

12-31-2011

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Dan Krier
Iowa State University

C. Richard Stockner
Iowa State University

Paul Lasley
Iowa State University

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Recommended Citation

Krier, Dan, C. Stockner, and Paul Lasley. 2011. "The Economic and Cultural Impacts of Veterans on Rural America: The Case of Iowa." *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, 26(3): Article 4. Available At: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu/jrss/vol26/iss3/4>

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**THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL IMPACTS OF VETERANS ON
RURAL AMERICA: THE CASE OF IOWA ***

DAN KRIER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

C. RICHARD STOCKNER

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

and

PAUL LASLEY

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Rural America has long been a crucial supplier of recruits and civilian personnel to the U.S. military. Rural America is also an essential source of cultural and political support for military activity. After their tours of duty have ended, many veterans return to rural communities where they continue to carry the values of their military experiences and extend military traditions into rural culture. Far away from the Pentagon, and other corridors of military power, live millions of geographically-dispersed rural veterans whose Veterans Administration benefits (cash payments, loans, medical care) and retirement pensions flow into, and become a crucial economic support of, rural communities. Using the state of Iowa as an illustrative case, we map the geographical concentration of veterans in rural communities. We then map the economic impacts of veterans on rural communities, tracing the labyrinth of ongoing financial transactions, medical services, and other benefits so important to the vitality of rural communities. We also map indicators of the cultural importance of veterans to rural communities and the role that veteran service organizations play in the maintenance of a rural culture that honors military service. Linkages between military service and the enduring values of patriotism are continually reinforced through a variety of community celebrations, events, and traditions that serve to make rural places fertile recruiting grounds for the armed services.

REGIONS AND RURAL CULTURE IN U.S. MILITARISM

When the United States goes to war, the troops who fight are disproportionately drawn from rural areas. In 2005, while rural Americans accounted for just 19 percent of the population, they represented 44 percent of the recruits into the U.S. Military (Behrman 2007; Mitrione 2010). This affinity between rural culture and military service is well known but not well understood

*Correspondence: Dan Krier, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Iowa State University, 103 East Hall, Ames, IA 50011; krier@iastate.edu. The authors would like to thank Hilda Heady and the anonymous reviewers of this paper. We would also like to express our appreciation to Michael Creighton for his work as research associate on this project.

(Woodward 2000). A vibrant literature has developed testing urban and rural differences in access to veterans' health care and psychiatric services (Cully et al. 2010; Wallace et al. 2006; Weeks et al. 2008). In this paper, we explore the impact that veterans and military culture more broadly have upon the rural communities. Historians have often linked militarism with rural agrarianism. Under the institutional structure of European feudalism, military fighters were economically supported by grants of agricultural land (estates) and workers (serfs). Many turning points in Western history hinged upon this link, with traditional agrarian militaries battling new, urban armies that lacked a warrior code of honor and appreciation for agrarian virtues. The English Civil War, the Hundred Year's Wars, and the Napoleonic Wars pitted traditional rural militaries against non-traditional, urban armies (Elias 2000). Even twentieth-century warfare with massive international mobilizations was fundamentally shaped by the affinity between traditional military virtues and rural agrarian values (Elias 2000; Theweleit 1987).

The sectional development of the United States, with two very different systems of political economy, complicated the relationship between rural culture and militarism. Historians have often situated patterns of American militarism within historical debates about sectional differences between the industrial, modernist North and the traditional, agrarian South. Southern culture emphasized military valor and the primal honor associated with war to a greater degree than the more pacified, capitalist North.

One of the most influential and nuanced views of regional differences in militarism appears in the seminal work of Fischer (1989; 2005). Fischer's summation of a century of historical scholarship delineated four ideal-type hearth cultures that dominated colonial institutions in North America and spread westward as the United States expanded. Two Northern ways were identified by a unifying sectarian ethos that shaped institutional patterns: New England Puritanism and Midland Quakerism. These northern-state "hearth cultures" were modernist, city-centered, industrial, and communitarian. These were not warrior cultures: Quakers were often outright pacifists and Puritans required strong moral justification for military action, such as imminent defense of life, property, and moral order. Status honor in these cultures was divorced from military valor, derived instead from civic accomplishments, industrial success, and piety. As Fischer documents, these ways spread westward into the frontier so that northern tier states (including Maine, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, the Dakotas, Oregon, and Washington) manifested institutional and cultural patterns derived from Puritan and Quaker "hearth cultures" (Fischer 1989).

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Southern regional subcultures were not unified by sectarian ideology but by the cultural traditionalism that shaped their institutional patterns: the Tidewater South (the plantation culture of slave-holding, armigerous cavaliers) and the frontier Backcountry (populated by Scots-Irish and others from the war-torn British borderlands). These southern-state hearth cultures were traditionalist, rural-centered, agrarian, and anti-communitarian. Both manifested strong affinity for militarism, maintaining cultural patterns emphasizing status honor through military prowess. In both regions, social honor and prestige flow from military prowess and veteran status more than from economic or other civic affairs.

Fischer (1989; 2005) utilized several markers to track the spread and mixing of hearth cultures, including speech patterns, linguistic maps, symbolism on state crests and flags, and rhetoric in state mottos. States whose institutions were patterned upon Tidewater southern or Backcountry culture often used military titles in civilian life, exhibited military symbolism on flags, and emphasized militaristic language in state mottos. Fischer's work situated the Midwestern rural state of Iowa (with the exception of Backcountry southwestern counties) as an institutional and cultural carrier of Midland Quaker and New England Puritan ways (1989). The state flag featured an eagle but without warlike extended talons and posture. Like the dove of peace, its beak carries a ribbon bearing a state motto exemplary of communitarian values and freedom through association: "Our liberties we prize and our rights we will maintain" (Fischer 2005: 313).

Historically in the Tidewater South, the elite planter-class monopolized the right to military participation, much like feudal Europe had done. In the Backcountry, participation in military activity was distributed more widely and "primal honor," acquired through military valor and maintained by ready willingness to fight, was a prerequisite to ascendancy in civic, political, and economic affairs. Both southern regions remained armigerous centers of military activity, academies, and bases into the twenty-first century. These cultures evidenced strong support for militarism, warfare, and deployment of military resources, despite the political purposes of the war. Unlike the northern subcultures patterned upon sectarian ethics, these southern cultures did not require extensive political justification to legitimate warfare. Innate support for war was always already present.

MILITARY VALUES AND RURAL CULTURE: THE CASE OF VETERANS IN IOWA

We focus on Iowa for several reasons. First, Iowa is a highly rural state. The 2000 census categorized 38.9 percent of Iowa's population as rural, compared to 21 percent for the U.S. population. As a highly rural state, Iowa has historically provided a high proportion of its young men and women for military duty. It is estimated that the number of veterans in Iowa exceeds 270,000 and the state provides more than \$260 million in veterans' benefits annually to Iowans (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2011). These 270,000 veterans constitute 9 percent of Iowa's population, slightly greater than United States national average of 8 percent. Finally, Iowa is located near the geographic center of the nation, far removed from major active-duty military installations. For these reasons, Iowa provides an excellent case study to explore the extensive effects of the military on rural economy and society.

Historians have long recognized the central significance of military values in the southern regional subcultures in the United States: the Plantation South and the Backcountry South (Fischer 1989). While Iowa lies outside these areas geographically, and to a large degree, culturally, the state exhibits a remarkable record of military service.

Iowa's first militia was organized *before* it was granted statehood in 1846, just ahead of the outbreak of the Civil War. Iowa was admitted to the Union as a northern free state, with most of its residents sympathizing with the Union cause. At the time of the Civil War, much of Iowa was only recently colonized and it was the rural nature of the state, rather than the regional subculture (predominantly northern), that produced remarkably high military participation.

The earliest of Iowa's settlers had been drawn heavily from Backcountry cultural regions of the Ohio River Valley, but later settlers were predominately from Puritan New England and Quaker mid-Atlantic regions (Urwin and Urwin 1999). There were pockets of southern sympathy, especially in the Iowa counties bordering upon slave-state Missouri that contained larger concentrations of migrants from slave-holding southern states. By 1860, the state had a total population of 674,000, but fielded 76,000 soldiers, half of all military-aged men, making up 57 infantry and cavalry regiments and four artillery batteries. This was the highest enlistment rate among any state, North or South. Almost all were volunteers. Iowa sustained the third highest casualty rate of any state: 13,000 Iowa soldiers died in the war (Urwin and Urwin 1999).

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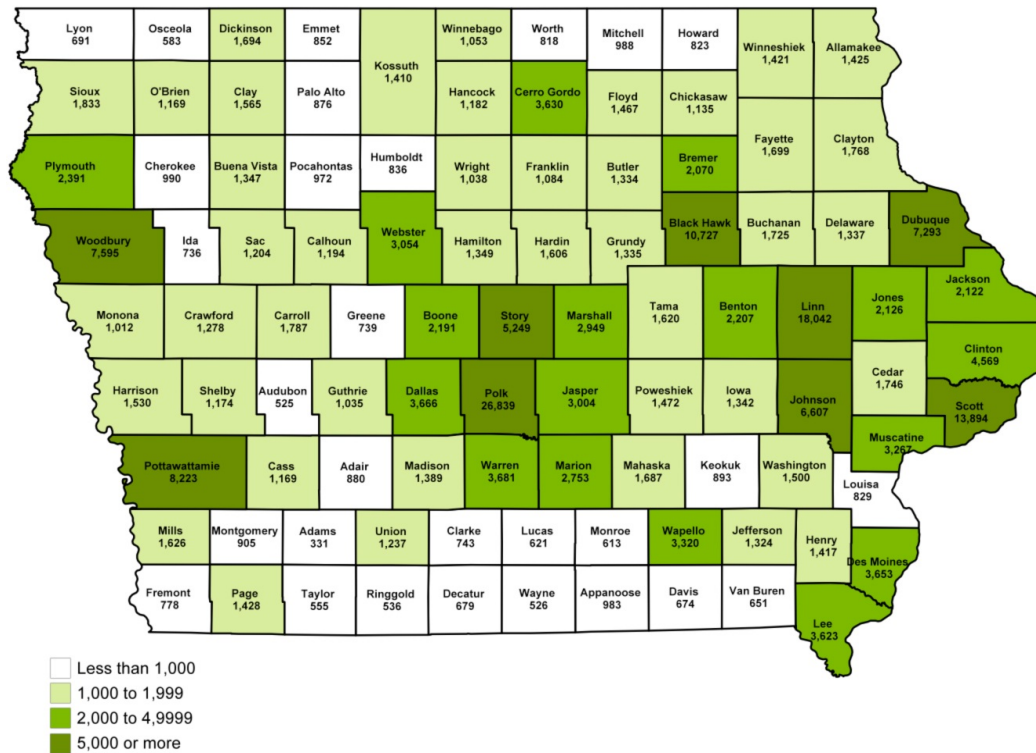
Iowa's high level of military service was not restricted to the Civil War. The territory fielded twelve companies to fight in the U.S.-Mexican War and an additional five companies were recruited from among Mormon's migrating through the state en route to Utah. This war was institutionalized in Iowa place-names: fourteen Iowa counties were named after noteworthy U.S.-Mexican War events, places, and persons (such as Buena Vista, Clay, Hardin, Mills, Scott, Taylor, and Worth).

Iowa's WWI military contribution was also significant. Camp Dodge, named for General Grenville M. Dodge, Iowa's most famous Civil War commander, was established in 1909 and located just a few miles from the state capital of Des Moines. It began as a relatively small training site for the Iowa militia, but soon became one of sixteen major, regional, military training facilities and a central induction point for volunteers and draftees from throughout the Midwest in the United States during WWI (Snook 2010). Snook (2010) noted the "key role Camp Dodge would play in helping to train a rapidly expanding national army for the Great War," and along with Fischer (2005), included the famous image of 18,000 Camp Dodge soldiers aligned in the shape of the Statue of Liberty to emphasize Camp Dodge's critical role as one of sixteen regional training camps. The expansion of Camp Dodge, because of its selection as one of sixteen regional training camps increased its land holdings from 78 to 570 acres by 1917. Lease options for approximately 6,000 additional acres for training were put in place as the U.S. Army Selection Board ensured that young recruits from Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and North and South Dakota were provided initial training (i.e., commonly referred to as the U.S. Army's "basic training").

Iowans also fought in the Spanish-American War, the Philippine-American War, World War I, World War II; the Korean War; the Vietnam War; the Persian Gulf War (Desert Shield/Desert Storm), NATO peace-keeping duties in Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Kuwait as part of Task Force Alpha in 2000-1. In addition, 12,000 Iowa Army and Air National Guard soldiers and airmen have been mobilized for duty in the Global War on Terror (GWOT). Iowa's record of consistent military service runs counter to the expectations of regional historians. Had the high level of participation been associated with a Southern State, historians would attribute it to the powerful militarized regional folkways. As a Northern state with high military participation rates and a large proportion of veterans, Iowa highlights a deep cultural affinity between rurality and military service that transcends U.S. sectionalism. In this article, we argue that Iowa's militarism derives from rural – rather than sectional or regional – culture.

THE PERVASIVENESS OF VETERANS IN RURAL IOWA

Just more than 9 percent of Iowa’s 3 million residents are veterans. Map 1 graphically depicts U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) data on the number of veterans by county in the state of Iowa (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics 2010a). As of 2008, the number of veterans in Iowa counties ranged from a high of 26,839 in Polk County (Des Moines) to a low of 525 in Audubon County. In general, many veterans reside in the urban counties (Polk, Story, Woodbury, Johnson, Linn, Black Hawk, Dubuque, and Pottawattamie), but this presents a misleading portrait of the rural concentration of veterans.

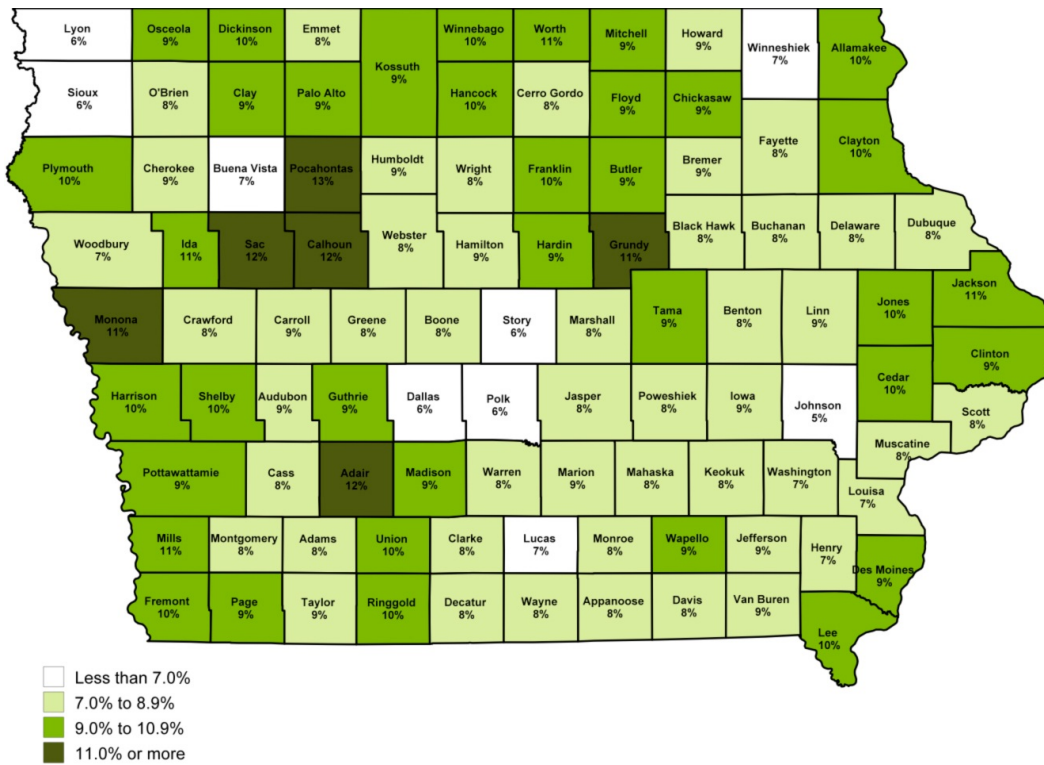


MAP 1. NUMBER OF VETERANS BY COUNTY IN IOWA, 2010

Map 2 displays data from the VA and the U.S. Census to tell a different story, depicting the percentage of veterans by county in Iowa as of 2008, ranging from a low of 5.2 percent in Johnson County (Iowa City) to a high of 12.9 percent in Pocahontas County (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics 2010a; U.S. Bureau of the Census 2010). In general, the urban counties have the lowest veteran population density while rural counties have the highest percentage of veterans. Polk County, which includes much of the Des Moines metro area, had the

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largest number of veterans of any county in the state but one of the lowest percentages of veterans (6.3 percent). Adair County, in the rural southwestern corner of the state, had one of the lowest veteran counts (880), but one of the highest percentages of veterans (11.7 percent). Together, these two maps illustrate the pervasiveness of veterans in rural states like Iowa. While veterans reside everywhere in the state, they are concentrated more heavily in rural counties.



MAP 2. PERCENTAGE OF COUNTY POPULATION REPRESENTED BY VETERANS IN IOWA, 2008 & 2010

The map reveals other important patterns related to the relationship of regional hearth cultures and militarism. Fischer’s folkway analysis reads Iowa as dominated by “Quaker Midlands” culture, with two exceptions: Backcountry ways in the southwestern corner of the state that borders upon Missouri and Kansas, and Puritan ways in several counties in the extreme Northwest with Dutch heritage and high concentrations of Reformed Church members. There is an affinity for militarism in regions pervaded by Backcountry culture and Map 2 reveals a high concentration of veterans in these counties. There is a dis-affinity for militarism in

Puritan culture, and Map 2 reveals a low concentration of veterans in Sioux County, a predominantly strong Dutch Reformed community.

These maps illustrate individual veterans, not households with veteran residents. If household, rather than individual, data were available and mapped, rural counties with veterans as more than 10 percent of their population would plausibly have more than 20 percent of households with a veteran resident. If one in five households contains a veteran, the significance of veterans' benefits, income support, and services for the viability of small, rural communities becomes apparent.

MEASURES OF VETERANS' ECONOMIC IMPACT ON RURAL COUNTIES

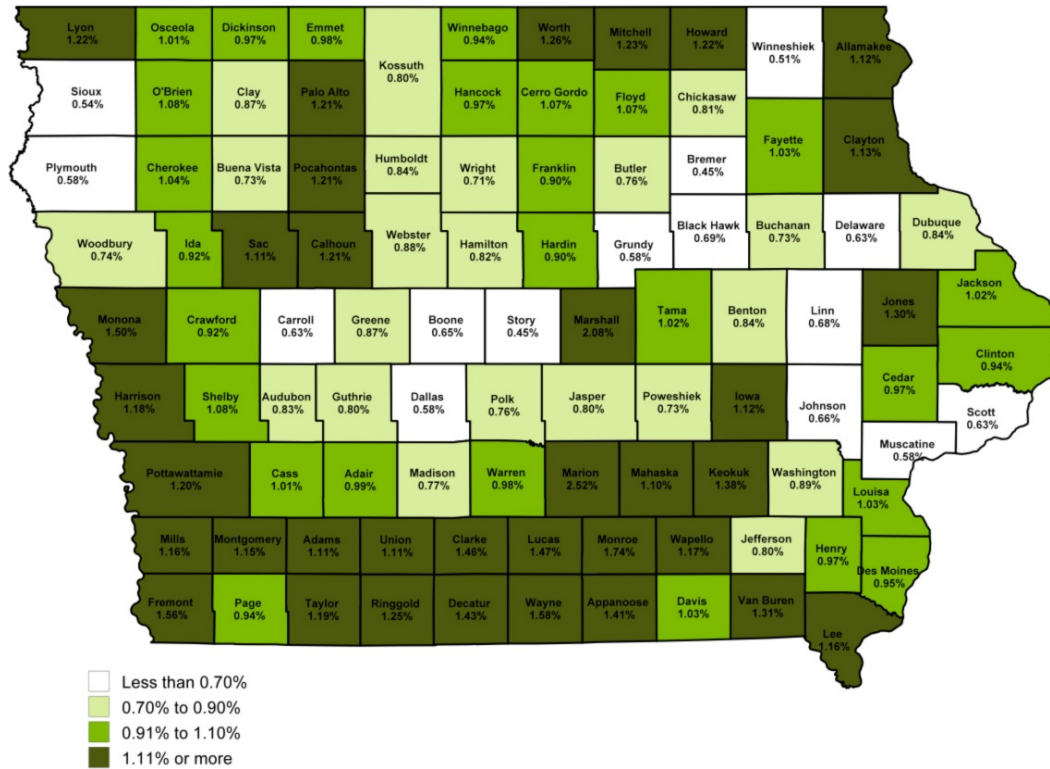
Since veterans constitute such a significant percentage of rural county populations, they have a substantial economic impact on these counties (Hooker and Kinetter 2007). We have not been able to fully trace these economic impacts. However, we have mapped two indicators that allow us to estimate what this impact might be and the differential significance that veterans have upon rural counties.

In 2009, the Veterans Administration expended \$839 million in Iowa, or about \$300 per capita (National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics 2010b). The largest categories of expenditures were for medical care (\$431 million to treat 68,000 patients), compensation and pensions (\$346 million), education, vocational rehabilitation and employment services (\$33 million), and insurance and indemnities (\$19 million). In 2009, nearly 30,000 Iowa veterans received disability compensation or pension payments totaling \$346 million. Veterans receiving GI Bill education benefits numbered 9,013 and 1,879 VA home loans were issued. These expenditures were disproportionately distributed among rural counties in the state.

Map 3 depicts Veterans Affairs expenditures in 2009 as a percentage of aggregate county income using data from the VA and from Iowa State University's Regional Economics and Community Program (RECAP) (National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics 2010b; Regional Economics and Community Analysis Program 2010). The amounts of these expenditures ranged from a low of \$1.2 million in rural Adams County to \$128 million in urban Polk County. The percentage of total county personal income represented by VA expenditures ranged from a low of .45 percent in urban Story County to a high of 2.52 percent in rural Marion County. Except for Pottawattamie County (adjacent to Offutt Air Force Base), Veterans Affairs expenditures in the other urban counties in Iowa (Polk, Story, Linn, Johnson, Scott, Woodbury, and Blackhawk) account for less than .9 percent of county income. Veteran's Affairs spending accounted for more than 1.11

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percent of total income in thirty-three rural counties, including almost the entire southern tier of counties bordering on Missouri. In general, the less urban a county, the greater the economic impact of Veterans Administration expenditures.



MAP 3. VETERAN AFFAIRS EXPENDITURES AS A PERCENTAGE OF AGGREGATE COUNTY INCOME IN IOWA, 2008 & 2010

The largest component of VA expenditures was for medical services that have become increasingly complex as the military has diversified and as soldiers whose injuries would have been fatal in the past survive but require long-term care. The \$431 million in expenditures listed above supports the VA Central Iowa Health Care System, which includes a Des Moines Regional Office; vocational rehabilitation & employment offices in Sioux City, Davenport, Cedar Rapids, and Des Moines; and clinics in Bettendorf, Dubuque, Fort Dodge, Mason City, Sioux City, Waterloo, Knoxville, and Marshalltown. This extensive health system includes nearly 200 medical professionals: neurologists, pathologists, ophthalmologists, radiologists, family practitioners, anesthesiologists, otolaryngologists, surgeons, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, physical therapists, mental health and substance abuse counselors, lab technicians, and many other

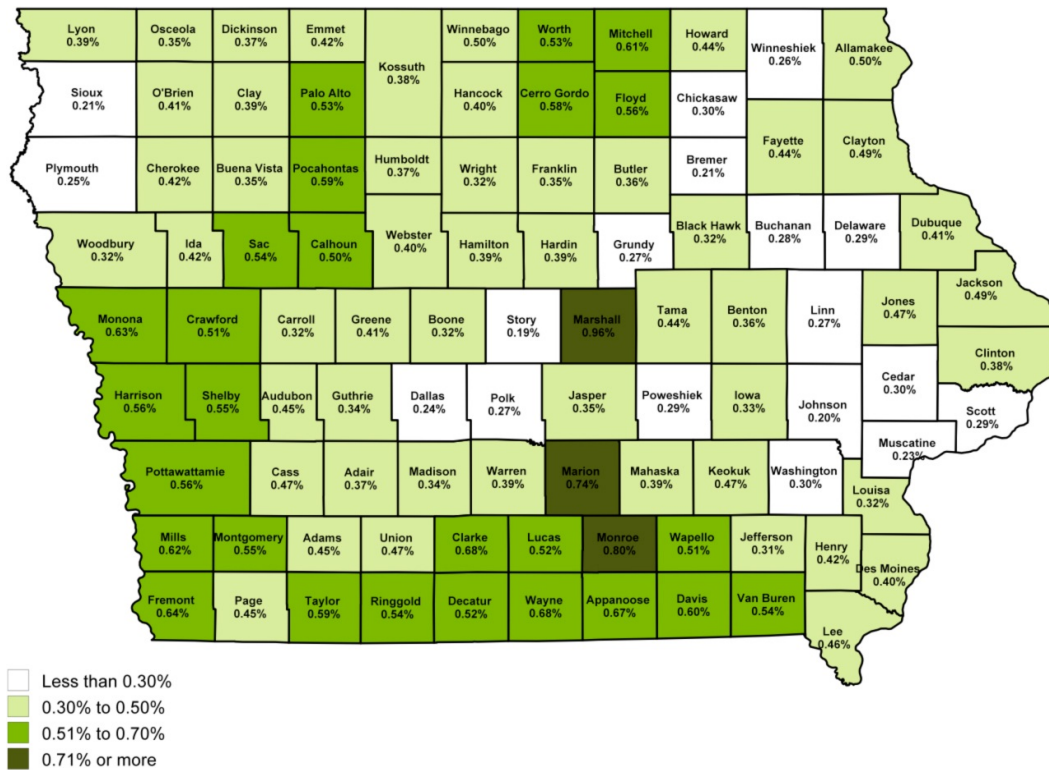
professionals in a variety of pertinent disciplines and specialties. Also included are more specialized programs such as the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom Program that offers care management and patient advocacy for orthopedic care, hearing examinations, dermatological care, Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), immunizations, surgery, physical therapy and rehabilitation, physical examinations, post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) treatment, and spinal cord injury treatment (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2010b). The Women Veterans Health Care program is broken down into gynecologic services, maternity care, and newborn care. A Women Veterans Program Manager is employed at all local VA facilities. The VA gives these veterans a VA Health Benefits Call Center, a VA Veterans Benefits Administration toll free number, and a Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group web site (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2010c; Veterans Benefits Administration 2008).

In addition, Veteran Centers in Cedar Rapids, Des Moines, and Sioux City provide individual, marital, family, and group counseling; referrals; liaison services with community services; substance abuse information and referral; community education; job counseling and referral; and bereavement counseling through experts educated and experienced in the psychological impact of trauma (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs 2010a). The VA maintains two cemeteries in Iowa, one in Van Meter and the other in Keokuk. In 2008, the Iowa Veterans Home in Marshalltown, Iowa, had 1,000 employees serving more than 720 residents. According to the 2010 Iowa Veterans Home Master Plan, this facility is currently undergoing a \$110 million renovation to create a “more home-like atmosphere” for patients (Iowa Veterans Home 2010).

Veterans Administration expenditures include the maintenance of State of Iowa Veterans Service Offices in ninety-five of the state’s ninety-nine counties. Many of these offices are located in county courthouses, state offices (e.g., Department of Human Services), city government buildings (e.g., city halls, law enforcement centers, etc.), and veterans’ service organization buildings such as the VFW, American Legion, or Veteran Commission buildings.

Map 4 depicts Veterans Affairs cash benefits as a percentage of aggregate county income in Iowa in 2009 using data from the VA and RECAP. Again, this map shows that a disproportionate share of the \$346 million in cash benefits went to rural counties. The amount of these county payments ranged from \$.5 million in rural Adams County to \$45 million in urban Polk County, while the percentage of aggregate county income represented by veterans’ cash benefits ranged from a low of .19 percent in urban Story County to nearly 1 percent of county income in

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MAP 4. VETERAN AFFAIRS CASH BENEFITS AS A PERCENTAGE OF AGGREGATE COUNTY INCOME, 2008 AND 2010

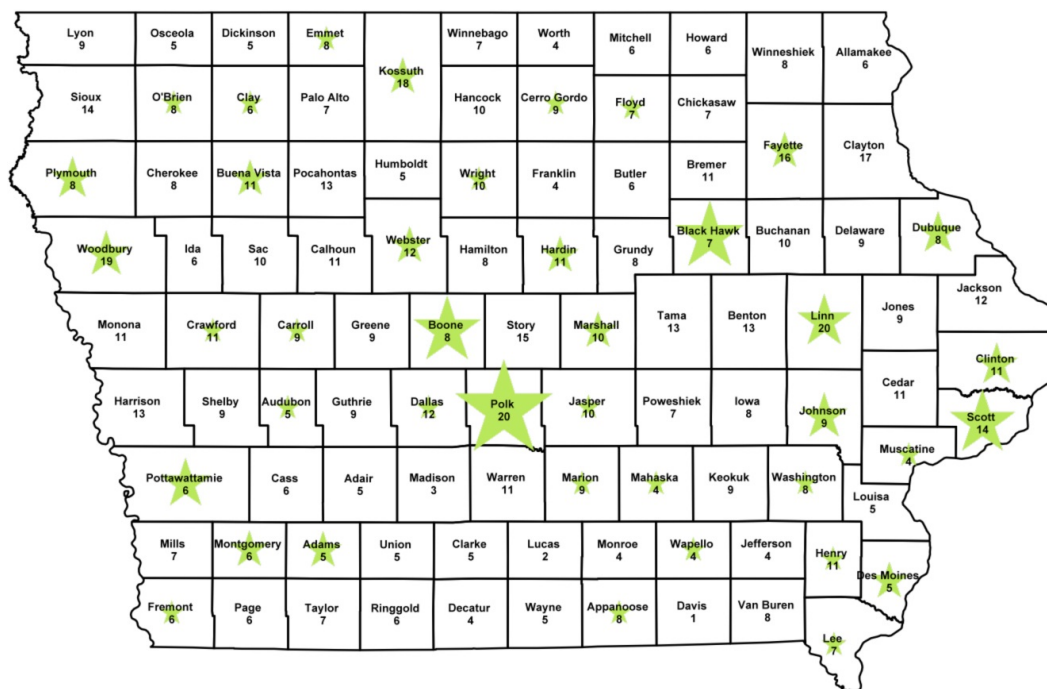
Marshall County. Consistent with Fischer (1989; 2005), the rural southern counties that border upon the Backcountry cultural territories in Missouri are those most dependent upon cash payments to veterans. In contrast, the urban counties and those in the northwest Dutch Reformed counties exhibit little reliance upon these cash payments in the local economy.

Veterans Affairs expenditures and cash benefits are only part of the total income of rural veterans. Most also receive income from employment, farming, social security, non-military pensions, and retirement plans. Including these forms of income, veterans' contributions to total county personal income would probably approximate their proportional representation.

Veterans' benefits are only one element of the economic impact of the military on rural America. Income received from spouses of active duty troops, salaries and benefits earned by civilian military employees, and income from National Guard and U.S. Air and Army Reserve service all contribute to the economies of rural communities. Financial support from military activity is perhaps most crucial for

people at the lower end of the income scale who could not otherwise find rural employment. Low-income Iowans without other employment options have been known to join the National Guard to obtain the secondary gain of a winter coat and warm boots.

Map 5 portrays Iowa National Guard data on unit locations (Iowa National Guard 2010). Because of data limitations, this map depicts guard units but not reserve units. National Guard military installations, commonly called armories, are heavily concentrated near urban areas such as Des Moines, Waterloo, Davenport, and Cedar Rapids. Army battalions, frequently made up of about four Companies of perhaps 50 to 150 soldiers, are headquartered near these urban centers. Additionally, Des Moines, (Polk County), is the location of the Iowa National Guard State Area Command (STARC), which includes the Air and Army National Guard Headquarters.



MAP 5. IOWA AIR AND ARMY NATIONAL GUARD UNIT LOCATIONS BY COUNTY IN IOWA, 2010 (U.S. ARMY RESERVE UNITS NOT INCLUDED).

Camp Dodge (also in Polk County), Iowa’s only military training installation, houses Air and Army National Guard administrative staff, a Department of Public Safety Communications Center, the Iowa Communications Network Control Center, a Troop Medical Clinic, a Veterans Affairs office, a Post Exchange,

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statewide Records and Human Resource Centers, the Air and Army National Guard museum, billeting structures (i.e., housing for soldiers and others), recreation facilities, weapon firing ranges, vehicle maintenance facilities, buildings and grounds for military ceremonies, cafeterias, many indoor military training facilities, numerous (today, perhaps as many as 3,900) acres for outdoor training endeavors, a state-of-the-art wellness center, Post Fire Department and Security (law enforcement) buildings, the State of Iowa Emergency Command Center, the National Maintenance Training Center or NMTC (the only facility of its kind for direct and general support of army companies within the U.S. Army), among many other physical and social (e.g., education-related resources, programs, and equipment) structures. More than 500 full-time employees work at Camp Dodge. Annually, well more than 100,000 people participate in training at Camp Dodge (Global Security 2010).

Beyond Camp Dodge are 50 armories scattered across the state, including 34 lease agreements in place for weekend tactical (i.e., field) training. Some of these weekend field sites are quite large, including 737 acres near rural Bloomfield (Davis county), 1,200 acres at Coralville Lake (Polk county), Timber Lake's 2,100 acres near Mapleton (Monona county), more than 5,460 state-owned acres near Oelwein (Fayette county), along with many others ranging from 1 to 600 acres around the state (Global Security 2010).

With nearly 7,600 members, the Air and Army National Guard finds itself prominently represented within Woodbury, Pottawattamie, Polk, Black Hawk, Scott, Johnson, and Linn counties, the most populous counties in the state. The state's largest six cities, Des Moines (population of 203,433), Cedar Rapids (126,326), Davenport (99,685 and 379,066 in the Quad Cities metropolitan area), Waterloo-Cedar Falls (104,551), Sioux City (82,807), Iowa City (67,830), and Council Bluffs (58,268), essentially a suburb of Omaha, Nebraska (837,925 within the metropolitan area), are found within these aforementioned counties.

However, in 34 rural counties, we find the rest of the "Guard." These National Guard units (and armories) are tasked with peacetime duties (e.g., emergency responses to floods, tornados, and other local disasters), as well as responding to the national call to duty in times of international conflicts and war. Upon finishing their enlistment in the Guard, many soldiers continue to live in the same geographic area as the Guard unit in which they "drilled" (i.e., normally a one weekend a month obligation and 15 days of annual training), becoming veterans entitled to a variety of VA benefits and opportunities to join veterans' organizations and community events recognizing their service to the community and the country. Staying closely

connected and remaining in the community where they trained increases the number of veterans in rural Iowa, but also builds and strengthens the sense of community among these “community Guardsmen and heroes.”

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VETERANS AND MILITARY CULTURE FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

Map 6 depicts the ubiquity of veteran memorials in the state. These tributes are found in every county throughout the state, despite county population. Data are mapped from several diverse sources (Iowa Courthouses Website 2010; Iowa Leadership Team – IAGenWeb 2010; Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War 2010; Waterloo Public Library 2010). We recognize that this is not an entirely comprehensive listing of Iowa memorials, but even this incomplete map demonstrates the prevalence of veteran memorials and the high, almost sacred, esteem accorded to veterans and their sacrifices in various military conflicts. As noted in Map 6, 360 Civil War monuments span all but three counties.



MAP 6. LOCATION OF VETERAN MEMORIALS BY COUNTY IN IOWA, 2010.

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In Iowa, as throughout the rural United States, veteran memorials are a prominent feature of the rural landscape. Our map depicts more than 360 memorials spread throughout 96 of Iowa's 99 counties. These memorials provide visual cues to the centrality of veterans to rural community identity. For most of the twentieth century, the Veterans Auditorium was the largest convention center in Iowa's largest city and capital, Des Moines. Iowa State University is the only university campus in the nation with a Memorial Union that has an entrance through a Memorial Hall that commemorates military service and sacrifice. Nearly all medium to large-sized Iowa towns have at least one veteran memorial. Cannons, artillery guns, and decommissioned military vehicles such as tanks and armored personnel carriers are common installations in Iowa's parks and public areas. Some of these memorials are aging relics commemorating past wars while others are more recent memorials honoring contemporary military personnel. Like many rural states, Iowa experienced a boom in newly constructed, Post-9/11 veterans' and military memorials, sometimes in exceptionally small towns. Many of these memorials seem inspired by the National Vietnam War Memorial in Washington, D.C., featuring polished stone and lists of names of fallen soldiers. Others seem inspired by the recent installation of the National World War II memorial in Washington, D.C.

Military funerals are a prominent activity in rural towns. Many National Guard units have funeral details in which perhaps a dozen or so guardsmen volunteer to provide the 21-gun salute, the presentation of cortège, and other ceremonial duties before and after the funeral. The guardsmen are normally invited to a light meal after the funeral since many guardsmen are local community members who know the deceased or their close family members. These military duties entail many hours of training and practice given the ceremonial accuracy required. Full-time support personnel attached to the local guard unit provide back-scene assistance for the "part-timers" (guardsmen who train once-a-month and an additional two weeks a year) to ensure the duties are performed up to standard and with precision to offer the family a sense that their loved one's military service to his/her country is appreciated by the community members and will always be remembered.

Local unit personnel are also prominent participants in annual Memorial Day remembrance ceremonies such as those conducted at the Iowa Veterans Home (IVH) in Marshalltown. A local veteran is frequently invited to be a featured speaker at Memorial Day and Veterans Day ceremonies. Cherry (1969) viewed such rural Memorial Day observances as crucial "American sacred ceremonies" that bridge divisions of religion, race, gender, and social class, unifying communities in ways that few other events could do. Similarly, W. Lloyd Warner (1953:24) argued

that Memorial Day services in mid-century created a cult uniting communities. The IVH grounds include a cemetery for veterans and some relatives, and Memorial Day ceremonies include the appearance of local veterans' service organization (Veterans of Foreign Wars) representatives as well. At these celebrations there appears to be a strong sense of family and community reinforced by these ritualistic activities, as community leaders, local present-day soldiers (i.e., guardsmen and reservists), individual veterans, and veterans' organizations come together to honor the deceased and reinforce the associations among one another.

Map 7 depicts data assembled by the authors from dozens of sources to display the prominence of veterans' service organizations throughout Iowa's rural counties (American Legion Auxiliary 2011; American Veterans: Iowa 2010; Veterans of Foreign Wars 2010). Various service organizations' headquarters are located in Des Moines and have regional officers scattered across the state. These headquarters include AMVETS, the American Legion, Disabled American Veterans, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and Vietnam Veterans of America. The American Legion consists of three segments: the American Legion, the Sons of the American Legion, and the American Legion Auxiliary. The Iowa American Legion has the following officers: Department Commander, Department Adjutant, National Executive Committeeman, Department Service Officer, Department Chaplain, nine District Commanders, and one Detachment Commander. The American Legion Auxiliary has a President, Secretary-Treasurer, Community Service Chair, Leadership Chair, Chair for Rehabilitation, Chair for Children & Youth; Education Chair; Junior Activities Chair, Auxiliary Chaplain, Department Junior President, a Department Membership Team, and Legislative Report Chair. These officers often reside in smaller cities and towns across the state, including Swisher (population 813), Le Mars (population 9,237), Granger (population 583), Shellsburg (population 938), Manchester (population 5,257), Woodward (population 1,200), Oelwein (population 6,692), Galva (population 368), Lake Park (population 1,023), Clermont (population 716), Osage (population 3,451), Keystone (population 687), and Shenandoah (population 5,546) (American Legion Auxiliary: Department of Iowa 2011). American Legion State Auxiliary officer candidates in 2010-2011 were from Arcadia (population 443), Keokuk (population 11,427), Merville (population 1,583), Calmar (population 1,058), Shellsburg (population 938), and Hinton (population 808) as the Auxiliary's structure logically ensures all corners of the state and in between are well represented (American Legion Auxiliary 2011).

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MAP 7. AGGREGATE VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION POSTS (AMVETS, AMERICAN LEGION, AND VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS) BY COUNTY IN IOWA, 2011.

Not to be outdone by the American Legion, AMVETS, with 77 posts throughout the state, has a variety of departments with personnel dispersed across the state of Iowa, and most of these are located in small towns as well. The AMVETS Commander resides in Vinton, Iowa (population 5,100). Within the Iowa AMVETS system, The Vice Commander for Membership resides in Ames (population 50,731); the Vice Commander for Programs in Wellman (population 1,393); the Adjutant in Vinton; the Provost Marshall in Maquoketa (population 6,112); the Executive Director in Coggon (population 745); the Alternate NEC and Sons Advisor in Donnellson (population 963); the Liaison Officer and Legislative Director in Truro (population 427); the Convention Corp President in New London (population 1,937); the Chaplain in Epworth (population 1500); and the Quartermaster in Evansdale (population 4,526) (American Veterans: Iowa 2010). Within the context of this small town phenomenon, six of the twenty-five AMVETS offices (i.e., five officers, with one officer serving in the capacity of two separate offices as of fall 2010) are held by those residing in the cities of Vinton (population 5,102) in Benton County (population 25,308), Truro (population 427) in Madison County (population 14,019), and Donnellson (population 962) in Lee

County (population 38,052). Using the city of Vinton and Benton County as a model, this leadership corresponds directly with the admirable number of American Legion posts (12) in the county, as well as the aggregate American Legion membership roll in the county (almost 1,400 members). All this takes place in a county of just over 25,000 residents, of which about 28 percent are under the age of 18. In contrast, Marshall County, about 35 miles west of Benton County, with a population of 39,300, has a county American Legion contingent of seven posts, or just over half Benton County's compliment and a total county membership of 993, or about 71 percent of Benton County's total, and an AMVETS county membership total for 2010 of 20, or just 46 percent of the total of 48 AMVETS members in Benton County. Accordingly, Benton County is a stronghold for veterans' service organizations. The AMVETS building is relatively new in Vinton, the county seat, having been built just eight years ago. There are few other traditionally male-oriented fraternal organizations (with women's auxiliary or other outgrowth entities) in the county (e.g., Masonic organizations may have entities referred to as White Shrine, Eastern Star, Job's Daughters, etc.). For instance, and this may seem strange at first glance to a rural Midwesterner, there is not a Masonic, Eagles, Elks, or Moose organizational structure or building in the county.

The high concentration of veterans in these two counties is linked to the proximity of the Iowa Veterans Home (IVH). Ritual celebration of military service, volunteerism at the IVH, and community honor accorded to veterans is linked to the high percentage of residents employed at the IVH or in the local Marshalltown National Guard units.

The centrality of veterans to the economy and culture of these counties is underlined by the presence of the Forty & Eight, a national veterans organization. Founded in 1920 by American veterans returning from France as an arm of the American Legion, it separated and became independent in 1960. Its name is derived from the French train boxcars with the stenciled directive capacity of either 40 men or eight horses as Americans were transported to the battlefield (Forty and Eight 2010).

Its mission statement reveals a commitment to charitable and patriotic ideals, as well as to promote the well-being of veterans and their widows and orphans, child welfare, and the training of nurses. The Forty & Eight website describes its origins in the following manner:

The titles and symbols of the Forty & Eight reflect its First World War origins. Americans were transported to the battlefield on French trains

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within boxcars stenciled with a “40/8”, denoting its capacity to hold either forty men or eight horses. This uncomfortable mode of transportation was familiar to all who fought in the trenches; a common small misery among American soldiers who thereafter found “40/8” a lighthearted symbol of the deeper service, sacrifice and unspoken horrors of war that bind all who have borne the battle.

Marshalltown’s chapter of this organization boasts more than 100 of the approximately 600 Iowa members and one of three state officers. This group’s service orientation has had a significant impact on the community’s higher education system since at least 1954, providing more than \$108,000 in academic scholarships to nursing students at two local community college sites in Marshalltown and Iowa Falls. In 2010, after conducting a variety of fundraising events, the Marshalltown Forty & Eight provided eight \$500 scholarships to eight nursing students, as part of its continuing efforts.

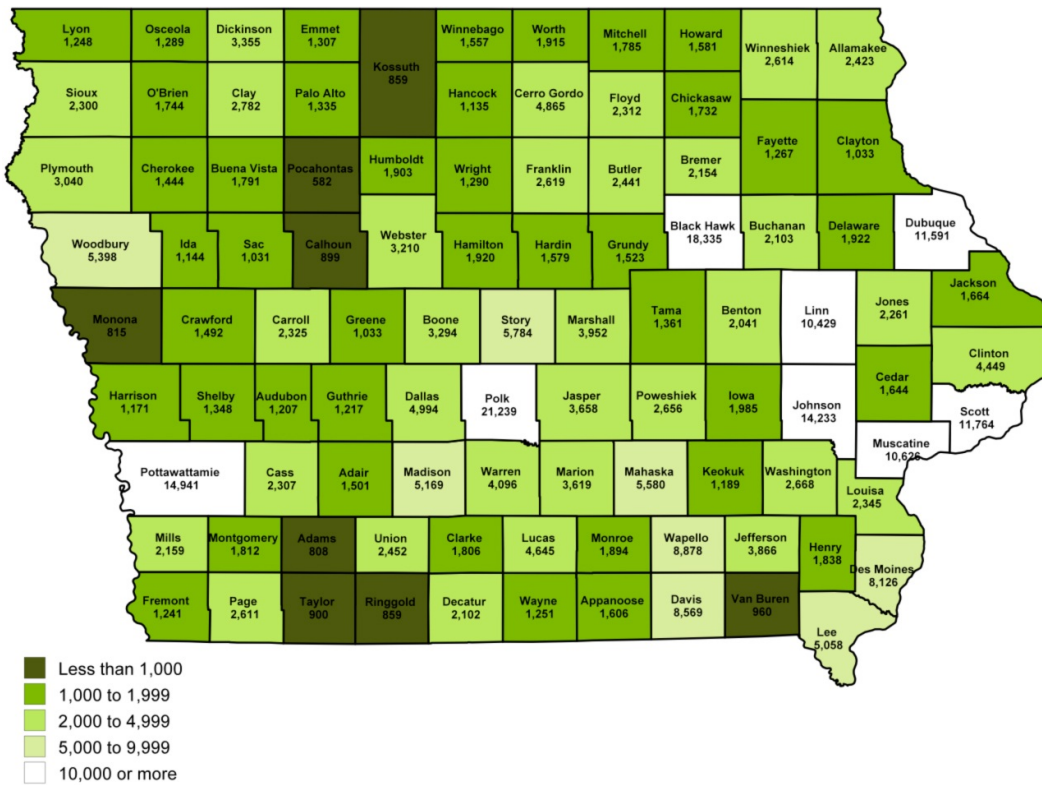
This organization may or may not siphon off another veterans’ organizations’ membership or perhaps decrease participation in other organizations, either directly or indirectly, as it meets its goals and mission in the community.

Map 8 uses RECAP data to portray membership in veterans’ organizations as a percentage of county population. Sixteen counties have 6 percent or more of their population as veterans with membership in a veterans’ organization. All sixteen of these are *rural* counties. Thirty-two counties have between 4 and 6 percent of their population as members of veterans’ organizations. All thirty-two of these are *rural* counties. Twenty counties have between 3 and 4 percent of their population as members of veterans’ organizations. Nineteen of these twenty are *rural* counties. The last category of counties, with less than 3 percent of the population as members in veterans’ organizations, all touch urban centers. They encircle its largest city and state capital, Des Moines, as well as the Iowa City-Cedar Rapids corridor, the Quad Cities metropolitan area, Council Bluffs/Omaha and Sioux City area. Clearly, veteran service organizations play a much more pivotal role in rural than urban counties in Iowa.

Map 9 is a measure of the centrality of veteran service organizations in rural communities, depicting the number of county residents per veteran service association post. Urban counties have only one post to serve thousands of residents (Polk 21,239; Black Hawk 18,335; Pottawattamie 14,941; Johnson 14,233, Scott 11,764, Linn 10,429), while some rural counties have one post that serves fewer than a thousand residents (Pocahontas 582; Adams 808; Monona 815; Kossuth 859;

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post is the only venue for community gatherings, church picnics, wedding ceremonies and receptions, anniversary celebrations, family reunions, and the like.



MAP 9. COUNTY POPULATION PER VETERAN SERVICE POST IN IOWA, 2010 (INCLUDES AMVETS, AMERICAN LEGION AND VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS).

Putnam’s famous analysis of the decline in civic engagement in America, *Bowling Alone*, opens with an account of a Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) post in suburban Chicago. This once-thriving post had lost most of its members and was having difficulty paying taxes on its building, despite younger veterans living in close proximity who chose not to join (2000). Had Putnam visited posts in rural Iowa, he might have encountered a different dynamic, as these rural posts remain vital to the cultural and civic lives of their communities. Skocpol (1999:474) found that veteran service organizations, especially the VFW, had “bucked the trend” of associational decline during the late twentieth century, while nonmilitary service organizations like the Kiwanis, Lions, and Elks have often seen their membership and community influence plummet.

In this section, we drew attention to the dominant position of veteran service organizations in rural life. These service organizations serve as the structural framework for rural and small town politics, culture, and society. These organizations not only place veterans in important leadership positions in rural communities, but they also keep military service visible to rural young people. The respect that rural communities accord to those who have served plays a significant, though often unrecognized, role in rural military recruitment.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, we mapped the prevalence of veterans in Iowa, a rural state located outside the southern region's militaristic hearth cultures. We demonstrated the disproportionate concentration of veterans in rural counties, the economic impact of veteran expenditures on rural communities, the centrality of veteran service associations on rural civic life, and the prominence of military culture in the sacred ceremonies that bind rural communities together. We highlighted the role that rural veterans memorials play as a means to reinforce cultural patriotism and military ideals. We described how Memorial Day ceremonies, Veterans Day solemnities, and military funerals transcend religious and occupational divisions to strengthen rural communities.

While we were writing this article, 3,000 Iowa National Guard soldiers were deployed in the GWOT, the largest Iowa National Guard deployment since World War II. Rural deployments bond rural communities together into a patriotic, moral community. State Adjutant General, Brigadier General Timothy Orr averred, "When we deploy a battalion [i.e., perhaps 500 or so soldiers], we touch anywhere from 270 to 290 communities. This brigade will deploy, and they will cover almost every community in the state of Iowa. The will behind this fight . . . includes the men and women back home, the families, the employers and the communities" (Himango 2010).

Iowa sustains a strong moral obligation to serve in times of war, displays deep respect for and care of its veterans, and has historically evidenced a readiness for military engagement. Rural communities in Iowa continue to maintain high rates of active-duty and part-time military recruitment. Crucially, we found that the significance of military and veterans' spending was greater in rural Iowa counties than in those that were more urban. We found that veterans' hospitals, clinics, and service centers not only provide crucial support to veterans, they also make an important economic contribution to rural towns.

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Taken together, these features of rural Iowa life demonstrate that military values are not only an expression of Tidewater and Backcountry regional folkways, but also a fundamental component of traditional rural culture. Iowa's sustained record of high military service runs counter to expectations given the state's regional subculture and is explained instead by its *rurality*. While it is difficult to disentangle the economic and socio-cultural influences of military spending on rural culture, one thing can be intuited from this study: there is a strong reciprocal relationship between the centrality of military and veterans' spending for rural economies and the cultural support for veterans.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Dan Krier is an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at Iowa State University. He has written a book and numerous articles on financial speculation and its impact on industry and society. His research interests bridge the interdisciplinary fields of political economy, historical sociology, and critical social theory. (email: krier@iastate.edu.)

C. Richard Stockner is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at Iowa State University. He retired at the rank of Sergeant Major from the United States Army (Battalion Operations) after twenty-one years of service. He has also served as an Administrative Law Judge for the state of Iowa and as a social work manager for Mid-Iowa Community Action, Inc. His research interests include theory, criminology, and political culture.

Paul Lasley is professor and Chair of the Department of Sociology and Chair of the Department of Anthropology at Iowa State University. His research focuses on the organization of U.S. agriculture and how changes in agriculture affect rural communities. Areas of research and extension expertise include rural development, community development, sustainable agriculture, and leadership in agriculture.

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