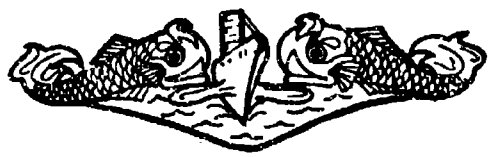

THE EFFECTS OF HUSBAND'S AT-SEA TIME UPON THE ROLE PLAYING BEHAVIOR OF THE SUBMARINER'S WIFE

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Various roles which may comprise the social persona of "submariner's wife" are presented. The roles of "wife" and "single wife" are analyzed in terms of the Lebra dimorphic, bimorphic, amorphic classification. Sources of role conflict, ambiguity, and the possibility of role shifts are discussed with a positively valued coping strategy outlined. Self-sufficiency and consistency of role playing in both husband presence and husband absence appear to be effective in offsetting the effects of husband's sea time.

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UPON THE

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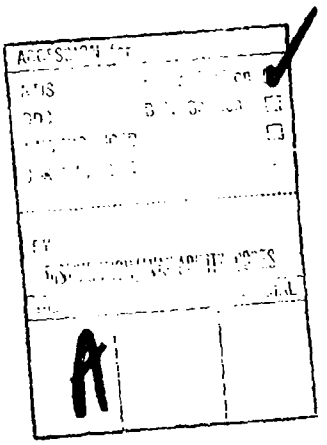

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THE EFFECTS OF HUSBAND'S AT-SEA TIME UPON THE ROLE PLAYING BEHAVIOR OF THE SUBMARINER'S WIFE[1]

Alice Ivey Snyder[2]

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to present some of the various roles which the submariner's wife plays and to describe the effect of husband's at-sea time upon the role of "submariner's wife." This role will be analyzed using Lebra's 1976 classification of female role types. Role conflict, role ambiguity, and role shifts will be discussed as well as coping strategies the women may use to reduce their effects upon the social persona of submariner's wives.

Methods

The results of this research have depended upon observations made via the traditional methodology of the anthropologist, that of participant observation. Field research was carried out during 1976-1977 among the submarine associated community at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Naturalistic, intensive observation, after Henry (1973), of eight submariners' wives in their homes and in their day to day activities provided much data concerning role playing behavior. Four officers' wives and four enlisted men's wives were observed from five to nine days from early morning until bedtime. They were observed

both during husband absence and in husband presence. Each woman was selected on the basis of her reputation within the community as an adequate manager of her life style.

Interviews were utilized and questionnaires were administered which requested not only demographic responses but also subjective material. Specific data on over 300 women whose husbands were active in the submarine service were accumulated over the twenty-one month period of field research. These women ranged from the wives of some of the most junior enlisted men to the wives of the most senior officers.

The Definition of Role

Goldschmidt (1971) deals with the definition of both role and status, and his definitions are appropriate for this analysis.

Goldschmidt states that a role is:

> The blueprint for the behavior that is considered suitable to a particular social position; it is not the behavior itself, but the rules and expectations--what should be done when a particular office is held.

As for status,

> Every society has a set of social positions or statuses, a set of relationships among its personnel, and every culture defines the behavior assigned to each status. A similar status in two different cultures may require quite dissimilar roles (325).

In extension from Goldschmidt's argument that similar statuses in different groups may be associated with different sets of role behavior, it is likely that the submariner's wife, and others' expectations of her performance

as submariner's wife, will contrast in her role behavior to the American civilian wife, the Air Force wife, or even the surface Navy wife. Her cultural setting is different in measurable, observable ways from the settings in which these other women operate and this will result in role behavior which contrasts to as well as overlaps the behavior associated with the similar status in these other groups.

A person can never play just one role at a time. Keesing (1973), after Goodenough, states this most clearly:

> In actual behavioral settings ego is likely to occupy a number of coalescing social identities in the same interaction. A man never interacts solely as "physician" (e.g., to "nurse"). He is, at the same time, "adult" and "male" as well. This additive or combinational property of culturally defined positions and associated statuses has not been adequately studied...Goodenough calls the composite identities assumed in a given interaction the actor's social persona...(1973:424).

When a social persona is a standardized combination of social identities, then that cluster becomes a category and is labeled. The standardized personae of a culture are what Keesing calls "the prepackaged units of a culture" (434). What this means is that those roles with which we are most familiar are actually a constellation of several social identities, or roles. For example, "mother" is actually "guardian," "female," and "adult," and may imply "wife" as well as other identities.

When one refers to the "submariner's wife" one is actually considering as reference point a social persona, a cluster of roles. This cluster will vary from individual to individual and from interaction to interaction for the persona involves a mode, a set of rules, and is subject to idiosyncratic performances and interpretations. The submariner's wife social persona,

unfortunately, is not a completely standardized "prepackaged unit" and is subject to variations as to which roles will constitute the persona and which are acceptable to the community. Nonetheless, many of the roles which may compose the submariner's wife social persona can be described.

Background:

The Nature of Submarine-Caused Separations

There are two major categories of United States submarines, the FBM's, or SSBN's, which are strategic deterrent nuclear warhead missile carrying submarines, and the attack submarines, the SSN's and SS's.[3] The two types of submarines maintain distinctly contrasting operating schedules, both of which feature more time at sea than in port.

FBM's, with the exception of those which are homeported in Charleston, South Carolina, are physically berthed and operated out of overseas ports. For those with a homeport of Pearl Harbor, the submarines actually operate out of Guam and their crews fly as a group to meet the ship. The FBM's are manned by two crews; one crew is on board the submarine while the second is home for vacation time and a session of retraining to take over the operation of the submarine once again. The schedule for each crew is three and a half months away and three months home, again with the Charleston exception. The two crews of the submarine overlap each other at the overseas port for four to seven days in order to provide the opportunity for transfer of pertinent knowledge necessary to the operations of the ship, to change command.

The attack submarines, whose function is anti-submarine warfare, operate from their homeports on an irregular, but carefully planned schedule. Each ship's schedule is unique and intersperses at sea periods of short duration, a few days to a few weeks, with weekends and weeks in their homeport.

In addition, they deploy for up to seven months to overseas operating areas in each approximate eighteen month time span. Thus, the attack submariner is sporadically home, then gone for over half a year, and then resumes his earlier presence/absence. His wife is usually privy to when her husband will be home; his presence is predictable, although not so completely as that of the FBM submariner whose wife can plot her husband's time in the home for literally years to come.

Crews of submarines range in size from approximately eighty-five to 168 (Moore, 1977:551 ff.) and form cohesive social units whose wives also form social groups for interaction in the absence of the husbands. The wives' groups are submarine and crew specific; they are called "boat wives". These groups provide support and assistance and this is deemed necessary because the women are often far removed from their families of orientation and may be unfamiliar with the locale and its customs. The situation is aggravated in Hawaii where the host community is not mainstream America and does not necessarily encourage integration of the military community.

Whether married to a man attached to an FBM or to an attack boat, the wife of a seagoing submariner can expect her husband to be gone more than he is home. She spends more time as a "single wife" (a term which is heard frequently in the community) than as a full-time, cohabiting wife.

Review of the Literature

Seafarers' wives usually experience lengthier separations than submariners' wives and they are usually irregular in duration. Studies in Norway, Israel, and England (Grönseth, 1964, Rosenfeld, Rosenstein, and Raab, 1973, and Smith, 1975), indicate that the wives of merchant mariners are established members of communities where they have lived for years and have

defined roles in the group. However, they experience role conflict upon the reappearance of their husbands and may be unwilling to adapt to the masculine presence. Bernard's 1966 study of the Greek sponge divers' wife contrasts in that the husband is gone approximately half the year on a regular schedule and is, like the submariner, a "dependable absentee." This wife also experiences difficulty in her role playing behavior because she must violate cultural traditions which hold that the woman's domain is her house and the outside world is for the man; she must venture into the masculine realm simply to maintain the household in her husband's absence.

Husband absence in the military context has a limited literature pertaining to the wife's roles. Hall and Simmons (1973) discuss the application of vamp and superwoman stereotypes to POW/MIA wives; these same stereotypes will be discussed for the submariner's wife. Worthington (1976) talks of role shifts required by one's reunion with her husband. The woman in a passive/reactive, or, in Batesonian terms, schismogenic submissive, relationship with her spouse has difficulty managing these shifts and the author places blame directly on the Women's Liberation Movement which has been "creating marital problems and causing psychological disturbances among women today" (7). It is difficult to find substantiation among submariners' wives. It appears more logical to attribute the marital problems to the effects of time spent apart when there will be inevitable changes in the marital tie, the opportunity, if not necessity, for the woman to develop independence and new conceptualizations of her roles, and her unwillingness to shift back to a passive role stance.

We know the following about submariners' wives from the literature: The women are depressed when their husbands are gone (Beckman, 1976), they experience a separation, or grief, reaction when their husbands leave (Pearlman,

1970, Bermudes, 1973), they undergo a reunion anticipation reaction when the husband is about to return (Isay, 1968), their communication network is limited mostly to other crew members' wives (Boynton and Pearce, 1977), they experience a mid-life transition between the ages of thirty and thirty-five (Snyder, 1978a), and they are sick more often when the husband is gone (Snyder, 1978b). Roles, unfortunately, have not been carefully considered and have been typified in simplistic terms, as O'Beirne (1969) has indicated:

> [The]...adjustment to separation and return has been oversimplified as the adjustment between the woman's role as dependent wife and independent woman or mother. Though this dichotomy does exist, it would be erroneous to believe that the change is from clinging vine to oak tree and back again (7).

The submariner's wife's roles are far more complex.

The Roles a Submariner's Wife Plays

Mother, Father Surrogate

If she has borne children, the submariner's wife must play the role of mother. In husband/father presence, this role may be very much like that of her civilian counterpart. However, in husband/father absence, it becomes complicated for many women not only to attempt to compensate for his absence but, in doing so, attempt to become a father replacement. This role of father surrogate appears to be predicated upon a profound reluctance to have contact with other men when one's husband is at sea. The wife indicates a fear that she will be viewed as a vamp, a woman out to bed others' husbands, if she should seek any sort of male assistance. So, because the woman wants her children to maintain many of the same activities during father's absence

that were performed in presence, and she avoids other men, she may attempt to become a father surrogate.

I observed seven of the eight informant wives performing the father surrogate role--the eighth wife had no children.

The Good Navy Wife

Many women feel pressured to play the role of "Good Navy Wife," a role which has been a tradition for years in the Navy. It has been defined in some detail through material available in various publications. For example,

> You are in the peculiar position of being not *in* the Navy but *of* it, and so not quite like other civilians. You are no longer a free agent but an unofficial representative of the Navy, and by your actions all the rest of us will be judged...it is presumed without question that you will show loyalty to God...[and] recognize that there are persons in authority over you,...showing them the respect due their positions (Johnson, 1964:244).
>
> You share equally with your husband, the responsibility to the Navy. This means accepting the bad with the good, without criticism or complaint, and doing the best you can with the tools at hand (246).

The definition of the Navy wife has changed somewhat since 1964, but the general principles still hold. Indeed, many senior wives would have had their initial exposure to this role in the early 1960's. The role carries an expectation of a detailed knowledge of the Navy and the general idea is to play the supportive, knowledgeable wife who busies herself in Navy aligned activities which will supposedly enhance her husband's chances for promotion. Being a "Good Navy Wife" requires much participation within the total institution of the Navy, frequently as voluntary labor; the Navy medical and dental

clinics depend heavily upon women willing to assume this role.

There are many women, and I believe the number is increasing, who are not willing to be good Navy wives. As one woman commented, "I don't like to be the Navy wife, an unrecognized, behind the scenes talent." In support, of the informant wives, two were striving to perform the role, four were making only token attempts, and the other two had no intention of being "The Good Navy Wife."

Reflective Roles

The expression that a wife "wears her husband's stripes" has usually been taken to mean that a woman is trying to influence people by indicating her husband's seniority. However, a wife may very well be expected to fill her husband's role to some degree, and, in effect, to wear his rank, especially when he is at sea. This kind of role is an extension of the man's status.

The formal "chain of command" and associated role duties transfer from the men to the women when a submarine puts to sea. A wife's "duties" will mirror somewhat those of her husband's. The wife of the Commanding Officer will be the head of the wives' group, the "boat wives." The Executive Officer's wife will be something of a personnel manager, orchestrating social events and attempting to find resolution of wives' problems.[4] The wife of the Chief of the Boat will oversee the enlisted wives and attempt problem resolution as well as relaying information to the Executive Officer's wife to be relayed on to the Commanding Officer's wife. This is the ideal transfer, of course, which may or may not resemble what happens in the actual case of a group of crewmen's wives.

Women are sensitive concerning these reflective roles. Some are

frustrated to be defined in terms of their husbands, and others take delight in the mirroring of power and status. Repeatedly one hears "When we received orders..." or "When we were promoted to Lieutenant Commander..." and just as often one observes distaste registered on the faces of many of the listener/wives. Nonetheless, every wife is accorded such reflective roles whether or not she chooses to perform them appropriately.

Vamp and Superwoman

Submariners' wives, like the POW/MIA wives Hall and Simmons describe, are made to suffer under the stereotypes of vamp and superwoman when husbands are at sea. Others apply these stereotypes to the single wives, but the women perpetuate the roles by assuming their existence.

Much like Bernard's sponge divers' wives, submariners' wives are potentially morally suspect when their husbands are gone as they sometimes infringe on masculine arenas. The term "WestPac Widow"[5] is used in the community to refer to single wives and it carries the vamp stereotype. The WestPac Widow supposedly is in a weakened, sexually vulnerable position or else is thought to be aggressively seeking other men.

The second stereotype, that of superwoman, implies that the woman undergoing sea time separation has no need for assistance from others (although many people sincerely offer to help if needed). It is important to the woman and the boat wives to maintain a guise of strength and self-sufficiency. A group of boat wives, for example will work within the unit to help a woman overcome her problems if she cannot solve them herself. The last resort is to seek help from FBM off-crews or administrative staffs. The boat wives work to maintain a reputation as capable of handling problems which arise, and the individual woman is expected to appear self-sufficient whether

or not she really is.

The results of these two stereotypes is a measured denial of weakness, of the needs which a woman faces when alone, both on the part of the community and on the part of the wife.

Of the eight informant wives, all eight were aware of these two stereotypes and worked to avoid that of vamp and attempted to perform as superwomen.

Other Roles

Other roles relate to the increasing number of women who begin or return to college, seek jobs, or pursue careers which had been held in abeyance because of the transitory nature of their life style or their deferring their careers to that of their husbands. Although it is often difficult for a military wife to obtain a job in Hawaii because of prejudice (employers assume the wife will not stay long in a job because of transfers), many women do manage to find work. Because this is regarded as an achievement, the women who do have jobs take pride in the fact. Tuition exemptions are possible for military wives and this makes it relatively inexpensive for a wife to go to college and many do.

These endeavors all have associated, different role expectations and imply further role diversification for the women, which can lead to role conflict. However, these types of roles are self-selected rather than imposed by the total institution which may imply they are open to more variation as well as there being less conflict in their performance.

Of the informant women, four had jobs, two of which were regarded by the women as careers. Two were attending college on a parttime basis, and two were in the process of deciding if they wanted to create a role for

themselves outside of the home. All desired roles which defined them separately from their children and their husband and from the Navy.

The Role of Submariner's Wife

The roles which are most affected by the cyclical presence and absence of the submariner are those of wife in presence and in absence, which are, of course, components of the social persona of "submariner's wife" just as the prior roles discussed are. One cannot be the same wife whether one's husband is home or not. The very occurrence of separation and the inevitable passage of time require shifts in expectations and performance in response to the husband's sporadic existence in the household.

The most pertinent aspects of separation which are reflected in role behavior of the wife are the deprivation of affection, the deprivation of communication, the deprivation of regular heterosexual activity, and the burdensome increase in responsibilities she must assume. There may be an unfortunate idealization of her spouse which may result in disappointment upon reunion. One woman remarked on this:

> Absence did not necessarily make the heart grow fonder--it caused us to fantasize about each other. When we were together again, we had trouble with the real people we were.

The wife usually finds herself acquiring new skills with each absence as she meets the unwelcome challenges of overcoming a leaky faucet, lawn moths, and a broken starter motor on the car. If she does not learn to deal with the unexpected problems she encounters in her husband's absence then she will require substantial support from the boat wives and will appear extremely dependent. Since excessive dependency, or "female helplessness," carries a

negative valence among women whose husbands are at sea, the wife may be ostracized if she does not acquire independence in her husband absent role playing.

It is readily perceived that there are many forces working on the wife to encourage her self-sufficiency in her husband's absence.

Dimorphism, Bimorphism, and Amorphism

Lebra has presented a threefold scheme of role behavior for Japanese women which has applicability to the submariner's wife. She terms the three different female roles dimorphism, bimorphism, and amorphism.

Dimorphism depends on the traditional definition of sex roles in a marital relationship, and, as Lebra states, "ultimately reinforces the cultural tradition of sex inequality" (288). In contrast, with bimorphism the wife and the husband seek expansion of their traditional roles into areas which had earlier been defined as either purely masculine or purely feminine, and, therefore, outside their prior realm of action. The husband and wife both attempt to become somewhat androgynous.

While bimorphism appears reassuring and an easy solution to some of the role disruption as we are currently encountering it in the United States, one finds that bimorphism is as yet sadly lacking in clearcut definition and in widespread cultural validation in our country. Frequently the woman attempts bimorphism with the man being somewhat supportive but not attempting reciprocative role expansion himself. This is "asymmetric bimorphism" (289). In effect the husband tells his wife to become liberated but not to be late in getting dinner on the table. This is frequently observed in the submarine community.

The third category of role orientation Lebra presents is that of amorphism which opposes the assumption that women must be, or ought to be,

wives and mothers. Amorphism requires that one's options be totally open, not limited by the most basic assumptions underlying traditional role behavior.

The following clusters appear with the three role forms:

Dimorphic Role	Based on traditional sex role Enforces sexual inequality Implies submissiveness to spouse
Bimorphic Role	Traditional role expanded Attempt androgyny, equality Implies neither submissiveness nor dominance to spouse
Amorphic Role	Traditional role overthrown All options totally open Domestic role may be denied

All three forms of role playing behavior as a submariner's wife are found. However, the amorphic role is neither culturally validated nor frequently observed for the community is traditional and conservative. The bimorphic role appears to gain converts because of its implied independence. The dimorphic role has been that which supposedly has been encouraged by the Navy system for it implies the wife deferring to and supporting her husband's career.

The woman may exhibit one form of role behavior in husband presence and another form in husband absence. If such a role shift does occur, it is inevitably toward a more liberated orientation in absence and not toward a more conservative stance. Thus, a woman who is bimorphic in husband presence would have the option of becoming amorphic or remaining bimorphic when he is at sea. If a role shift does not occur, then one finds the following patterns: (1) a dimorphic woman who is not equal to withstanding the separation periods and may go home to mother (if she can afford it), be excessively dependent upon the boat wives, or may even seek a husband surrogate; (2) a bimorphic woman who becomes more bimorphic in her husband's absence for she takes on additional role responsibilities; (3) an amorphic woman who is not a fully functioning

member of the community. Her interests usually lie without the community and she regards her husband's choice of career simply as a job and not membership for both of them in a viable cultural group.

The most commonly observed combinations of role behavior are the following:

	Husband Home		Husband at Sea
Wife is:	Bimorphic	and remains	Bimorphic
	Dimorphic	and becomes	Bimorphic
	Dimorphic	and remains	Dimorphic

The patterns observed among the informant wives are the following:

	Husband Home	Husband at Sea
Wife #1	Bimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #2	(Asymmetrically) Bimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #3	(Asymmetrically) Bimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #4	(Asymmetrically) Bimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #5	Dimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #6	Dimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #7	Dimorphic	Bimorphic
Wife #8	Dimorphic	Dimorphic

Half of the women were maintaining a bimorphic role orientation although three husbands were lagging behind and unwilling to give up their own masculine dimorphic orientation. Three wives were dimorphic in presence and bimorphic in absence and all three evidenced some dissatisfaction with the role playing activities they felt forced into when their husbands were home. One woman remained consistently dimorphic but changes were occurring in the

marital relationship and in her role playing behavior which implied that she was transitioning into a bimorphic orientation.

All eight women coped well with the life style of the submarine community but their relative satisfaction with their role playing as submariner's wives varied. Wife #1, who did not encounter a shift in role playing with the reintroduction of the husband into the household and who remained bimorphic throughout the separation/reunion cycle, displayed the least difficulty in role identification and performance. Wives #5,#6, and #7 made the most drastic shifts and were in the process of attempting a renegotiation of their relationships to their husbands which would allow them a bimorphic role in husband presence. This appears to be their attempt to obtain more role consistency.

The role of submariner's wife has two basic aspects: wife in presence and single wife. Making the transition from one form to the other can imply much disruption and it is logical to assume that a woman who minimizes role shifting in response to her husband's appearance and disappearance by adopting a consistent role stance will reduce the potential for psychic disarray and associated dissatisfaction with her life style.

From field observation, the tentative conclusions are that the less radical shifts in role playing are more easily handled by the wives, that there is pressure from several areas which encourages bimorphism, and that the consistently bimorphic woman manages the separation/reunion cycling best. A list of expectations handed around at various wives' social functions includes the following admonition to the husband concerning his wife upon his return: "Expect her to be different. Coping with separations has changed her into a more independent, competent person. Expect this to be permanent."

Strategies for Managing Roles

The "role" of submariner's wife is actually a cluster of roles, a social persona where the combination will vary from woman to woman. Expectations by the community continue to shift and change and the woman may have difficulty in achieving a persona which is acceptable to her cultural group. There is no culturally standardized definition of the role constellation, and, because it is not standardized, the submariner's wife is faced with role ambiguity.

In addition, the woman may face role conflict. The behavioral expectations associated with one role may conflict with those expected in another. For example, if a bimorphically oriented woman is going to college and she also has children, the behavioral expectations of the two roles of student and mother may oppose. The second grader runs a fever. Is she well enough that the woman can send her to school and then go on to her classes? If not, can the woman put the child into a child care center? The woman does not want to miss her classes but she also feels she should remain home with her daughter. For this bimorphic woman, the domestic role will almost inevitably take precedence and she will stay home, guilty because she did not attend her classes, but not guilty because she left a mildly ill child behind (cf. Lebra:289). She is caught in roles which may occasionally conflict.

A third difficulty in achieving success as a submariner's wife is role shift. Because her husband is sometimes home and sometimes gone, the woman is forced into two aspects of a role, one being played in husband presence and one in husband absence. The wife role, the female role, is particularly susceptible to role shift, and the amount is dependent upon the marital tie. For example, if the couple maintains a dimorphic relationship, then the

woman faces a substantial shift if she assumes the independence and bimorphic orientation towards which she is pressured by the group. The mother role, too, feels the effects of shifts for it is a much more complex role in the at sea episode with no father present.

And so the submariner's wife faces role ambiguity, role conflict and role shift. The questions is, how does she cope? What are her coping strategies?

Lofland (1976) provides the following definition of strategies. They are "constructed-action-to-deal-with-problematic-matters" (40). The objective is to avoid failure which occurs when "the self presented to others has, in a sense, died" (167). The individual perceives her/himself as playing a role inadequately and unsuccessfully to the point that the viewers do not understand what role is being portrayed, what "self" is being presented. The individual encounters a "problematic matter," the possibility of failure in role portrayal, and takes conscious action to avoid that failure.

Lofland (164 ff.) presents six categories of coping strategies: passive acceptance, active quest (this means to confront, disagree, insist on recognition, exert pressure, and be a general thorn in the side), withdrawal, disavowal, getting by, and making out. The only alternative with a positive valence is making out, the others are either negative or neutral, and, therefore, do not reduce the possibility or sense of failure.

The making out strategy is as follows:

1. Project a clear image as an effective doer.
2. Mobilize new combinations of skill.
3. Test new images.
4. Use senior people as resource persons.
5. Identify with people with seniority.

These five points have substantial applicability to the submariner's wife. It can be readily seen in the group that the woman who is recognized as an adequate performer as submariner's wife has a reputation as a competent manager with the skills necessary to smooth the deployment periods (1). She is most often willing to try new skills and methods both in managing separations and in other areas of her life. She tends to try others' ideas for helping ease her times alone (2). She will try to adapt and is often critically evaluating her performance to see how she can improve it (3). Even the young wives rapidly learn whom to turn to: the boat wives, those with more experience and expertise for problem resolution when the problems cannot be handled alone (4). Finally, the submariner's wife will accept her identification with the boat wives group and use the group as a support system, especially those women with more years and experience in the life style.

Concomitantly, the submariner's wife who does find means of handling her many roles as well as the separation/reunion cycle will find some way to deal efficiently with her disappointments (missed Christmases, birthdays and anniversaries are especially hard to accept when playing the role of single wife). Positive means of managing include recentering one's efforts if the current avenues are not working, remodeling role images if they are unsatisfactory either to the self or to the group, setting up intermediate, short term goals to fill separation periods but with a long-term purpose in mind. Finally, the woman needs to reassure herself of her own self worth and to have others reassure her too. One means of this assurance is to become convinced that one's group is a select group.

Interpersonal support is especially important in managing roles and defeating the conflicts and ambiguities which the woman may face. Again, since one's husband is not home during sea time to provide interpersonal

support, then the logical alternative is the acceptance of and participation in the boat wives group as the major interpersonal support system. As has been mentioned, the women view seeking assistance from off-crew members and administrative staffs with distaste and as a last resort measure.

Summary and Conclusions

Many roles constitute the social persona of "submariner's wife." Roles which have been discussed here have included mother in presence and mother in absence, father surrogate, "The Good Navy Wife," roles specifically reflective of the husband's status in the Navy and the submarine service, vamp and superwoman stereotypes, student, career woman, wife in husband presence, and the single wife. The woman selects, or has imposed upon her, a subset of these roles which constitute the framework for her performance of the social persona.

This social persona is not clearly defined for women in this community. Some members, for example, maintain all wives should attempt to be "The Good Navy Wife," while others argue that a woman should have an option not to accept the role. Such varying opinions lead to confusion on the part of the woman as to which roles should constitute her persona. Thus she must deal with areas of ambiguity in her role performance as well as with role conflict.

The submariner's wife is alone over half the time her husband is on sea duty, and this state of singlehood places somewhat different demands upon her than the reunion period. The woman alone usually has increased responsibilities for her household and family in addition to some measure of emotional and communication deprivation. In consequence she plays somewhat different roles when her husband is gone, and with the return of the husband she alters

her role stance once again. Radical role shifts appear to be disruptive but the woman who performs roles which are similar in both the separation and reunion episodes usually manifests adequacy in managing her life style.

Wife roles have been placed into Lebra's threefold classification. The woman who is bimorphic in husband presence and in husband absence appears to experience less difficulty in making the shift from single wife to cohabiting wife. The women of the community, as, for example, in the boat wives groups, tend to validate the bimorphic role by encouraging independence and self-sufficiency, both of which are discouraged by the dimorphic orientation. Amorphic women are infrequently observed and tend not to participate in the community.

Ambiguity, conflict, and shifting are met by varying coping strategies. The making out strategy, a combination of actions which result in a positive self image as well as adequacy in role performance, has been presented. The major features include a willingness to try new approaches to problem resolution, to assume a guise of effectiveness, and a utilization of more senior, experienced persons as a positive resource for support.

The submariner's wife plays many of her roles within a total institution of which she is *not* a member. But, she is still accorded some inclusion. Recently Admiral Thomas Hayward, Chief of Naval Operations, remarked to a gathering of Navy wives, "I regard you as part of the chain of command,"[6] thereby recognizing the influence and impact the wife has upon her husband and also emphasizing her inclusion, confusing as it is, within the Navy system and associated milieu. Because of this unusual status, compounded as it is by the sea to shore rotation of her husband, it is especially important for the submariner's wife to come to grips with her social persona and achieve role consistency, self-sufficiency, and that she utilize coping skills which assist her in achieving success in her role playing activities.

FOOTNOTES

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[2]Alice Ivey Snyder is Principal Investigator for the above Office of Naval Research sponsored project and was Research Sociologist at the Mental Health Clinic, Naval Regional Medical Clinic, Pearl Harbor, at the time the data were collected.

[3]SSN refers to fast attack nuclear powered submarines and SS refers to fast attack submarines which are conventionally powered, i.e., diesel fueled. FBM stands for "fleet ballistic missile" and SSBN is the designation for the ballistic missile carrying submarines.

[4]Some of the obligations and expectations of the reflective roles of Commanding Officers' and Executive Officers' wives are noted in Guidelines for the Wives of Commanding and Executive Officers (Protocol Committee of the Navy Wifeline Association, 1977).

[5]WestPac is an abbreviation of "Western Pacific." Men who are deployed, i.e., gone on a six to seven month trip, are "on a WestPac." FBM crewmen who are on patrol are also "in WestPac." Thus, all the wives of men

who are deployed or on patrol are referred to as "WestPac Widows."

[6]This meeting as held in San Diego on August 10, 1978 as part of Admiral Hayward's familiarization visit to Naval activities. Commanding Officers' wives, Ombudsmen, and wives of senior enlisted personnel were invited to attend the briefing and question and answer period.

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