Recognizing Military Wives
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The materials analyzed in this chapter illuminate the paradoxical combination of public recognition and state neglect of military spouses, who receive contingent visibility as a function of their proximity to suffering, along with a chronic suspicion about their reliability. To contextualize the figuring of the military spouse, the chapter begins with two key histories: that of women’s militarization during the War on Terror and that of the U.S. military’s approach to military wives. Affective investments in military spouses (read: wives) are made explicit in presidential proclamations of appreciation for military spouses and their sacrifice, the first objects of analysis here. Operational Security materials, the second, reveal the other side of official regard for military spouses, which identifies them as vital but weak links in national security. Conversely, the American Widow Project, a network organized and maintained by military widows, offers an alternative to these official discourses, recognizing widows’ sacrifices but also embracing a vision of widowhood that is independent and pleasure-seeking, and the chapter’s penultimate section analyzes their work. The chapter concludes with a consideration of military spouse PTSD, an emerging line of inquiry that simultaneously maps and submerges the subject-position of the military spouse.

“Security Moms” in Twenty-First-Century U.S.A.
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This chapter examines how the discourse of security moms in the United States works to legitimate a hardening of national borders that deflects attention from domestic violence against women. The concept of “security mom”—an American figure called forth in the 2004 presidential election by Republicans seeking election on the platform of security against “global terrorism”—reveals how the neoliberal state maintains and disavows its powers and limits through the dynamic of public and private. The chapter links the subject of security moms to ideas of security and safety within imperial and transnational contexts of neoliberalism and geopolitics. It also explores how this subject becomes visible as an assemblage of disparate and connected forms of power, new strategies, and technologies, as well as deeply sedimented American notions of home and domesticity, imperialism, and feminism. In discussing the connection between public and private within the contemporary discourse of security, the chapter highlights the existence of biopower and biopolitics in relation to geopolitics.