TO USE OR NOT TO USE? SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND POST-9/11 VETERANS: THE IMPACT OF MILITARY SERVICE ON THE LIFE COURSE


Committee:
Kyle Crowder (Chair), Paula S. Nurius (GSR), Callie Burt, Steven J. Pfaff, Jay Teachman (Western Washington University).

The study of the military is often entangled with the study of war. While both subjects overlap substantially, the discipline of military sociology focuses on those serving in the military and the institution itself, rather than solely the conflicts militaries endure. Regardless of our personal attitudes toward the military, it is a relevant aspect of our society, and will likely continue to be so into the future. For something that can nearly be classified as a total institution, a concept that sociologists have been fascinated by for decades, it is surprising that researchers tend to avoid the discipline of military sociology entirely. More specifically, while some theorizing has been accomplished on the operation of the military as an institution, direct research on the lives of servicemembers has scarcely been touched upon. I conduct mixed-methods analyses (survey and interview data) to address these questions, focusing solely on the rates and reasons behind substance use for post-9/11 veterans currently residing in Washington State.

From this study I am able to discern that for the current era (post-9/11) of veterans the socialization processes of the military appear to be roughly similar across a variety of sociodemographic characteristics. Most notably, gender differences in patterns of substance use are subtle, if not non-existent; contrary to findings in previous literature. In addition, the mechanisms that drive specific behaviors do appear to vary across the life course, and I note some gender differences as well. Overall, the post-9/11 era of veterans appear to be less influenced by the military institution, and instead their actions are primarily driven by age and social factors.

People Involved:  Carter Merklinghaus
Adviser(s):  Kyle Crowder  Callie Burt  Steve Pfaff
Status of Research:  Completed/published
Research Type:  Graduate  Dissertations
Related Fields:  Conflict  Demography  Gender  Life Course  Organizations  Qualitative Methods  Quantitative Methods
veterans-impact-military-service-life