

# **An Untraditional Life: Male Spouses of Female Military Personnel**

Jennifer L. Jebo

Dissertation submitted to the faculty of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
Sociology

Toni Calasanti, Chair  
Carol A. Bailey  
Clifton Bryant  
Michael Hughes  
Dale W. Wimberley

April 29, 2005  
Blacksburg, Virginia

Keywords: Gender, military sociology, spouses and employment,  
gendered division of labor.

Copyright 2005, Jennifer L. Jebo  
All Rights Reserved

**An Untraditional Life:  
Male Spouses of Female Military Personnel**

Jennifer L. Jebo

(ABSTRACT)

Military wives continue to represent the majority of military spouses and as a result, most research on military spouses has focused exclusively on them. Utilizing data from the 1999 Survey of Active Duty Spouses, one goal of this study was to address this gap in the literature by examining how male and female military spouses differ. The results indicated that military husbands were more likely to have military experience themselves than military wives. Military husbands were also more likely to be older than female spouses and less likely to have children. Men were also more likely to indicate that their employment was not a concern during the family's last permanent change of station move.

The primary goal of this study was to examine the influence of gender on military spouses' support for their active duty spouses' retention in the U.S. Military. Previous research has indicated that spousal support plays an important role in military personnel's retention decisions. Other factors that were considered for their influence on spouse support for retention included age, race/ethnicity, education, children, personal military experience, employment concerns during the family's last move, the hours worked per week by the active duty spouse, the rank of the active duty spouse, and the military spouse's satisfaction with the military lifestyle. The results of this regression analysis indicated that military husbands are less supportive of their active duty spouses' retention than military wives. Satisfaction with the military lifestyle was found to be the most significant predictor of military spouses' support for their active duty spouses' retention in the U.S. Military. Of the other factors, age, race/ethnicity, education, the hours worked per week by the active duty spouse, and the presence of children in the family were also found to be significant predictors of spouse support for retention.

As satisfaction with the military lifestyle was demonstrated to be a significant influence on spouse support for retention, this study also involved an examination of gender differences in satisfaction with the military lifestyle. Gender was not found to be a significant influence on satisfaction with the military lifestyle. Factors that were found to significantly influence satisfaction included the military spouse's age, race/ethnicity, concerns about employment, hours worked per week by the active duty spouse and the rank of the active duty spouse. Concerns about employment during the family's last move and the hours worked per week by the active duty spouse were both found to have a negative influence on military spouses' satisfaction with the military lifestyle.

## **Acknowledgements**

I'd like to thank my advisor, Toni Calasanti, for all her assistance with this dissertation. She both encouraged me and challenged me to exceed my own expectations and, as a result, this dissertation is a product I can be proud of. I'd like to thank Drs. Hawdon and Hughes for their advice and assistance with the statistical aspects of this dissertation. I'd also like to thank my committee members, Drs. Bailey, Bryant, Hughes, and Wimberley, for all their support and encouragement throughout the course of my studies here at Virginia Tech.

Finally, I'd like to thank my parents (all four of them) for their support and encouragement throughout this process. They never doubted me and my abilities and that has meant everything to me. Thank you.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Figures and Tables.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Review of Literature.....</b>	<b>8</b>
Gender, the Warrior Ideal and the Gendered Military.....	9
Organizations and the Family.....	12
Gender, Employment and the Family.....	16
Husbands and Household Labor.....	19
The Military Spouse.....	22
Retention and the Military Spouse.....	26
Research Questions.....	29
<b>Chapter 3 Methodology.....</b>	<b>40</b>
Data and Sample.....	41
Analytic Strategy.....	45
<b>Chapter 4 Results.....</b>	<b>49</b>
A Profile of Military Wives and Husbands.....	49
Descriptive Statistics.....	50
Regression Analysis for Question 1.....	52
Regression Analysis for Question 2.....	57
Regression Analysis for Question 3.....	61
<b>Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions.....</b>	<b>79</b>
Military Husbands and Military Wives.....	81
Military Spouses and Support for Retention.....	82
Military Spouses and Satisfaction with the Military Lifestyle.....	88
Conclusions.....	89
Limitations and Future Research.....	93
<b>References.....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>Appendix A: Codebook.....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Appendix B: Additional Descriptive Statistics.....</b>	<b>108</b>

## Figures and Tables

Model 2.A.....	30
Model 2.B.....	33
Model 2.C.....	35
Model 2.D.....	36
Model 2.E.....	37
Model 2.F.....	38
Model 4.A.....	52
Model 4.B.....	55
Model 4.C.....	58
Model 4.D.....	60
Model 4.E.....	61
Model 4.F.....	63
Table 1.....	43
Table 2.....	43
Table 3.....	65
Table 4.....	66
Table 5.....	67
Table 6.....	69
Table 7.....	71
Table 8.....	73
Table 9.....	75
Table 10.....	77