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Abstract

Service in the armed forces has long been associated with ideas of citizenship but these have often been associated with serving, male personnel. We argue that ideas of military citizenship should extend to other, non-serving family members because of the expectations placed on them by the armed forces. In this article we focus on the lives of children who have parents serving in the military. Drawing on the idea of everyday citizenship, we examine the impact of military service on children's lives. Based on empirical evidence from young people living in a UK garrison city, we examine how the spaces of the home, school and recreational clubs shape their identities as service children and reflect different forms of citizenship. In doing so, we foreground children's voices to counter commonly-held discourses of heroism or victimhood. We conclude that emotional geographies are significant to the formation of military citizenship, which extends well beyond that of the serving man or woman.

1. Introduction

Service in the armed forces has long been associated with citizenship. Military duty was a requisite of citizenship in the Classical period (Bellamy, 2008) and has been associated with the rise and protection of the nation-state (Ambrose, 1997; Basham 2013; Cowen and Gilbert, 2008). Duty in the armed forces has been a significant constituent of modern citizenship (Turner, 2012) and has helped to bind citizens more closely to the territory of the nation-state (Cowen and Gilbert, 2008; Woodward, 2017). Ideals of national duty have been used to enrol troops (Cowen 2008) and remember losses in conflict (Jenkings et al., 2012; Stephens, 2007). The soldier citizen is often portrayed on war memorials, as 'the heroic male figure striding commandingly through the sites and activities of public space' (Painter and Philo, 1995: 114). The implication is that soldier[1] citizenship is masculine and cherished: soldiers are seen as not only national heroes but also as those who have achieved the highest standards of citizenship and service (Cowen, 2008).

Yet, this rhetoric of duty and citizenship is coming under increased scrutiny. Rather than duty, the need to access social rights is often a motivation to enrol (Cowen, 2008); something that has also prompted soldiers to enlist into the armed forces of states other than their own (Ware 2012). This service is rewarded with forms of military workfare and public goods such as housing, health-care, pensions and recreation (Cowen, 2005) that become particularly attractive in times of austerity (MacLeavy and Peoples, 2009; Gifford, 2006). The 'heroic soldier myth' (Millar and Tidy 2017),

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[1] Unless noted, we use the term soldier to refer to the men and women that serve in all branches of the armed forces. We recognise that inter-service differences are important to the identities of these people but here the term is used as a collective short-hand.

together with its ideals of masculinity (Woodward and Winter 2004) and duty (Cowen and Gilbert 2008), has therefore been challenged through research that has revealed how complex social and spatial relations shape the relationship between the armed forces and citizenship (Basham 2013, Rech et al 2015, Woodward 2005).

Enloe (2000, 3) has noted that militarisation, or the 'process by which a person or thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military', extends to the lives of people who are not themselves soldiers. Thus, she notes 'the militarization of women has been necessary for the militarisation of men' Enloe (2000, 3). One example of this is revealed in 'Warrior Wives' (Eager, 2015), a collection of accounts by women about their experiences of military life:

'When it comes to moving, in all honesty their [children's] opinion, along with mine, is often irrelevant, particularly if we're drafted to meet the Corps needs rather than through our own choice. (Louise, 'Royal Marine Wife' quoted in Eager, 2015: 40)

In this case, militarised family members, including children, are expected to put the needs of the armed forces before their own – an act of service which allows a Royal Marine to do his (in this case) duty. Despite frequent residential relocation, family separation, normative social controls and relative poverty (Ender 2002), families are expected to 'put on a happy face' and be strong at school, work and in the home in order to support the armed forces (Eager, 2015; Marsh 2003).

It is clear that the concept of military citizenship not only shapes soldiers' lives but also those of their immediate families living their lives in ordinary places

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(Duncanson and Woodward, 2016; Beier and Tabak 2020). Existing work has, rightly, drawn attention to the various ways in which women's lives have been impacted by military actions and militarism, either through direct service or as part of a military family (Basham 2013, Enloe 2000, Pain 2015), but less attention has been given to the experience of children. This is perhaps surprising as feminist geography has also drawn attention to the significant, yet often unheard and disempowered, lives of children (Aitken 2018). Such work is especially important as there is evidence that military children need support (which often they do not get), especially during periods of re-deployment, combat, parental separation and post-conflict stress (De Pedro et al., 2011, Merriman et al., 2017; Frain and Frain, 2020).

To begin addressing this gap, we consider the relationship between militarism and citizenship through a consideration of the lives of children and young people within military families in the UK. This paper has three main aims. First, it seeks to examine how militarism impacts on children's lives, geographies and family relations. Second, ideas of citizenship are used to examine critically children's social, political and emotional relationships with the armed forces. Finally, consideration is given to the ways that certain institutions shape and support these relationships. The following section draws on existing literature to provide a context for our empirical work.

2. War babies or heroic citizens?

Ideas of everyday citizenship have been used to examine the ways that people are able to live out their daily lives as ordinary people in everyday spaces (Mackian, 1998). Militarism is often re-enforced through 'humdrum forms, because it tends to

insinuate itself into ordinary daily routines where is rarely heralded or even deemed noteworthy' (Enloe 2000, 3). Consequently, the lens of everyday citizenship has the potential to reveal how children's lives are lived within the frameworks of military and civilian institutions. We might, therefore, examine how 'the ordinary, the quotidian, the everyday plays a powerful role in the way citizenship is structured, practiced, and enacted' Staeheli et al. (2012: 640). Yet, in doing so, it is also important to draw attention to the ways that these ordinary lives are also shaped by the *extra*ordinary events, expectations and emergencies of military life.

Beier and Tabak (2020) suggest that modalities of war affect daily lives of children and youth far from conflict zones (see also Kelley, 2002; Lincoln et al 2008; Hogg et al 2014). Studies have shown that "there are significant and enduring adverse effects of parental deployment on the mental health of children in military families" (Forrest et al 2018: 1060) leading to some children experiencing sadness, depression, parental attachment difficulties, sleep disturbances and suicidal ideation (Frain and Frain, 2020). Just as the civilian 'military wife' is a political subject – precarious and vulnerable, forged in relation to power (Enloe 2000) - the civilian 'military child' is often perceived as either heroic or vulnerable in relation to military activities and geopolitical events.

This is reflected in the growth of, and public support for, organisations and charities that aim to support personnel and their families (Ashcroft, 2014; Pozo and Walker, 2014). To elicit citizen support, many military charities have portrayed soldiers as not only heroic but also as ordinary people in need of help (Herman and Yarwood, 2015). Here, the soldier is not someone placed on the pedestal of a statue, but

someone who has come from, and is returning to, a civilian community. Many charities are careful to portray soldiers as someone's father, mother, son or daughter in an effort to solicit empathy as well as sympathy. For this reason, military families, including children, have been enrolled into these discourses.

While some charities, such as the 'Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association' (SSAFA), have long-supported service children, a plethora of organisations have emerged in recent years to support different needs, ranging from bereavement support (for example, Force's Children's Trust 2019) to educational support (Reading Force 2019). Children are often positioned by these organisations as either 'war babies' in need of support and sympathy (and often within a wider discourse of war being necessary to protect future generations) or 'heroic citizens' mirroring the qualities of serving parents (Table 1). Sometimes children's vulnerability is highlighted in relation to parental separation caused by active duty or the cycle of deployment, with charities advocating a need for better wellbeing (Chandra et al., 2010; White et al., 2011).

Given these challenges, children are also depicted in similar ways to their serving parents; sometimes as heroes, sometimes as victims but always as 'extraordinary' citizens, bravely playing their part in their military duty to the state. In common with other 'Shadow State' charities (Snowdon, 2012; Wolch, 2006), this complicity has blunted the edge of political citizenship (Chaney and Wincott, 2014; Hines et al., 2015) and helped to normalise military action and societal support for those prosecuting it (Woodward, 2017). Consequently, children are enrolled into

military networks in seemingly apolitical ways (Hörschelmann, 2016) and portrayed as heroes or victims of military service. Their own voices can be lost.

Yet children are, of course, not passive. The sub-discipline of children's geography has drawn attention to the agency of young people and the significance of their voices and experiences (Holloway, 2014; Yarwood and Tyrrell, 2012). This has emphasised the need to treat children as citizens in their own right, rather than 'citizens in the making' or human 'becomings' (Mills, 2012; Prout and James, 1990). Thus, children should be thought of as complex political subjects who interpret, (re)produce, or resist the militarism of which they are a part (Beier and Tabak 2020, Pennell 2020). There is therefore a need to understand military issues from children's and young people's perspectives; to understand the importance of military citizenship to them; and the extent to which these relationships enforce or challenge the politics of militarism and soldier-citizenship (Hopkins et al., 2018). Such knowledge will not only lead to deeper understandings of children's everyday lives but contributes to understanding how military children and their families can be best supported (Horton, 2005).

To begin addressing these issues, we draw on research conducted with children and parents in military families in a UK garrison city, as well as stakeholders in schools, charities and the armed forces. Drawing on interviews with children, parents, teachers and youth leaders, we reveal how the lives and geographies of young people living in service families are shaped by geopolitics, military policies, the work of support groups and, most significantly, children's own agency in negotiating these structures. We explore these issues in the spaces of the home, schools and two

children's organisations; all of which were identified as important to children's lives. All of the children who participated in our research identified with being a service/military child or part of a service/military family. The paper draws attention to perceived differences between themselves and, as they put it, 'civilian' children. It challenges the dualism of military children as heroic or vulnerable citizens and broadens understandings the ways that military citizenship extends beyond the serving soldier.

3. Methodology

Or study is located in Plymouth, south-west England; a city that has long been shaped by its relationship with the armed forces (Essex and Yarwood, 2017). Her Majesty's Naval Base Devonport has been a significant naval port for over six hundred years and it remains an important base for The Royal Navy. The Headquarters of 3 Commando Brigade is based in the Stonehouse barracks and the Army maintains a significant presence through 29 Commando Royal Artillery, garrisoned in the city's Royal Citadel. There were 7,720 serving personnel and an estimated 20,000 veterans living in Plymouth in 2011 (Devon County Council 2014), representing 10% of its adult population (five times the national average). Despite a recent downsizing of forces (Rech and Yarwood, 2019), Plymouth remains a significant garrison city with significant numbers of military families whose lives continue to be impacted significantly by military activities.

Within this context, participants were recruited using purposeful sampling techniques that drew upon formal support networks for military families (Table 2). Individual participants were identified and selected through contacts with charities that

supported military families in the city. We used a qualitative methodology, employing a range of participatory methods that included observation, focus groups, interviews and 'draw-and-talk' conversations that aimed to reduce the power imbalances between researcher and participants (Bushin, 2009; Schäfer and Yarwood, 2008).

Data collection occurred in three main phases to triangulate findings and provide contextual insights that informed the next phase of investigation. First, participant observation was carried out at meetings of Military Kids' Club Heroes (MKCH), a charity that supports children with a family member serving in the military. Second, a focus group was held with five young people from service families living in Devon (although their serving parent(s) may have been deployed anywhere in the world) who participated in MKCH. Third, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with children from military families and stakeholders from organisations working with young people from military families. The latter included educational support workers and teachers at primary (4) and secondary (2) schools, as well as council support service staff (2).

Group interviews with service families included two key elements: an interview with the parent(s) and an interactive arts-based interview, where young people were encouraged to draw images to represent their experiences, and to discuss them with the interviewer. Children and young people chose whether they wanted their parents to be present during these discussions or not. All focus groups, semi-structured and participatory group interviews were recorded, transcribed and subsequently analysed using a thematic approach. Drawings produced during the participatory group interviews were used to support data analysis.

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By engaging with and listening to children and young people in these ways, we were able to move beyond the polarisation of children in service families as either vulnerable or resilient (victim or hero), and gain understandings of their everyday lives across different spaces. The following sections draw upon data from all of the methods to examine the relationship between the young people, the armed forces and citizenship.

4. Everyday spaces of citizenship: soldiering on and fitting in

The children's lives in our study were significantly affected by their parents' service in the armed forces. In turn, this service was determined by military deployments and actions that reflected wider geopolitical relationships between the UK, its armed forces and global military conflicts (Essex and Yarwood, 2017). At the time of our research, units from the city had recently been actively deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq, which had resulted in casualties, as well as Europe, Africa and North America, as part of commitments to NATO, UN and UK policy.

There was a sense that these deployments contributed to a sense of difference between military and non-military families. When one boy commented that 'civvies don't understand us', he not only identified a sense of separation but also aligned himself as part of the military: a soldier citizen. For the most part, children commented that they felt different because they were in a service family but they did not want to be treated differently, particularly in school spaces. They acknowledged the emotional stresses caused by active service or redeployment but, at the same time, asked other

people to understand this and be inclusive. Yet, children of all ages told us that 'teachers don't understand' the impacts of deployment and that their friends were unable to empathise with them.

'Interviewer: And are you able to talk to your friends about what's happening with your Dad or how you feel at certain times, even though they're not in service families?

Josie: It's just like sometimes where you just feel like you don't want to talk about it sometimes though. Sometimes you feel better if you just get on with your day-to-day life as normal and not try and bring it up in conversations.' (*Young female 3, interview 4*)

This interview points to a common coping strategy of 'putting on a brave face', 'acting like nothing is wrong when there obviously is' or simply refusing to talk about it (Frain and Frain 2020). This could cause tension, as one girl reported: 'friends start to get annoyed because you may be too distraught to talk about it'. This also became apparent in, and affected, our interviews:

Interviewer: And do you talk to your Mum then?

Rachel: No. Don't really feel like I need it, you know.

Interviewer: So is it ever difficult?

Rachel: No. Not for me. It is for him [indicates her younger brother].

Interviewer: Why is that?

Rachel: I've had it since I was like, since I was really, really young. I've got used to it, over and over again.

Interviewer: So do you think it just feels like normal life now?

Rachel: Apart from one person. Missing. Obviously Dad…'

(Young female (daughter), interview 9)

It is interesting to note that while the child herself says that she is not concerned, she suggests that her brother is. This was repeated in another example:

'to be honest with you, last couple of years I've not been bothered if he goes away, it's become like the norm really, it hasn't really done anything to, so. But then it's the younger ones that, my sister, she struggles with it a bit, she, she's … Year Eight so, she still struggles with it. But then it becomes more the norm.' (*Young male 4, interview 4*)

These comments may reflect the strategy of avoiding talking about the emotional stress of parental separation due to deployment (Frain and Frain 2020). The interviewee, Rachel, says that she can deal with the separation and, instead, implies that it is stressful for her younger brother. Rachel also expresses a desire to protect and support her sibling, perhaps reflecting a sense that she, as the older child, views herself as stepping into the shoes of 'the man or woman of the house' during deployment (Jensen and Shaw 1996; Kelley 2002).

Rachel also states poignantly that her father is often the one person missing. This is also reflected in the drawing of her family (see Figure 1): Rachel drew her Grandad and then said that she changed it to be her father:

'Interviewer: Could you tell me a bit about your picture?

Rachel: Um, basically, Pops [her Grandfather] … doing craft but I changed it to Dad because me, Mum and Pops and Nan, um, do some artwork …'

(*Young female (daughter), interview 9*)

Figure 1: Absence present military father

This indicates that she has got used to her father being an absent presence. Daily activities do not include him when he is away yet she felt somehow uncomfortable in not including him in the picture, especially as he was sitting in the lounge when the picture was drawn.

Rachel, like all children in military families, recognises, and has learned to live with, the emotional aspects of the 'cycle of deployment' (Kelley, 2002) in which serving parents spend periods at home and periods posted away (sometimes elsewhere in the UK, sometimes overseas, sometimes at war). The emotional impacts of the 'cycle of deployment' are not only felt when the parent is absent but both beforehand and afterwards:

'So you have like the build-up and the arguments before hand. And trying to get like, just like simple things sorted; with stuff like that puts the family under stress, especially parents. The children get stressed, you've got the whole going away so, you can only speak with them for so long […] then they come back for R and R [rest and relaxation], that can be up to two weeks away during the course of a six month deployment, or even a nine month deployment ... So then they go back to sea or, whatever, again to carry on the other half of the deployment, and then they come back so it's all happy families and then it sort of goes downhill again from there, the arguments start again' (*Young male 1, interview 4*)

While coping with the cycle was sometimes discussed with bravado, especially by older children who claimed it was nothing extraordinary, it was clear that some children could find it emotionally challenging. One young woman used active citizenship as a way of dealing with this:

'It's just keeping myself busy really. I was throwing myself into, like, volunteering works. My Mum works in, like in, the hospital so she gets me a lot of

volunteering work up there, so I just do that a lot, concentrate on my school work, just to keep my mind busy and not focussing on him being away.' (*Young female 5, interview 4*)

Although she uses volunteering as a method of distracting her from her father's absence, she also reflects ideas of service that are shared with her father in the armed forces. This example stresses that young people are not passive 'victims' of armed forces life but, instead, devise their own strategies for coping with the cycle of deployment through embarking on everyday activities that allow them to engage with their non-service friends.

As well as coping with separation from parents due to deployment, many children in military families also experience residential mobility. Often, whole families moved as part of a deployment and, in the case of the army, whole units often move together which can make it easier for networks of service families. However, a serving parent could then be deployed with their unit elsewhere shortly after family residential mobility. In contrast, personnel in the Royal Navy or Royal Marines often moved individually to join a ship's company or a Commando unit, which could be a more isolating experience for children. In all of these different scenarios, children and their families felt that they were expected to put the needs of deployment first and 'soldier through' any disruptions. One student told us that moving due to re-deployments could be disruptive but, equally, was part of service life and could be positive:

'I've been moved, like, five times now. And that's just with, like, postings and stuff. […] Personally, I think it's a good thing. It's an eye opener, you meet

different people. Experience a fresh start, stuff like that. […] Pretty much every two years, like, through school. You settle down, then move, settle down, then move. So, it can be a good thing and a bad thing. The only bad thing is, like, moving away from mates and that's pretty much it, but you always make new mates' (*Young male 2, interview 4*).

Children's abilities to participate as ordinary citizens in everyday life reflected geo-political policies made by government and strategic decisions made by the military about which units to deploy where. However, children also had their own agency in dealing with the emotional stress of separation and/or relocation. This section has discussed how young people view and cope with the demands of service life, especially separation from parents. While many children feel different because of their status as members of service families, for many of them their main desire was to simply 'fit into' daily life, echoing the discourse promoted by military institutions. Indeed, when the authors of this paper presented a review of the literature on the impacts of military deployment and residential mobility on children to an audience of tri-service military members, one naval officer responded with the comment 'If things are this bad for them, why aren't we doing something about it?'. Children did employ agency in developing ways of coping with the challenges of having parents serving in the armed forces. However, there is a need for further research that seeks to uncover the multiple impacts on children, particularly as they may be unspoken or unacknowledged.

5. Schools and citizenship

At home, families shared the experience of deployment and were able, in various ways, to live through it together and support each other. All of the children that

we spoke to attended local state schools. Here, service children faced, and had to negotiate, competing, and often challenging, discourses of soldier citizenship with others who had little empathy for their experiences and, furthermore, sometimes opposed the military actions that affected them. As Staeheli (2011: 359) reminds us, school is a site of citizenship formation that is shaped by a mixing of different ideas and people, 'an aggregation of the aspirations, ideals, values, and instrumentalities … the school is a site in which key concepts such as equality, democracy, history, justice, belonging, and citizenship are contested'. On one hand, schools were sites where difference was felt most keenly, with many children saying that staff and other students did not understand their situation. Yet, on the other hand, schools contributed to a discourse of recognising and rewarding military citizenship by utilising government funding to support children from military families.

In 2011, the introduction of the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) in England and Wales provided extra funding (approximately £300 per pupil per annum) to schools 'in recognition of the specific challenges children from service families face and as part of the commitment to delivering the armed forces covenant' (Ministry of Defence 2019). This reflects a view that children of service families are in need of extra support due to parental absence, or the stresses of deployment. Payments are not, however, available to support children with absent parents due to other circumstances or in other, stressful jobs such as the emergency services or private maritime security. One teacher also reported that a serving Royal Marine's children could access SPP but his step-children could not. As well as acknowledging the additional educational needs of service children, the SPP also regards service children as deserving, as well as

needing, support. This contrasts with the idea that children should be able to cope with the challenges of military life and just 'be brave'.

Schools chose to use SPP funding in different ways, which reflected how they perceived the needs of service children. In one school the SPP had been spent on a dedicated room and library for the exclusive use of service children. One staff member justified this by saying 'Year Eleven students say that when Dad's away it's quite difficult to do homework at home because Mum's busy and often the little ones get in the way.' Although these issues can also affect non-service families, the needs of service children are prioritised through the SPP. Usually, though, SPP centred on school clubs (at lunchtime or after school) for service children or supporting engagement with other schools and activities in the city. Often these revolved around crafts or activities that simply aimed to bring service children together, yet this aim was sometimes difficult to achieve:

'And other children come along to that as well, just because I can't refuse, and other children have parents who are away, either on oil rigs or working away or an absent parent and um, when they're very little they don't understand the difference that you know, little Johnnie's Dad's in the Navy so he can go to the group and 'well my Dad's away as well', he could actually be a plumber but, you know, so they all get included or they can bring friends. Sometimes we have five children and sometimes we have thirty, it just depends' (*Parent Support Advisor, interview 8*)

In this case, the school recognised the importance of bringing service children together for mutual support but, at the same time, recognised the parallel need for these service children to not be 'different', and that other children would benefit from the activities. Service in this case was not privileged, something that was problematic for one parent who felt that resources should be directed solely at providing service children with pastoral care:

'playing noughts and crosses and hangman for a lunchtime isn't pastoral care. Making Christmas decorations, which is what they do in a normal lesson, isn't pastoral care. I'm not even sure that the TA [teaching assistant] who runs it has got any acknowledgement about what it's like to be anything part of the services … I'm going back [to speak to the Headteacher] in January … because for them to get the money, we've got to sign a form to say that they are service children. We'll put it to him that if he doesn't tell me what they're gonna be doing with it and I think it's worth it, then I'm not going to sign the form, so they could lose out on the money that way, because I'm not happy that it's being swallowed up by something else in the school, because that is there specifically for them' (*Parent (Mum), interview 9*).

This confrontation also echoes some of the children's comments in the previous section that suggested their needs were not fully understood by non-service families or staff. Children, as we noted, often aimed to keep their emotions and feelings private as a way of 'fitting in' to daily spaces and 'being brave'. These hidden behaviours might have contributed to a feeling by some school staff that most children did not need specialist support:

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'But they don't very often get emotional or upset. I don't think we have a high percentage of service children that Dads are away for long times. A lot of Dads are Monday to Friday; maybe a lot of Dads are kind of based here. Obviously they are on ships, they do go away as well for long times and they'll be like, you know, 'oh, [it's] so many weeks until my Daddy comes home' and they might get a little bit upset but not to the point where we felt at all that they needed heightened support … they seem to cope really well' (*Parent Support Advisor, interview 5*).

'I don't, we don't tend to see it a lot. I say now and again the behaviour slips, um, um, you know this little boy goes a little bit wayward and a little bit naughty but not to the extreme, at all' (*Parent Support Advisor, interview 5*)

In response, other staff suggested that staff training was needed on the cycle of deployment and its impact on learning. Schools also appeared to adopt a low-key response to issues they identified, such as:

'Day one, we start it from then and slowly they get used to that idea that it's about us working with them to make sure that any issues that they might have from being part of a service family doesn't impact their education but at the same time being able to be proud and say 'I'm part of a service family'' (*Teacher and military families support group leader, interview 6*).

'Well certainly as a school we're very aware if the Head's been told by the parent … 'just to let you know, so and so might be a little bit upset because Daddy's going away' (*Parent Support Advisor, interview 5*)

Perceptions about the extent to which, and how, children should be distinguished as different, rewarded or in need, varied and was balanced by the needs of the wider school community. In all cases, though, the aim was to enable children to fit into and participate in, the daily spaces of the school.

However, school remains a place where citizenship ideals are contested (Staeheli and Hammett, 2010; Pykett, 2009) and, as such, children of service families found themselves having to defend or explain their parents' involvement in political conflict to other students and, indeed, staff. One young male described one of his experiences:

'People make rash statements and it can annoy. At my school we had a day, we had a guy who's very like critical, he hates war. So I had a three hour conversation in our free periods on why war, on why in cases it's a good thing, even though people die and that, why, the core to it is, can be a good thing. So we had this massive conversation and then he said something which I was like, that close to knocking his teeth in, and it was basically, he said something along the lines of 'anyone in the military should go to hell' (*Young male 2, interview 4*)

On another occasion, students were disappointed at a lack of social and political awareness of their situation by a teacher:

'I will never forget the assembly that one of our Deputy Heads did on Libya 'Well most of you probably don't even know where Libya is'. And I'm thinking actually,

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I know four or five kids out there that have already told me that their Dad's been deployed out there and he's sitting in a submarine or a ship just off the coast waiting for the order to fire and he's saying 'well we need to do this, we can't just ignore these things' and I'm thinking you're talking to… The reaction following that, this is going back some time as obviously the history of it says, but the children were furious, absolutely furious' (*Teacher and military families support group leader, interview 6*).

The comments in this section reveal a process of negotiation between schools, parents, students and government agents about how to position children as soldier-citizens that is played out in both the formal spaces of the classroom and the informal spaces of student life. As the first two sections have noted, these processes can result in tensions and/or children adopting strategies to fit into spaces where they sometimes feel discordant. Some children speak out and challenge other children's and teachers' views in school spaces. Some children keep quiet, even if they are experiencing difficulties. As a consequence of having to negotiate these interactions and spaces of potential conflict, some children chose to participate in other institutions that were more closely aligned with the armed forces – where they could feel more understood and comfortable.

6. Youth Institutions and Civic Militarism

Existing work has demonstrated that different institutions have attempted to mould people, particularly children, into specific types of citizen behaviours (Mills, 2012; Mills and Waite, 2017; Robinson and Mills, 2012). Some of these behaviours

have emphasised the importance of duty and civic participation to citizenship, ultimately through military service. The Scouts, for example, were established to train boys to support the armed forces, so much so that Robert Baden-Powell, their founder, wished 'that before long every eleven, whether football or cricket, will also make itself good for shooting and scouting' (Baden-Powell, 1908: 183-184). More specifically, the cadet forces, which are sponsored by the Ministry of Defence, seek to provide activities for young people 'based on the traditions, values and standards of the armed forces' (Ministry of Defence 2020). The Sea Cadets, Army Cadet Force and the Air Training Corps mirror the organisation of the armed forces and enrol young people into discourses of military citizenship through discipline, teamwork and leadership training, as well as learning field-craft and other military skills.

Some commentators have considered these youth activities as a form of 'civic militarisation' in which military approaches are enrolled into, and become a widely accepted part of, civilian life (Woodward et al 2017). Politically, these forms of civic militarism have been advocated as providing solutions to some societal problems (Kuus 2008). Indeed, since 2012, there has been a large, state-sponsored expansion of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) with the aim of increasing the number of units in state schools, especially those in less affluent areas (Ministry of Defence 2020) to 'instil values in young people that will help them get the most out of their lives, and to contribute to their communities and country' (Combined Cadet Force 2020).

Although the broad sweep of these activities has been to enrol young people as useful, soldier citizens, Woodward et al (2017) caution against considering civic militarisation in only in structural terms, and instead, consider the nuanced, personal ways in which young people engage with military discourses. Thus, one interviewee

relished his involvement in the cadet forces as it offered opportunities to mirror his parent's military experiences and what he regarded as exciting about them:

'The kit. Especially, in the Cadets, that's it. All the latest kit I've got it and I wear it, so, that's quite a big one for me. It's always nice when they bring back some more.' (*Young male 4, interview 4*)

Here the student celebrates having the latest equipment used by the (adult) Armed Forces and notes that this increases his sense of connection and pride with the armed forces. Other children also told us about occasions when they were able to wear their parents' kit or share their ration packs. These material items and performances enrol children into the practices of soldier-citizenship that, at the same time, provide a form of connection and empathy between child and parent. The same student went on:

'Just because I'm doing sort of similar things to what the Navy are. Most, quite a few of the people at my unit are in the Navy so they sort of help out but that was more when I was younger, so ... thankfully whenever I've had a problem they've always been quite open and said yeah, come and, doors always open. There's always someone who's been in the Navy or is in the Navy or even in the Marines, who's in the unit to help out, so, it's always a good thing' (*Young male 4, interview 4*)

The extract demonstrates the significance of this participant's 'unit' to his social life, in the same way that a regiment, squadron or ship's company has significance for

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service personnel. Yet, the quote also reveals the emotional and practical support afforded by his unit. He feels able to not only confine in his problems but also that people in his unit will be able to empathise with his feelings due to their military experience. Here, militarism has created a shared understanding between cadet and veteran that is able to support him during times of anxiety and separation. While some commentators have critiqued civic militarism for the teaching of military violence (Hörschelmann, 2016), this example also draws to the naunced, personal and emotional engagements that these organisations can also foster (Woodward et al 2017). In this case, it is a way of coping with parental absence. Other organisations also drew on civic militarism, although more covertly, to provide mutually supportive networks between children, schools and third sector organisations. One of the most important of these was Military Kids' Club Heroes (MKCH).

Military Kids' Club Heroes

Military Kids' Club Heroes (MKCH) was established by Plymouth City Council to support and give voice to local service children, recognising some of the difficulties they may experience as a direct consequence of being in a service family. It provides support at a school-level for children, as well as a city-wide network to bring service families together and provide mutually supportive activities. MKCH also aims to give a voice to service children and, significantly, develop their standing as citizens enabled and empowered to speak about the concerns of military children. To this end, the club has been driven, with adult support, by children themselves. The organisation emerged following meetings between service children from different schools, all of whom identified a need for a city-wide support network:

'The children made the decisions and they always do because it's their voice. Having said that as with all things, we have to be a little bit careful because sometimes they do have a wish list that is difficult and we have to have lots of discussions with them about what can and can't be achieved in the space of time. They always make the ultimate decision but sometimes we have to play devil's advocate in what would happen if..., suppose that..., is there a reason why you might not choose to do it this way?' (Female council employee, interview 16)

This is illustrated in the development of the group's branding. Its original name, HMS Heroes[2], reflected two ideals. First, children wanted a military identity:

'Then some of the naval children wanted it to be like a ship, a ship's company so they came up with HMS, that's what it is at first. We've got the army, we've got the RAF ... how can we do that? They played around with that for quite a long time and then came back with the fact that the initials could mean something quite different. Hence, we got Her Majesty's Schools Heroes.' (Female council employee, interview 16)

The Heroes appellation was taken from a child who suggested that:

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[2] MCKH was originally named as Her Majesty's Schools (HMS) Heroes but as HMS refers to Her Majesty's Ship, it required Royal approval for its use. Hence, it was renamed Military Kids' Club Heroes (MKCH).

'in your own home you can be a hero, supporting the parent left behind, caring for your brothers and sisters and being brave when your parent or family member is in a dangerous place.' (Military Kids Club Heroes, 2019)

In this way, MKCH reflects an idea that children have similar 'heroic' qualities to their serving parents. Further reflecting military tradition, members decided that the organisation should have a motto deciding on 'together as one', perhaps reflecting a recruiting campaign for the infantry at the time that used the slogan 'forward as one'. The logo was designed by 10 year old girl and included a boy and girl, who wore generic caps 'to prove that everybody was part of it and it had to be something that you weren't embarrassed to wear if you were 17 or you were 7.' (Interview 16). Children also chose white t-shirts as the colour was not associated with any particular branches or units of the military. These activities reflect some military ideals by mirroring unit loyalties, sharing identity through uniforms and partaking in military events alongside adult organisations.

MKCH has been involved in a number of different activities that have recognised the agency of children as citizens. Thus MKCH, has created opportunities for its members to participate in Armed Forces Covenant meetings, meet MPs and to speak at various events. MKCH has also given service children opportunities to participate in spectacular national events such as The Festival of Remembrance, Remembrance Sunday parades and Armed Forces Day (Rech and Yarwood 2019); Sunday parades where children carry standards and 'stand alongside' military and veterans' organisations. To these ends, MKCH collaborates with, and is supported by,

the Royal British Legion, a national veterans' organisation that runs the annual Poppy Appeal.

MKCH also runs a choir that performs regularly throughout Plymouth and, annually, at Armed Forces Day, mirroring the national Military Wives' Choir. Although Cree (2019) is critical of staged efforts to enrol families into heroic military discourses, children and adults themselves spoke enthusiastically about their involvement in the choir. While it often performs publically, allowing civilian families to engage and empathise with military families by inviting them to imagine what separation from *their* children or families must feel like, most of their activities are more low-key and everyday in nature. There are, for example, meetings that bring together children and staff within and between schools across the city. On these occasions, children meet together with two facilitators from the charity and participate in a fun activity which is often linked to a military theme (e.g. poppy making), whilst the school staff are encouraged to share best-practice around a topic related to supporting service children.

Many young people felt a sense of belonging to the charity, which helped them to identify and empathise with other service children. This sense of belonging was built through weekly meetings organised by teachers and volunteers, and enhanced with the development of a cross-city network aimed at sharing good practice and encouraging children to support each other:

HMS Heroes group … so really that is for all the service children and they tend to be quite littlies here … We don't, as a group, really necessarily talk or do

things around deployment or around the military as such because actually they just want to have some fun. What it does do is it united them as a group of children so they can be there for each other and they all have a common cause (*Parent Support Advisor, interview 5*)

Here, emphasis is placed on ordinary activities, rather than extra-ordinary ones to build friendship and mutual support. One parent noted

'…although they don't necessarily associate as a forces thing, it's just the nice group that they like to go to and they have fun …. [name of daughter] also did the choir for a while, which was lovely, really, really nice … but it was nice, um, that you know, there was this additional thing that they could access and it, it doesn't cost any money' (*Parent (Mum), interview 10*)

The military is not explicitly mentioned but, rather, it forms the basis of the bond that allows children to meet others in a similar position and, through shared activities, provide mutual support. These activities stress the importance of 'ordinary activities' to create spaces and activities where children feel included. Everyday citizenship, or the ability to fit in and participate in daily society (Painter and Philo, 1995), is celebrated here, rather than military service, connection or achievement. This serves to distract children from the impacts of military life to such an extent one mother reported that her son was not always aware of MKCH's connection with the forces:

'[name of son] gets kind of like a little bit, 'I get to go out of school', he doesn't really know what he's doing but he's going out with [name of sister] and it's

excitement and he's missing lessons, that's how he views it.' (*Parent (Mum), interview 10*)

MKCH has been worthy in its efforts to support service children and to give them agency as citizens both to participate in civic events and political decision making. The platforms enabled by MKCH have allowed young people to raise awareness about the needs of service personnel and their families, rather than always coalesce around the dominant discourse of service children 'being brave' or constantly framing service family life in positives ways.

7. Conclusions: more than soldier citizenship

This paper has sought to highlight a range of discourses and narratives surrounding the lives of children living in military families. In doing so, it has drawn attention to the ways in which ideas of citizenship and military service are intertwined with families living their lives across different civilian spaces. Our work is situated in a garrison city where the armed forces have a strong presence. As such, military issues and concerns are a more prominent part of daily life than in other cities and, consequently, institutional backing for the armed forces is strong. Children are, therefore, more likely to be supported at school and through voluntary organisations than in other places. There is clearly further scope to examine and compare the experiences of UK service families living in other countries (for example Germany) to understand how military mobilities at an international scale impact on their perceptions of, and enrolment into, ideas of distal citizenship.

Although we have discussed service families, there is a need for more critical scrutiny of the idea of family in a military context. In this paper we have used the term 'service families' as a shorthand for immediate family units entrained into a military context through the employment of one or more parents. We have also suggested that this term is important to partners' and children's identities but it would be beneficial to examine this in more depth and the extent to which this is deployed or denied in different spatial and social settings. Our work supports Beier and Tabak's (2020) call to take children and childhoods seriously in the debates on everyday militarisms, positioning children's subjectivity more centrally, rather than engaging them only as objects—or victims—of militarization.

Further work is also needed to explore the experiences of children in other military spaces. Our work contributes to understandings of children affected by war but, in focusing on children living in the UK, there is a danger of privileging them over children more directly affected by wars in other countries. We therefore call for more work to build on the findings in this paper, to explore other facets of citizenship associated with children and militarism.

So, what of citizenship? This paper has used the idea of citizenship to examine aspects of the lives of children from service families. We have focused primarily on the idea of everyday or ordinary citizenship, using it to examine how children seek to live out their daily lives in the context of wider geopolitical and military discourses, as well as in relationship with state and voluntary agencies. One aspect that is perhaps missing from our analysis has been any discussion of political interaction. Few children we spoke to engaged with the politics of militarism or armed deployment. When

children were upset about deployment it garnered, understandably, an emotional rather than a political response. Wider political motives went unquestioned and active deployments were accepted as part of military services. While MKCH gives children an important voice, this tended to reflect ideas of military service rather than anti-war rhetoric. This points to an affective form of citizenship that supports military action through sentiment rather than politics but is, nevertheless, powerful and important. In keeping with Ho (2009), we argue that greater attention is needed on the significance of emotional citizenship, especially when considering military service. To illustrate this we finish by recalling an incident recounted to us by a teacher. The teacher refers to a teddy bear called 'Commander' who served as a mascot for service children in the school. The toy itself was made by children from 'Build a Bear[3]' and was emblazoned with tri-service badges. More significantly, he also served as a way for children to vent feelings:

'There was one child in Year Eight that got so angry with the services for sending his Dad back out to Afghanistan when he'd already done a long chunk of tour of duty, and had to go out there to relive an injury, this lad was furious, and he came in here and he actually had to shout at him [Commander] and just get it off his chest because there was nobody else to blame. It wasn't Dad's fault that he was going, it wasn't Mum's fault that Mum was upset and it wasn't his fault because he was upset, it was the MOD, the faceless organisation' (*Teacher and military families support group leader, interview 6*)

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[3] A former chain of high-street shops where children can make their own teddy-bear. 'Build a Bear' donated free kits to service children.

Military citizenship is more nuanced than has been hitherto recognised. It extends well beyond the serving soldier to encompass the friends, family and communities of those under contractual service. Children in service families are neither war babies nor heroic citizens, although they are often portrayed as such. They are citizens in their own right, seeking to live their daily lives as well as they can in the context of shifting geopolitical actions, traditional military institutions and nuanced cultural norms of militarism and service. To understand this, the significance of emotional geographies to the formation of citizenship should not be underestimated.

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Theme	Portrayal of Children	Examples		
		Organisation	Year of formation	Aims
'Little soldiers'	Children are seen to have the same heroic and resilient qualities as their serving parents and are capable of 'soldiering on' through the hardships faced by service families. Camps and sporting activities with other military children are seen as rewards for being brave, as well as providing opportunities to demonstrate engagement in soldierly outdoor activities.	Little Troopers	2011	To 'support children with parents serving in the British Army, regular or reserve' when they are separated from a parent by deployment, by offering advice to parents, providing support packs and organising activities for children. (Little Troopers 2019)

'Out of the ordinary'	Children that have special needs beyond those of civilian children.	Service Pupil Premium	2011	Provides extra government funding for schools in England and Wales to support children of service families. This recognises that such children may have additional counselling and/or support needs beyond those of 'ordinary pupils' (Ministry of Defence 2019)
'Vulnerable'	Demonstrated by charities that support bereaved children who have lost a parent serving in the Armed Forces.	Scotty's Little Soldiers	2010	Named after Corporal Lee Scott who was killed in Afghanistan to support children who have lost a parent while serving in the

				Armed Forces. (Scotty's Little Soldiers 2019)

Table 2. Range and type of data collected

Interview Number	Agency	Research participant(s)	Data collection Method
1	Secondary School	Work-Related Learning Co-ordinator	Interview
2	Primary School	Head Teacher	Interview
3	Primary School	Parent Support Advisor	Interview
4	Charity	5 young people (aged 11-18)	Focus group
5	Primary School	Parent Support Advisor	Interview
6	Secondary School	Teacher, school lead for with military families support group	
7	Children's support group/charity	Army Chaplain and military children support group Chaplain	Interview
8	Primary School	Parent Support Advisor	Interview
9	Military family (Not living in military housing)	Two adults (parents), two children	Participatory group interview
10	Military family (Living in military housing)	One adult (parent), two children	Participatory group interview
11	Military family (Living in military housing)	One adult (parent), two children	Participatory group interview
12	Military family (Not living in military housing)	One adult (parent), two children	Participatory group interview
13	Military family (Living in military housing)	One adult (parent), one child (one child too young)	Participatory group interview
14	Military family (Not living in military housing)	Two adults (parents), one child (one child away)	Participatory group interview
15	Military	Unit Welfare Officer	Interview
16	City Council	Council Employee	Interview