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Harrison, D., Albanese, P. (2016). Growing Up in Armyville: Canada's Military Families during the Afghanistan Mission. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

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Deborah Harrison and Patrizia Albanese want to reveal the struggles faced by the soldiers and families of the Canadian Armed Forces during the Afghanistan mission in their book, "Growing Up in Armyville." In comparison with other nations that chose combat methods, Canada was known to be the peacekeeper of the situation, but the Afghanistan mission changed everything. Harrison and Albanese argue that the Canadian Armed Forces is "a greedy institution to demand loyalty and service at all costs" (p. 11). The authors discuss the effects of the war through several chapters that shed light on growing up in a military family and in Armyville, comparisons of life before, during and after deployment, as well as the way things are once the deployed parent returns home.

Harrison and Albanese begin by stating that even though military families are similar to any other type of family, they deal with more stressors in their lives. While all adolescents experience stressors "related to self-image, physical changes, peer and family conflicts, academic challenges, school transitions, and establishing and maintaining romantic relationships" (p. 26), family relocations that happen often for those in the military cut the social ties that are necessary in coping with the issues faced in life. The authors explain how geographic relocations, frequent separations due to training and deployment, and living under a blanket of risk create problems for military families. Therefore, adolescents are often confused with their changing identity,

and/or given the responsibility of caring for their younger siblings amidst the chaos of moving and deployments (p. 35).

Armyville is a military base, which as of 2011, has "almost 9,000 people residing in" (p. 43). Surveys and interviews were the two types of methodological techniques used to collect information on subjects such as "significant differences in [the] social and psychological indicators between Canadian Armed Forces youth and civilian youth in Armyville" (p. 46). Some of the findings of the research concluded that the youth of the Armed Forces have a more positive attitude towards school, less likely to skip classes, higher educational ambitions, and less likely to have friends who were bad influences, in comparison with their civilian school mates. Children from military families face the same issues as other adolescents. An interview with Jasmine, a student at Armyville High, revealed:

> If you read magazines and stuff like that, it's like this. And then we look at other people. You know, it just brings you right down. You're like, "Oh I feel really bad about myself."…I don't think guys have stuff to worry about, because [they] wake up, they put on something to wear, and then they go to school. Girls try to compete with other girls and try to look the best, or be the best. And like, yeah, you want to be the one who gets notices, because it makes you feel better. But when you don't, you feel really bad" (p. 59).

Personal interviews also revealed the turmoil students at Armyville faced upon knowing that their parent was to be deployed. Amanda, a high school student, is quoted before her father's deployment to Afghanistan:

> We definitely spent more time together as a family…. Everybody was trying to be happy. If something got them down, you just kind of picked yourself right back up and forgot about it. Whereas you usually wouldn't do that. We were always trying to be a lot more positive and doing stuff as a family before he left, because there's always that chance that that might be the last time (p. 79).

Adolescents tend to experience shock once their parent deploys. Harrison and Albanese

focus on “the losses, the anxieties, the extra work, and the process, successful or unsuccessful, of seeking support from individuals and institutions outside the home” (p. 85). Research has revealed that children of deployed parents have “higher level of emotional difficulties” (p. 91) and reported signs of anxiety. Teens feel worry over the safety of their parents on their missions (some even feeling physically sick) and have developed coping strategies. Boys are more likely to repress their emotions and act out, while girls have internalizing mental symptoms that can lead to depression. For example, some adolescents have confessed that they get drunk as a form of rebellion. The Canadian Armed Forces respond to these mental health issues by offering services to the students, such as therapy. The schools provide supportive environments that also keep the students engaged and busy with school work and extracurricular activities to help deal with the stressors in their lives.

Even though the children and family are always happy to see the military spouse return from a deployment, “the post-deployment phase is difficult, as the household rearranges itself to reintegrate the partner and parent” (p. 135). The lives of both the deployed parent and family usually change by the time of return. Stewart comments on the changing dynamic of the household after his father comes back from Afghanistan:

> When I screw up, he always brings up the fact like I don’t respect what he does for me, or things like that. But I don’t want to bring up the fact, “Yeah, well you leave us for nine months at a time, and you expect me just to accept it. I know it’s you job but you also have a family.” I mean, it’s hard to cope with it. It’s almost like you’re living with your family and then a stranger comes home. ‘Cause nine months is a long period. It’s almost as if you don’t know him anymore. You don’t know his new habits (p. 143).

Some students volunteered to be interviewed about the effects of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) on their parent and family. Harrison and Albanese define being diagnosed with

PTSD as 1) experiencing or witnessing an actual or threatened death or serious injury; and 2) responding to this trauma with intense fear, helplessness, or horror (p. 147). Brady recalls an incident his father had:

> [On] Remembrance Day…they shoot off the big cannons and they start off the moment of silence. When they shot off those cannons [last Remembrance Day], his reaction right away, he was looking around, you could tell he was in Afghanistan mode. And then we managed to calm him down… The big thing was at the end of the moment of silence. They shot [the cannons] off again. He wasn't expecting it, and he dropped down to the ground (p. 150).

PTSD "interferes with daily functioning long after the traumatic event" (p. 149). The authors write that some examples of this would be recollections of the event, depression, withdrawal, loss of interest, difficulties sleeping, and sudden outbursts of anger (p. 149). This can also lead to abusive and violent behaviour towards family members, and can also "be a predictor of alcohol abuse" (p. 152).

Harrison and Albanese bring information about a topic that is little known to civilians in Canada. This book is an excellent way to learn about military life and the honour and stresses it creates for the military members, as well as their families. A suggestion I would make to improve the book would be to include some parental responses to the children's responses. I think it would be interesting to know what parents (deployed and the spouse of deployed) think of the situation. Professionals that would find this book interesting are those in the fields of sociology, psychology, education, social work, and documentary film makers. Upon reading this book, I was able to understand the struggles of worry faced by adolescents of deployed parents and the constant fear that their parent may not return. I also have learned about post traumatic stress disorder, and how if affects the family members. I have realized that Armyville students face the same problems as other teens, because I remember also being concerned about what others thought of me.