

# Introduction

In the mid-1970s, life on the island of Okinawa was exciting for an American middle-schooler in an Army family. I made close friends among the other kids in the family housing area. For many of us, living in Okinawa was an adventure, although some kids lamented that their families had not been sent to more enchanting places like Germany or England instead. But we tried to make the most of our three years on the island. Within the housing area, beyond the baseball field for American families, we sometimes played in what we called “the boonies,” trekking through heavy foliage and underneath the webs of huge spiders to visit an Okinawan tomb, mysteriously empty. Other times we ventured beyond the chain link fence surrounding the base housing to walk along a stretch of highway lined with Okinawan shops, where we bought Japanese candy, Hello Kitty paraphernalia long before it came into vogue in the United States, bootlegged cassette tapes, food for my mynah bird (also acquired from an Okinawan pet shop), and souvenirs. We thought we detected subtle disapproval in the faces of some Okinawan shopkeepers toward us Americans, and speculated that this must have had something to do with Japan losing the war to the United States, and maybe the atomic bomb; or perhaps they were just concerned about children bumping into fragile wares or shoplifting. At the Department of Defense middle school for military dependents there were several kids from Japanese-American families (and many others from marriages between American servicemen and women they’d met in host countries), but most did not have relatives in Okinawa. Most of the Okinawans we encountered on- and off-base—the school bus drivers, the maids and seamstresses who came to American homes, the waitresses and shopkeepers—were quietly polite to us. The only hostility that I recall was Okinawan schoolboys on the side of the road throwing rocks at our green military school bus as it passed them. I didn’t know why and didn’t think too much about it, and figured that it must have something to do with the memory of World War II. I knew that the war had destroyed much of the island, but I knew nothing of the history and politics of U.S. bases on the island.

This book is an effort to understand why the United States sent military families to overseas bases after World War II, and the significance of their presence in the Cold War. Although World War II ended in 1945, the United States continued to maintain bases around the world. In 1946, the government arranged for family members to join military personnel (the vast majority of them men) stationed abroad. Although military families had lived in U.S. overseas territories since the early twentieth century, their numbers were few in contrast to the hundreds of thousands of spouses and children who traveled to foreign stations after the end of World War II. In 1960, over 600,000 armed forces personnel and 462,000 members of military families resided abroad.

This is a history of how military family members living overseas during the first two decades of the Cold War considered themselves representatives of “the American way of life” and participants in Cold War objectives. In the years following World War II, military families came to be considered significant players in relationships between the United States and the countries that housed its overseas bases, first in the occupations of Germany and Japan, then during the Cold War. During the 1930s, most Americans and their government leaders had wanted to avoid military involvement in international conflicts. But during World War II, a majority of Americans became convinced that stabilizing the world and preventing foreign aggression in the future necessitated a strong U.S. military presence abroad and far more prominent U.S. leadership in international affairs than before the war. Yet although the United States emerged from the war a military superpower, American policymakers knew that it would take more than the potential for force to succeed in foreign relations. Displays of American benevolence and willingness to cooperate with other nations could help to persuade allies as well as former enemies to go along with U.S. foreign policy goals. Military officials and members of military families articulated an ideal of families as “unofficial ambassadors,” who in projecting American good will would help reform occupied Germany and Japan and aid Cold War military and foreign relations goals. To those who viewed service wives and children as representatives of the United States, opposition to communist expansion required not only “masculine” displays of military might—overseas bases, uniformed personnel, and weapons—but also “feminine” demonstrations of American sensitivity toward and cooperation with the residents of countries that housed U.S. bases. While servicemen in their official capacity represented U.S. military power, service wives and children, and to a lesser extent men as husbands and fathers, could be more convincing representatives of American good will and cooperation abroad. In endeavoring to cultivate friendly relations with local peoples, however, family members

also aided U.S. military and diplomatic goals by reinforcing American dominance abroad.

This book examines the significance of women, children, and men in their family roles in U.S. Cold War military objectives and foreign relations. It is during the postwar occupations and the Cold War that the military establishment began to forthrightly acknowledge the necessity of families for supporting military personnel and, by extension, overseas bases and operations. The military also viewed families as potentially influential in strengthening ties between military communities and local residents, and even advancing foreign relations goals by helping to generate support for the U.S. military presence and Cold War objectives. Military officials and guidebooks expected families to exert friendly, cultural influence in foreign countries, alongside soldiers and weapons that embodied a resolute stance against the encroachment of communism.

Before the early 1990s, most (though certainly not all) scholarly works understood foreign relations to encompass mainly activities conducted by state officials, and regarded military history as largely about great male leaders, soldiers, battles, and weapons. These studies are valuable for my analysis, and some are cited here. Scholarship produced in the last two decades, however, has expanded diplomatic and military history (to the chagrin of some traditionalists) to give far greater consideration to cultural and social dimensions, including race, sexuality, and gender.<sup>1</sup> Many of the scholarly innovators pursue ideas articulated by historian Joan Wallach Scott in the late 1980s, who drew from a variety of disciplines, including anthropology and literary theory, to advocate “rethink[ing] the history of politics and the politics of history.” Gender roles and ideas about gender differences are not essential, universal, or timeless; rather, they are social constructions, historically and culturally specific, based on assumptions about biological sexual differences. Concepts of gender have been, and are, expressed, defined, and redefined not only in relationships between men and women but also in “war, diplomacy, and high politics,” which, Scott noted, many historians did not envision as gendered.<sup>2</sup> In her 1990 essay on gender and foreign relations, historian Emily Rosenberg furthered this enterprise of rethinking history by asking “how are histories of women’s roles and gender patterns becoming relevant to studies of United States foreign relations?” As Rosenberg pointed out, if we take the approach of looking in the historical record for women who engaged in foreign relations in official capacities—for example, as heads of state or ambassadors—we will find relatively few. A second approach, then, is “the study of women doing ‘women’s work,’ at home and abroad,” which requires us to extend our understanding of foreign relations “beyond governmental diplomacy and war.” But limiting analysis to the rare women

who made it into the elite “men’s world” of international politics, or to women who participated in foreign relations by doing what was defined as “women’s work”—for example, as missionaries’ or diplomats’ wives—risks reinforcing notions of inherent rather than socially constructed differences between men and women, the work that they do, and the spheres they inhabit. Rosenberg argues that it is necessary to complement the first two approaches to studying women in foreign relations—the “exceptional women” approach and the “women doing women’s work” approach—with an analysis of gender ideology in the historical context under scrutiny.<sup>3</sup>

In *Unofficial Ambassadors*, American family members’ interactions with local peoples within the context of postwar gender ideology helps to achieve a better understanding of how masculinity and femininity were constructed in this era, as well as of the exercise of power in relationships between Americans and residents of occupied and host nations. The prevalent conception of the post–World War II era is of a time when ideally (even though this certainly was not the case for everyone) women were first and foremost wives and mothers who dwelled primarily in the domestic sphere, leaving the world of national and international politics to men. But as Joanne Meyerowitz has shown in her study of women’s magazines from the period, the postwar feminine role also accommodated public activities, including work outside the home and political participation.<sup>4</sup> Military wives, usually in unofficial capacities, engaged in occupation efforts and Cold War international politics in interacting with local peoples and in encouraging fellow service wives to do so as well, to help advance U.S. foreign policy and military objectives.

Analysis of these gendered interactions and how they were portrayed benefits from consideration of Joseph Nye’s theory of “hard power” and “soft power.” Soldiers (most of whom were men) and the potential for military force represented a form of hard power in the United States’ efforts to prevent the spread of communism to occupied and allied nations, while military wives and children could exercise soft-power influence by attracting, rather than coercing, residents of occupied and host nations to support U.S. Cold War goals.<sup>5</sup> This study of the Cold War roles of American military personnel and military families, however, shows that the American gender ideology of this period did not limit men to masculine hard-power tasks; nor were women’s and children’s soft-power activities abroad of significance only in domestic and unofficial venues. Servicemen engaged in soft-power activities such as charitable efforts to aid inhabitants of occupied and host nations, while military wives and children ultimately supported the hard-power U.S. military presence overseas, which

often entailed the reinforcement of hierarchies between Americans and local peoples.

Besides considering how gender conditioned and influenced relations between peoples of different nations, historians also have analyzed how race relations and ideas about race shaped and were shaped by foreign relations. Authors such as Mary Dudziak illustrate how as the post-World War II civil rights movement in the United States gained increasing visibility internationally, U.S. government leaders became more concerned that Jim Crow laws and violence toward peaceful African-American activism at home caused people abroad to question Americans' claims that their nation represented democracy and justice for all as opposed to the tyranny of communist societies. Other works examine how the racial attitudes of the occupiers and the occupied in Germany and Japan shaped relations between the United States and its former enemies.<sup>6</sup> These and other studies of race and foreign relations inform this book's consideration of how racial attitudes influenced relations between Americans and occupied and host nation peoples, and could reinforce alliances between white peoples (as in West Germany) and also U.S. dominance (as in Okinawa).

Primary accounts, including military documents, offer information about American military families overseas during the Cold War, and the armed forces have produced white papers and other analyses concerning military families, but historical scholarship by Americans focusing on this subject is scarce. One of the earliest scholarly studies to examine military family life abroad in this period is sociologist Charlotte Wolf's *Garrison Community: A Study of an Overseas American Military Colony* (1969), which includes firsthand observations on the activities and attitudes of members of military families stationed in Ankara, Turkey during the late 1960s.<sup>7</sup> Nearly two decades later, Martha Gravois, an Army wife who had lived in Germany, completed a master's thesis in history and published an article analyzing the foreign policy roles of American families in Germany after World War II. Gravois found that families participated in occupation efforts and represented the United States' commitment to defend Western Europe during the Cold War.<sup>8</sup> Of the other scholarly studies that give some attention to the presence of American military families overseas during the post-World War II occupations and the Cold War, most focus on Germany, probably because this is where the largest population of Americans affiliated with the military were stationed.<sup>9</sup>

*Unofficial Ambassadors* builds upon these and other works that have broadened the scope of the history of foreign relations and the military after World War II. Petra Goedde's study of relations between U.S.

soldiers and West Germans, especially women and children, shows how Americans in occupied Germany came to see their former adversaries as a feminized, victimized people instead of despicable proponents of the Nazi regime. Interpersonal interactions, which in many cases led to marriages between American men and German women, contributed to the softening of U.S. occupation policy in the months and years immediately following the war and helped to transform the United States and West Germany from enemies to allies. Maria Höhn's analysis of postwar German-American relations focuses on the influence of the U.S. military in Rhineland-Palatinate in the 1950s, and German responses to this ranging from welcoming to hostile. Like Goedde, Höhn discusses informal social relations between Americans and Germans. She shows that while Germans generally tolerated relationships between German women and white U.S. soldiers, they objected to German women's relationships with black soldiers. German critics of the American presence in this period employed racist arguments to oppose housing the foreign military.<sup>10</sup> Whereas Goedde and Höhn focus more than I do on military personnel, and solely on Germany, American military families in several countries are at the center of *Unofficial Ambassadors*. Also, both Goedde and Höhn give extensive attention to German responses to the U.S. military presence and use many German source materials, while this book emphasizes American experiences and perspectives in various locales.

A landmark in the historiography of early Cold War American families is Elaine Tyler May's study of how the post-World War II nuclear family ideal and expectations that Americans assume "traditional" gender roles and produce numerous children represented stability and security to Americans in a world where people feared communist encroachment and nuclear warfare.<sup>11</sup> Whereas *Homeward Bound* focuses on families in the United States and how the nuclear family ideal reinforced anti-communism domestically, *Unofficial Ambassadors* scrutinizes the idea that military families in foreign locations considered strategically crucial in the Cold War represented the American commitment to anti-communism internationally, as well as the alleged superiority of the American way of life—believed to be characterized by freedom, democracy, and prosperity—to life under adversarial regimes. In other words, this book analyzes the significance, in Americans' minds, of Cold War American families in the wider world rather than only within the United States.

Primary sources used here include military reports, memoranda, official announcements, and guidebooks; statistical data from the Bureau of the Census and the Department of Defense; writings by service wives, children, servicemen, and educators; newspaper, magazine, and journal articles; images; memoirs; and fiction. Articles and other items from *U.S.*

*Lady*, a magazine chiefly for military wives published between 1955 and 1968, provide valuable insights into these women's roles abroad. The magazine is cited throughout the book; I discuss it at length in chapter 3. Other important accounts of life overseas come from a questionnaire project conducted between 1999 and 2000. In this project I gathered accounts from forty-eight former service children, educators, and servicemen (out of approximately ninety questionnaires distributed) that described their experiences in occupied and host nations between 1946 and 1965. Many of the questionnaire respondents permitted the inclusion of their names in citations, though several requested confidentiality.

Although some attention is given to high-level foreign policymakers and military leaders, *Unofficial Ambassadors* focuses on ordinary women, children, and men as significant actors in foreign relations. American power in the Cold War was derived not only from the capacity for military might and displays of toughness but also from friendly and "feminine" influence. The Cold War was a fierce ideological battle as well as a military contest. Military family members—wives, children, and servicemen as husbands and fathers—were expected to contribute to the ideological rivalry with communism by representing what Americans considered the best aspects of their way of life. Their deportment, homes, and family relations were to embody the freedom and prosperity believed to flow from American political and economic institutions. Military documents and accounts from family members reveal that many service wives and children, and some servicemen in their family roles, indeed considered themselves advocates of their nation's military and foreign relations goals.

I do not claim that all or even most military family members took on the unofficial ambassador role in the period under investigation or mixed extensively with residents of occupied and host nations. I am, however, attempting to refine the widespread notion of Americans in military families abroad living rigidly separated from local peoples, and the unquestioned assumption that most contacts that did occur were trifling and therefore undeserving of closer scrutiny. A statement from a recent book on the history of the global U.S. military presence might perpetuate these notions: "The 'Little Americas' [compounds where Americans affiliated with the military lived] made life easier for personnel and their families. On the other hand, they isolated Americans from their host communities, and as a result most members of the military community were exposed to foreign cultures only in small and superficial ways, such as tourism, eating in restaurants, and occasional shopping in local stores." The author's discussion of American military families abroad is brief yet is more extensive than what one will find in the vast majority of histories of the U.S. military. Furthermore, her observation that most Americans lived in

self-sustained communities is not untrue, and she does go on to briefly discuss some ways in which Americans and local peoples interacted in the 1950s and 1960s (mainly in events sponsored by the U.S. military).<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, I worry that most readers would come away from this portrayal with their presuppositions intact: that Americans in military families had little or nothing to do with local peoples, and therefore their overseas presence made little impact and held little import. I want to demonstrate that in order to understand the cultural, social, and political influences and significance of the U.S. military overseas (a subject that has received too little scholarly attention, considering that millions of Americans affiliated with the military resided abroad in the last century), a closer look at military family members' interactions with local residents is warranted. Yes, many military families lived in "Little Americas," but these were more permeable than many civilian Americans assume. Also, as a person who fervently values cultural history and is fascinated by the meaning of seemingly small and insignificant human statements and actions, I wish to challenge the notion that "superficial" contacts between Americans and local peoples meant little. "The gestures which we sometimes call empty are perhaps in fact the fullest things of all," wrote sociologist Erving Goffman.<sup>13</sup> What did it mean when, in the context of occupation and Cold War, an American military wife tried to say a few polite words in Japanese to a shop owner? Or when American youngsters played pranks on Germans? These may have been small acts, but they were not insignificant.

The first chapter of this book investigates why and how families joined military personnel stationed abroad starting in 1946. After World War II, the military maintained overseas bases to police, rehabilitate, and rebuild occupied countries, and protect U.S. and allied interests. But in the months after the Allied victory, American servicemen and servicewomen around the world clamored to return to the United States. Military leaders worried that servicemen's crime, fraternization with German and Japanese women, venereal disease, and general low morale would undermine military operations and occupation goals. In the meantime, women in the United States complained that servicemen's absence from families caused emotional and financial hardship, and demanded the return of their husbands. But U.S. government and military leaders believed that their nation's international responsibilities required maintaining forces abroad indefinitely. Military planners decided that sending families to foreign bases would help to solve military *and* family problems, thus responding to social demands and the beginning of the postwar cultural idealization of the nuclear family. In the fall of 1945, they began formulating plans to transport, house, and sustain spouses and children who would arrive in Ger-

many in April 1946 and Japan in June 1946. Families also joined military personnel in allied nations, usually staying overseas for two- or three-year tours of duty.

Chapter 2 analyzes the emergence of the idea that Cold War foreign relations required not only a formidable military posture toward adversaries but also friendly guidance and understanding of peoples of occupied and allied nations, which military family members were to project. Even before the arrival of families, military personnel abroad engaged in self-initiated as well as officially organized efforts to demonstrate generosity and good will to allies and former enemies, especially children, in war-devastated countries. American popular culture explored such relations in literary and visual depictions. As family members joined military personnel in Germany and Japan in 1946, the armed forces sought to make use of them in occupation aims, and later in the Cold War. The military came to conceive of family members, especially wives, as “unofficial ambassadors” in their relations with residents of occupied and host nations. Through advertisements, prescriptive literature, and statements from military officials, the armed forces encouraged wives and their families to aid military goals by extending good will to non-Americans. Informal friendly contacts, military officials believed, would strengthen relations between the United States and host and occupied nations and help win support for maintaining U.S. bases.

The third chapter explores military wives’ perceptions of themselves as unofficial ambassadors worldwide, and their efforts to define and enact this role. In a time when according to stereotypes, reinforced in popular culture, women were relegated primarily to domestic roles, American military wives abroad were engaging in foreign relations, albeit usually informally rather than officially. Many wives not only accepted but also expanded the ambassadorial responsibilities that the armed forces asked them to shoulder. The most prominent women were officers’ wives who took it upon themselves to guide military families in their relations with local residents in a multitude of settings, including homes, charitable activities, schools for children of host and occupied nations, excursions to historical and cultural sites, and international women’s clubs. Their accounts of informal relations with local inhabitants reveal that they encountered an ideological contradiction: they were asked to demonstrate appreciation of non-American cultures and customs, yet they also were to advance U.S. Cold War goals by conveying to residents of occupied and host nations the presumed superiority of the American way of life.

The subsequent two chapters focus on American accounts of relations with West Germans and Okinawans, respectively, and examine how family members, especially wives, attempted to advance military and foreign

relations aims in each context. The United States occupied Germany between 1944 and 1955, and Japan between 1945 and 1952, and continued to maintain a large military presence in each nation long after the end of occupation. Occupation goals in both countries included the establishment of democracy and the rebuilding of the economies. Both also were considered strategically crucial sites in the war against the expansion of communism.

Although West Germany (chapter 4) depended on the United States for military and economic assistance after the end of occupation, military wives and their husbands downplayed inequalities of power between the two nations and promulgated the idea of an egalitarian American–West German anti-communist, anti-Soviet alliance that served both American and West German interests. U.S. strategists wanted to maintain bases in West Germany and West Berlin, depicted as bastions of freedom and prosperity on the Cold War battlefield between the Western powers and the Soviet Union. Not wishing to appear as an imperialistic, militaristic aggressor that dominated weaker nations (which was how Americans perceived the Soviet Union), Americans helped to generate an image of American–West German reciprocity and cultural commonality, and promoted the U.S.–West German alliance in the war to defend liberty and capitalism in Western Europe. West Germans accepted U.S. bases because they wanted American military and economic aid and believed that they would gain greater autonomy through alliance with the United States rather than the Soviet Union. Though ambivalent about their status as a bulwark in the Cold War, West Germans perceived the U.S. military presence as largely conducive to their own goals. The affinities between white Americans and West Germans, however, were largely based on a shared sense of whiteness, which perpetuated racism in U.S. military communities and in German society.

While West Germany presents a scenario in which many residents of that nation viewed the U.S. military presence as advantageous, Okinawa (a prefecture of Japan and the largest and most populated of the Ryukyu Islands) offers a contrasting scenario in which a majority of the people did not regard the foreign armed forces as beneficial. Chapter 5 shows how military wives attempted to demonstrate friendliness, generosity, and understanding to Okinawans, and to mitigate the negative effects of the military presence on Okinawan communities. Yet in positioning themselves as maternal figures to Okinawans, American women ultimately reinforced cultural and racial stereotypes of Okinawans as a backward and child-like people who needed guidance and protection from the United States. They thus bolstered U.S. military control of the island despite Okinawans' strong preference for Japanese governance.

*Family Members of Armed Forces Abroad in 1960 and 1970*

	1960	1970
Europe & USSR	327,446	204,049
Asia	81,540	98,129
Africa	15,581	4,359
Canada & Mexico	12,718	2,903
Americas (except Canada and Mexico)	5,284	6,022
Other	19,935	2,537
Total	462,504	317,999

Sources: US Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *US Census of Population: 1960, Selected Area Reports, Americans Overseas*, pp. 52–57, Table 9; and US Department of Commerce, *1970 Census of Population: Subject Reports: Americans Living Abroad*, pp. 1–2, Table 1.

Chapter 6 examines the idea of military children as natural facilitators of international friendship. The armed forces, mothers, and teachers envisioned American youngsters and teenagers as “junior ambassadors” who learned languages quickly, made friends easily, and rapidly adapted to foreign cultures. American children learned about the customs and cultures of the countries in which they were stationed, and encountered residents of occupied and host nations in their homes, neighborhoods, schools, youth clubs, and other venues. Service children were caught in the same bind as their mothers: they were expected not only to demonstrate understanding and appreciation of local residents’ ways of life and promote international cooperation but also to represent the superiority of American ideals and ways. Moreover, despite depictions of warm relations between service children and local peoples, American children (like adults) did not, of course, invariably behave as ideal ambassadors.

This study focuses primarily on Army and Air Force families in Western Europe and Asia. Army and Air Force personnel and family members were more numerous than those in the Navy and Marines.<sup>14</sup> A majority of personnel and their families resided in Western Europe, mainly West Germany, or in Asia, mainly Japan. Navy and Marine families, and families stationed in areas other than Western Europe and Asia, do appear here, though to a lesser extent. Though details in advice literature and accounts of relations between military families and local residents varied depending on location, the idea of Americans as representatives of their country—who were to show friendship toward non-American peoples and respect for their cultures, while representing American superiority—was essentially the same for all of the services and in all countries.

Although families of civilians employed by the U.S. government also lived abroad, this study is most interested in military families. Military personnel and their families abroad far outnumbered U.S. civilian government personnel and their families, and it is the experience and culture of

military life overseas that I wish to focus on, though some observations on the U.S. military presence abroad from American civilian employees and their family members do appear here—for example, from teachers at U.S. Department of Defense Dependents Schools. In addition, although I examine responses of residents of occupied and host nations to the U.S. military presence and, when possible, Americans in military families, these perspectives are relatively fewer in this book. To hear the Americans tell it, they were effective in establishing friendships and making positive impressions of how Americans lived. What did local people really think of American military families? Most of the evidence of local views of American families is anecdotal. There were polls that attempted to assess local views of the U.S. military generally, or of Americans generally (in occupied or host nations or in the United States), but I have not located polls that asked for opinions on the presence of U.S. military families specifically. Individual interviews conducted by researchers reveal a variety of local experiences with and views of American military families. This study uses personal accounts collected by other scholars, and literature, to try to answer the question of what residents of occupied and host nations thought of Americans in military families.

Before continuing, a few words on terminology. Although military documents often refer to the spouses, children, and other relatives of personnel as “dependents” (and I occasionally will use this term), I prefer the terms most used by military family members themselves, for example, “service wives,” “Army wives,” or “service children.” I also employ a variety of designations for the residents of countries that housed U.S. bases. I avoid the term “foreigners,” sometimes found in the American primary sources, because of course Americans would have been the ones considered foreigners to the local peoples. Other terms used here include “residents of occupied and host nations,” “local residents,” “local inhabitants,” “host nationals,” “local nationals,” “host citizens,” “local citizens,” and “non-Americans.”

In scrutinizing American attitudes and accounts of experiences abroad, I do not claim that actual relations lived up to the ideals expressed in the official and unofficial prescriptive literature. Nor do I dispute that friendship, good will, and respect between Americans and residents of occupied and host nations existed. Many Americans and local residents enjoyed their acquaintanceships; some maintained friendships that endured for decades after Americans left for new stations. Sometimes, however, actual relations fell short of the ideals articulated in the military prescriptive literature and by Americans who took the ambassadorial role seriously. Some Americans offended local peoples with their rudeness and arrogance. Racism among Americans poisoned relations between Americans

and some residents of occupied and host countries. American racism, along with rank and class hierarchies in military communities, contradicted American claims to represent freedom and equality to all the world's peoples.

Exploring encounters between Americans and residents of occupied and host countries in their complexity is essential for understanding how they contributed to, or in some cases undermined, U.S. overseas military goals and Cold War foreign relations. After World War II, to be an American was to be a citizen of the world's most affluent and powerful nation. This fact colored any encounter, however seemingly superficial or innocuous, between Americans and residents of occupied and host nations. Yet within the context of greater U.S. military, political, and economic power, social and cultural relations took a wide variety of forms, some of which reinforced and some of which partially effaced American dominance. This is a story of how American military families engaged in the contested field of Cold War military and foreign relations.