).

Most of the attention in the extant literature that focuses on how service wives are retreating from involvement in military life, is explained in relation to the increased opportunities in paid employment. Few question the restrictions that everyday demands place on wives, let alone the intense demands associated with operational deployments or the roles adopted in the overlapping contexts of home and work. Evidence in the wider society has shown that women's increased commitments to paid employment are not being met with significant increase in men's commitment in the home (see Sullivan 2000). Restrictions on negotiating such 'gender arrangements' within family relationships (see Pfau-Effinger 2004) is surely, if not especially, relevant to relational norms for service families. The social situation of service wives is rarely acknowledged in the wider literature therefore it is difficult to assess the extent to which wives are deserting the spousal role.

In his research on perceptions of marital adversity in the RAF, Milroy (1996) identified three types of coping mechanism employed by the nine wives in his study. The first group *camp followers* had very clear ideas of their sense of identity as a military wife, were very loyal toward the military and aspired to being model military wives. The second group was characterised by those wives who had, in the beginning, fully embraced the role of military wife until certain events had forced them to question their loyalty to both the military and their husband's career. They had reached *saturation point* and set in motion a process of building a separate life away from the military, to discard their institutionalised baggage, and become 'individuals' in their own right. The third group had always *refused to soldier* and were antagonistic towards the system and those who embodied it. These wives refused to identify with the role of military wife, were anti-conformist and worked hard to create and sustain a separate identity and private life (Milroy 1996: 83-147). Wives may ultimately seek to establish forms of resistance between themselves and the military environment and set about divorcing themselves from it (Harrison and Laliberté 1994). At the same time, however, this strategy, or coping mechanism, may also place greater pressures on a military marriage because of the 'rigours of being married to a serviceman' (Milroy *ibid*: 125).

Good military wives (camp followers) will perceive themselves as shadow enlistees or associate members of the military (see Bell and Schum 2002) and any woman (wife) who falls short of this model is likely to be perceived as a problem to both the military and her husband. Coping mechanisms might therefore be associated with levels of commitment to a husband's career (Pavalko and Elder 1993). Thus a wife's commitment

to a husband's career may also be viewed in terms of marital stability in the military context. Wives who engage in paid employment are perceived to cause potential marital problems, which is linked to morale, cohesiveness and ultimately operational effectiveness (see Dandeker 2000). As I have previously discussed, a number of commentators point to the influence that wives may have over personnel as a factor in the decision to leave the military (see Higate 2004a; Strachan 2002). Conversely, research suggests that wives are keen for husbands to remain in the military (CAS; Dandeker and French 2006; see also Leroy Gill and Haurin 1998, in relation to U.S. military wives). Research also points to the difficulties experienced by personnel from the competing roles of father and serving member (see Regan de Bere 1999). However, it is at the level of family relationships that the impact of such conflict is felt. Families will either find ways of managing these conflicting demands or not. As I have also discussed, the tension that emerges from family problems is represented as a problem for the military, the most pressing one being that personnel will leave to save their marriage.

This problem frame relates to concerns about retention of experienced personnel. A further problem is that marriages will dissolve, which may ultimately impact on recruitment if marriage in the military is perceived in a negative light. Claims that the rate for divorce is highest in the military are perhaps not without some substance (Harrison and Laliberté 1994). It is not difficult to conceive that sustained marriage for many service wives might be regarded as 'beyond the call of duty'. One factor that appears unproblematised in the extant literature on service families in relation to family problems and marriage breakdown, is a distinction between wives being 'married to the military' and husbands being 'married to the military'. I discuss the relationship between social and personal identity in the final section of this chapter.

### **Emotional dependency and role identity**

A fundamental element in examining the role of emotion in the military is the relationship between emotional dependency and role identity. Both marriage and the military may be considered institutionalised sources of identity. However, marriage as an institution is considered to be less powerful than it was (Allan and Crow 2001: 148). Marriage is not an organisation *per se* although the military clearly is. However, as Jenkins states, "[w]here acquired organisational identities are *imposed* on *non-members*...ascriptive criteria are likely to be influential" (1996: 140-3, emphases in original). Jolly (1992, 1996) argues that service wives can often become more institutionalised than their husbands as a result of the sacrifices they have made to be with the man they love.

Institutionalisation becomes a form of coping mechanism. In this sense wives will benefit from their incorporation, despite the fact that normative restrictions and the demands of military life may be negatively experienced. With defined institutionalised identities wives are more likely to integrate into and consequently contribute to supportive social networks, which can provide an important function in personal well-being particularly during stressful times such as family separations, relocation and combat deployment (Wechsler Segal 1988: 88). Such networks of support can also be defined as 'emotional communities of coping' (cf. Korzynski 2003).

In the context of this thesis I define emotional dependency as the development of institutional identities and the degrees to which personal identity becomes assimilated with the military institution. This can be understood in relation to self-categorisation theory, in that the attributes of a social (group) identity can be more significant to a person than the attributes of an individual personal identity (see Parkinson et. al 2005: 95-96). The blurring between the public and private in the lives of service personnel and their families can also be understood in relation to the blurring of personal and social identities. Institutional identities are socially constructed through processes of social pressure, social control, and integration (Jenkins 1996). The extent of these processes may only be evident when personnel leave the military institution. An analysis of the relationship between institutionalised identities and the military has generally been examined in relation to service leavers in the transition to civilian life (see Higate 2001, 2004a; Jolly 1996; Regan de Bere 1999), and routes into homelessness and rough sleeping for ex-servicemen (see Higate 1998, 2000; Milroy 2001).

What is absent in the literature is a focus on the degrees to which personnel become partially or totally institutionalised within the military system and the impact this may have on family relationships, marital adversity and dissolution. Jolly interestingly uses the term emotional dependency to describe the degrees of difficulty personnel experience when adjusting and adapting to civilian life on exit from the Armed Forces, as a result of the military incorporating the identities of its members (Jolly 1996: 38). Institutionalisation, according to Jolly, "...involves a total yielding of the self to an organisation, to the extent that the self hardly exists as a separate entity" (ibid: 39). The main concern for Jolly was the question of why it is that some people are more susceptible to higher degrees of institutionalisation in the military than others. She concluded that the concept of autonomy can explain why certain personnel are either predisposed or resistant to the impact of 'rules, hierarchy, standardisation and group mentality' on their identity throughout their military career (ibid: 51).

As I have previously discussed, both inter and intra-service cultures reflect a diversity of missions, contingencies and roles, and may go some way to explaining why not all personnel become emotionally dependent on the military. I would argue, however, that in order to examine processes and degrees of institutionalisation (emotional dependency) it is necessary to take into account the relationship between role socialisation and assimilation; doing the role and becoming the role. For Hochschild there is an inherent human cost to managing feeling and emotion, therefore conforming to feeling rules in the military may result in emotional and psychological harm. Such costs could be reduced if workers felt a greater sense of control over the conditions of their working lives (Hochschild 2003). In stating that the military is hierarchical and thoroughly organised from the top, personnel and their families are perhaps more vulnerable to social engineering of their emotional labour over which they have limited control.

In Chapter Three I discussed the re-evaluation of personnel and family issues as a result of the Strategic Defence Review (1998) and Defence Policy (2001). In pledging a 'policy for people' the Armed Forces are attempting to move towards a principal Human Resource Management (HRM) strategy and agenda for change, although this process appears slow. Putting people at the heart of defence policy should improve morale and influence cultural change (Alexandrou 2002: 3). It could be argued, therefore, that improvements in policy and representation may go some way to ameliorating some of the negative effects of emotional labour for serving personnel. Again, while there have been changes in the social structure of the military, induced by legislative changes in wider society, the military still retains significant control over the family. The role of emotion management within the family serves to reinforce gendered practices. In terms of military policy, it is more about what the military *does not do* that is a central concern of this thesis.

For an organisation such as the military, a more pressing issue for personnel and their spouses may be a lack of control over their private lives. For example, people will join the Armed Forces for a number of reasons. They will most likely feel they are personally suited to the military, and are happy to be moulded into the role through initial training and continuing professional development. A service wife, on the other hand, does not choose the role but a husband, although his role in the military will significantly shape her role. The pinch between personal identity and role (social) identity (Hochschild 1969: 87) is unlikely to be felt by most personnel, and for those that do are more likely to leave

the military. A service wife may also feel the pinch between personality and role, despite the fact that she may well enjoy many aspects of service life. However, if she feels the pinch and her husband does not her options are limited. In other words, the expectations placed on her by way of her marriage may become increasingly hard to sustain. The potential, then, is a conflict between the social identity of a husband and personal identity of a wife. This process may manifest itself, however, in terms of failure as a service wife. In terms of the tension between retention and divorce it might suggest that family problems may make transparent a serving member's emotional dependency on the military, in relation to media reports that personnel are sacrificing their marriage to remain in the services.

A primary focus on the negative effects of emotional labour, in terms of personal costs to the worker, has been criticised for being deterministic (see Bolton and Boyd 2003). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) suggest that emotional labour is also performed through the expression of genuine emotion that can result in a positive function. A person will perform more effectively in their work, thereby promoting interpersonal skills and confidence (Bolton and Boyd 2003). Other positive effects are related to the concept of identity. Whilst people will be socialised into specific roles through training, if there is a high degree of identification with the role (assimilation) this may significantly reduce the negative effects of emotional labour on well-being (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993). The demands for emotional labour stimulate internal (psychological) and external (organisational) pressures to identify with the role, which can be regulated by social and personal identity. Without these personal safety mechanisms, however, assimilation or deep identification with the role can create its own set of emotional risks (Ashforth and Humphrey 1993: 89). In relation to military personnel one of these risks is evident when the role is no longer available to identify with, for example when making the transition from military to civilian life is difficult. Deep identification with a role will demand less emotional labour, however this is helpful only while the role continues to exist. Conversely, less identification with the role may result in the negative consequences of emotional labour and the well-being of wives, levels of marital quality and satisfaction and expectations associated with the spousal role.

The main objective of this thesis is to open up a new frame of analysis for concerns over family problems and marriage breakdown in the military. The Armed Forces have long held on to the mantra of needing to remain *different* from wider society (Dandeker 1994). Consequently, military personnel are encouraged to think of themselves as being *apart* from society which inevitably contributes to the impact of institutionalisation.

Current representations of family problems and the tension between retention and divorce fail to take into account the impact of the military organisation on social and personal identities, which may have far reaching consequences.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I have critically analysed a broad, although not exhaustive, overview of the literature on the role of the military spouse, incorporation into a husband's job, and the demands of both military and family life on service families. The pressures families are currently experiencing, due to commitments of the British Armed Forces in the current political climate, suggest that attempts to balance increased demands from both the military and family life may create a number of irreconcilable tensions. The responsibility for adapting to such pressures is placed firmly on military wives. There is some evidence to suggest that wives are more than capable of coping and managing without husbands. What is not discussed in the literature is the emotional labour associated with these pressures, and the potential effects of role strain. The findings of the interviews are now presented in the following three chapters.

## 5. Playing the military couple game

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*It's always been the case, whatever you've done in the military, somebody else has always had it worse. And...what you're supposed to do, anyway, is get on with it. That's like the big military phrase that's sticks in my head about my military life. You've got to get on with it.*

Helen, former wife of Army Colonel

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I am concerned with the retrospective experiences of marriage and family life as a biographical stage in women's lives. In offering women the opportunity to voice what they thought were the problems associated with military life, it is their concerns about marriage and family life that provided a starting point for analysis. My aim in previous chapters was to make explicit the role of 'Captain of the marital and family ship' that is expressively placed on service wives. There is little evidence to suggest that significant changes in organisational reality have created new spaces for service families to negotiate prescriptive gendered roles. Wives that fail to toe the line have the potential to create problems for their husbands, providing a powerful institutional influence in the control of military wives. This pinch between what wives might feel, and what they should feel suggests that wives can engage in what Hochschild (2003) conceptualised as deep acting, with potential consequences for the well-being of service wives. The starting point for this chapter is to explore some of the reasons why these women chose to marry a man in the military.

### **The decision to marry**

An important question in response to some feminist accounts that tend to position wives as victims or dupes in the military system (see Enloe 1983, 2000; Harrison and Laliberté 1994; Weinstein and Mederer 1997) is why any woman would *want* to marry a man who is serving in the Armed Forces. Marrying a military man may be viewed as a life choice, but like any decision it will be context dependent. Half of participants in the present study were under twenty one at the time of marriage, however, all were aged eighteen years or over. Most participants had known their husbands for less than two years upon marriage, and several for less than twelve months. If personnel are frequently on the move to different bases in the UK and overseas couples wanting to be together will find there is little choice but to marry, and this was the case for the majority of women. Reasons for getting married can be clear-cut in terms of the provision of affordable housing, like Patricia who was nineteen when she married her fiancé who was serving in the Royal Marines:

*We met in May 1973 and got married [sixteen months later]. But you see he was away a lot of the time and he was going [overseas] and so...we thought oh well we'll get married...Otherwise I would have been left in England.*

The provision of married quarters also creates opportunities for personnel to escape barrack life and gain a modicum of privacy and independence from the military, as ex-Naval officer Naomi comments:

*With the Naval quarters...it's just so easy, you know. You've got a man sharing with X number of other hairy sailors and it's sort of Hey! You can have your own little house...And because a lot of ratings join up very young, they do get a bit homesick [...]. And then of course there's the wearing of the uniform at the wedding, and everything like that. I think [there are] a combination of factors that promotes [marriage] in many ways and [the Navy] doesn't do anything...to stem it.*

Whilst the provision of housing both creates significant institutional pressures to marry and facilitates marriage, there are additional reasons why marriage in the military may be attractive to young women. For some, a military marriage offers an opportunity for travel and adventure. Sally was twenty when she married her fiancé who was serving in the Army. They had known each other for eleven months and Sally was eager to leave home and become independent. When she left school Sally had planned to 'join up' although she "married the Army instead".

Grace married her childhood sweetheart when she was eighteen, always knowing that he wanted to serve in the RAF. This excited Grace, as she "could just see the lights going off into the Air Force" and there was nothing to stop them getting married. Helen described herself as having lived a very sheltered life as a child and was very shy and lacking in confidence. She met her husband, a Second Lieutenant who was serving in the Army, when they were both studying at university. During this time she had started to 'come out of her shell'. Helen felt she had been completely swept off her feet and became quite 'dizzy' with the idea of being an Officer's wife:

*I thought I loved him, but I was too young to really know what real love was. I mean, I think I did feel a certain amount. But it was also a package which, if I'm honest...I'm not really materialistic, but it was [exciting] for a twenty one year old who'd not really ever led that kind of life. I'd done a bit of traveling with my parents, so I mean the travel thing was...it was like a whole lot of things that I don't like to admit to.*

In Wendy's case, marriage to a Private in the Parachute Regiment appeared to be somewhat of a knee-jerk reaction to the constant chaperoning by her parents:

*My parents were so strict. I was not allowed to sit alone in a room with him [that was what it was like] in those days. So we ran away and got married. I hadn't even lived with him...I'd spent one night in a hotel with him and nothing, nothing had happened.*

In line with previous research decisions to marry could be perceived as pragmatic in response to structural constraints, as cohabitation is prohibited by the military in terms of provision of married quarters and allowances and prohibitive for many couples due to the lifestyle. Within several accounts participants also appeared to exercise considerable agency in their decisions, seeing potential opportunity and excitement in the military lifestyle. However, the ramifications of these decisions were not necessarily apparent until some time after. When all is not 'as it should be' it seems that wives are often expected to have known 'what they were getting themselves into', and this tension was experienced by many of the women.

### **Expectations of military life**

As I previously discussed in Chapter Four, wives have been expected to understand and accept that they should play second fiddle to their husband's loyalty to the military organisation. Such an assertion might be considered somewhat outdated for today's military wives but it was a significant theme to emerge in the present study, bearing in mind that marriages occurred across five decades between 1965 and 2003. What is not generally explained is *how* wives are supposed to know what to expect. Many women expressed irritation at the number of times people, especially husbands, had said to them 'you should have known what you were getting yourself into' when they questioned the status quo. This appeared to represent a demonstrable 'feeling rule reminder' of the norms associated with the role of service wife (see Hochschild 1979: 564).

Emma married at eighteen, having known her husband who was then serving in the Royal Marines for three years, but had remained in her own home near her family for two years. She felt reasonably protected from the demands of military life and would only see her husband when his work schedule permitted. Having not long lost her mum to a terminal illness Emma was issued an ultimatum by her husband to move nearer his place of work. She eventually acquiesced not long after their first child was born. As Emma discovered, having a vague understanding of the military way of life was not the same as the reality of lived experience:

*When I met my husband I was only young...He was away then so I knew partly what it was like, but not to any degree...You're very naïve and when...you marry and when you come to say, well hang on a minute! I didn't know this was going to happen or whatever, and you get the answer 'well you knew what it was like when you met me'...You don't know what it's like when you meet them. You know what it's like because you're courting or...they're far away and they come back...But you do not know until you've lived that life. What did we know...about the whole military life? I mean we're not in the military...It's not until you're married, and in that complete unit, that you [then] meet every obstacle going at you.*

In response to her findings on the experiences of RAF wives Manson (2002) constructed five main levels of awareness of previous military knowledge on entry to marriage: no experience or knowledge of the military (entering marriage with no idea of what to expect beyond media images); limited experience of the military (early childhood experience or having friends in the military) and partial knowledge of the lifestyle; having a close relative in the forces and entering marriage with a fairly detailed knowledge of military life; as an ex-servicewoman (having personal experience of military service and knowing the demands of the job) and entering marriage with full knowledge of the lifestyle; as a child of a parent in the military (having grown up in a military environment with full awareness of the job and the lifestyle) and entering marriage with 'eyes open' (2002: 58).

Familiarity and prior knowledge of service life does not necessarily guarantee a trouble-free ride, and turned out to be a double-edged sword for several women in the present study. For example, Claire's father had served in the Royal Navy and was absent a great deal during her childhood:

*I mean...even my mum has said to me before, 'Oh you know, you've just got to stand by them, and look out for them, and don't upset them, and 'don't rock the boat' sort of thing. So it's probably been ingrained in me to be the typical Navy wife...I think [my mum is] quite hard really... not 'hard' hard but she gets on with stuff and doesn't moan, or anything and I think that's why she's like she is...And that used to annoy me when some people used to say 'Oh, you knew what you were expecting'...but you never do. Every person's different aren't they?*

For these women the expectations and pressures to live up to the model military wife were felt more acutely, and demonstrate the pinch between personal identity and role identity that I discussed in Chapter Four (page 86). This notion of not 'upsetting husbands' or 'rocking the boat' was expressed by every woman in this study, and was extremely powerful in the control of role appropriate emotions.

Debra's father had served in the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and was also away a lot while she was growing up. She believed she had a pretty good idea what to expect with regards to separation and military demands. However, Debra draws distinctions between her expectations of Navy life and the expectations she placed on her husband, which demonstrates the process between the context and relational aspects of a military marriage:

*...cos everybody says 'Oh you know'...and I hate this, 'you should've known what you were getting in to'. Now hang on a minute I did not! ...I did not think I was going to have twins [and] I did not expect my other half to suddenly decide he didn't want to be part of this [family life] anymore.*

Prior knowledge of military life was also perceived positively for some women. Naomi believed her service as a Naval officer had made her more tolerant of the lifestyle and that her husband had benefited from her realistic expectations of marriage in the military. However, as she 'knew the system' he certainly could not get away with 'pulling the wool over her eyes'. It was a similar story for Tanya, whose father had served in the Army for twenty two years:

*I understood 'what was what'. Had I not grown up in the Army, I would have been one of those wives that didn't have a clue about any of it. But...[learning from] my mum, and knowing this can happen...[these are] the rules...this is how we can help you. Don't worry about what your husband is saying because...their husband's can tell them absolutely anything. And they believe it! I used to stick up for wives an awful lot, and think don't let them pull the wool over your eyes.*

Tanya refers to some of the problems that can arise for wives who are kept 'in the dark' by husbands, particularly in relation to the types of help and support that are available. In my conversation with the Chief Executive of one of the Families Associations, comment was made about information that is sent to wives via personnel, including the CAS, which more often than not ends up in the bin (see Chapter One, page 22). Wives that 'know too much' can create marital tensions in terms of issues of control. However, the majority of women did not have any prior experience of the military lifestyle, expressing a certain sense of naivety in their expectations, as Becky describes:

*I don't think it's an easy thing [service marriage]. And I don't think you know what you're letting yourself in for. And we all think, yeah...it'll be fine, we'll do it, we love each other we'll do it. But it's not that easy.*

The start of married life in the military generally represents a move away from family and friends, as was the case for the majority of participants. As in previous research many women who had married found that being together was symbolic, as the posting that prompted the marriage in the first place was often associated with separation (see

Chandler 1989). Whilst the opportunity to travel seemed quite appealing to Sally, as soon as she married she was posted to Germany and did not anticipate all the hard work that would be involved with her husband's repeated absence. Sally estimated that he was generally absent eight months out of twelve most years. Finding this especially tough in a foreign country she described wives as being 'thrown feet first into military life' and was indicative of experiences in previous research (see Manson 2002). Adaptability and adjustment was therefore expected and accepted.

In some instances the benefits associated with the transition to marriage, and setting up home, were positively embraced and appreciated, as Joanne demonstrates:

*I had a three bedroomed terrace house at nineteen...fully kitted out with manky Army furniture. But it was still a home, with the man I was madly in love with...We were adults...We got our own thing... Yeah, as far as I was concerned it was alright...I just got on with it.*

Joanne attributed her ability to 'get on with it' as being because she was 'a bit like that'. She felt her personality was suited to the lifestyle and often described herself as very independent. Women's self-description in terms of an 'independent personality' was a key factor in wives ability to adjust to military life. When Michelle met her husband he was training to become a pilot in the Royal Air Force. They married three years later. The military lifestyle appealed to Michelle and in the beginning it all seemed quite glamorous to her:

*It's almost like...well you married a pilot in the Air Force...you've got to expect him to be away. You do, even if you marry a pilot in civvy street. Yes, of course they're going to be away. But I think I was willing to look at a different way of life...*

As one of two participants that attempted to maintain a career, I discuss below how the reality for Michelle fell very short of her initial expectations of married life in the military. It is how wives navigate this gap between expectation and reality that provides the focus for discussion in this chapter.

### **Learning to labour**

Sally's self-description that service wives are 'thrown' into the military lifestyle conjures up an image of being thrown into an extremely deep swimming pool with no-one else to save you. In the first few years of married life there is perhaps less of a focus on the marriage relationship at this stage and more on learning to adjust and cope with the

demands of military life. Wives learn to take the rough with the smooth, as Naomi points out:

*They [the military and husbands] want you to be strong and independent. And generally...well in my experience, the girls either sink or swim in the first few years. If you can get through the first few years and survive, and think [inhales] ...Right, okay it isn't quite what I expected...isn't quite what I wanted, but there's payoffs as well. It's not all doom and gloom. So if you get through those first few years, I generally think you're pretty good for a while.*

Like many of the women in the study Patricia described herself as an independent person who took everything in her stride:

*I've always worked and had interests [...] so I'm a lot more self-reliant than a lot of wives. I remember someone saying to me once 'why don't you cry when your husband goes away. Don't you love him?' And I used to think why do I need to cry? We can write to each other [...] and I'll decorate the spare room or something [...]. You'd get together for a coffee as soon as [husbands had] gone and there'd be all these red eyes. And I'd be thinking, well they haven't died. They're going to come back. They haven't gone forever. I think if he'd have got a years draft to the Falklands, then I would have cried.*

An important coping mechanism for Patricia was to keep things in perspective and she also demonstrates the different ways in which wives may deal with husband separation. During the first year of marriage Tess saw her husband for forty five days. Having never lived away from home before, she described the experience as a 'hard horrible year'. Feeling isolated and lonely was the worst part for Tess, particularly at weekends. During the week her employment occupied her days and on weekends she would often travel home to visit her family.

For wives living abroad, however, visiting family when loneliness sets in is not a viable option. Isolation from friends and family back home is compounded by housing and social situation in relation to a lack of informal support networks offered by other military wives. During her first overseas posting Helen was living away from the main base in a small block of flats with relatively few occupants:

*It sounds so ridiculous I can't believe I did this. But...this was the mind set I was in when I was a military wife living abroad, having gone straight from being a student, and not knowing anything else. I did do what [husband] told me. It was like I was...I mean he would almost do part one orders...It was always, we have a diary check... You know I was [treated] like another [soldier]. And I think I was probably the only one who ever did say to him 'Oh get lost' or 'I'm not doing that'. But most of the time you were totally in that person's power [especially] ...when the only person you see who speaks English is your husband.*

For many women the first few years of marriage represented a 'baptism of fire' during which time wives were socialised into the feeling rules of military culture: the role appropriate emotion was to 'get on with it' and play the military couple game.

Most women talked about how they perceived themselves in relation to their husband's job. As military wives they felt they were a part of, yet apart *from* the military system and thus occupied a contradictory space that appears to retain its longevity (see Chapter Four, page 75). In providing essential support to a husband a wife may consider that she is also supporting the institutional goals of the military, though receiving little deference for the emotional labour she performs, as Tess explains:

*In my mind you do become part of the Army in that great big machine. And whilst they don't recognise you [...] they do expect an awful lot from you support wise [...]. So that's why I think we served alongside them. And you know, just to uproot everything every year and a half...schools and jobs, and just follow them everywhere with...no thought to how it affects the family.*

Most participants could be described as enablers, in Pavalko and Elder's (1993) terms, for the indirect support they provided to allow husbands to focus on their career. However, some participants perceived themselves as being directly involved in their husband's career, and this was often linked with issues of promotion, as Sally explains:

*Within about four years [husband] was promoted to a Corporal, and then a Sergeant. They did say he wouldn't get any further because ...he's dyslexic. But I pushed him to go on an education thing, and tried to help him through it.*

Katrina was the only participant in the study who did not marry into the Army. She was already married and a homeowner with two young sons. Times were hard for the family and Katrina very much saw her husband's entry into the Army as a joint decision. When her husband was accepted, their house was sold and the family moved into barracks:

*He was gonna be a vehicle mechanic, but he had lots of options [and I suggested] that he go for avionics...And he did that and he joined [up] and we were posted to [base] which was a great adventure [...]. We had quite a varied sort of career in the Army. I used to sit with him while he did all his studies. So I learnt quite a lot about helicopters [...]. When I left [country] the flight actually awarded me a badge...the Squadron badge, and it's the first time it's ever been awarded to a [wife]. And I felt enormously proud of it...and it was almost as if I had passed a test with them. So I did feel proud of that.*

Katrina constructs her perceptions of her relationship to her husband's career in the Army in terms of a partnership, rather than just involvement in her husbands' work, for example 'we had a varied sort of career'. A service wife's level of commitment to her

husband's career is also related to coping mechanisms, for example Milroy's 'camp follower' (see Chapter Four, page 83). Service wives may be perceived as being directly involved, in a number of ways, in supporting their husband's career, hence, indirectly the institutional goals of the military. However, some will be more involved than others. It is not difficult to understand why many service wives might construct their relationship to their husband's occupation in the military in terms of the 'two-person career' (Papanek 1973). One explanation for this may be associated with the difficulties that many wives will encounter in seeking and sustaining suitable employment, therefore degrees of attachment to a husband's career may be greater.

### **Wives and paid employment**

In Chapter Four I discussed the subject of military wives and paid employment which is substantive on a number of levels. Firstly, it is constructed as a problem for the military in much of the literature in that wives are seen as either wanting to, or actually, deserting the metaphorical ship in terms of their loyalty to husbands' careers and the institutional goals of the military (see Dandeker 2000). In terms of the impact of wider social changes and fears over the civilianisation of military communities, the increase of military wives in paid employment is connected with retention issues of older and more experienced service personnel. Secondly, evidence suggests the percentage of military wives who want to work or are seeking employment is argued to be considerably higher than civilian wives (see Puckey and Kinsman 2007).

As I discussed in Chapter Four (see page 79) previous research on the US Military shows that service wives experience a weak connection to the labour market. This appeared to be the case for many participants in the present study, reasons for which were multi-faceted. It is with reference to employment that distinctions between being independent, giving up economic independence, and dual-earner/dual-career were highlighted. Tess believed she was one of the 'lucky ones' as she had managed to sustain full-time employment for the eight years she was married prior to the birth of her first child:

*I think when you marry into the services you are taking on a way of life. And to an extent...I think you give up your independence, and you give up any chance you have of a career, unless you have [one] beforehand. We'd been married for a year and we moved to [country]. I got a fantastic job over there working for the Army but in quite a civilian role [...]. I was lucky because they had a branch in England, so when we were posted back I was able to transfer [...]. I then had another job for three years. So, on paper, it looked quite good, like I hadn't had that many jobs [...]. When you move around a lot it, used to come up time and*

*time again in interviews, 'well...how long are you going to be here?' In fact a lot of the time I would omit things from my CV. Certainly, in the Army we were moving on average every year and a half...Nobody wants to employ someone in a very responsible position [...], or invest in you and train you [if] they know you're gonna move in a year and a half's time.*

Tess highlights how she tried to avoid the discrimination practices that often impede access to employment. For some wives the majority of their married life is dominated by mobility, both in domestic and international contexts, which can be both an enjoyable and rewarding experience. When Helen married she had just finished her postgraduate degree in education:

*I got married and went straight to [country]. I think about nine months later I had my first move, and then eleven [further] moves in thirteen years. So what chance had I got to [establish] a career? There was one time... when I had a two year stint at teaching in [country] which was before I had the children...But we were backwards and forwards between [country and country], which I do... find that that was a positive. I did love the travel and the friends that I made.*

Despite the impact that constant mobility may have on potential careers there can also be benefits to the lifestyle. For some women it depended on where they were living rather than the fact of being a military wife. Becky was a home owner and had spent most of her married life in an area where there was not an abundance of jobs or particularly well-paid jobs, which she believed had impacted on the opportunities available to her. Despite constant mobility Carrie had always secured some form of employment. She also found herself in a similar situation, as a result of a decision that arose from a familiar dilemma faced by service families:

*I mean I've always got jobs wherever I've lived really, so I've been like quite fortunate [...]. And I've had job, after job after job following him around really [...]. I had a really good job and I know I was going places. And we had a house. We'd been in [place] for about five and a half years. He [husband] got transferred to [town] and he wanted me to stay put [...]. But I thought it was more important to be a family unit so...that's just obviously my values [that] were a little bit different at the time to his. We ended up selling [the house] and we lost about seven grand on it [...]. But when we moved there was no jobs at all, and I couldn't see myself...I've never been a stay-at-home type of person. And obviously we had negative equity of seven thousand pounds, so obviously...I wanted to contribute if I could, but I couldn't get a job.*

Not all wives will seek paid employment and may not perceive the military as having a negative effect on their employment patterns. However, this may be subject to change during the life course, especially when children become less dependent and reasons for seeking employment also change. The decision not to work, or to give up employment,

can be pragmatic in relation to the expense of childcare, as in Debra's case where income is unlikely to compensate for this:

*When I had [my first child] I was working full-time. I gave up work because I thought it was unfair [husband] away all the time and...farming baby out to the childminder, when really my wages at the time didn't really warrant staying.*

Whilst childcare expenses are a generally a consideration for all working mothers, Debra's decision against employment was also a moral one. In view of her husband's absence she did not think it was fair that her child should be without both parents. For most of the women who were in paid employment their priority was to balance this out with their parental responsibilities. Like Debra, it was also important for Tanya to 'be there' for her children especially when her husband was away:

*Yes, I used to work [part-time] when they were younger...I worked in the schools, cos obviously with them, with your husband going away all the time I liked to be there for the children. So I just worked in the schools when they were small, which meant that I was at home whenever they [children] were at home. Just before I left [country] I was teaching computing courses at the adult education centre. But again, I could do that as and when I pleased. If the children were on holiday I didn't run a course.*

Both Naomi and her husband served as Officers in the Royal Navy, and her decision to leave was rooted in her desire to start a family:

*I would say a large number of Naval wives don't have a career. They have a job. But they don't necessarily [not] have a career because they can't afford either the time, or the money to devote to that career. [It's] because of the fact that they are, in a lot of cases, the sole carer of the children [...]. Consequently you tend to adapt your job, career, whatever, around the children. And you just have to think...well I can't rely on [husband] [...]. I had part-time jobs, but I didn't have a career. Didn't have...a decent job because I always had to be there to drop and pick the kids up, and school holidays and things like that.*

In the beginning, Michelle believed her career would be conducive to married life in the military. However, difficulties arose once she became a mother and this led to much resentment on her behalf. The excerpt cited from my interview with Michelle is fairly lengthy, but highlights one of the oversights in much of the literature on spousal employment in the military; a lack of distinction between wives having a job and trying to establish a career:

*I actually felt incredibly annoyed that [husband's] life didn't alter at all. I went back full-time originally, because my company wouldn't allow me to work part-time...they [employer] said... you either come back full-time or you don't come back at all. So I was under enormous pressure [...]. I remember having to go*

*back to work [full-time] when [son] was twelve weeks...and really didn't want to. We were moving as well [...]. So I had two days in which to move house, find childcare, and it was all down to me [...]. And then I went back to work feeling totally inadequate because I didn't really... have the chance to settle him into the nursery. There was all this guilt associated with it, and [husband] just carried on...his life [his working life]...I just didn't think it had changed at all and I...I felt very resentful.*

I asked Michelle whether she felt her resentment was directed to the RAF or to her husband:

*Both, I think, because ...I mean the two of us... we found it difficult because my...husband would blame it on my company and say well, it's their fault, which yes it was really. And I should have stood up to them a bit more actually. But I was scared of losing the job and, and at the time we...brought fifty per cent of the income in each. So it wasn't as though I could just say 'Oh well let's...I won't bother working then [...]'. I didn't really want the trauma of looking for another job because it's not something I'd considered at that time [...]. Yes some of it was directed at one another... and so there was a bit of tit for tat going on. But never once did there ever seem to be any flexibility on his part [...]. It seemed...I don't know whether, or how hard, he pushed for it or whether it just wasn't available. I don't know [...]. And at one point, it was either gonna be my marriage or my job. So I had to give up my job that I loved, absolutely loved, because it wasn't conducive to family life with him...never quite sure when he was gonna be in the country.*

Notwithstanding the practical difficulties many service wives experienced in finding and sustaining employment the term 'single parents with income' was self-descriptive and is also evident in previous research. This suggests that whilst wives do not endure the economic constraints that befall many lone parents, they will encounter similar problems with access to reliable and affordable childcare in order to enter employment or train for a career. Occupational mobility is but one explanation for this situation, the other being that a wife's social situation may be perceived as similar to that of a lone parent without a partner.

### **Formal and informal support**

As I discussed in Chapter One, an analysis of the problematisation of marriage breakdown in the military reveals that a focus on marital stability is closely connected with improving retention rates and embedded in directives to increase service welfare provision to strengthen family policy. In this section I am concerned with women's experience of accessing welfare support, given that it is regarded as detrimental to husbands' careers (see Milroy 1996). It was clear that wives learned early on in the marriage that a husband's career must be protected at all times and at all costs. This perception was supported by the majority of women in the study when describing their

experiences of welfare services. Tess identifies the parochial obligations and normative constraints imposed on wives that were often perceived as unspoken rules:

*I don't think [husband] actually ever said it to me, but it was very much drummed into you in very subtle ways that you didn't go, sort of, telling tales...I mean it just wouldn't occur to me, or to anyone I knew, to go to the welfare office...I wouldn't even know where it was. It was also... a lot of the time, it was how your wife behaves could affect your promotion and the times ... [personnel] have been called in to see the Sergeant Major over something their wife has done. If you wanted them to [be promoted] you didn't rock the boat. And you wouldn't go to welfare [...] or anyone in authority.*

When Claire's husband was away at sea, and both she and her son were ill, she was advised by her doctor to contact Naval welfare services as she was struggling to cope on her own. The threat of the potential repercussions for her husband's career was enough to spur her to 'get on with it' and manage. Claire interestingly used the word stigma to describe the conflict between family problems and the military. Goffman's (1963) concept of spoiled identity is useful here, and relates to my discussion on emotional dependency and role identity in Chapter Four (page 84).

This spoiling of the military identity can be understood in Sally's experience, particularly in relation to her husband's role as Platoon Sergeant:

*I was really poorly...when those two [nods at daughters] were little, and [husband] was training [recruits] then...The first six weeks are really intense... the recruits can't go out of camp so they have to be [nanny'd]. And he said that he couldn't take two days off to look after the kids, so that I could sleep. I had glandular fever or something ...and I just needed to basically sleep for a week... At the time he said that he couldn't [take time off] because it would look bad on him... So I thought, well it's okay I'll cope, sort of attitude, even though I was feeling angry and worthless... And it would be the wives club, community side of it, rather than the Army side of it, that would help you out.*

As she later found out from a discussion with her husband's boss he would have been able to delegate his responsibilities and come home to look after Sally and his children. The conflict lies in the social identity of the group (military man) versus personal identity (husband and father). The hypermasculinised culture of the military devalues the feminine rendering social and family problems unnecessary topics of discussion or consideration (Harrison 2006: 560). This is perhaps demonstrated by Helen's experience of her husband as constantly saying to her "don't bring me your problems bring me your solutions".

Social (family) problems appeared low on the list of priorities for military authorities *unless* they were seen to compromise a member's performance on the job. In describing her experiences of approaching welfare, Katrina felt that she was made all too aware of the distinction between *her* problems with her husband, and the military's problems with her husband:

*The drinking was just awful...Well he threw a knife at me one day...And I remember going to the families officer [...] and saying 'please help me I can't live like this'. And I was politely told I was excess baggage, and my husband was the most important person there. And...I should be there to support him... He [husband] once shouted and screamed at the Sergeant Major [and] they picked him up on that.*

When Debra was trying to deal with a very difficult situation on her own it seemed reasonable for her to believe that the number of years she had served as a loyal and 'well behaved' Naval wife should count for something:

*1999 was a horrendous year. I lost my dad and my gran, and [husband] was away all year [... When I was going through it all [the Navy] didn't help [...]. I'm not one of these women who are on the phone every five minutes. I've never asked for help [before], but I expected that when I did, I actually got some. And I got told 'you're only his wife you know'. And then I got told from somebody else, 'well unfortunately you don't know how to play the game [...]. I mean the [Navy] were okay when my dad died, they did get [husband] back [...]. But when my gran died suddenly, and she's like a second mum really [and] I was devastated, absolutely heartbroken, and I wanted him there for me. You know I'd never asked for anything in fifteen years, [but] the attitude I got was kind of 'tough, he's in the forces, get on with it, you're only his wife'. So I thought great...how supportive I've been over the years, I've not kicked up a fuss. I've always played the Naval game.*

As previous research has shown many wives will be reluctant to seek formal support from the military authorities, even at times when 'special welfare services' have been provided in relation to deployment to conflict zones (see Dandeker and French 2006). This reluctance and refusal was also borne out in the current research. It is not just about the potential ramifications on husbands' careers that may suppress the use of such services, even though this is an important factor. Many wives will be dependent on the higher earnings from their husband's career and is effective in conditioning wives to 'get on with it' and cope. It is perhaps yet another demonstration of a 'feeling rule reminder' to wives.

Wives can also be made to feel a total irritation within the military system, and self-descriptive terms such as 'second class citizen' and 'excess baggage' were frequently used by these women to describe how they perceived themselves within the military

system. Katrina's award of the Squadron badge appeared to be an exception to the acknowledgement of wives' contribution to the military. The lack of status conveyed on wives by the military, in terms of wives' perceptions, has implications for their emotional labour in that they may at least feel that they have earned for themselves a little status for their work. The relationship between emotional labour and lack of recompense for this labour therefore begs the question of what the potential cost is for wives' well-being (see Hochschild 2003: 12). In this next section I examine this question further.

### **Intermittent husband absence and re-integration**

The interrelated processes of separation and reunion are argued to be two of the most demanding features of military life that personnel and their families will have to cope with. As I have discussed in previous chapters, these factors relate to military wives' levels of adjustment and coping both of which are multidimensional concepts (see Wood et al. 1995). It was a subject that occupied a prominent place in most of the women's narratives, particularly those for whom separation was a regular occurrence and often for significant periods of time. There is great pressure for wives to cope and many will consider they have little choice but to grit their teeth and 'get on with it'. These role appropriate emotions are not simply private acts, they represent institutional feeling rules for a system of emotion management (Hochschild 2003: 49).

Personnel must convince themselves that their wives will cope whilst they are away. It would be considered detrimental to combat readiness if personnel do not have their minds on the task in hand if they are too busy worrying about their wife and family. In Joanne's case neither she nor her husband appeared to have any choice:

*Yeah, [husband] was very focused, tunnel vision...and they've [military personnel] got to be haven't they to an extent. I mean, you leave your wife and children, and you go off. They've got to be slightly like that, haven't they? They've got to be the type of person to be able to walk away from their family. He did it to me loads of times. He had no problems doing it. I got posted to [country] two days before Christmas. A week later he left [...]. I'm in the middle of [town] all on my own and didn't know a soul. I cried my eyes out when he left. He turned and then he walked off. He had to...they have no choice. I think that's the way that it's bred [into] them but it's got to be there [in them] as well.*

Processes of physical separation demand considerable emotional labour on the part of both husband and wife. In stating, 'they've got to be slightly like that, haven't they?' Joanne acknowledges that military personnel have to be able to control and hide their emotions. Her husband was able to do this because it was 'bred' into him, suggesting an institutionalised process that regulates and normalises the situation for personnel (see

Ashforth and Kreiner 2002). Emotions are therefore compartmentalised in order for personnel to be able to 'get on with the job' (see Ashforth and Humphrey 1995). What is also evident to Joanne is that her husband appeared to be receptive to this process. In understanding and accepting their situation both Joanne and her husband were responding to 'feeling rules'.

A wife will find she has to cope with additional responsibilities on top of the normal domestic side of life. There will be minor repairs, paperwork, financial management, and the added responsibility of being both father and mother to her children. However, a number of women spoke of the difficulties of reintegrating their husband back into the family when they had been absent for a lengthy period of time, as Tanya describes:

*I did use to find it strained when he came back. As much as you wanted them back, you'd built your own little life...Six months is a long time and the children grow up an awful lot in that six months, so much so that when [laughs]...The first time my husband went to [country]...I flew out after four months during his R and R [and] my daughter screamed the place down and wouldn't go near him. And that's quite hurtful for them [personnel]. But at the same time I'm thinking, well what do you expect? She was twelve months old [when he left]. It was almost like she just didn't even know who he was. And I think that's difficult...But I think [husband] did three [or more] tours in about three years, which was a lot.*

It was clear that processes of husbands' reintegration into the family represented one of the greatest demands for wives in the present study, particularly for those who described themselves as very independent and had learned how to tough it out. Having been the primary decision maker and manager while a husband was away, it was difficult to 'step back' and allow someone else to become head of the household again. As Tess describes, she felt like she had to have two personalities:

*It makes me laugh now when someone says, 'oh my husband's away for a week what am I gonna do'. And I'm thinking Cor! God [laughs] ...I look back now and I think, really yes, you were married but it was a very strange existence...You'd spend half the year on your own and you do get very independent. And I used to find that when he came home it was almost, not a resentment, but it was almost like, you can't tell me what I need to do, I've been doing this for six months you know and...it was very odd [...] and it was like being two different people really.*

For most participants, adjusting and coping to their husband's homecoming was far more difficult to navigate than their absence, as Carrie demonstrates:

*It is stressful, you know, when they're away and they come home and...I mean it's hard when they go away. But I found it harder when they came back. I can remember [husband] being away once for ages and I bought a new car. I think*

*I'd just had [son] and that's why I bought a car. [My daughter] was a toddler and with [son] I thought 'Oh no, I need a car!' And I always used to fill it up with petrol. Never five pound here...ten pound there. I can remember just picking [husband] up and I had to go and put some petrol in. And he said 'oh just put ten pound in' and I ...I think I had a blazing row on the forecourt. 'How dare you tell me [what to do]...you've been away for three months'. Do you know what I mean? 'How dare you tell me how much petrol to put in my car'. It was just sort of trivial little things...You just get used to being independent and they'd come home and they take over don't they? And you're back. I think they like you to be dependent on them.*

In order for personnel to successfully reintegrate back into family life wives are required to manage their husband's temporary role displacement (see Thomas and Bailey 2006). The more independent wives perceived themselves, the greater the demand for emotional labour in displaying role appropriate emotion. Both Tess and Carrie demonstrate a pinch between what they should feel with regard to their husband's homecoming and what they actually felt. So what service wives have to do and how they actually feel may instigate a process of estrangement, not just from a husband, but also from the emotional self. Such processes of emotional dissonance suggest there may be negative costs attached to wives' emotional labour.

### **Summary**

This chapter has been concerned with a number of themes that emerged from women's accounts of their retrospective experiences as service wives. Married life in the military presented a number of challenges and obstacles. Despite degrees of divergence between expectations of marriage and military life and the reality of lived experiences, they learned to cope with the demands of family life. In learning how to 'get on with it' and make the best of their situations, unwritten feeling rules acted as powerful influences in women's lives. For the majority of women the length of marriage would suggest they had become battle hardened and fiercely independent which was helpful in dealing with and managing husband absence, yet not so helpful when husbands returned home.

Many of the women enjoyed several things about the military way of life and considered themselves to have been happily married for a good number of years. Even when describing the good times in their relationships and general socio-milieu, a picture emerged of an explicable potential for high incidences of marital adversity in the Armed Forces, even if many of these marriages do not end in divorce. For the women in the present study the processes between marriage (whether happy or not) and marital

adversity did lead to separation and divorce, and it is to this discussion that I now turn to in the following chapter.

## 6. When marriage fails for service wives

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*Looking back, if someone had said to me... should I have married him, I would have. I would do that all over again. Cos at the time, it was the best thing I could've done and really, for say ten years of the marriage, it was brilliant it was. And then it just started... You know, nobody would ever have thought we would've split up. And most people say that if we can split up, then there's no hope [for them].*

Debra, ex-Naval wife

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I explore participants' perceived causes of the breakdown of their marriage. Reasons given for marriage failure could be divided into two categories: adultery and unreasonable behaviour. However, I explore these categorisations from a social rather than legal perspective to reveal the processes contributing to women's decisions to end their marriages. The starting point for the chapter is to discuss some of my key findings within an overall framework of macro-social changes, before moving on to a more detailed examination of perceived causes of marriage failure within the context of the military.

### **Overview of marriage failure**

As previous research has shown there is never any one reason why a marriage dissolves, and it is often a long and complex process generally in one person making a decision (see Walzer and Oles 2003). This is also the general finding of this thesis. Most participants had separated from 1997 onwards and almost half had received their decree absolute within two to three years at the point of interview. Whether they were married younger or divorced younger, the length of marriage for the majority of participants was comparable to the national average, and several far exceeded this. Only two of the women were in full-time employment at the time of marriage breakdown, having been married the longest at twenty and twenty seven years. On analysis of the interviews it was clear that a picture of marriage failure emerged as a result of a number of difficulties experienced within marriage, the degrees to which these difficulties were exacerbated by the organisational reality of the military, and how these demands filtered or crossed over into family life. The evidence tended to point towards what are perceived as 'micro' changes within partnerships, which appeared to impact on participants' long-term expectations of marriage and family life.

That the women as wives were prepared to tolerate a lot within the overall social context of military life was evident, many stating how much they loved the life and it being 'the best of times and the worst of times' for them. Apart from one participant no one blamed the military directly for the failure of their marriage. I was surprised at this bearing in mind the findings of previous research on Naval personnel (see Regan de Bere 1999). In the one case in the present study where the military was considered to be directly at fault, the marriage had broken down a number of years after the husband had left the services. As I have already discussed in Chapters One and Four, most of the research on military families has focused on wives' ability to cope with the demands of family and military life. The extent and depth of difficulties that may arise in a military marriage are *unproblematized* and many couples will experience different types and varying degrees of marital adversity throughout the course of a military marriage.

In the wider social context reasons for divorces being granted in legal terms are defined within six categories; adultery, behaviour, desertion, two years separation and consent, five years separation, and 'other' which generally means more than one of the listed categories (Social Trends 2006). In simple terms the two categories most relevant to the discussion in this chapter are adultery and unreasonable behaviour. In attempting to categorise perceptions of marital breakdown a number of sub-themes emerged that inevitably overlap to some degree. Fifteen of the women claimed responsibility for initiating marital separation which, in terms of my achieved sample, was representative of a gendered process. As I briefly discussed in Chapter One (see page 18), there are a number of situations that have been identified as causal elements of marriage breakdown in the military that are not necessarily exclusive to the military lifestyle. However, these situations are exacerbated by certain features and demands of military life. Just as it has been argued that there are a number of endogenous factors impacting on military marriages, a number of endogenous features of marriage breakdown can also be identified, which I now discuss in the following section.

### **Infidelity**

Infidelity was a significant theme to emerge in that the military lifestyle facilitates opportunities for affairs. Of the five women who stated it was their husband who initiated separation, in three cases the cause reported was that the husband had 'had an affair' and had ended the marriage. Two of these women were still unsure as to why the marriage ended, but had suspicions that infidelity was an underlying factor. For the women who initiated the end of their marriage, infidelity on the part of their husband was the reason given by seven participants, with three also citing additional clusters of

behaviour. Whilst adultery is a fact proven at divorce it is argued to be symptomatic of marital adversity rather than a cause of divorce (Amato and Previti 2003; Duncombe and Marsden 2004a). Whilst infidelity was cited as a reason for marriage breakdown there was a general acknowledgment that the lifestyle, in terms of separation and reunion and living separate lives, was an underlying factor which may have led to infidelity on the part of the husband. Therefore, infidelity was not perceived necessarily as the root cause of marriage failure but may have been the end result.

Naomi's husband had ended the marriage as a result of his infidelity. She also discovered that he had had a number of one night stands and two protracted affairs with female colleagues, three of which were subordinates. Helen also commented on how a high-ranking officer in the Army was discharged for having an affair with the wife of colleague in a lower rank, which is seen as 'bad news'. The problem of affairs, however, only becomes a problem if they are discovered. The number of sex scandals involving married male and female personnel in the late 1990s attracted high profile media coverage, prompting the MoD to introduce a new code of conduct for service personnel. Previously, all extra-marital affairs were supposedly outlawed, including affairs between personnel and civilians, although the blanket ban on adultery has now been lifted. It is still an offence under military law, however, for service personnel to have affairs with each other, particularly if the effectiveness of a unit is undermined, or the military is brought into disrepute (The Daily Telegraph 20 February 1998).

In attempting to predict processes of infidelity research has shown a number of variables that generally fall into three categories: the characteristics of individuals who are likely to participate in infidelity; circumstances that encourage infidelity; and relationship factors associated with infidelity (see Vangelist and Gerstenberger 2004: 60). In light of my findings it seems reasonable to suggest that all three variables can cut across military marriages. Firstly, men are more likely to have affairs than women and with more (presumably single) partners (Duncombe and Marsden 2004b: 143). I asked Lauren, who was still married at the time of our interview and living in married quarters, if she thought that infidelity was an issue in the military. Infidelity was not cited as the cause of her marriage ending:

*Yes, very much [so]. Yeah. Most of them [men] can't keep it in their trousers really... There's a lot more of it than people think [...]. Especially like when the men go away and there's, like the... female version of the RAF... Most wives don't like them... we don't get on... it's just not the done thing. Cos they'll get to know your husband, and they'll probably sleep with him as well. So we just don't mix at*

*all. I mean we went out on camp last night and we went to see a band, and there was a hell of a lot of [female personnel] there. And you've got the wives and the husbands, and the boyfriends and the girlfriends, on this side and [female personnel] on that side. You could tell in a club where they are, cos they're just lined up against the wall...and they're on the prowl...Literally they are hunting for the next victim...it's...quite stupid actually but it's just the way it is.*

Only one woman reported having had an affair a number of years prior to leaving her husband for his infidelity. Several women spoke of extra-marital affairs being 'rife', not just in terms of men's participation but also for the lonely wives who get left behind. Whilst they were quite adamant it was not a situation to be condoned, there was a distinct empathy as to why this may happen, as Debra explains:

*It's the guy that turns round and says 'Oh my wife was shagging someone else' and [wives] get labelled and that's annoying. But I think... yeah, but you haven't had to sit at home for six months...when I know fare well the ones that are going back and saying my missus is whatever... They are the ones that get into a foreign port, take off their wedding ring and have as many [flings] as they want...So it's still okay for a man, because it's part of the Naval thing [...]. But it's that woman that's at home with the kids, twenty four seven, sat there waiting for him to come back...And when he doesn't show her the love and attention that she's been waiting for, she just feels so devalued.*

Debra identifies the sexual double standard whereby it is okay for men (husbands) to engage in casual sex, however, women will be stigmatised (see Duncombe and Marsden 2004b). In most cases where participants were the initiators in ending a marriage, and a husband's infidelity had been cited as a contributing factor, it was more about 'what happened next' when the affair had been exposed that was the ultimate reason for ending the marriage.

I was struck by these women's accounts of their attempts to keep their marriages intact that is perhaps indicative of the emotional investment they had made. For Sally it was not necessarily the fact that her husband had admitted to having an affair, it was the humiliation she felt when it continued:

*I said at first... that we need to split up, that I couldn't deal with [the affair] that I didn't want the marriage to end...But he still carried on with [the affair] behind my back for another six months. And then...I'd had enough by that stage.*

In Claire's case both she and her husband attended marriage guidance, although she never really felt that her husband was committed to saving the marriage:

*He was going back to sea, so I thought everything was fine. Although looking back it probably wasn't...When he came back I knew he was in contact with this girl again, and I just thought I've had enough...I can't do this anymore...So then he was like 'Oh I do love you and I want to be with [you] and I'll go to Relate, I'll do anything'. So we went back to Relate... we went about seventeen times. And I knew...he wasn't telling me the truth really. But I just had to see if he meant what he said, cos I thought if there was a chance of saving [the marriage] I didn't want to [be the one] to split it all up. But in the end...it was me who ended it, because he wanted his cake and eat it...And I couldn't stick it anymore. There was no respect really to me, and I don't think I had a lot of respect for myself either.*

For Vikki her husband's infidelity became an issue within two years of their marriage. This was her second marriage, although her first to a serving member, and she had given up her home in the North and moved with her two children from her previous marriage to be with her new husband and their child. Whilst Vikki felt that her husband did not want to be part of the family anymore, 'if indeed he ever really did', she felt it necessary to take responsibility for ending the marriage:

*He was a single man when I had met him. He'd never had a heavy relationship, and he'd been drinking and living that life from the age of eighteen up to thirty years old. And that was partly the reason why we broke up was through [his] adultery. He just couldn't give up that single man's life and the comradeship [...]. He just could not make that transition into family life. [I hung on for another] six years. But you can't fight something that is bigger than yourself. There's just no way you can do it. So I just thought I gotta let go, I can't live like this anymore, it's wrong, I can't do it. I just feel like I'm getting nothing here...empty lies. It was like I could have been anybody's stand in [...]. We came so far down his list of priorities that...we were just a noose around his neck really. And I knew that he would never make that decision [to end the marriage] because he couldn't, he's not that type of person. So I had to make the decision, and I asked him to leave, because I knew he could. He would have somewhere to go cos he was up at [base] at the time, so he lived on there.*

Whilst I can only rely on participants' perceptions of why their marriage ended, in the few cases where the husband was the initiator in relation to his infidelity it appeared to be a 'cut and dried' case. In other words, for men it might be more likely that affairs will end in divorce for they will end their relationship purely for their own interests (Hewitt et al. 2006; Walzer and Oles 2003).

Theresa and her ex-husband had recently spoken about 'what had happened' although it was rare for him to broach the subject. As a non-initiator she felt she had absolutely no control which was harder for her to accept, particularly as there were no prior clues for her that anything was wrong:

*He said to me that I didn't really get a chance [to even say] 'Well...you've had an affair, are you gonna stop it or...you know, can we work it out?' It was just straight forward [for him]...that was it. I was so hurt and shocked ...Because I suppose I'd always thought we'd got a rock solid marriage. But obviously it wasn't as rock solid [laughs] as I thought it was.*

In attempting to come to terms with her husband's infidelity, Theresa believed he was experiencing an episode of mid-life crisis. Theresa's marriage can be characterised as a weekender relationship, whereby her husband was living elsewhere during the week and came home at week-ends. This form of intermittent husband absence is often viewed as the least satisfactory for service families, and is more representative of families that are owner-occupiers (see Chandler 1987, 1989). For Theresa this situation had worked perfectly well for her and her children for a good number of years. However, at the time of the affair her husband was approaching retirement from the Navy after twenty two years service:

*His mother always said she didn't know whether it was because he suddenly realised he'd got a family...Whether he couldn't hack having a wife twenty four hours a day and two teenage children. We don't know. [Ex-husband] still can't explain it today himself. It's just one of those things... I don't know. He'd say he just can't answer it at all.*

Naomi received counseling funded by the Royal Navy which she found very helpful when her husband ended their thirteen year marriage:

*Mmm...the last [girl] was a twenty eight year old...hence the mid-life crisis [laughs]. It would have been much easier if he'd have just bought a motorbike...I think there's a lot needs to be written about male mid life crisis but that, again, is another topic [laughs]. I think that some are lucky and manage to get through it [infidelity]...and some don't.*

References to infidelity and dating much younger women were also acknowledged by a number of women to be signs of male mid-life crisis. Additional factors also linked to perceived causes of marriage breakdown can be defined as 'unreasonable behaviour' that are not necessarily separated from issues of infidelity, as I examine in the next three sections.

### **Financial problems**

The subject of financial problems within the military context is complex, and I can only attempt a brief examination in response to the findings of the current study. It is one of the factors cited in relation to marriage breakdown in previous research. Three participants, two as initiators, spoke at length about financial issues as a perceived

cause contributing to the breakdown of their marriage. However, there was a general acknowledgement from most women that money issues contributed to marital problems, as Katrina demonstrates:

*One of the last straws to end the marriage was that I'd...put two hundred pounds away on a Friday to go and put a...payment on a holiday. We were living [overseas] at the time and I went to get it the following week [and the money was gone]... [Husband] hadn't been out any longer than normal and it was because he'd spent it all on the slot machines [...]. Well I used to work in the NAAFI cos we couldn't afford...food [and] I couldn't understand why people could buy meat on the twelfth or the eighteenth of the month, cos I never had any money...I was so naïve cos he was drinking and gambling.*

Family finances were always an issue for Helen who never really felt she had her own money, despite the fact that she had had a number of jobs whilst she was married. The biggest problem was that she never had any idea what her husband was doing with the family wage. Helen had always received what she considered to be a 'meagre' housekeeping allowance that never stretched far enough with two growing children:

*One of the things he bought was an Aston Martin. And it basically was what finished off the marriage...Because he spent what, in those days [1990], would have bought a small house up here, on renovating [the car]. And then the bottom fell out of the classic car market. So then I came up to the house [that we had bought some time back] and it was in a mess. And because of all he's done with the money over this car, the money wasn't there for anything [...]. We'd been here a year and the house was in a mess [and] we were in all this debt...as he'd taken out all these loans.*

It was clear to Helen that her husband had mis-managed a substantial amount of money over the years. In both Katrina and Helen's accounts their lack of access to money had impacted quite negatively on the family's standard of living, which often reveals a link between male control of finances and power and inequality in households (see Vogler and Pahl 1999).

There are a number of features to military life that may exacerbate financial pressures for families, the most obvious being the additional expenses incurred with familial separation. Another problem, which is related to my discussion on the impact of social bonding as an essential element of military cohesion (see Chapter Three, page 52) are the additional expenses associated with promotion. Although promotion through the ranks will secure a pay increase, this is often not sufficient to cover the associated social functions and rituals that personnel and couples are expected to participate in. This situation is compounded by restrictions placed on personnel who are away from home

attending courses, as Claire explains when her husband was training to become a Naval Officer:

*We couldn't see each other obviously for the first...twelve weeks or something [as] he wasn't allowed home. And at the time we couldn't sell the house and...he was spending huge amounts of money down there. And [although] they weren't allowed to come home...they were expected to socialise and that. And you know there was about five hundred quid going each month, or maybe more, just on [his] socialising. And we didn't have that money and I wasn't working.*

The provision of married quarters has always been viewed as an affordable and convenient option for families. With the recognition of increasing home ownership in much of the literature on military families the associated financial burdens are also likely to increase. It is therefore reasonable to assume that greater numbers of service wives would need to take up paid employment in order to contribute to the security of the family.

Debts can easily accumulate and for a number of different reasons. For personnel and their families unable to manage their finances it can become quite a public affair. Personnel can get into serious trouble with the military authorities and ultimately be discharged for bringing 'his Service into disrepute', which may discourage those in trouble from seeking help (Jolly 1992: 152). What is unproblematised in the literature is how financial troubles can also be kept hidden from wives. Debra had no idea that her welfare and that of her three children had been put at risk when the Navy closed rank around her husband:

*I haven't really got down to the bottom of the debt, but I think probably gambling because there was nothing to show [for it] no flash cars, no holidays, nothing...I really just don't know where all that money went...But it was the Navy that allowed him...to do it really...He was able to do it because of his job. He used his [base] address, so he was bypassing me... Unbeknown to me he'd had a warning [from the Navy] for his financial [problems] that I knew nothing about ...He'd been a naughty boy, they were gonna deal with him...Didn't matter about me and the kids. He had tried to forge my name on documents to get [over thirty thousand pounds] from the house...and whenever I approached [the Naval authorities] they couldn't give me the information...Even the guy from the family services said, we can give [personnel] all the information they want but unless [husbands] give us wives the information [the military] can't help us.*

Debra's situation was very serious and the fight to keep her home following the breakdown of her marriage took her years to recover from and secure. It was evident that she was very upset that her husband's employer knew what was happening. It is perhaps not difficult to understand why many military wives will refer to themselves as

'excess baggage' or 'second class citizens', when the paternalistic hand of the Armed Forces is seemingly there to protect personnel only. Many women in the study commented on the lack of responsibility that the military fails to instil in personnel which was viewed as 'no good for anyone'. This perception is demonstrated quite succinctly by Vikki:

*When they're young men they can be very silly. And the military hide a lot of things, and they cover it up for them. What is that teaching them? It's teaching them that every time they make a mistake, that affects people's lives, the military is gonna sort it out for them.*

This notion of 'covering up' by the military was a prevalent thread running through most of the women's narratives connecting both similarities and differences in their stories. Most of these women had very clear ideas as to what constituted responsible behaviour within a family context, and this was not a situation that was perceived to be encouraged or fostered by the military. In the next section I discuss the culture of drinking and alcohol consumption in the military as a factor of marital adversity and marriage breakdown which is rarely featured in the extant literature in terms of the impact on wives and children.

### **A culture of alcohol**

When Vikki states above 'you can't fight something that is bigger than yourself' she is referring to the drinking and socialising patterns that are the expected norm for service personnel. An emphasis on drinking and evening and weekend socialising with fellow colleagues, is closely connected to the bachelor ethos and unit cohesion that pervades military life. Most participants offered unsolicited comments about the drinking environment. For Tess, it was a profound annoyance and intrusion in her marriage, "drinking? Yeah, well it was a military thing wasn't it? Go on exercise, we've been with you every day for weeks but now we'll go out on the beer together". Alcohol pervaded the lives of the majority of women to various degrees. Michelle felt the drinking culture in the RAF was completely 'over the top' and, as a couple, it was not easy to 'buck the trend':

*We went to [an Officer's] ball when [son] was probably about 6 months old and I never went to another...It was too much like hard work, because it's very much a drinking culture. And yes...we tried to stay up til breakfast, and we never made that. But you know to have this massive hangover, and then come home and have to look after a child...It wasn't something I wanted to participate in any more.*

Becky highlights both the intrusion of the alcohol culture in the Armed Forces, and the general lack of consideration as to how this impacts on family life:

*I used to panic every time I knew that he was going out, or that he had a 'do' on in the mess. I can remember one incident, where he got sent home, cos he'd had that much to drink [at the mess] and this was at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. I had a phone call from the girl who lived across the road from me saying [husband] ... is peeing all over your front door. I was absolutely furious because like...the Sergeant Major, or someone, had sent him home cos he was so drunk. Well why does he think that I want [husband] home when I've got children [with him] drunk like that? So...I got my neighbour to have the children, bundled him in the back of the car, drove him back to camp...I opened the passenger door...and he was that drunk he just fell out outside the Sergeants mess. Cos I thought...he's married to the Marines as well, and they can take some responsibility if they've got him in that state. I think he got loads of extra duties for going back in, but there was no way he was gonna be at home.*

Becky demonstrates quite clearly here her refusal to 'play the game' which resulted in consequences for her husband. Concerns about alcohol in the military are generally health related, however, there are also social implications. In Katrina's case her husband was 'always a drinker':

*The Army's no good for drinkers...as there's lots of happy hours [...]. He broke his neck going back up to the pub one day. He'd been drinking for about twelve hours at that stage [...] and he had to be [repatriated] back home. So they left me in [country] to sort of, pick up the pieces and then go to him...There were a lot of servicemen in the hospital with alcohol related problems [...]. But [the Army] appeared to turn a blind eye to all his drinking...And I remember in [country] and it's happy hour and it's half past ten in the morning...And I remember saying to this Sergeant Major, who said to me 'do you know how hard I worked to get this to be a family happy hour?'. And I said that I didn't want to be in the happy hour all the time...I didn't want to be part of that culture. And as a mother of three children I don't think I should have been [expected to]. And I don't think [husband] should have been there for twelve hours at a time either.*

What is unproblematised in the extant literature about the use of alcohol in the military, are the social and health implications for wives and children. Patricia's husband had spent a period of time attending the support group Alcoholics Anonymous. She believed that service life had both encouraged and exacerbated levels of drinking that might not be so easily hidden or accepted in a civilian occupation:

*He'd only been home one weekend a month for those months, apart from a couple of weeks in August. And life was so much better without him. You know, while he was not drinking, fine. But when he came home at the Easter and he was horrible...and then in the summer really really awful, I thought...life is peaceful, it's quiet while he's not here...Why should I have to put up with this, and subject this little child to all of that? And when he's not here things are fine.*

Part of the problem revealed in several participants' accounts of husbands excessive drinking and the culture of alcohol in the military, is the extent to which this was also associated with abusive behaviour and even physical violence.

### **Domestic violence**

One of the findings I found most disturbing was that more than half of participants reported experiencing some form of violence within their relationships which included physical, verbal, psychological and emotional abuse and, in some cases, this was directed towards children. There were extreme cases, however, of wife battering and incidences with a variety of weapons. In the legal sense the definition of violence is 'the unlawful use of physical force by one person against others'. In the context of this discussion I adopt a broader approach by defining violence as 'behaviour which harms others, either physically or emotionally' (Pilcher and Whelehan 2004: 173). Also of use is the definition of domestic violence by the Army Welfare Service, which categorises a range of behaviours where the objective is to achieve control, including; physical assault, threats of violence, intimidation and humiliation, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and denigration of looks, intelligence or ability.

A theme relevant to this thesis is the impact of patterns of employment for wives who follow their husbands on geographical postings. More specifically, wives suffering from domestic violence and living in married quarters are threatened with the loss of their home. The decision to leave a relationship, therefore, can often be protracted, as was the case for Katrina who was living overseas in married quarters with her three children at the time she left her husband. She had experienced a number of years of her husband's 'womanising, drinking, gambling and violent behaviour' but for Katrina the option of staying with her husband became worse than the unknown of going:

*I've always known my own mind [and] yes, I wanted the marriage to be for life. [But] I always knew that I had to do the best thing for my sanity. And when I thought I was losing my sanity... that was the time for me to go, because I would have been no good for my children. If I'd have stayed I would've ended up in a mental institution...I tried for as long as I could. I would have left him after seven years if I hadn't fell pregnant [with my third child]...I loved being in the Army, I just didn't enjoy what was happening. And taking the decision was the hardest [thing]...not actually leaving. The leaving was easy. But it was the decision to actually do the [...] 'what if?' in your head. Okay, I don't know what's over there, but it's got to be better than where I am. And [after making] that decision I just felt that such a weight had lifted off me.*

Katrina decision to leave her husband is a moral one and is based on her perception of being a good mother (see May 2008). Lauren was twenty-six and had been diagnosed

with mental health problems and was receiving treatment at the time of our interview. She had been separated for three months following her second marriage to a serving member of the RAF. She was soon to move out of her married quarters and move away to be near family. I asked Lauren if she felt that leaving her husband was the only option:

*Yeah. Definitely. I mean even my psychiatrist said [that I] need to get away from [my] husband, and get away from the situation that [I am] in now... So it's gotta be something wrong. So yeah, it was the only way I [was] gonna get better [was] to get away from it all. He's a bully... a very big control freak and a bully. And... I wouldn't say he gets violent, but he does get very controlling over me... which is not very good cos I'm mentally ill. And that's mainly through him... he's made me mentally ill. So I had to get out. I mean I've left before, and then I've come back and tried to give it another chance but obviously it's not worked. So this time that's it.*

I asked Lauren if her husband had always behaved in this way.

*His first wife suffered with psychosis... which he had played a big part in apparently... But I thought he would be different... I mean he was nice in the [beginning] but... as it's gone on... he's awful to be honest. And because he's a Corporal in the RAF, he thinks he's a Corporal at home as well. So the kids have got... like it's constant boot camp. And with myself, as well, if I don't do the housework right... then he'll stand there and talk to me like he'll talk to one of his [subordinates]. So I couldn't put up with that anymore.*

Like Katrina, Lauren believed that she was 'saving her sanity' by leaving her marriage and felt she was lucky that she had only been married two years. Helen, on the other hand, had been married for twenty seven years and was still trying to adjust to the ending of her marriage. For several years she had been suffering from depression and physical health problems and was finding it very difficult to 'move on'.

*You know I think, actually we're brainwashed by [husbands]... We don't realise it. And I don't think they realise they're doing it. But between the military system and the military person that you married, you are brainwashed into thinking it's your fault... That you're stupid, and the problems are due to you. I mean I have told people over the years [...] I was like a doormat... I was like a little squashed [thing]. And it happened so gradually, it was mental cruelty rather than anything else. But I don't think he intended it [...]. But the mental thing is very slow... He knows what buttons to push, just as he does with his soldiers that he's got to work with. And I think that the buttons that they push are very deep psychological ones, that actually wreck you as a person. And they dominate you, like [husband] dominated... had to dominate everybody... to be in charge... to be followed.*

Wendy's experience of violence and abusive behaviour began not long after she married and this experience dominated her narrative. Initially she wanted to leave her husband after a few months when she realised that she had made a big mistake. In

visiting her mother she was promptly put back on the train with the words 'you made your bed you lie in it'. Wendy's mother was not aware of the abuse at the time, nor during the twelve years following before Wendy finally left. She could always find a way to pass off the bruises as her face was never marked, despite being blind in one eye from receiving a punch behind her ear. Wendy felt that she had a wonderful marriage when her husband was away for it was 'all quiet on her Western front'. Luckily her husband was away for much of the time. During a particular period when her husband's immediate superior was female the frequency of assaults increased, and it was always 'her' name that he was shouting at Wendy. In recounting her experiences I asked Wendy if her husband had ever been arrested by the Military Police:

*Oh God no! They don't...no they really don't want to know. Nothing. In fact when it got really bad, and we were in [country], I mean just really really bad...the assaults were constant. And I went to his RSM's wife and I said, 'look...[RSM's name] has to help me some way'. 'Oh I don't know what I can do', she says, '[RSM's name] got posted up from [place] because he tried to strangle his secretary'. And she says 'what can I do?...Take a look at me Wendy'. He'd broken her thumbs and she had a big...mark on her where he'd branded her with a hot iron.*

What was evident in the continuity in stories across time was that exposure of problems within the family would result in a black mark against personnel that would ruin careers, as publicly demonstrated by the caller on Radio 2 that I discussed in Chapter Two (see page 46). Such feeling rule reminders meant that women were under significant pressure to 'keep things quiet'. What appears to be unproblematised for service families in the extant literature is that, on the one hand personnel are expected to be fighting machines in the military context and on the other, display appropriate and responsible behaviour towards women and children when tensions may be high within the family. As I have discussed in a number of chapters a thread that runs through this thesis relates to one of the endogenous factors of military life ignored in the literature on UK service families; the context of the job. Hence some of the 'not so family friendly features' of military culture and ideology are likely to spillover into the family context.

### **Operational stress**

Eight women described their experiences of living with a partner who exhibited signs of 'post-operational stress' as they perceived this. A common theme running through their stories is characteristic of military culture; the stigma attached to the acknowledgement of mental health issues and subsequently seeking help. In the following accounts both Debra and Tess (respectively) describe the helplessness they felt when attempting to deal with their husband's difficulties and the impact of operational stress:

*He came back off a trip from [country] and was never the same again [...]. I was just told it was all top secret at the time. I did piece [things] together a bit, but obviously I can't say...And I said to him, 'look do they give counseling or whatever?' and he said 'yeah, I'm told I can have counseling but I'm not allowed to talk about what happened cos it's confidential'. So I thought, well [sighs]...Because I almost tried to counsel him myself [...]. I mean he used to just lie awake at night not sleeping. And well...you could see a deterioration in him, and he said he was afraid to go to sleep...afraid to shut his eyes [...]. We went away on holiday, and he just couldn't sit on the beach...He would end up in tears [each] night [...]. The Navy don't wanna know. But then he [wouldn't] go for help either because it...affects your ranking, and it affects your promotion...And it really galls me on the telly when you hear...them going on about family support when they're away, or...the support that they give their men. And you just think, [people] don't know the half of it. There's nothing... there's no help for them.*

*He didn't sleep because he didn't want to sleep. He would...have these awful flashbacks...He came back a totally changed person...It was a horrible, horrible time...[with] excessive drinking [and] he became very cold and distant and unemotional...Just withdrew completely into himself. Our [daughter] was such a tiny baby, and he had seen some awful things in [country] with babies, and it just brought everything back [to him] ...And he couldn't sit and play with her, or anything like that... And [the Army] promised that they would receive counseling for the things they'd had to see...And the Army's idea of counseling at the time was them all sat round in a ring of chairs...and a chap saying 'so has anybody got any issues they want to talk about?' Well of course no-one would say a word...So it was just a joke really, and it was all left for the families to pick up the pieces, which was an impossible [task]. So it wasn't the done thing to admit you had...what the Army saw as, a mental health issue...It was a problem ...and I needed someone to talk to, but couldn't because he didn't want anyone to know.*

Single session 'debriefings' are considered to be unbeneficial in reducing psychological stress and prevention of PTSD, and may even aggravate symptoms in certain cases. The military environment in itself represents organisational barriers to care through the stigmatisation of mental health issues. The fear that seeking help may prove detrimental to a serving member's career may ultimately exacerbate psychological problems (Greenberg et al. 2007). Whilst personnel are more likely to turn to informal support networks such as family members (see Greenberg et al. 2003), wives may feel they are ill-equipped to help. Such situations reveal the potential for negative implications of emotional labour for both personnel and their wives in that the 'stiff upper lip' as a role appropriate emotion may be far removed from what is actually felt and experienced. The potential for the harmful effects of deep acting here is clear. The impact of operational stress, therefore, has implications for processes of separation and integration as one of the most demanding features of family life. In the final section of this chapter my discussion relates to the final section of the previous chapter on family separation. It was also the subject that was most talked about by the women in this research.

### **Living separate lives**

Intermittent husband absence and family separation is both an event and process and can impact on service families in a number of different ways. For most participants there was a distinction between separation in physical distance from partners, and living separate lives in a psychological and emotional sense. Most attention to military families in the extant literature focuses on the practical aspects of coping with husband absence, and how wives' manage additional household tasks and responsibilities. A turning point for Debra was not just that her husband was away a lot of the time, but they were both beginning to lead separate lives. The anticipation of her husband's return and reintegration into the family eventually failed to live up to her expectations. Like many of the women in the present study, she felt more than able to cope with her husband's absence. What she found difficult to cope with was the emotional distance that began to emerge between them as a couple:

*Yeah, well I've always said it's like being a one parent family with financial support...I think initially maybe you're a bit naïve [although] I was quite happy to enter into a marriage where he went away. I was quite independent I can deal with that no problems. When they come home, they kind of have that emotional distance...so there you are thinking they're gonna sweep you up in their arms and [say] really really missed you...And I remember going down to [meet] the boat, and I thought 'Oh is this it?' There was no emotion. So what happens is you're...well okay, you're a Naval wife but you slowly feel devalued because you don't feel missed [...]. And then you think well okay...right. So I'm just here to see to the kids, wash the clothes, do the housework? ...I want more than that.*

An understanding of the cost of emotional labour is useful here as Debra does not in any way feel recompensed for the work she performs at home or in her marriage so that her husband is free to pursue his career. There is, for Debra, a lack of exchange value for her labour. The term single parenthood was also used by Claire to describe her situation rather than lone wife:

*He went to sea on a ship...for a while, and then came back. And he did his training then, up in [Naval port] and again, I stayed here [...]. And I mean I had my own friends and that, but you're just living completely separate lives, which I don't think is a good thing. It is difficult living apart, and living separate lives. From experience, as a spouse, it sometimes feels like you are a single parent with a bit more money. However, life is very different from non-service lives. And though you cope, and get on with things as best you can, you are constantly living two different lives really. And often that is difficult to manage.*

Claire highlights the dilemma often faced by wives who are owner occupiers, whether to follow their husbands or stay put to retain a sense of stability for themselves and their children. A number of pressure points appeared to be associated with the relationship

between separation and housing status. Thirteen participants were owner occupiers at the time of their marriage breakdown, nine of whom were initiators.

House purchase can often prove to be a double-edged sword for service families. For Grace she felt that trouble started not long after they bought their first home. Her children were still quite young at this time, and just three days after moving in her husband was posted on detachment for four months which Grace found incredibly hard:

*So I started then to build my life which, at the time, really revolved around the children. And then I started to get involved in organizing stuff within the village. It was a real villagey atmosphere and [husband] wasn't that sort of person...So of course, he'd come home and I'd joined the netball team in the village. But there was a crèche with it as well, so...when you were playing if you had little ones they came with you. And...I slowly got involved in a lot more things and [socialising] with the other women. So you might all go off to the movies. It didn't matter that he had been away for four months...I'd got something organized on that date...So my life started to become separate to [husband]. And that was really the downfall. I was leading a different life to him. He was only a small part of my life by then.*

For eight years Tess had always managed to establish clear lines between herself and the Army, however, within a short period of time everything changed for her:

*I always had a job outside the Army and, of course, I went off to [posting] and they had to vet every job for security reasons. Suddenly I was sort of plunged into not being allowed to work. I had a very new baby, not being allowed to work, and being put on a camp twenty odd miles away from where he was based...And being a military police wife [stuck] in the middle of a regiment it was horrible. [The wives] didn't want anything to do [with me] and it was so isolating. And that's when I said [that] I'm going home and buy a house and [settle down] and that I'm not moving anymore. And that weren't long before we split up...and I didn't have any idea. I mean, I know that I was incredibly unhappy in [posting] and obviously that has an effect. But when I came home, no I didn't in anyway foresee that that would be the end of our marriage, even though we were obviously living apart. But you know we'd spent an awful lot of time apart throughout our marriage, so I didn't foresee it.*

Whilst Tess had experienced a number of separations from her husband, even though she was 'following the flag' on accompanied postings, she experiences a different type of separation between the time they spent apart from each other and moving into their own home. Problems arose as a result of wives wanting to settle down and create a stable environment for children and support systems for themselves. If husbands did not 'get on board' then tensions arose. Conversely, if husbands wish to establish a sharper line between work and family life, and wives do not, then tensions will also occur, as Becky discovered:

*I suppose it was about a year before we decided to buy our own house that things started to fall apart. I wanted to buy [back home] where all my family are because of the time they [personnel] are away, and the uncertainty of drafts and things, and taking the kids out of school [...]. And he wasn't having any of it he was like point blank refused. We couldn't afford to buy [where we were posted] so we ended up [about fifteen miles away]...And he was saying, 'well it's only fifteen miles [away]'... But in reality when you're dropping children off at school at nine, for you to pick them up at twelve, and then have to go back again at three, you can't do anything [else]. So after about six months I'd just like... 'please can we just move back [into married quarters where we were]' and he wouldn't have any of it. [...]. And it sort of like, you reach stalemate. I wasn't happy, he wasn't happy. So it was just like...there was no way forward really. I felt like...I'm the one at home and he's not thinking of my feelings. And...it does just get to a time where you just think...this quality of life is crap. Why should I do it anymore? Life's too short, [and that's] probably the same with any marriage whether you're in the forces or not.*

Despite attempts a few months later to 'sort things out' Becky felt that she was fighting a losing battle. Feeling isolated, and believing she had offered a workable compromise by moving in to married quarters in order to be near her friends and a much needed social network, it appeared that both she and her husband had different objectives. The only way to effect change in a relationship when things reach 'stalemate', as in Becky's situation, is to become an active agent in ending a marriage.

At times when the pinch between personal identity and role expectations reveals the costs of marriage, in terms of emotional and psychological well-being, the only way to 'save one's sanity' is to end the marriage. In terms of demographics Lauren was the youngest participant and still living in married quarters at the time of our interview:

*There is a lot of stereotyping...especially in the RAF. Everybody expects you to be the perfect little RAF wife, and attend all these do's and...be nice to all their Sergeants. But...I mean [we're] not all like that. I mean the group of people I like...associate with...we'll go and sit at the Hive [family centre] for a few hours a day. Whereas you get the other women...and they are typical RAF wives, they will sit at home with their kids and make sure their house is immaculate...stuff like that. But we, I mean, we can't do that. There's not enough hours in the day to be an actual RAF wife really [laughs].*

Lauren illustrates that it is not always possible to live up to the pervasive model service wife. At twenty six years old, and with two failed marriages to RAF personnel almost behind her, she was absolutely adamant that she would never have a relationship with a member of the Armed Forces again. Lauren was also on a hospital waiting list to be sterilised.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have examined a number of reasons why marriage failed for the women in this study. It was clear that a number of endogenous factors of military life are absent in the extant literature on UK military families that, as a result, are left unproblematised in terms of existing explanations for marriage breakdown. Whilst factors such as infidelity and financial problems are mentioned in the literature, this chapter has painted a picture of these issues and how they impact on relationships. Features of marriage failure that are absent in the literature concern the impact of alcohol on marriage and the family, domestic violence, and post operational stress. Whilst separation is cited as an important factor for service families, an understanding of the process of living separate lives, rather than purely managing domestic responsibilities in husband absence, provides a greater understanding of the potential for marital adversity.

Where wives were non-initiators decisions appeared to be clear-cut in terms of infidelity on the part of their husband, or as a result of perceived episodes of mid life crisis. For women who were initiators in ending their marriage, a complex picture emerged of interrelating factors that contributed to these often protracted decisions. Independent wives who cope well practically, psychologically, and emotionally during husband absence were more likely to end a marriage that was falling short of their expectations. It was not necessarily military life that they could not hack. Once decisions were made, however, these women soon discovered they had a different set of obstacles to surmount as separated families in the military system, which I now turn to in the following chapter.

## 7. The consequences of marriage breakdown

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*There's good times and bad...you know yourself, in that married life can be really good. But the lifestyle, the false lifestyle. But Oh! do you tumble down after when you realise you're on your own. Totally and utterly on your own, with nothing... You don't get an end of service pay... You don't get a gratuity, or a long service medal... Absolutely nothing, not a dickie bird. And the [military] don't care a hoot about the wives and children. Not one bit. Cos as far as I know, whenever you hear of anybody splitting up... the husband's fine and just carries on as normal [...] and he can live in the mess [or] he can set up home somewhere.*

Wendy, ex-Army wife

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I am concerned with a significant issue unproblematised for service families in current representations of marriage breakdown: the invisibility of families in the military system post marital separation and divorce. Most conventional families will encounter housing and financial problems, as well as the difficulties faced by non-resident parents in trying to maintain a 'meaningful parental role at a distance' (Walker 1993: 274). This raises the crucial point for service families of how to navigate the post-divorce terrain, given that both family migration and occupational demands will pose significant obstacles. In exploring some of the consequences of marriage breakdown that emerged from the findings of this study, it is clear that the organisational reality of the military is not a conducive environment for managing family change. In the first section of this chapter I discuss the impact of housing status on marriage breakdown for wives and their children.

### **Housing careers and migration**

As I have previously discussed, geographical mobility and family migration is a significant feature of military life, particularly for Army and RAF families. Whilst housing tenure changed for over half the participants during the life course, eighteen had moved directly into married quarters upon marriage and two became home-owners. Debra had never occupied married quarters and was still living in her marital home at the time of our interview. At the point of marital separation thirteen participants were owner occupiers, the majority of which reflected the trend towards homeownership for Naval families (see Appendix B, page 199). For service wives who are owner-occupiers, the threat of becoming homeless through marriage breakdown may be lessened. However, as is the case for the majority of women in the wider society, this does not guarantee that on marital separation wives living in their own homes have the necessary financial resources to remain there. There is evidence to suggest that many women lose their

owner-occupied status on divorce, although there is little understanding as to why this is so (Pascall 1997: 141). This did not seem to be the case for most of the women in the current study, which may be related to the levels of child maintenance payments received from ex-husband's. It was also evident that these women were highly determined to provide or keep 'a roof over their children's heads'.

Of the women that were homeowners at the point of marital separation, ten had either remained in their marital home or had retained their homeowner status. Three of the women, who were living in married quarters at the point of separation, had become homeowners at the time of interview. For many service wives a limited connection to the labour market during marriage may impact on their ability to remain in the marital home. Of the women who were owner-occupiers at the time of marital separation, four were full-time mothers at home, and seven were working part-time, like Patricia:

*Finances were an awful shock though...trying to manage financially. But yes, I think because I was independent it gave me that confidence, well yes I could go [leave the marriage]. But if I'd have been in married quarters it would have still been a big thing...Well I've got to leave my married quarters...am I gonna end up in some council sink estate? That would have been a horrible thing to...have been worried about. Whereas with [my own home] there was a chance I could stay...unless I couldn't cope with the mortgage and then I'd have had to move.*

Plans to extend the Long Service Advance of Pay across the tri-Services (as opposed to only Naval personnel as has been the case) so that more families may have access to home ownership may benefit wives in the long run if marriage breaks down, particularly if the house has substantially increased in value. This was something that Helen came to appreciate, even though it had been a huge financial struggle throughout the marriage she anticipated that she would be able to buy a small cottage when the marital home was sold.

The group of women and children most powerless upon marital separation are those who occupy married quarters, who may find themselves potentially homeless within a few months of the marriage breaking down. To find oneself in this predicament is usually in contrast to civilian families. The person with parental responsibility for the children would be more likely to maintain residence, rather than be considered an 'irregular occupant' and forced to leave their home (McCarthy and Simpson 1991; see also Jessup 1996: 75). The provision of married quarters is often viewed as both a cheap and convenient start to married life in the military, but this can often prove to be a double edged sword for women and their children on marriage breakdown. The disadvantages

were clear to Lauren, who was waiting to move out of her married quarter at the time of our interview:

*Yeah, it comes up...slaps you one hell of a way round the face, it really does. Cos I mean they've given me [...] ninety three days to clear out, basically and then ... you're responsible for the rent [...]. But I mean they've given me, like, two days before Christmas to move out. And I mean even if I don't have to move out, then they will just take me to court and get a proper eviction order. Well, I mean that's a kind of black mark against your name, and you don't want that, especially when I'm going for a private rented house as well. And I do need references and a guarantor, and things like that but I mean it's not fair...really isn't fair.*

Vikki realised she had made a 'big mistake' by giving up her Housing Association property that she had shared with her two sons from a previous marriage. She was so concerned about the 'ex-military wives ghetto' Vikki found herself in, that she became involved in a volunteer project on the estate:

*Suddenly everything was taken away. My freedoms of choices were taken away. You're now regarded as homeless, you've got to be evicted from your Naval quarters and so we have to seek refuge in the council. And to be perfectly honest the council have got a problem, and they just have to re-house you for what's available at the time...that's their job. And...I refused properties that they gave us [as] there was no way I would even put a human being in the properties, let alone asked to be paying rent for it...The black hole that you're left and dumped in...And I looked at so many of the women in that area who were literally...and I use the word dumped because they were dumped. [The council] didn't know what to do with them [...]. The area was poverty-ridden with a lot of social problems.*

In order to qualify for Local Authority (LA) housing service, wives and their children will usually be served a repossession order of 'Cessation of Entitlement to SFA and of Impending Homelessness'. This is served on the ninety fourth day following the initial three month 'cooling off period'. In a fact sheet produced by the Army Families Federation 'What happens if your marriage breaks down?' wives are advised that LAs will normally make only one offer of accommodation, in order to fulfill their obligation to housing provision, and that further offers are not usually made. Whilst waiting lists and waiting periods for LA housing have increased, those qualifying for accommodation through the homelessness route will be under greater pressure to accept poorer standards of housing, particularly lone parents (Pascall 1997: 146-147).

For some, the rules and regulations regarding the allocation of military housing can create anomalies. Sally had divorced her first husband, who was serving in the Army, and the marital home had previously been sold. She subsequently moved with her two children to live with her new partner, who was also serving in the Army. Although they

were not married, her partner was entitled to occupy married quarters (SFA) as he had full responsibility for his children from a previous marriage. When this relationship failed Sally found herself in a housing trap. Technically she did not occupy the married quarter, and she could not be made officially homeless by the Army in order to qualify for LA housing through the homelessness route. As Sally wanted to move back to her family and home of origin she could not apply to the LA to go on the waiting list, which created a different set of problems for her:

*[Partner] didn't like the way he couldn't do anything because...he couldn't actually get me evicted, because [technically] I wasn't here. And I couldn't go anywhere until I'd got somewhere to live here. As it was, in the end I came to live with my brother because I couldn't stand it anymore. [Partner] had hit me once too often. My brother came up, brought his van and said, 'right get in, put all your stuff in and we'll go'. But [...] the city council were trying to get me transferred from [city] to here [but] because I wasn't on any council list anywhere...they couldn't come up with anything, not straight away...I'd have to wait.*

Of the seven women that were living in married quarters at the point of marital separation, five had migrated a considerable distance to be near their family of origin, as did two owner-occupiers. These women acknowledged their need for practical and emotional support and encouragement, not just for themselves, but also for their children during this period of transition and adjustment in their lives. Joanne was living overseas at the time of her marital separation, and was repatriated initially into married quarters until she was able to purchase her own home:

*I could have chosen to go anywhere. I could have gone anywhere. But logic for me...I mean my best friend from college was here, my parents live here, my grandma lives here, my aunts and uncles and my cousins and my brothers. There was nowhere else to go. I wouldn't even have considered going anywhere else. I'm slowly getting there now but that was the worst bit of all...to have to start again in my home town. I was happy to...get rid of the Army, lovely, fine, so be it, that's life isn't it? But from having a home, to having a pile of furniture, a dog and two kids, with no roof over your head...It was definitely the worse bit.*

Several participants, like Melanie, took control of their housing situation and did not wait to be served notice of irregular occupancy:

*I went back home to my mum's. We were only there for a week then I moved into rented accommodation. As soon as I had made the decision to go I was gone in a couple of days.*

Upon marital separation, service personnel will generally return to Single Living Accommodation (SLA) types of which will be dependent on rank at the time, for example to the Sergeant's or Officer's Mess, and this scenario was representative in the current

study. A 'cooling off period' of a maximum of three months is allowed before the separation is made official, whereby personnel are required to change their Personal Status Category (marital status).

Whilst personnel do not have the worry of searching for accommodation, SLA is generally unsuitable for non-resident fathers wishing to have children staying with them overnight, or for sharing parental responsibility (McCarthy and Simpson 1991). Living in private housing in order to accommodate parenting responsibilities will prove too expensive for most personnel, particularly in lieu of the impact of occupational mobility, for which personnel would not receive any assistance with moving costs. As might be expected, research on migratory patterns of separated and divorced people in the wider society did not easily translate to the experiences of participants in the current study. Distances between place of work and non-resident children would clearly represent a major obstacle to contact and parenting for non-resident fathers. In the following section I discuss participant's perspectives of non-resident fathering and parental involvement.

### **Parenting**

Each participant had a different story to tell of their experiences and perceptions of ex-partner's levels of involvement in children's lives, although there were a number of emergent themes and issues. It was also useful to conceptualise a non-resident father's involvement in children's lives in terms of levels of commitment or estrangement. Apart from Helen whose children were over eighteen at the time of separation, and Grace who had separated from her husband ten years after they had left the RAF, all children were sixteen years or under at the time of separation, the youngest being two years old (see Appendix B, page 199). All mothers in the current study were still actively committed to, or had been in the past, encouraging and maintaining contact and parental involvement between children and a non-resident father.

When asked about an ex-husband's involvement in children's lives it was evidently a distressing subject for most participants, particularly where fathers were described as 'not interested' or 'too busy' to see or take an active parental role in children's lives. This was compounded by difficulties in reconciling how this affected children and ultimately whether children would blame mothers, as Melanie explains:

*I said to [ex-husband] 'have you got any plans of coming back down or is this just a one-off visit?' And he said he would start having contact and start seeing them. I asked him how often he planned to see the kids and he said 'when he could'. And he started telling me when he could, and when he couldn't, because of*

*commitments. So I asked him to come into the house and tell [the children]. So he did, and he told them that he wanted to see them, but couldn't on such and such. And I asked him to tell them why, and he said it was because of his work. So I said 'so every week-end you're working', knowing damn well he wasn't. I said that he had to tell them why because [the children] think it's my fault. So he's giving all these excuses why he can't see them.*

The provision of and access to a contact house (married quarter) for personnel, for the purposes of visiting children and to enable them to stay overnight, appeared to be a thorny issue for several women. In Melanie's case her children were living in an area where married quarters were available for such situations, even though her ex-husband lived some distance away. She felt he had the opportunity to visit and spend time with his children, but chose not to do so.

Michelle's ex-husband was still living in the Officer's mess at the time of our interview, and she was particularly frustrated at how little had changed over the past three years:

*On a positive note for the Air Force, he did have a bolt hole to just run to as he's been able to stay in the mess. It's unfortunate that there isn't more that can be done for fathers, perhaps where they can have the children more often...as it does have its disadvantages. He can't have them overnight in the mess. There are houses that they can use that [are] fully furnished with toys, and you just use it for the week-end...but they charge them. So during the first two years he rarely had them over night, which was an absolute nightmare...for them, and for him, and for me. I couldn't get on with my life at all because I always had the children...And now he probably has the children for a week-end about eight to ten times a year...and he'll book the house or go to his parents...But he's relying on having them only when he books leave, which you can imagine how infrequent that is.*

Several women reported that an ex-husband had appeared to secure residency in married quarters, but this was perceived to have made little impact on the frequency and levels of contact with non-resident children. This situation is exemplified by Tess:

*No...he's never [had much to do with daughter]. I mean [sighs] he talks the talk, as I say, but he doesn't actually follow it up...I mean I have never ever said to [daughter]...a bad word about him and I wouldn't. But...he's just not particularly interested, which is a shame because she thinks the sun shines out of his backside [laughs]...He rings her maybe once a month, and he saw her last July and then saw her at Christmas. He doesn't live that far away. He got a married quarter when he came back from [posting] because of [daughter visiting]...I mean, we've been apart now for seven or eight years and he's only, just before Christmas, given up his married quarter.*

Several women were aggrieved that non-resident fathers had been able to move girlfriends into married quarters, in that the provision of married quarters to non-resident

fathers was viewed as 'open to abuse'. Women, like Tanya, who felt their ex-husband was able to misuse the system, also felt let down and betrayed by the Armed Forces:

*What I was very angry about was...[girlfriend] moved into a quarter with him. Well I was still married to him...but I wasn't bothered about that bit...But the Army, the regiment, I was cross with. They knew I was his wife. They knew what was happening...what was going on. How could they encourage him by putting another woman into a married quarter with him? Do you see what I mean? When they knew he wasn't actually doing the right thing with the rest of us either. How he got round that I've no idea, because he applied for a quarter on the basis that he would need to see the children...which was a load of rubbish cos he didn't bother.*

Tanya described how contact had dwindled over the past eight years, and how her children had seen more of their father when he based overseas than since returning to England. Lauren was separated from her husband at the time of our interview and spoke about his two children from a previous marriage, aged nine and five:

*He's never seen them in the time that he's split up with his ex-wife... I don't think he's seen the youngest one since he was in his mum's tummy...I don't think he has any inclination of going to see them really [...]. He's just not interested. I think he'll do the same again [with our son]. I think he'll just lose interest.*

For some, there was a perception that a 'lack of interest' in maintaining a fatherly role was a familiar story outside of their experience. These women found it difficult to understand, and accept, why the military did not appear to do more to encourage personnel to take responsibility for their children, as Claire expresses:

*[Ex-husband] always says he's too busy and that...he doesn't keep in contact with [son] much at all. And I find that hard for [son]. But I don't think he is that busy because he does his own thing...It's just the way he is, so I think he generally...he's just a selfish man really...but he doesn't seem that bothered about [son]...But is there any way [the Navy] can sort of encourage their men to be [laughs] responsible people? I mean, I don't know if you can but [son] will be lucky if he sees him once every two or three months. And that's because he's too busy, he says...Well he's not going to sea anymore...and I know other people who are in that situation. But I don't know how widespread it is generally, in the Navy...that people don't care really [the fathers of children] they just don't care.*

Whilst physical distance may create obstacles that may impact on levels of contact between non-resident fathers and their children, the perceived 'lack of interest' on the part of fathers, as reported by mothers in the present study was discernible. In the next section I examine the issue of financial support for non-resident children, which was a significant problem for a number of women.

### **Supporting children**

Of the eighteen women with dependent children only six received voluntary financial support for their children upon marital separation, amounts for which were decided by non-resident fathers or were jointly agreed. Whilst these contributions were generally viewed as good, these arrangements were often far from trouble-free. The remaining twelve women reported problems with non-payment, sporadic payments, or conflicts surrounding payments of child support. Clearly a relationship between unemployment and non-payment, or problems with payment of child support was not a factor in the current study as non-resident fathers with dependent children were all serving in the Armed Forces. That the non-resident fathers in question belonged to the same occupational group extends existing knowledge on the subject of financial support for non-residential children, in that a link between employment and payment may not be so clear-cut (see Bradshaw et al. 1998; Bradshaw and Millar 1991). I was surprised to find that financial support for children was still a major issue for many participants at the point of interview.

A number of reasons have been cited by lone mothers in previous research for non-payment, or irregularity of child support payments by ex-partners; selfishness; lack of appreciation of real costs of looking after children, for example feeding, clothing, and entertaining; a husband's second family; control and harassment (Simpson 1998: 113), all of which were relevant to the women in the current research. Eight of the women with dependent children at the time of separation were in part-time employment and the remaining were full-time mothers at home. Of the mothers that claimed benefits, this was done reluctantly due to a non-resident father's reported refusal to financially support children. Sally's situation was compounded by the fact that she was unofficially living in married quarters with her new partner, and had not been receiving any maintenance from her ex-husband:

*I had to give up my job because I couldn't get benefits [...]. I was a teaching assistant at the time and...it brings you down, and you think how did I get this low? I don't mean emotionally low, I mean you think...I don't do this. A person like me shouldn't be doing this [claiming benefits] and shouldn't have to. And I couldn't go to the welfare office because obviously we weren't officially together.*

At the time of our interview Sally had been divorced from her husband for five years, and receiving £75 per month maintenance for their youngest child who was twelve years old. Her ex-husband was not only a Warrant Officer, who would have been earning a considerable wage he was also a Families Officer, which Sally considered rather ironic. Whilst Sally admitted that she was able to approach her ex-husband for one-off

payments, if she was really stuck, she would have to be feeling desperate to do so. It was evident that she was experiencing financial difficulties with her two adult children also living at home:

*I've just said to her [nods to middle daughter] they've took £300 tax off me this month...off a thousand pounds through my tax credits and everything. And we're really struggling this month [...]. Sometimes I wish your dad would send a bit more money...I don't know if it's pride, call it stubborn pride or something, but I don't wanna go running to him you know.*

When Becky and her husband separated she also had to apply for income support as her husband had refused to provide any financial support for the children:

*I had to go straight on to benefits cos he wasn't giving me anything...I just didn't get anything from him at all. I didn't start getting maintenance [via the CSA] until about 7 months after we split up and he had to pay arrears and they were taking something like £10 a month which didn't... I didn't benefit from it at all.*

It was a similar story for a number of women who did not receive financial support for children until the CSA 'caught up with their ex-husbands'. Vikki worked as a volunteer on a housing project:

*The only way you could survive is if you have a career and education. And a lot of...us women in that area just didn't have it...And they didn't always get maintenance. Some of them had to fight...to get money through the CSA.*

For Lauren, who was newly separated at the time of our interview, the future for her and her three children looked rather bleak. She was receiving maintenance from her first husband for her second child. Her current husband was the father of her youngest child, although she was not receiving any maintenance from him. Lauren had applied for Income Support but was refused, as the amount of maintenance she was already receiving took her over the weekly income threshold. I asked her why she thought her husband was not financially supporting his son:

*He's got other things to spend his money on. Like I mean, he's just... I mean today he's going up to [city] to buy a new car ...and [he will] spend another £150 on top of that to get an in-car DVD player. Well nobody goes in his car apart from him...cos his car is his life literally. And the other thing he said was [he'd] rather go through the CSA, and that was it. I've not had any contributions off him whatsoever.*

In wanting to wait until he was approached by the CSA, there did not appear to be any sense of parental responsibility to his non-resident child in the interim in Lauren's account of her husband's actions. This appeared to be a familiar theme emerging from these women's narratives. I asked Lauren how she was managing:

*Well here...we've got SSAFA, which I am going to them for help at the moment. I mean...it took four weeks for me to get my child tax credits through. So I was living basically on fresh air for four weeks. SSAFA actually went and gave me a hundred pound cash, just so I had something to live on...I mean the only way I knew those kids were being fed was if I didn't eat, and they went to school every day...and they got free school dinners [...]. I went to his Chief...to ask [husband] to give me money, and apparently [husband] told his Chief that he has his own debts, and his own bills, and he couldn't afford to pay anything. And that was all I got basically...is just fobbed off really.*

The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA Forces Help) is an independent charity that was founded in 1885, and provides a wide range of services to members of serving and ex-serving communities and their dependents. Several women had approached SSAFA Forces Help for a number of practical and financial issues, and this was considered a vital link for wives who felt they had 'no-one else to turn to'.

Doing, or not doing, the 'decent thing' was a phrase used often by participants with reference to an ex-husband's financial support of children. Why is it that some non-resident fathers accept they have responsibility and an obligation to support their children and others do not? An emerging issue in the current study related to the power and control women felt their ex-husbands wielded over them, with regards to their reliance on financial support. Maintenance payments could be withdrawn at the drop of a hat. In Melanie's case it happened on a number of occasions, particularly over one Christmas. However, she was not going to take it lying down and clearly demonstrates a direct refusal to 'play the game':

*I phoned the barracks and kicked up stink...I get six hundred quid a month and I would have been that short...But I got it [eventually] so the kids didn't dip out...But I just thought...he didn't think I was gonna do what I done. I phoned to get this number, to get that number, to speak to his Captain, and I done it. I thought 'good on me'. There's no way he's gonna get away with that, and that made me really angry.*

There were instances where women were asked to refund all, or part, of the maintenance payment if non-resident fathers were taking their children away on holiday. There was also a strong perception held by mothers that formal maintenance paid to them for children was viewed by ex-husbands as 'all-inclusive'. Extras such as pocket money or things that sat outside normal everyday expenditure, for example children's hobbies, new clothes for holidays with non-resident fathers, and travel expenses for visits, should be deducted from maintenance payments. In Theresa's case this included her children's birthdays and Christmas, until her ex-husband turned up one day and gave each of her two children an envelope:

*He'd never given them anything...always a [birthday or Christmas] card, but never anything in it. And it was not because he couldn't afford it, because he was going on holiday and things like that...They opened up the envelopes and there was a ten pound note in [each of them]. And [daughter] said 'that's one pound for every year you've missed'. And his face...that she'd almost dared to say anything. And it was...it was ten years since he'd last given them anything...ten years since he'd seen them.*

In most cases there was generally a lack of increase in financial support to children over time, and a number of ex-husbands had reportedly tried to reduce the amount of maintenance paid because they believed 'they were paying too much'. What was significant, however, was the reluctance of these women to dispute amounts; they did not want to 'rock the boat'. There appeared to be two themes to emerge from this perception; keeping the peace and maintaining continuity in payments. The latter position relates to women's attempt to retain some control, as opposed to the former, as in lacking or losing control. Both perspectives, however, relate to issues of power and women often described ex-husbands as playing mind or power games with them. Becky had been receiving the same amount of maintenance for her two children for five years. I asked her why she had not approached either her ex-husband, or the CSA, to review the amount:

*I haven't put in for an increase...because there's so much bitterness, mainly from his part, that if I did that...I mean he wouldn't not slate me in front of the children you see...So if I did something like that, it would just cause an uproar and I just think it's not worth it.*

Becky's concern, both for her children's emotional welfare and her own position, overrides her financial concerns. Several participants talked about attempts to increase maintenance payments as 'not worth the hassle' even though they were aware of ex-husband's promotions, increase in salary and lifestyle.

The issue of regularity of payments taking precedence over amount of maintenance received was significant. However, it was generally perceived as the result of non-resident fathers challenging the amount of maintenance that was currently being paid, either through voluntary agreement or as a result of intervention by the CSA. I refer to Tanya's account in-depth, as it is a very good example of the situations these women found themselves in and the issues that had to be faced. In the first few months of being separated Tanya was receiving a £400 per month voluntary maintenance payment from her husband for their two children, which her husband had reportedly decided on from the outset. Tanya had found it hard to come to terms with the fact that when they were

living overseas the family had had £1800 each month disposable income to do 'whatever they liked with'. With £400 to now pay for everything she felt she just had to manage. After about five months she received a phone call from her ex-husband:

*I went out of my way to find out what was what...what the rules were, what I was entitled to, and what would happen if [husband] went to the CSA, and what would happen if he didn't...And I was actually trying to advise him...But he said that he had spoken to the Paymaster, who had told him that somebody else in the regiment doesn't pay that much...and that [he] shouldn't be paying [me] that much money...And I said to [husband] 'look I think it's very reasonable I'm quite happy with it...probably easiest all round if we just keep things as it is'. He said 'I'm not paying you a single penny more. Go to the CSA'. And he didn't...he cut off all the money.*

It seems appropriate here to mention The Army Pay Act (1955) that can be invoked by Army chiefs who can then determine how much a soldier will pay to support his children. It has been reported that awards have been grossly underestimated in comparison to those awarded by the Child Support Agency. Consequently, financial hardship has since been endured by many women and their children (The Newcastle Journal 3 December 2004) and illustrates the institutional mechanisms (feeling rules) that are in place to protect the well-being of personnel over that of children.

In Tanya's case the CSA calculated the maintenance payment and her ex-husband was asked to increase his voluntary contribution to £444 per month, which he agreed to pay for a couple of years until the same thing happened again. What is highlighted here in Tanya's account and, unsurprisingly perhaps, a familiar theme for many of the women is the position of authority afforded to the CSA by non-resident fathers, which is in contrast to attitudes of civilian non-resident fathers towards the CSA:

*He said 'you're not getting any more [money] until you fill out new forms at the CSA'. So I did it all again and they [CSA] came back and said he had to pay £534. And at that time I was thinking 'thank you very much' [laughs] because... I would have still been happy with £400 all this time. If he was paying something and it was regular, no matter how small it was...I mean I thought £400 was quite reasonable...And people would say that's a lot of money. But proportionate to [the] lifestyle the children had when we were together, and to the wages that he receives...all those things it's not a lot of money. I know it's an awful lot more money than a lot of people get [...]. He wasn't very happy about that either but he'll do it because they told him to.*

By the time Tanya's divorce was being finalised, the issue of maintenance arose again, and her ex-husband was then co-habiting in a married quarter. Tanya believes that he was again attempting to reduce maintenance payments in his financial affidavit, and

described the reasons why he was unable to afford maintenance for his two children as 'quite ridiculous':

*One of the reasons why he couldn't pay was...because they had to pay the cleaner [laughs]. There's two of them in a two bedroom married quarter, both working full-time...and he was daft enough to say that...The other one was the golf membership every month...and other things. And I thought I don't believe this! Here's me thinking shoes, school uniform, you know all these sorts of things, showing where every penny was going. And they were saying they couldn't afford to contribute anything because they had to pay for the cleaner... If only [laughs].*

There were similar echoes in other accounts and experiences of the reasons why ex-husbands were not doing the decent thing: 'not being able to afford maintenance' was interpreted as fathers prioritising their own lifestyle over children, or the needs of children.

In some cases, an ex-husband's attitude toward maintenance was perceived as a means of avoiding the responsibilities of parenting. Naomi felt she shouldered all the responsibility for their two children, and referred to her ex-husband's contact time with them as 'high days and holidays':

*I would say look...I'm a bit worried about [daughter]...she's not doing so well at school, and I don't [know what to do]. And he'd say 'well that's not my fault'. And he automatically thinks that I'm trying to get at him and I'm not...I'm saying...you know I just want to talk to you about it. 'Well sort it... go and see the teacher'... 'Well I have and...we need to talk' [...]. That's actually the one thing that I wasn't prepared for... the loneliness of bringing up the children on your own. When you bring them up as a Naval wife, a forces wife, you've still got the emotional security blanket. And you know that if...something is desperately wrong with the children or something, that [you have someone to turn to]. And I mean, theoretically, I'm in the same situation. But basically you're not, as an ex-wife. And I mean this whether you're civilian or military...I feel that his attitude is well...I pay you the money [...]. And as far as he's concerned it's 'well if there's a problem solve it, and if there isn't a problem why are you talking to me?' So I feel from that point of view I feel very, very alone...Because the person you should be sharing these worries and concerns with sometimes... just doesn't want to know.*

In other words, in exchange for financially supporting children, a non-resident father pays an ex-wife to shoulder the emotional burdens of caring for children, as well as the practical issues; absolving a non-resident father from the responsibilities of parenting. This highlights a gendered difference between perceptions of contact and responsibility that has been found in other research (see Bradshaw et al. 1999). Rather than there being a positive association between payment of maintenance and levels of contact, there appeared to be an association between payment of maintenance and ex-wives'

work; a transformation of the emotional labour women perform as service wives. In the final section of this chapter I discuss the economic costs of wives' emotional labour.

### **The cost of being married to the military**

In the preceding two chapters I discussed emotional labour in terms of the cost to emotional and psychological well-being. In this section I examine the economic costs of being married to the military, which relates to previous discussions in Chapters Four and Six on the employment and earnings of military wives. The employment history of women with children can generally be divided into three phases: the initial work phase, the family formation phase, and the final work phase (Ginn and Arber 1996). For many service wives these phases are likely to be more fragmented. In terms of the potential to contribute to occupational, or non-state pensions, a number of risk factors can be identified for service wives, including the impact of mobility in finding paid employment, securing the type of employment that will offer an occupational pension, and the ability to sustain such type of employment (see Ginn and Arber 1996 and Peggs 2000). As I have previously mentioned, it is on marital separation and divorce that women's economic vulnerability within a military marriage is most acutely experienced.

Hence, those wives believing their families will receive future recompense for their hard work and sacrifices in coping and managing the work-life tensions of military life, will find that their invisible and vital contribution to operational effectiveness is rewarded only *if* they remain married (for example see Dandeker and French 2005, 2006). A proportionate share of a husband's pension and gratuity is not automatically awarded on divorce. Nor can it be assumed that an ex-husband will consider that a wife is entitled to it. As I discussed in the previous section, many women experienced a number of difficulties just trying to secure sufficient child maintenance, and these women would face similar obstacles in terms of financial settlements

Four women had been awarded spousal maintenance by the family court. Wendy was granted spousal maintenance until death or remarriage, although she had not received a penny to date. Wendy left her husband in 1982 and had reckoned her ex-husband owed her about £25,000:

*Now he thought he was being smart by not providing for me. But what he didn't realise, and what the Army doesn't realise, is that while they're playing silly buggers, you're bringing your children up. I was working a hundred hours a week in the local hotels, so [son] was on catch as catch can because I would not go on benefits. Because I had been a victim of domestic violence and was a prime target for the social workers...I wasn't having none of that. I was gonna work*

*hard, keep my nose clean, bring [son] up properly, and keep the whole shebang outta my life. And that's what I did [...]. The only thing I got out of my marriage was two photograph albums and a picture...and only because my son stood up for me.*

Both Joanne and Naomi were responsible for young children at the time of their marriage breakdown and believed they were perfectly entitled to spousal maintenance, particularly in Naomi's case as she had given up her career in the Navy to start a family. Helen had been married the longest, at twenty seven years, and had been unable to work since the breakdown of her marriage due to a number of health related difficulties. She was still receiving spousal maintenance as financial settlements could not be determined until the marital home had been sold:

*At the beginning I thought...after all I'd gone through, and after all I'd paid for him that... I actually deserved it. But actually, it's demeaning now [...]. The fact that he still gives me maintenance at least means that I can have [son and daughter] home. I can pay for the...petrol to take [son] backwards and forwards to [university]...I try and help them out. But he's only paying maintenance because the court said he had to. If he wasn't paying that maintenance to me, then [son and daughter] and myself would be getting absolutely nothing...not one bean. And he wouldn't, I don't think, think a thing about that. If I'd known, sort of two years into the marriage, the possibility was that in twenty years or so I was going to be divorced, which of course you don't. And you don't go into marriage with that [thought] then I would have said there's no way I'm not teaching. There's no way I'm not following my career...or I could have changed careers, whereas I can't do that really now. How can I? I'm fifty.*

The impact of mobility, living in married quarters, trying to fit jobs around children's school holidays and leave periods, created a number of difficulties for women who were trying to secure 'a permanent roof over their children's heads'. The result being that, post-separation and divorce, their 'rubbish careers' had made it very difficult to secure a mortgage.

The tri-Services produce a fact sheet 'what happens if your marriage breaks down' (available on community websites), and the section on financial aspects refers generally to maintenance payments and the Child Support Agency. There is only one reference to financial settlements; an acknowledgement that solicitors should be familiar with the law regarding pension sharing on divorce. The subject of pensions and gratuity, as experienced by these women, could be categorized into four groups: those choosing not to pursue entitlement to pension and gratuity; those that had received poor legal advice; those who found it difficult to fight against ex-partner for financial settlement; and those who had successfully navigated the pensions minefield, and had secured everything they were entitled to. Even then, women would not feel the benefit of this entitlement

until they had reached sixty years of age, when their ex-husbands would start receiving his pension on reaching fifty five, which was viewed as very unfair. Since conducting the interviews, however, there has been a change in policy on military pensions. Ex-wives will now receive their entitlement to pensions from the age of fifty five.

For women who had managed to secure a share of their husband's pension there was still a sense of grievance about disparities in current living standards. Joanne admitted that she sometimes felt quite 'bitter and twisted' about this:

*He's just buying himself a nice five bedroom house [...]. And we live in a little three bedroom [flat]. And when [daughter's] friends are here..I had a house of teenagers and I was trying to... revise for a first aid exam [...]. And oh God, it was like Piccadilly Circus round here...and I was thinking, Oh for God's sake... and give me a break [laughs]. That's when I feel angry and about the way we've been treated. But you know we can't make a man behave. But they get away with it better in the Army actually.*

Narratives were therefore imbued with a great sense of 'material injustice', particularly for those who had been unable to secure a financial settlement. Like Vikki, many felt they were constantly battling with the injustice of it all, in acknowledgement of the years they had spent supporting a husband's career:

*It looks like I'm going to have to go back to court to do all this, and that can be quite stressful. But it's gotta be done because at the end of the day it's for [son]. It's...what he's entitled to...a decent life...not an existence. His father came out [of the Navy] he'd done extremely well and bought this...cottage in [place] and his new car and he's done OK. We didn't. We didn't do OK. And he's got his [job] and he's got his pension coming in every month...He came out with something like thirty four thousand [gratuity] and he gets five hundred and seventy something a month. And he was only wanting to pay his child twenty five pound a week...Well I'm sorry, but where's the justice in that [...]. I'm alright Jack...But to me, it seems quite a common story.*

It was also clear that these women felt that 'moral injustices' had also been dealt, particularly from a perception that the military had a duty of care in ensuring that non-resident fathers should take responsibility for their children. This was indeed a thorny issue that does beg the question of just how far the military should intrude in private family life.

## **Summary**

In this chapter I have examined some of the difficulties that service families face when a military marriage ends. Whilst it is generally acknowledged that parents who no longer

live together have major obstacles to surmount with regard to the well-being of non-resident children, the disparity between military policy and current legislation on parental responsibilities and the rights of children render this particularly challenging for serving personnel. Opportunities for negotiating co-parenting practices would appear to be, for the most part, unattainable post-separation and divorce. The institutional aspects of a military marriage are magnified on divorce. Notwithstanding this issue, a number of cultural and institutional mechanisms operate *against* the promotion of family responsibilities post divorce which marginalizes families, if not renders them invisible within the military system. A discussion of these issues, together with the overall findings of the thesis, is outlined in the following chapter.

## 8. Discussion

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*I didn't feel as though the marriage was...a significant part...for the Air Force. You know, you're just this person that raises children...and keeps the quarters clean and tidy, and what have you. I don't think they [Air Force] really go into any great depth to protect relationships...Or go to any lengths at all to ensure that marriages have a chance of survival. I think it's just down to the couples themselves to actually make it work.*

Michelle, ex-Officer's wife

### **Introduction**

In this chapter I discuss the main findings of the research, in relation to the context of the existing literature analysed in Chapters One, Three and Four, and the research objectives outlined in Chapter Two. The empirical chapters have been organised over three stages of the life course and represent women's experiences and perceptions of marriage, marriage failure, and post-divorce. I now present these findings as a number of key themes that have emerged from the study, which inevitably overlap to some extent.

### **Wives and welfare**

It was not within the scope of this thesis to map out the intricacies of welfare provision for each individual service as I have been primarily concerned with participants' experience of welfare, or formal support, and how this relates to perceptions of coping (see Chapter Five, pages 100-103). Given that strengthening family welfare is viewed as a solution to family problems, in terms of the military's philosophy to the concept of welfare it is important to distinguish between welfare provision and a welfare service. As I discussed in Chapter Four, upon marriage families will be posted in the UK or abroad and provided with housing, schooling, access to medical care, financial allowances for separation, travel, moving and boarding school. These welfare benefits are afforded with the proviso that couples marry and do not separate or divorce, although certain benefits will still be retained if personnel become the resident parent. These welfare provisions then are unequivocal.

However, the provision of a military welfare service is inherently ambiguous in that it offers social support to service families *in so long as* the problem represents a problem for the serving member or the military. Even then, the potential for a conflict of interests in terms of institutional needs versus client needs is evident (Ferguson 2001; Scourfield and Welsh 2004). Welfare provision in the military serves two purposes; that of the

social, and the operational (Chandler 1991; Jolly 1992). The reason for such a conflict is clear: the Armed Forces do not espouse a social service for its task is to prepare for war and to go to war, which will reflect lines of formal support (Jolly 1992; see also Milroy 1996). It is evident, both in the literature and from the findings that have emerged in this research, that family problems (wives and children) are perceived as a nuisance, therefore, it is hardly surprising that many wives are reluctant to seek formal support from the military authorities. The fear associated with approaching welfare services is a hidden process reinforced on a number of levels: institutionally and hierarchically to personnel and wives; peer to peer; and personnel to spouse.

One of the criticisms of military welfare services appears to be the suitability and selection of personnel who are given the responsibility of, what was perceived by the women in this research as, a very important role. It has been highlighted that the provision of welfare services is negatively affected by poor support, lack of interest, and 'arrogant' individuals who just do not seem to care (AFF Conference 2004). Appointment to Families Officer is an unpopular job that is often a feature of the rite of passage to promotion for Non-commissioned Officers (Giles 2005: 216). Traditionally, the hostile attitude to social work, busy bodies and bearded weirdies outside of the military gaze is more about protecting military imperatives (Beevor 1990: 53). There is little evidence to suggest, almost twenty years after such an observation, that the entrenched paternalism of welfare services has changed. A significant shift in cultural attitudes is therefore required in order to minimise harmful divisions between military personnel (us) and wives and children (them).

Previous explanations as to why service marriages are successful focus on wives' ability to cope with the demands of military life, and the degrees to which they are committed to their husband's career (see Jolly 1992). Structural processes influencing conformity to institutional goals of the military appear to be subtle, or unwritten, yet they are extremely powerful. Wives that are 'mentally robust' and resilient to the demands of military life are an asset to a husband's career and military operations. Such patterns of commitment were evident in the present study in the sacrifices and compromises women made over a number of years. Ability to cope and 'get on with it' appeared rooted in socialisation processes and feeling rule reminders during early marriage that were connected to the fear of 'rocking the boat' and the potential to risk damaging husband's careers, which deterred wives from approaching welfare services.

### **The paradox of independent wives**

The first few years of marriage in the military are thought to represent a period where couples are most at risk of marital adversity and breakdown. It is evident in the literature that this period is generally linked to the issue of spousal ability to cope with adjusting to the military way of life. Younger wives are likely to experience more problems due to more frequent separations and lack of knowledge (Jolly 1992). The majority of women participating in the current research could be described as seasoned veterans as they had been married for a significant number of years. Wives who learn to cope will be effective at supporting their husband's career, which they do indirectly through relieving husbands of family and household duties and responsibilities when required by the military. Much of the emotion work involved with these responsibilities is invisible, as it is located in the private sphere of the home and perceived as unconditional in that wives 'do it for love'.

Whilst previous research also suggests that relationships conducted at a distance do not necessarily require physical closeness in order to achieve intimacy (see Holmes 2004) the findings in the present study show that some distance relationships will be context dependent which can shape expectations and levels of intimacy. Within both the context of a mobile existence, distance relationships and associated job demands meant that many of the women were building an emotional life apart from their husband. Such observations have been found to occur in a study of non-military (civilian) relationships where wives blamed themselves for 'expecting too much' and grudgingly set about building an emotional life apart from their husbands (see Duncombe and Marsden 1993, 1995). Within the military context, however, participants did not blame themselves for expecting too much from their husbands. It appeared to be a fundamental coping mechanism and part of the course to becoming an independent military wife.

It was clear for most of the women that as they became more independent practically, emotionally and psychologically, coping with separation and husband absence was less likely to be a problem. However, husband role displacement and reintegration presented far greater challenges. Independence and ability to cope with the demands of military life appeared a contributory factor in marital adversity and was acknowledged by mixed feelings, for example, 'it's not probably a good thing' or 'in some ways it is and in some ways it isn't'. What is unproblematised in the extant literature then is that institutional mechanisms that indirectly influence wives propensity to cope are the very same ones that may threaten marital stability. This suggests the presence of contradictory feeling rules which may ultimately result in a wife's refusal to play the military couple game.

## **Employment and caring**

There has been much emphasis in the extant literature on changes in wider social processes and associated changes at the level of the service family. Commentators on military issues generally focus on how the family has become 'greedier' of personnel as a result of a shift in expectations of marriage, dissatisfaction amongst the spousal ranks regarding employment and establishing and maintaining a career, and concerns over the disruption to children's education (see Dandeker 2000). However, a perception in the erosion in normative expectations does not necessarily translate to actual change. Significant progress in men's increased contribution to the household, in terms of domestic work and parenting responsibilities, has not been forthcoming in the broader social context (Arber and Ginn 1995; Sullivan 2000). Tensions therefore arise due to a lack of practical support, which may also be interpreted as a lack of emotional or moral support (Hochschild 2003).

This situation is exemplified in service families, particularly as research has shown that employment has been linked to issues of well-being for military wives (see Dandeker and French 2006; Puckey and Kinsman 2007). For service couples the potential for negotiating roles within the family is circumvented by the demands of military life, and more easily organised around a traditional gendered division of labour. This prescriptive framework, or cultural variable (see Lewis 2001), is fundamental to the operational imperatives of the Armed Forces. Much of Hochschild's (2003a, 2003b) subsequent and extended work on the gendered division of emotion work has focused on the dual-career family. In general terms, the service family model is more representative of a two-person career situation.

Many service wives may take up some form of paid employment, as the findings in my research and other studies suggest. However, the cumulative effects of the 'trailing wife/mother syndrome' and/or cycles of separation, impact on the ability to establish shared childcare and domestic responsibilities within the household. Consequently, the notion of establishing a career will be fraught with difficulties for many service wives, who may feel they are 'lone parents with income' as my findings suggest. What is problematic in the literature on service families is how 'the family' is defined. General assumptions of the role-relationship as a joint one between husband and wife, in line with the symmetrical family model, is not particularly helpful and obscures a segregated role relationship which is fundamental to military imperatives. Spousal co-operation to a traditional gender-order based upon a strong male breadwinner model has been tacitly assumed, if not demanded, by the military (Duhan Kaplan 1994). As I discussed in

Chapters Three and Four, it has been a distinct, although not unique, feature of military culture that has historically shaped service family life.

It has been argued that the military maintains a more conservative view of marriage and family life (see Beevor 1992, Jolly 1992, Manson 2002 and Milroy 1996). There was little evidence emerging from the current study to suggest otherwise. It would seem reasonable to suggest that for many service couples a lack of flexibility within the organisational context of the military can impact significantly on the ability, or inability, to negotiate significant change in 'gender arrangements' within the family (see Pfau-Effinger 2004). Managing this tension can demand significant emotion work on the part of a wife, more so if a wife wishes to establish a career and her husband is unavailable to take on a joint role with childcare and domestic duties. Moreover, the idea that the UK Armed Forces is 'family friendly' is also somewhat of a misnomer. Such a concept is difficult to operationalise for it will represent different meanings to different employers and their employees. However, it is a term that has been used in relation to the overhaul of personnel and welfare policies, yet there appears little about the military that can be regarded as family friendly.

Service wives are often unable to rely on their husbands to pick up the evening or weekend shift for childcare due to intermittent husband absence. This inflexibility and unreliability in support of wives working patterns also extends to everyday life, whereby personnel are contracted to work twenty four hours a day, seven days a week. The military do not operate on a 'nine to five and home for tea' regime (see Jolly 1992). The gendered process between services wives seeking employment and wives feeling they are able to take up employment, is unproblematised in current representations regarding concerns over the civilianisation of service families. As Harrison and Laliberté state, "[w]hatever her husband's rank, the military wife is expected to view his career as primary and as relying on her unpaid support...Military operations rely on wives' continued adherence to the gendered division of labor" (1997: 38). What my findings suggest is that 'part of the problem' lay in the inflexibility of the employment patterns of military personnel, highlighting a particular aspect of family policy which is likely to remain unchanged. A strong male breadwinner model is therefore likely to persist in the service family, irrespective of a wife's employment status, which also translates as feeling rule reminders to both personnel and their wives.

### **Marital adversity**

Current representations of marriage breakdown in the military focus on marital stability. What my findings show is that a stable marriage does not necessarily equate to marital quality and satisfaction as perceived by the women in this study. Common sense would suggest that the potential for marital adversity is high, in that a number of military demands can place additional stressors on marriages. These are generally identified in the literature as factors associated with separation and mobility. What my findings show is that there are a number of additional stressors unproblematised in current representations of family problems and marriage breakdown that can contribute significantly to processes of marital adversity. Marriage in the military is undoubtedly 'obstacle ridden' (see Manson (2002)), and these obstacles demand emotional labour from both personnel and their wives. It is evident that the organisational reality of the military promotes a culture that is potentially harmful to marriage and can widely impact on family life. A number of perceived factors of military life that emerged in this research were adultery, violence, emotional and psychological abuse, and effects of alcohol, and the impact of post-operational stress.

The relationship between alcohol and peer bonding, as a feature of military life, is rarely discussed in terms of effects on service families. Whilst there is a paucity of research on alcohol consumption in the UK Armed Forces, the consequences tend to be related to the individual health of personnel and the risk to operational effectiveness. The most recent research into patterns of drinking made comparisons with the wider population using the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT). Excessive alcohol consumption was found to be more common in the UK Armed Forces than in the wider population. In terms of hazardous drinking there was a higher prevalence of men (57 per cent) and women (49 per cent) in the military in comparison to men (38 per cent) and women (16 per cent) in the general population (Fear et al. 2007: 1749). Research has shown that men in the Army and the Navy have higher AUDIT scores than men in the RAF due to the different drinking subcultures that are associated with team work, peer pressure, and unit cohesion (ibid: 1756). Such patterns of drinking culture were borne out in the findings of this thesis.

According to Beevor, most of the Army's disciplinary problems are the result of drink related incidents; the more serious offences follow bouts of heavy drinking. Fights can break out in barracks, or outside the wire against civilians or other regiments, and is more commonly associated with infantry regiments, particularly those cultivating the

aggressive warrior image (Beevor 1990: 35). Only recently has the link between drinking and aggressive and violent behaviour in the military prompted a revision of policies on alcohol misuse across the tri-Services (Fear et al. 2007: 1749; see also Orford et al. 2002a). However, such connections are framed in the literature as concerns for the welfare of personnel and rarely translate to the welfare of wives and children. My findings show that for a number of women there was a connection between alcohol and domestic violence and abuse. Previous research on the Canadian and US military has shown that wives and children characterise a group that are among the most vulnerable to abuse in society (see Enloe 2000, Harrison 2006, Harrison et al. 2002, and Harrison and Laliberté 1994). In their assessment of available representative studies, Marshall and colleagues found that rates for domestic violence among US military veterans and active duty servicemen were up to three times higher than in civilian samples (2005, para. 6).

In the current UK Tri-service Operational and Non-operational Welfare Policy (2007) the MoD Policy on Domestic Violence is currently under review. The findings from my research, and evidence from studies into domestic or intimate partner violence within the US and Canadian militaries, suggests that the problem is contained within a 'culture of silence'; the objective being above all else to protect serving members *not* their families. There may be powerful feeling rules at work here that keep many of these problems underground. Whilst all women are least likely to have access to resources that will facilitate the exit of abusive relationships (Nazroo 1999) this situation is exacerbated for military wives. Again, there is a paucity of research into the incidences and effects of domestic violence within the Armed Forces, particularly in the UK context, which should be addressed.

Attitudes in the wider society towards domestic violence, as being essentially a private matter, have shifted over the past thirty years. Feminist research has highlighted the relationship between marital violence and patriarchal power. An increase in the number of refuges for battered women has enabled many victims and their children to escape violent relationships (Allan and Crow 2001). The description of an abuser as pre-occupied, or obsessed, with control is often cited by women who have experienced domestic violence in the wider social context (Harrison 2003). The link between abuse and control is exemplified in the military, in that the use of control is positively valued as the ultimate method of achieving and maintaining military objectives; it is how people are mobilized to make war and provide backup support (ibid: 73). However, the emotional labour demanded by the military to achieve these objectives suggests that contradictory

processes may make this form of emotion control difficult to 'put back in the pot'. Militaries have been downsized whilst, at the same time, back-to-back deployments and longer operational tours have made the roles of the serving member, and the role of supporting personnel increasingly more stressful. However, some feminists have argued that the causes of high rates of family violence are rarely discussed in policy-making sessions as it would require the military to 'dig deeper than the stresses of downsizing' (see Enloe 2000: 190).

What is also unproblematised in much of the extant literature is the impact of operational and combat stress on personnel and their families, which may also be a contributory factor to domestic violence. A feature of husband absence and integration that is often neglected in explanations of divorce in the UK Armed Forces is the subject of both operational and combat induced psychological and emotional stress, and the more extreme form of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Over the past few years the media has focused on the high operational tempo of deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, raising concerns about the general state of mental health in the UK Armed Forces. As I have previously discussed (see Chapter One, page 19) combat experience is associated with marital adversity and dissolution. It is more likely to be the nature of the service, rather than the length of deployment, that is the key factor: in other words, the job personnel *do* when they are on deployment, the demands for emotional labour and the psychological cost of this labour. Although it is clearly recognised that service personnel are reluctant to seek help, there is a paucity of research into the attitudes military personnel hold about mental illness, which clearly needs addressing (see Greenberg et al. 2007).

The findings of this thesis also support previous research that wives may suffer additional stress and mental health issues both during and following deployments (see Dandeker and French 2006; Eaton et al. 2008; Giles 2005). The problem for marital relations is not combat stress *per se* but the anti-social behaviour resulting from it. It is hardly surprising that other research concludes that couples who are experiencing marital difficulties prior to deployment are at far greater risk of breaking down when personnel return. How research participants (male personnel) perceive their marriage is a key factor underpinning such studies. However, little reference is made to gendered processes within marriages and how men and women might describe their relationships. There is much emphasis in the literature on service families that relates to the question of marital stability. It would appear that a stable marriage is one where wives do not upset the status quo by adhering to feeling rules and playing the military couple game.

However, much of the problem for many of the women in the present study pointed to the lack of marital quality and satisfaction in their relationships. These women were literally fed up of playing the game and responding to unreasonable feeling rules which required them to support their husband and 'be there whatever'.

It was evident both in the literature and in the findings of this thesis that infidelity is a significant problem in the Armed Forces. In the wider social context, a decrease in the number of divorces granted on grounds of adultery to both husbands and wives in England and Wales between 1981 and 2000 has been met with an increase in divorces granted on the grounds of behaviour, most significantly those granted to husbands (Population Trends 2006). In my small sample of twenty participants, infidelity was cited as a factor or potential factor in thirteen cases. That men are more likely to endorse the approval of extra marital sex relates to the characteristics of individuals who are likely to participate in infidelity, and the social circumstances that encourage infidelity (Vangelisti and Gerstenberger 2004). A 'bachelor ethos' is positively encouraged in the Armed Forces in order to maintain cohesion between groups of men (Jolly 1992: 166). It is hardly surprising that wives have protested to the 'dishing out' of free condoms when personnel are sent abroad, as it gives the impression that infidelity is officially sanctioned (see Beevor 1990: 32 and Higate 2004b). The military, on the other hand, is seen to be concerned with protecting the health and effectiveness of personnel, a practice which relates back to the testing of prostitutes for venereal disease in the nineteenth century (see Chapter Four, page 71).

The relationship between infidelity and divorce is complex, for not all affairs will lead to divorce (Duncombe and Marsden 2004a: 192). Some women may be prepared to tolerate a husband's infidelity out of love for their husband (see Shaw 1991) although these women may be hoping that a husband will change his ways, as was the case for several of the women in the present study. Previous research has shown that the quality of a marital relationship will generally have a significant bearing on whether opportunities for extramarital affairs are capitalised by men or women (see Vangelisti and Gerstenberger 2004: 61). One of the most significant features of a military marriage is husband absence. A major problem associated with husband absence in much of the literature focuses on a wife's ability to cope when a husband is away. If a wife copes too well her levels of independence may make it increasingly difficult for a husband to reintegrate into the relationship and family life upon his return, a factor I examined in Chapters Five and Six. The contradiction present in this feeling rule in relation to husband absence resulted in a number of participants leading and building separate

lives from their husbands, therefore both husband and wife might be *least* likely to report being satisfied with their marriages. Couples may begin to drift apart, and it is this process of 'living semi-detached lives' (see Jolly 1996) that may lead to extramarital affairs, particularly on the part of the husband who may come to view himself as an outsider in the family.

### **Non-operationally effective families**

A significant theme to emerge from my research findings was the women's concerns and attempts to foster and maintain relationships and involvement between children and non-resident fathers. All separating and divorcing couples will experience a number of practical and emotional challenges few are prepared for, in what is often a protracted period of adjustment. Moreover, parental separation is not an isolated event for children but a process that has a bearing throughout their lives (Maclean 2004). It is widely perceived that whilst divorce signifies the legal ending of a marriage, it should not denote the end of familial relationships, even though this may be hard to achieve in practice (Allan and Crow 2001: 118; see also Smart 1999). This is likely to prove the case for a great proportion of service families, despite research that suggests how new forms of family practice are challenging 'taken for granted assumptions' of how childcare and employment have been played out in conventional post-divorce families (see Neale and Smart 2002; Smart 2004). Clearly, there is little about the service family that can be described as conventional.

Legislation such as The Child Support Act (1991, 1994) has been implemented by the state to reinforce the message that fathers should not walk away from family responsibilities, and then expect the State to carry the cost (Millar 1994: 28). The Children Act (1989) reinforces the moral stance by encouraging non-resident parents to play a more central role in children's lives, emphasizing co-operative and life-long parenting (see Simpson 1998: 84). Previous research suggests that parents who no longer share an intimate relationship with each other have major hurdles to surmount in order to share parental responsibilities (Bradshaw et al. 1999; Lacroix 2006; Simpson et al. 1995). Where service families are concerned, operational effectiveness is established and maintained on marriage and intact families, hence the post-divorce service family is rendered 'non-operationally effective'. Lone parenthood, shared or co-parenting in the divorced service family, and co-habitation represent a perceivable threat to an organisational reality that legitimizes marriage with a stable family life. This alone represents a demonstrable feeling rule. In Chapter Three I discussed how the framing of the military's 'need to be different' paradoxically constructs difference as a problem for

operational effectiveness in relation to homosexuality, women's role in the military and members of ethnic minority groups. It is clear that any form of alternative family practice will create problems for the military. It also presents significant problems for service families.

Tensions between the military and the family have increased particularly during the past two decades or so. The mismatch between military policy and legislation on parental responsibilities places military personnel who are committed to co-parenting or maintaining meaningful relationships with their children in an untenable position. It is hardly surprising that personnel in this position can find themselves feeling frustrated, distressed, depressed and, at the extreme, suicidal (see *Army Families Journal* March 2005: 60). It is through the transition to post-divorce parenting that male personnel may experience the sharpest conflict between being a serving member of the Armed Forces and a dad. Divorced servicemen with children are still fathers. However, these personnel continue to be positioned within a socio-milieu that legitimates family life with marriage, and negotiating these feeling rules demands significant emotional labour.

In order to officially occupy a married quarter personnel must either be married, and not officially separated from a spouse, or have primary (residential) care of children, which is denoted by receipt of child benefit, or where children do not spend more than fifty two days per year with the other parent. For personnel that fall outside these definitions they will not be entitled to occupy a married quarter. There will obviously be many genuine cases where non-resident fathers feel thwarted by the military system. Due to the nature of occupational mobility within the Armed Forces, geographical distance is a significant barrier to maintaining contact and an active parental role for non-resident fathers. What my findings show, in terms of occupational status, is that where there was a reported lack of contact or involvement in non-resident children's lives this could not be attributed to unemployment. Such a relationship has been shown to be a significant factor to infrequent or non-contact between non-resident fathers and their children in previous research (see Bradshaw et al. 1999; Simpson et al. 1995). Furthermore, accounts of long-term child support issues that were experienced by many women in this study could not be attributed to unemployment or the low wages of non-resident fathers as the same research has also shown.

The findings that have emerged from this research suggest that service families, post marital breakdown, are significantly disadvantaged in a number of ways. Firstly, the gendered nature of responsibility within military marriages is particularly discernible

upon marriage breakdown, to the effect that the demands of the military and the family continue to be absorbed by the emotional labour of ex-service wives. In the capacity of their institutional and occupational role, personnel are socialised *not* to take on any practical and emotional responsibility for children. As no decisions were made with regard to shared or co-parenting in the current study, the majority of participants continued to have primary responsibility for children. There was little evidence to suggest that any process of negotiation took place, even in the few cases where non-resident fathers were described as good fathers. The responsibility for maintaining and arranging contact and visits appeared to rest with participants, which was associated with a great deal of emotional effort on the women's part. Whilst there were three cases where residency of children was contested by ex-husbands, consequently two women lost residency of their children, these were exceptional cases that were perceived as an extension of abuse and control that occurred within the marriage.

Secondly, there is a cultural barrier to consider in that both experiences of fatherhood and levels of commitment to a fathering role will vary. I discussed some of these related tensions experienced within the military in Chapter Three (page 63) in that fatherhood is now viewed as central to men's identities in the wider society. Those personnel who are unable to successfully combine both military and family roles, when these identities conflict, are more likely to leave the Armed Forces (Regan de Bere 1999; see also Jolly 1996). Consequently, the extent to which personnel may identify with a fathering role (personal identity) is axiomatic when it comes to the sustained effort that is required to 'carve out' the role of non-resident father with their children (cf. Corcorran 2005: 150, and Smart 1999). Where the military role (social identity) is more central, non-resident fathers will be at a significant disadvantage. However, negotiating the demands of the job and contact and responsibility with non-resident children may be less detrimental to the well-being of these personnel.

In a previous study that examined how parenthood was negotiated after divorce, it was found that when mothers mediated between fathers and children when the parents were together, it made it much more difficult for non-resident fathers on separation. In order to be a father he would have to change the basis of his relationship with both his children and their mother (see Smart 1999: 103). Effective relationships with resident mothers provide a crucial link with regard to contact and parental involvement with non-resident children. An emergent theme appeared to be the level of respect that participants in the current study perceived that an ex-husband held for them as the resident mother, in the few accounts where contact was perceivably working, and non-resident fathers were

considered by participants to be committed to establishing a role in children's lives, which supports previous research (see Trinder et al. 2002). A lack of respect for women as mothers, and perceived attempts by ex-husbands to gain control and power, appeared to be an extension of the marital relationship which resulted in a negative impact on contact and involvement with non-resident children.

Personnel may also be influenced by cultural and institutional barriers that exacerbate practical obstacles to parenting. The military is regarded as the 'first family' and is a long-standing feeling rule that reinforces, perhaps more informally now, exactly where a member's primary loyalties should lay. Evidence from the current study would suggest that little has changed. Taking *on* greater responsibility for non-resident children will conceivably impact on the well-being and operational effectiveness of the military member as this will demand greater emotional labour. In other words there will be a conflict in loyalties between what personnel feel they want to do and what they feel they should be doing, which ultimately creates a pinch point. Another drawback is identified upon divorce whereby some fathers will need to learn how to be with their children (see Simpson et al. 1995). For those personnel who have spent a great deal of time away from their families, and are unlikely to have taken sole responsibility for children at any given time, post-divorce parenting may create further challenges. It might be logical to suggest a solution to such challenges for personnel may lay in the 'clean break' divorce more characteristic of the 1980s. However, divorce no longer holds the same meaning as it did previously, and parents are no longer 'free from one another' (see Smart 2004: 403). However, it is perhaps one of the signifiers of the cultural lag of the Armed Forces.

As Corcorran notes, wider social processes "...work against the interests of men in that men are discouraged from expressing their feelings. This is exacerbated after family break up, because men tend to lose the status of parenting which is the one arena in which they can legitimately give expression to emotion" (2005: 148). It is not difficult to perceive how this may represent a 'double whammy' for personnel and a significant disadvantage. Just as it has been argued that the military encourages and facilitates first marriages, the same could be said for second marriages. At the time of the interviews, eleven ex-husbands had remarried, four were co-habiting, and three were in a relationship. Conversely, not one participant had remarried, although six were co-habiting, and two were in relationships. Several women had not been in a relationship since the breakdown of their marriage which was attributed to being *too* independent, and that civilian men did not know how to cope with this. The contradictions inherent in

wives becoming independent in order to respond to the feeling rules of the military had spilled over into their new lives.

### **Forces syndrome**

Only one participant blamed the military directly for the failure of their marriage, therefore this thesis generally supports the findings of other research. What is interesting to note is that the marriage in question had broken down a number of years after the husband had left the services. Post-military divorces are not recorded in defence statistics, which obscures the extent to which marital adversity and divorce is considered a consequence of time spent in the services (Beevor 1990; Jessup 1996; Jolly 1992). Previous research has also highlighted some of the difficulties that couples will experience during the transition from military to civilian life that may create additional tensions for ex-service couples. Some of these difficulties relate to the interplay between assimilation and institutional identities (for example, Higate 2004a; Jolly 1996; Regan de Bere 1999). Rarely, if at all, has the concept of institutionalisation been discussed in relation to the effects this may have for marital adversity and dissolution.

There was a general acknowledgement in these women's accounts that military culture promoted a narrow view of the world, which they perceived as negatively impacting on 'certain types of personality'; the effects of which were felt by wives and children in terms of the quality of marriage and family relationships. In other words, it was not the demands of military life *per se* that represented the problem for wives, but whether husbands were able to successfully cope with family life and contribute to the emotion work required to maintain relationships. Comments like 'not all military husbands are like this', and descriptions of how wives and children were treated as if they were in 'boot camp' were common in women's accounts. What my findings show is that a preoccupation with spousal ability to cope with military life obscures any consideration of how military personnel navigate the process between the domains of work and home. Husbands who were described as 'married to the military' were perceived as least likely to successfully negotiate this process. In this sense, the military could be seen as the dependent variable and a husband's social or personal identity as the independent variable, revealing a further dimension to the dynamics of service family life.

Several women used the term 'forces syndrome' to describe how certain aspects of military culture could affect personnel in different ways, such as not being able to 'live in the real world', difficulties in communicating with wives and children, and difficulties in coping with the chaos of family life. According to Jenkins (1996), institutions provide a

structure to organise the way things should be done however, this also shields people from the demands of a 'complex social world', which makes it difficult to step outside of the organizational reality. What was interesting about these women's accounts was they believed that, as individuals, they themselves had grown emotionally over time but their husbands, had become stuck. As I discussed in Chapter Four (pages 84-88), there have been attempts to explain why certain personnel may be predisposed to the effects of institutionalisation. Jolly (1996) concluded that the concept of autonomy may act as a protective factor, which she relates to the various occupational roles and situations personnel become involved within the military context. For example, there will be diversity in institutional demands between an administrative clerk and a frontline infantry soldier on combat deployment. There will also be a number of different constructions of military masculinity that will vary across role specialists (Barrett 2001: 78).

Whilst I agree that the concept of autonomy is a useful analytical tool in analysing the effects of institutionalisation, it is but one piece of the jigsaw puzzle. There were clear implications that a process of emotional divergence between couples was grounded in women's perceptions of marital quality and satisfaction. In discussing divorce in the military, Jessup (1996) has argued that all couples will be faced with accommodating a number of shifts, events and factors of personal growth throughout the life course. In other words, all couples generally start out marching to the same drumbeat. These women had developed a strong sense of personal identity that was grounded in mothering and taking responsibility for others. That personnel are *not* expected to take responsibility for the family was perceived as a barrier to emotional growth and development of a personal, as opposed to a social, identity. The military lifestyle was seen to affect psychological and emotional well-being, both in terms of development as a couple and as a family, which demonstrates a mismatch in the demands for emotion management in the military and the demands for emotional expression in the family.

Where the workplace was viewed as the primary source of identity (see Doherty 2009) a husband's development was perceived as focused on advancing the hierarchical ladder, whereby risks of institutionalisation can increase. As Kovitz observes, rank also "marks the internal differentiation, or conflicts of interest, between more or less powerful men" (2003: 9), which may spill over to family relationships. As was shown in previous chapters, children were described as being in 'constant boot camp', wives were issued with 'part one orders', and violence reigned in the home as a result of a husband's boss being female. The process of divergence between husbands and wives appeared to be a conflict between developing personal and social identities.

What the findings of this thesis show is that the degrees of autonomy personnel may have in relation to occupational roles and situational contexts might not be the only protective factor that guards against the effects of institutionalisation. The quality of marital and family relationships may also be a significant factor to ameliorating these effects. However, if personnel are unable to successfully navigate these competing identities, a tension becomes palpable between retention and divorce. As previous research has shown, personnel who are unable to successfully combine the role of husband and father, where this role is deemed as the primary identity, with the role of serving member they are more likely to leave the Armed Forces (Jolly 1996; Regan de Bere 1999). How the present study contributes to this debate is to provide some insight into why military marriages might fail, notwithstanding the factors that contribute to marital adversity I have already mentioned above. If a wife adopts an institutional identity in that she is 'married to the military' the marriage may have a greater chance of surviving the rigours of service life. In other words, there may well be positive outcomes to wives' emotional labour which can be viewed as a coping mechanism. However, the marriage may be at greater risk of dissolution if a husband is 'married to the military'. Hence it might be inferred that these personnel are more likely to sacrifice a marriage to remain in the services.

### **Picking up the pieces**

It was evident in my findings that many of the women in my study, particularly those who initiated marital separation, had experienced some negative effects of emotional labour, which is the focus of the final section of this chapter. As I discussed in Chapter Two, women's narratives during the interviews, in correspondence and telephone conversations, conveyed a deep sense of emotional effort that was associated with their role as both service wife and ex-service wife. However, much of this emotion work was concealed by action metaphors that defined role appropriate emotions, for example; 'it's his job', 'you can't ruin his career', 'you don't rock the boat', 'you don't make waves', 'we're just here to pick up the pieces'. Much of the attention paid in the literature to wives' ability, or inability, to cope with the demands of military and family life, appear to focus on task orientated responsibilities. According to Duncombe and Marsden (1995) many women have to cope with a triple shift of paid work, housework and childcare, and emotion work. What my findings show is that an analysis of emotion management, within the context of the military, reveals the extent to which institutional feeling rules can spill over into personal relationships and family life.

Generally speaking, the concepts of emotion work and emotional labour are correspondingly analysed in terms of the private and public realms. As Chandler and colleagues have stated, “military units in particular have the qualities of total institutions, where division between the public and the private are almost entirely eradicated” (Chandler et al. 1995: 126). The feeling rules of the military reinforce the gender division of emotion work, but expectations go beyond this. These feeling rules provide a context for wives’ emotional labour. The role of a service wife is not limited to the use value of emotion work in the private sphere: emotion work translates to the public sphere as emotional labour which is then appropriated by the military. However, wives do not receive recompense for the invisible work they perform for the military. The relational norm in a service marriage is often subject to overstretch, therefore greater emotion work will be necessary to sustain intimate relationships. The relational norms are dictated by the institutional goals of the military, whereby feeling rules provide a prescription for marriage and family life. Whether this is workable and sustainable, or not, will depend on the extent and depth of the emotional labour performed by service wives.

An important question in relation to the institutionalisation of service wives as a coping mechanism, is whether this process is authentic. For example, is independence a myth that is constructed as a result of having to ‘get on with it’? Or is it a genuine personal characteristic? Whether the ability to get on with it is real or phoney relates to processes of surface or deep acting, and has implications for the negative and positive elements of performing emotional labour. It was evident in my findings that there was a distinction between wives who coped well with military life, because they identified themselves as independent by nature, and those that felt forced to become independent in order to cope. To be a good and happy military wife will depend on whether a wife is surface or deep acting in order to play the military couple game. The negative effects of deep acting may result in a wife becoming estranged from her emotional self. Hence, for a number of women, ending the marriage was the only option to ‘save their sanity’ or to regain a sense of self-respect.

A wife’s love for her husband is essentially a private emotional system. When it is appropriated by the military this emotional system can become stretched to breaking point. Several women stated that they did not leave their husbands because they did not love them anymore; rather, they could no longer live with them. This was apparent in accounts from women that were desperately trying to save their marriages. There was little evidence here to suggest that it was a case of ‘off with the old and on with the new’;

it was more a case of self-preservation. However, wives and children who were once considered a valuable resource to the military can, in the next breath, be rendered alien and expendable (see Enloe 1988: 49). Is divorce the end of a service marriage, or is it a transformation of that marriage? (see Delphy 1991: 45-58). Whilst the legal contract of marriage may have ended, my findings show that in their role as ex-service wives, women will continue to perform emotional labour that is appropriated by the military.

The gender ideology of the Armed Forces constructs the norms and values (feeling rules) that control and define emotions to be managed in relation with specific role performances. With regard to parental responsibility, and for a number of reasons that I have already discussed above, both distance and demands of the job can render it more difficult for non-resident fathers to maintain contact and a meaningful relationship with children. Consequently, increased responsibility for sole parenting is placed on resident mothers. Both marriage and family life are subject to the feeling rules within the institutional context of the Armed Forces. What my findings show is that there is little evidence to suggest that for post-divorce families it will be any less so. If anything the demands on ex-service wives to 'pick up the pieces' in the name of military imperatives persist.

### **Summary**

This discussion has highlighted a number of key themes that have emerged from women's experiences and perceptions in relation to the problem of marriage breakdown in the British Armed Forces. Such a discussion provides an important contribution to current sociological literature about the military and wider debates. In addition this thesis prompts suggestions for further research, as well as having clear implications for policy regarding the military. These issues, together with the more general conclusions of the thesis, are now outlined in the final chapter.

## 9. Summary and conclusions

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*I think, generally speaking, morale in the forces is very low at the moment. They are incredibly stretched and never more so have they been in danger of not returning from a deployment because they're dead. But you have to be realistic about these things. And if they haven't got a happy home life...if they haven't got the support and help from their family, they are more likely to get disillusioned and make mistakes or leave. So if the forces can get the wives onboard they can get them helping them.*

Naomi, ex-Naval Officer and ex-Naval wife

### **Introduction**

This thesis has been concerned with a number of sociological issues relating to organisational culture, the interface between work and family life, intimate relationships, and socialisation and identity. It has also offered an insight into some of the features of family life and marital dissolution that are relevant to a number of contemporary policy issues for service families. In the previous chapter I discussed the main findings that have emerged from this study. In this final chapter I demonstrate how this thesis has answered the questions initially posed, and summarise the contribution of the research to academic and wider debates. As well as prompting debate regarding policy, this thesis also raises issues for further research. Finally, some specific suggestions for change are offered in the way the military both perceives and supports service families.

### **Research aims and objectives**

The overall aim of the research was to examine the issue of marriage breakdown in the UK Armed Forces. By adopting Bacchi's (1999) critical approach to problem representations it is possible to reveal what is *unproblematized* in military policy and the extant literature concerning family issues and marriage breakdown. Two questions were central to this thesis. Firstly, what is the problem of marriage breakdown represented to be? The rationale being that a critical analysis of existing discourses is necessary in order to illuminate how concerns about family problems in the military are framed, and for whom. The second question applied to the empirical element of the research was to ask what is problematic about marriage breakdown for military wives. The main objective of the thesis was to construct new problem representations which emerged from in-depth interviews with a sample of ex-service wives from across the tri-Services. The research explored women's experiences and perceptions of marriage and family life, and marriage breakdown. Rather than address each question separately I discuss

them as summaries in the following three sections, which inevitably overlap to some extent.

### **Service families and problem framing**

It is clear in both military policy and the extant literature that increased attention to the effects of service life on families during the past decade or so is framed by concerns over the recruitment and retention of personnel. Hence, concerns about family issues are constructed by a number of scholars and commentators as a problem for the military. If family problems remain unresolved a new frame emerges of a tension between retention and divorce. In other words, family issues will be resolved if the serving member leaves the Armed Forces, or the marriage will ultimately breakdown. Concerns about family issues are embedded in policy and framed by the military's primary goal of operational effectiveness, therefore solutions to family problems will be strategic. Little is understood, theoretically or empirically, about service marriages due to a paucity of academic research in this area, yet policymakers are charged with the task of producing initiatives to support families. However, it is difficult to perceive how an organisational approach to these issues can invoke significant change for families, particularly at the level of marital and family relationships.

Many of the changes that have impacted on the organisational reality of the Armed Forces to date have been externally induced as a result of wider legislative processes, for example equality and diversity policies to improve access to women and ethnic minorities. However, it is evident that social change is perceived as begrudgingly accepted rather than fully embraced (Higate 2003b). Similarly, family issues are impacting on an organisational reality that is threatened by external social factors as perceived by conservative commentators to be undermining the military's cultural practices; in effect the military's need to be different. For the military to adapt to changing expectations of service families and be less greedy of personnel would demand a significant cultural and organisational shift. Moreover, entrenched attitudes within various levels of the military hierarchy impede cultural change in an organisation that is historically resistant to a disruption to institutional mores.

That gendered processes provide an explanation that underpin problematisations of family issues in the extant literature is palpable in a number of ways. Firstly, family problems (wives and children) are believed to impact on the ability of personnel to be operationally and combat effective. If a wife is not self-reliant she is perceived as a problem to both her husband and the military. This perception is evident in much of the

extant literature on military families and was supported by the findings of this thesis. A wife's self-reliance and motivation to 'get on with it' stems, in part, from unwritten feeling rules connected to the reluctance to seeking help through formal welfare channels, or in acknowledging that there are indeed family problems. Although there is a dearth of literature on military families, particularly in the UK context, much of this is fairly dated. Hence I was both surprised and disappointed at the degrees of continuity in women's accounts of the pressure to adapt to the demands of the military that cut across time. Moreover, observations made over twenty years ago by some feminist writers on the US military are still relevant today. These unwritten feeling rules remain potent in the control of both wife and husband. If a wife does not play the game her husband will suffer, if a member cannot control his wife there may be ramifications for his career (see Enloe 1988: xxviii). Whilst the military may seek to identify and address some of the disadvantages that service families may face in comparison to civilian families, what my findings and other research suggest is that little seems to have changed in terms of the organisational control of wives and personnel at the level of family relationships.

Secondly, there is little evidence to suggest that wives are significantly influencing personnel to leave the Armed Forces, as a number of scholars and commentators have implied. To the contrary, previous research has shown that wives are more likely to influence their husband's decisions to *remain* in the military (Dandeker and French 2006; Regan de Bere 1999). My findings also support this latter position in that only one participant issued her husband with an ultimatum to choose between his family and his job. Despite evidence in the present study that supports the unwritten expectations that wives should adapt to the demands of the military it was not a question of whether wives could cope or not. Only one participant was married for less than six years, therefore it is reasonable to assume that all these women had found ways of coping. Moreover, as other research on service wives has shown, their stories were not imbued with feelings of incapacity, but were 'full of a sense of injustice' (see Chandler 1991: 66).

Since commencing this research, the Government has launched a full-scale review of the Armed Forces. The Service Personnel Command Paper (SPCP July 2008) sets out over forty initiatives to improve the lives of the military community and has prompted a large scale consultation process. The Green Paper "The Nation's Commitment to the Armed Forces Community: Consistent and Enduring Support" is framed by concerns that service families should not feel 'disadvantaged' in comparison to civilian families. The main areas under review relate to the difficulties that service families experience in accessing public services such as education, healthcare, and housing. Whilst these

issues are of concern to service families, what appear to be absent are those issues that impact directly at the level of marital and family relationships. For example, the patterns of employment for personnel that include separation, mobility, operational tempo and overstretch, as representing the least family friendly aspects of the military organisation that present far greater challenges for military policy. Whilst the SPCP and Green Paper appear far-reaching in terms of aims and objectives, the underlying concern for operational effectiveness remains clear. The issues that policymakers target as areas for improvement will be driven by institutional demands, rather than family needs; it is what Governmental policy *fails* to address that reveals a conflict of interests between the military and service families that will no doubt endure for a long time.

### **Sociology of emotion and the military organisation**

In Chapter One I set out my argument that service in the Armed Forces represents more than just a job, which is partly due to the considerable encroachment of the military on marriage and family life. What has been lacking in the literature on service families is a discussion of the context of the military as an occupation and way of life. In order to open up a new frame for analysis this thesis has attempted to address this omission by examining the military through the lens of a social theory of emotion. In identifying a relationship between emotion management and the military this thesis shows how personnel and their wives are subject to feeling rules and represents two extremes of occupational demand on emotion. On the one hand personnel are trained to be an aggressor and to play their part in the military system. Personnel will be expected to suppress certain emotions, such as questioning direct orders, while at the same time rousing certain emotions that will help them to get the job done. On the other hand, a wife has a part to play in providing love, support and understanding to her husband; to enable him to do his job effectively by supporting his emotional labour.

These feeling rules are dictated by a set of cultural and social norms and values that essentially set the military organisation apart from the wider society. Consequently, military marriage, family life and marriage breakdown need to be understood within the overall ideology and feeling rules of the military institution. As this thesis has shown, the relationship between the concepts of emotional dependency and occupational identity, and how this cuts across empirical areas of marriage and family life, is essential to an understanding of marriage breakdown. Much of the literature focuses on the practical demands of military life. However, this thesis has been concerned with the complexities of the emotional demands of the work-family interface.

It was evident in my findings that, in their roles as wives and ex-wives, women shouldered the responsibility for managing not just the practical everyday tasks and responsibilities of military demands and family life, but also the associated emotional demands. These feeling rules provide a sharp case regarding the spillover of emotion work in public life. The role of a service wife is to be an effective 'emotional buffer' and if she acquiesces to the demands of the military and her husband's career then greater harmony is likely within the family. In using action metaphors to describe their experiences, women's narratives concealed the emotion work and emotional labour they performed directly for their husband/ex-husband, and indirectly for the military. For many of these women, it was the extent and depth of this labour that held their marriages together. Whilst my findings have shown that wives will generally learn to cope with the demands of service life, as is suggested in much of the extant literature, the emotion work that wives do for their husband and the military is invisible and so gains little recognition. It is these emotional demands that will place the greatest pressure on relationships.

The gendered concept of emotion work is generally associated with the private realm, therefore this work is performed unconditionally 'for love'. In order to understand a wife's relationship to a husband's occupation, this thesis has highlighted a connection between emotional labour and the two-person career. What my findings show is that wives who constructed their relationship to a husband's job either directly or indirectly, believed they deserved some recompense for their labour. Often this was not forthcoming, whether this was reinforced at the level of formal welfare channels and feeling rules that dismissed wives' concerns or requests as unimportant, or whether they felt that their husbands were not engaging in family life. In other words, there was little exchange value for these women.

In examining the concepts of emotion work and emotional labour as multi-dimensional, there are both positive and negative features to these constructs. Many wives will benefit from incorporation into their husband's job; some wives will choose to adopt an institutional (social) identity which may shield them from the negative effects of emotional labour. Whilst wives' emotional labour may result in positive outcomes for both the military and her husband, there may be negative consequences to playing the military couple game, leading to psychological strain and emotional burnout. My findings suggest that a great deal of emotion work is demanded in order to sustain a relationship

that is creating emotional dissonance or alienation from the emotional self; a pinch between what wives *should* feel and what they may *actually* feel.

### **Re-framing the problem of marriage breakdown**

Military marriages are subject to a number of factors that can place extreme pressures on family life. It seems reasonable then to suggest that the military is unconventional in terms of the impact of organisational culture on marriage and family life and that, anecdotally at the very least, marriage breakdown might be viewed as an occupational hazard within military communities. Divorce is recognised as one of the main factors contributing to family change in contemporary Western society. However, the concept of family change in the military is synonymous with the ending of marriage, rather than the acceptance and legitimisation of diverse family practices. It is also a process that impacts on the increasing civilianisation of military communities (Dandeker 2000). Military culture underpins operational effectiveness and is a key concept in understanding the impact of change and processes of civilianisation in the military (English 2004: 10). Ultimately, the impact of family issues on operational effectiveness poses a problem for the military, in that a tension may exist between retention and divorce. As my findings show, there are a number of consequences for service families as a result of marriage breakdown that appear to receive little attention in Governmental policy and academic literature.

The consequences of marriage breakdown might be considered extreme for a service wife who will generally have much more to lose than her husband; notwithstanding the social and economic vulnerability of service wives and their children that is acutely evident on marriage breakdown. Hence, one of the consequences of reaching a turning point whereby wives no longer feel they can play the game is that they and their children may find themselves deemed surplus to requirements, which was a general finding of this thesis. The most vulnerable group of wives and children are those who occupy Service Families Accommodation, who have chosen to continually uproot their lives and follow a husband wherever he may go. Decisions will often be made by wives in relation to barriers to employment on the one hand, and occupying the roles of both mother and father during times of husband absence on the other. Service wives, as a group of mothers, highlight the disparity between moral and rational decisions in terms of mothers as adult-workers in social policy (see Duncan et al. 2003). On marriage breakdown, then, wives may be totally dependent on the help they may, or may not,

receive from both the military and their estranged husband and, as this thesis has shown, renders some women particularly vulnerable to abuse and control.

What my findings also show is that for those women who ended their marriage it was not a decision that was made frivolously or in haste. In other words there were subtle ways in which pinch points could be felt which might induce a wife to become defiant or desperate enough to disobey an unwritten feeling rule; for instance, by approaching the welfare office when a husband's behavior became too much to bear, or returning a drunken husband to barracks to sober up. Whilst military policy tends to focus on ways to improve marital stability, it was evident that marital quality and satisfaction lay at the heart of these women's concerns. The constructs of emotion management and emotional labour are useful for understanding the interplay between a stoic independent wife and issues of stress and well-being that have been associated with the demands of military and family life. Feeling rules that elicit role appropriate emotion in the military extends to service wives.

Wives are socialised early on in marriage 'not to rock the boat' and it was clear for most of the women in this study that a husband's career was to be protected at all times and at all costs. This unwritten feeling rule was persuasive in that the implicit role of a service wife is to *not* cause problems for her husband or the military. It was evident in my findings there was great pressure for wives to conform and cope, and several women felt they had little choice but to grit their teeth and get on with it. This role appropriate emotion was extremely powerful when these women were dealing with particularly difficult situations. Two of the features of military life that are rarely discussed in terms of marriage breakdown are the impact of the bachelor ethos that is regarded as an essential element of military cohesion, and the masculine warrior culture. Consequently, the role wives play in the management of emotion in the military has implications for the maintenance of gendered identities.

The reasons given by these women for ending their marriages included infidelity on the part of the husband, domestic violence and emotional abuse and control, and the endemic patterns of alcohol and drinking. The implications for wives is that marriage becomes stretched to the point that some are willing to risk losing their homes, potentially plunging themselves and their children into poverty in order to alleviate these tensions. Despite protracted efforts to save their marriages, most of these women reached a turning point when they had simply had enough of playing the military couple game. These women drew on the very role appropriate emotions that were an essential

ingredient of 'the good military wife' which gave them the strength and courage to end their marriages. An independent, resourceful and adaptable service wife is certainly an asset to both her husband and the military. However, the tension that exists between retention and divorce might be explained by the presence of contradictions in the feeling rules of the military organisation. One such contradiction is apparent in that an independent wife might become a problem to both her husband and the military, not least by the very fact family separation in the military provides good practice for going it alone. Moreover, resident mothers may well refuse to play the non-intact military family game where maintenance and parental responsibility for their children are concerned, as demonstrated by a number of efforts of women in this study to reject these feeling rules.

It was clear that ending the marriage was viewed as a last resort and that the process of marital adversity was, in many cases, protracted. The notion that we now live in a 'throw away' society, where partners are replaced at the drop of a hat (see Jessup 1996 and Giddens 1992) bore little resemblance to these women's narratives of struggle and perseverance, as they clung on to the notion that marriage was supposed to be for life. Despite financial difficulties and often extreme hardships most women were in no hurry to re-partner. There is evidence to suggest there are potential long-term consequences for male personnel, in that an increasing number are at risk from homelessness and rough sleeping. Ex-personnel who are divorced are no longer able to depend on the military or their wives and children for social and emotional support (see Higate 2000, Jolly 1996 and Milroy 2001). The military may have also provided the primary source of identity. However, as my findings suggest, the rate of re-marriage for personnel may be high.

There are a number of issues concerning marriage breakdown that have been identified by this thesis, not least is the impact of military culture that spills over into marriage and family relationships. As an organisation the military should bear some responsibility in that it encourages and facilitates marriage at a young age and early parenthood, which may often be the result of microwave relationships. What this thesis has highlighted is that the cause of marriage breakdown is a complex and multi-layered issue that demands further research. What is evident is from the women in this study is that they perceived themselves and their children as bearing the brunt of the consequences of marriage breakdown. However, institutional barriers also appear to make it difficult for non-resident fathers to maintain meaningful relationships with children. It is through the transition to post-divorce parenting that personnel may well experience the sharpest

conflict between being a serving member of the Armed Forces and a father. For this reason the potential for estrangement between non-resident fathers and children is palpable, representing a significant problem for service families that is wholly unproblematised in the extant literature and military policy.

### **Suggestions for supporting service families**

As I discussed in Chapter Two, one of the main motivations that women gave for participating in the research was from a genuine desire for their experiences to be of help to others. In this respect, most of the women were keen to offer some solutions to the problems experienced by families. Firstly, there was a general acknowledgement that marital tensions are unavoidable, given the overall context and demands of the military lifestyle and is not something that can easily be shored up against by military policy. What is needed is a review as to how marital separation is managed by each of the Services in terms of; the formal length of the cooling off period which is not considered long enough for wives who are living in Service Families Accommodation (SFA); greater transparency in terms of the allocation of SFA to non-resident fathers for the purpose of spending time with children; and a designated centralised point of contact, advice and support centre for families that are experiencing family breakdown. It is also essential that the military takes responsibility for the marginalisation of divorced fathers, even if this responsibility is framed within a business case approach in terms of retaining personnel.

Secondly, it is essential that wives feel they are afforded at least some sense of status within the military system in exchange for their emotional labour. Self-descriptions of excess baggage and second-class citizens cut across previous research and the findings of this thesis, which suggests that entrenched gendered attitudes to women as wives are still very much at large. As this thesis has shown, commentators and academics on military issues continue to frame family problems in terms of the extent to which wives are engaging in paid employment and deserting the metaphorical ship. This does not help the military, or service families, as wives need to believe they are an accepted and essential part of the military organisation rather than merely irritating appendages. For this to be achieved the Armed Forces should be encouraged to focus inwards in order to address this failing.

Thirdly, as this thesis has demonstrated, family separation is a fundamental feature of service life and is perceived as one of the greatest demands that can be placed on intimate relationships. The increasing move towards home-ownership within the Armed

Forces creates a culture of stability for wives and children, as opposed to a culture of mobility more synonymous with the RAF and the Army (cf. Mason 1999). However, this also increases the likelihood of both intermittent and lengthy periods of family separation. Greater attention needs to be given to the impact of separation and the difficulties encountered in relating at a distance. Processes of re-integration, particularly in relation to required periods of decompression and adjustment when personnel return home from conflict deployments, and how families deal with these difficulties needs to be better understood and supported.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

With reference to the study of organisations this thesis extends emotional labour theory as applied to the military context; specifically to the conceptualisation of emotional labour in relation to wives' support of their husband's career. In addressing the subject of women's experiences of marriage breakdown in the military, this thesis also makes a number of key interventions in existing empirical, theoretical, and methodological literature on military marriage and family life in the British context that are also relevant to wider sociological debates. Most explanations for marriage breakdown and divorce draw upon correlational data; a limitation of this approach is the lack of attention to individual perceptions as to why a marriage dissolves. By adopting an approach that considers the subjective accounts of divorced people this thesis has added a further dimension to understanding the divorce process; who initiates separation and why.

In focusing on a single occupational grouping this thesis also makes a key contribution to current debates on perceived changes in patterns of parenting in post-divorce family life. Firstly, family policy has previously focused on the obligations of parenthood. However, there has been some evidence to suggest that parenting in post-divorce families is shifting towards a new sense of moral consideration; parents want to do what is right for their children rather than what has previously been imposed by Family Law (Neale and Smart 2002:184; see also Finch and Mason 1993). However, post-divorce family life in the military context is constructed within a prescriptive gendered division of labour that restricts, if not denies, such processes of negotiation between parents. This division of labour is fundamental to maintaining the military imperative of operational effectiveness. It is therefore an extension of the patterns of earning and caring in military marriages that are, essentially, context dependent. Secondly, a positive relationship between employment status and earnings, and contact and financial support of non-resident children, is not always so clear-cut. As this thesis has demonstrated, there may be additional social, cultural and institutional barriers that

impede this process; not all non-resident fathers may be seen to be interested in parenting post-divorce for a number of reasons.

This thesis contributes to wider debates in family sociology more generally in terms of family dynamics, relationships and processes in everyday life. A familiar theme that runs through much of the literature on the Armed Forces is the extent to which cultural practices lag behind the rest of society; an organisation that is quite literally viewed as stuck in the past. Perhaps John Wesley Williams was correct in believing there is much to be gained from studying marriage breakdown and divorce in the Armed Forces (see Chapter One, page 15). For example, occupational mobility, family separation, and relating at a distance have been normalised features of military life since the reforms of the mid-Victorian Army gave rise to the service family. In considering the extent to which these features of service life are becoming more characteristic of contemporary family life in the wider social context it begs the question: Just how different *is* the service family from other family types?

As I have previously discussed, a specific family type has been required to meet the needs of military imperatives, consequently service families do not easily fit contemporary family typologies of household, diversity and process. However, it could be argued that all families and households are constantly adapting to meet the priorities and needs of everyday life which will affect the choices, constraints, dilemmas and decisions made at any given time. Hence individuals may be more or less connected to traditional family type practices throughout the life course, and it may be more useful to view family types as a continuum. In placing the traditional male breadwinner/female carer model at one end of the continuum and the dual breadwinner/dual career model at the opposite end, the family experience of dual career women may link more strongly into the traditional female carer model. Although family models are useful tools for analysis, a focus on difference between family types may obscure similarities, which may be a useful direction for future research in family sociology.

For example, dual-career couples maintaining separate households and conducting relationships at a distance, or couples who live in the same town but conduct relationships from different households are conceptualised as Living Apart Togethers or LATs (see Holmes 2004: 180-181). The Armed Forces are more representative of the historical pattern of relating at a distance, in that personnel who are absent from their family home are provided accommodation by the military, for instance when on unaccompanied postings, training courses or exercises, peacekeeping duties or combat

deployment, and do not generally establish and maintain separate households. However, the difficulties experienced by service families may shed important insight in relation to occupational and geographical mobility and distance relationships. It is not always a husband's job that will separate families, necessitating the conducting of relationships at a distance. It can be a result of wives wanting to settle in one place, provide stability for their children and establish a career for themselves. As the findings of this thesis have shown, family separation and distance relationships can increase a woman's sense of independence and self-reliance which may be a contributing factor in the decision to end a marriage.

### **The research – limitations and reflections**

This research is an exploratory study of the experiences and perceptions of women who were previously married to serving members of the British Armed Forces; the overall aim to increase the likelihood of theoretical generalisability. Theories do not provide answers to problems, but they can help us to see issues that we might not have ordinarily seen, or have been looking for (Forester 1993: 1). I believe this was achieved as a result of both sample characteristics and method of enquiry adopted. As the sample is not representative of the wider population this thesis does not make claims to empirical generalisation, although some of the findings are consistent with other research. Due to the paucity of research on service families within the UK military context it was necessary to draw on both international and interdisciplinary studies in order to situate some of the findings. As stated in Chapter One much of the research on military families has been conducted in the US. Difficulties can arise, however, when attempting to make international comparisons with the Armed Forces of other nations and should be treated with caution. Not only is it evident that a separate international culture exists there are discernible variations among the cultures of the Armed Forces studied.

Firstly, the UK Armed Forces are considered to be more institutionally entrenched and marginal to British society than the US (see Downes 1988 and Cassidy 2005). As I discussed in Chapter One, the civil-military gap and the extent to which this gap is narrowing is a prevalent topic in the literature on the UK Armed Forces, in terms of survival of institutional mores and normative processes fundamental to the need to be different from the rest of society. In the US this narrowing gap appears to be welcomed and perceived as positive in terms of a renewed and greater sense of patriotism and nationalism. Secondly, the sheer geographical size of countries such as the US and Canada will place greater distance between the service family unit and wider kin networks, thus necessitating greater dependency on more formalised social support

(Jessup 1996). Differences in provision of healthcare and welfare benefits may also impact on degrees of economic dependency for military wives in an international context (see Harrison 2006 regarding Canadian and American military wives). In the US military, family studies have been reasonably prolific since the Vietnam War. Even then much of this research has been ad hoc, sporadic and in response to particular issues of the day 'spread widely across decades, disciplines and outlets' (Karney and Crown 2007: 34; see also Chandler 1987). As both a major employer and a long serving civic institution the British military is a neglected area of research in the social sciences.

Within the military context there is a dearth of literature on service family life in the UK in general. Marital adversity and divorce is mentioned, albeit, briefly within a few pages, or the odd chapter at best. The paucity of research on family issues is understandable given that up until the early 1990s the subject has been largely ignored, which inevitably impeded the research to some extent. It was therefore necessary to draw upon unpublished material in order to write up the thesis. Whilst there have been a number of PhD theses, Masters dissertations, journal articles, book chapters and conference papers that have contributed to these debates in the UK there does not appear to be continuity and coherence in driving these debates in the social sciences forward. Moreover, a preoccupation with women's integration into the Armed Forces and the debate about women as combatants appears to surpass the subject of the gendered position of women as wives in the British military system. From a position of necessity rather than choice, and despite this material reflecting an insider position, some of the literature analysed in this thesis has been written by historians and investigative journalists. Consequently there is a tendency in this work to place greater emphasis on processes of change in terms of the issues affecting military families rather than ways in which continuity in cultural and social practices is maintained, which can be revealed by a sociological approach.

In terms of researcher reflexivity I discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Two, my commitment to remain upfront throughout the writing process was difficult to uphold and is most evident in the research material presented in Chapters Five to Seven. Despite my voice as both a researcher and an ex-service wife being present during the interactive interviews (Oakley 1981) I seemed to have taken great pains to mute it. On reflection there are a number of explanations for this omission. In the first instance I had, to some extent, managed to overcome the ghost of positivism during the analytical process by allowing my subjective self to take control of the research process which I had struggled to nail down. This difficulty appeared to reflect the experience of leaping,

what I believe to be, somewhat of a grand canyon from undergraduate studies to independent doctoral research. Consequently, writing in the first person and feeling comfortable in this process will be a work-in-progress for some time to come.

What has been most revealing is a mismatch between researcher reflexivity and researching the military. This has proved telling in two ways. Firstly, as a result of my own experience as a military wife and ex-military wife in that in my personal relationship I felt that I did not have a voice worthy of being listened to and this ghost is still resident. Whilst the thesis has provided me with a platform to indeed express my socio-political concerns and raise the profile of issues that are close to my heart, inserting my own voice into the text was perhaps a bridge too far. Secondly, as other researchers have acknowledged, the concept of reflexivity as applied to military sociology is still relatively overshadowed by the dominant positivist model of research in the social sciences (see Higate and Cameron 2006).

When a novice researcher with insider knowledge of the military is confronted with the many decisions that are necessary to produce the thesis, it may be difficult to break the mould in order to be taken seriously by those who are most likely to express interest in this work out outside academia i.e. military authorities. That is not to say this mould should not be broken. A burning question that has niggled away at me throughout the research process is my reluctance from the outset to interview male military personnel about their views on marriage breakdown. Undoubtedly this would have added a balanced perspective to the research even though this was not an essential element of the research design. However, the answer staring me in the face is related to issues of power, status and identity. I did not hold the sense of authority I would need to carry out such a task, rightly or wrongly, even in my role as social researcher it would not have been significant enough to overshadow what I perceived as my lack of status as an ex-service wife. Indeed, important lessons have been learned here which are very revealing, and I agree with others that there is much to be gained by incorporating reflexivity to the subfield of military sociology.

### **Implications for further research**

In terms of implications for further research what would be helpful in determining a more accurate picture of the pattern of marital breakdown in the Armed Forces is for definitions of marital status to be standardised across the tri-Services. Whilst there has been a recent revision in relation to these definitions (October 2007) in that personnel are now allocated a Personal Status Category (PStat Cat) rather than a Marital Status

Category (MCat) the most recent document available is the Tri-Service Publication 11 (DASA April 2007) that I discussed in Chapter One (see also Appendix A on page 198). It is unclear how this categorisation will translate into new information about the marital status of personnel, and there is no indication as to when the next publication will be made available.

As this thesis prompts debate regarding military policy it also raises issues for further research which might address: the reasons why the marital status of female personnel is not comparable to the female marital status in the wider society; the relationship between occupational roles and marriage breakdown, knowledge of which might be gathered at the point where personnel change marital or personal status; an understanding of how lone parents in the military manage both their parenting and military status; research into the employment patterns of military wives and the specific barriers wives face, particularly those who are owner occupiers where financial demands in maintaining this status may be considerably higher; and impact of the military on the experiences of post-divorce parenting for non-resident fathers. Finally, what would be of greatest benefit is longitudinal qualitative research on service families in both deployment and non-deployment contexts, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the complex demands placed on relationships. Moreover, there needs to be a greater attention paid to how military personnel experience, and deal with, the rigours of family life.

## **Conclusion**

This thesis has addressed important issues concerning the impact of organisational culture on work-family interfaces and relational processes for service families. Over a decade ago the Strategic Defence Review (1998) promised significant change in the way it both viewed and treated personnel and their families. This thesis has contributed to these debates by highlighting some of the issues for families that have yet to be acknowledged and addressed in military policy. The current Green Paper (2009) consultation seeks to address some of the disadvantages that service families face in accessing public services such as education, healthcare and housing. Whilst addressing these issues will go some way to ameliorating the exceptional demands placed on service families, it remains to be seen whether these improvements will lead to significant change and, ultimately, whether this will translate at the level of marital and familial relationships.

In concluding, this thesis contends that a re-framing of the problem of marriage breakdown in the military in relation to the impact of these processes on service families needs to be placed firmly on the policy map. Moreover, the subfield of military sociology can only benefit from a reflexive turn which may generate greater interest in the military from social scientists. Addressing the dearth of research and knowledge on the social context of the military, particularly the impact of the organisation on personnel and families, is long overdue.

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## Media Resources

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## Web resources

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Army Families Federation, <http://www.aff.org.uk>

British Sociological Association, <http://www.britisoc.org.uk/about/ethic.htm>

DASA, <http://www.dasa.mod.uk>

DHE (2003) Defence Housing Executive, <http://www.mod.uk/dhe/>

Military Family Research Institute, <http://www.mfri.purdue.edu>

Ministry of Defence, <http://www.mod.uk>

Naval Families Federation, <http://www.nff.org.uk>

Royal Air Force Community, <http://www.rafcom.co.uk>

Royal Airforce Families Federation, <http://www.raf-ff.org.uk>

Royal Navy Community, <http://www.rncom.mod.uk>

Tri-Service Publications 11, [www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp11](http://www.dasa.mod.uk/natstats/tsp11)

## Appendix A – Marital status definitions by service

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### **NAVAL SERVICE**

#### **Married**

Includes Officers and Ranks who are Married

#### **Not married**

Includes Officers and Ranks who are Widowed, Legally Separated, Divorced (Decree Nisi), Divorced (Decree Absolute) and all other including Singles. Also includes those Service Personnel whose service spouse (either Service Personnel or Civil Service Personnel) receiving allowances for a married person).

### **ARMY**

#### **Married**

Includes Officers and Ranks who are Married, Legally Separated, Legally Separated Revoked, Divorced (Decree Nisi) and Divorced (Decree Nisi) revoked.

#### **Not married**

Includes Officers and Ranks who are Single, Single Marriage Annulled, Widowed and Divorced (Decree Absolute), all inclusive of either with or without children.

### **RAF**

#### **Married**

Includes Officers and Ranks who are Married, Legally Separated, Divorced (Decree Nisi), and Estranged/Separated.

#### **Not married**

Includes Officers and Ranks who are Single, Widowed, Divorced (Decree Absolute), Marriage Annulled and Restatement Case.

TSP 11 Annual Publication UK Regular Forces Marital Status as at 1 April 2007

Source: Defence Analytical Service Agency

## Appendix B – Participant portraits in alphabetical order

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### Key:

PTE – part-time employment	FTE – full-time employment
OO – owner occupier	MQs – married quarters
(S) – second marriage	(OS) - overseas
RN – Royal Navy	RM – Royal Marines
RAF – Royal Air Force	(O) - Officer
(R) - retired 22 years service	

Name	Year of sep.	Years Married at sep.	Age of dependent children at sep.	Career status at sep.	Housing status at sep.	Ex-husband serving at time of interview?
Becky	1998	6	2, 5	At home	OO	Yes, RM
Carrie	1999	16	9, 11	PTE	OO	Yes, RM
Claire	2002	13	11	PTE	OO	Yes, RN (O)
Debra	2002	14	6, 6, 9	PTE	OO	Yes, RN
Emma	1998	16	8, 11	PTE	OO	Yes, RN
Grace	2000	20	15, 17	FTE	OO	No, RAF
Helen	2003	27	Non-dep.	FTE	OO	(R) Army (O)
Joanne	2001	14	7, 12	At home	MQs (OS)	(R) Army (O)
Katrina	1990	16	7, 13, 15	At home	MQs (OS)	(R) Army
Lauren (S)	2005	2	2, 4, 7	At home	MQs	Yes, RAF
Melanie	1998	10	5, 7	At home	MQs	Yes, Army
Michelle	2002	10	3, 6	PTE	OO	Yes, RAF (O)
Naomi	2002	13	6, 9	FTM	OO	Yes, RN (O)
Patricia	1985	10	2	At home	OO	(R) RM
Sally	1999	15	6, 12, 14	PTE	OO	Yes, Army
Tanya	1997	10	6, 9	At home	MQs (OS)	Yes, Army
Tess	1997	11	1	At home	OO	Yes, Army
Theresa	1982	17	15, 16	PTE	OO	(R) RN (O)
Vikki (S)	1999	8	3	PTE	MQ	(R) RN
Wendy	1982	12	9	At home	MQ	(R) Army