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Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Foodways of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Personnel

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Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Foodways Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Personnel

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Dedication

To Mark, Hannah, and Dylan

Abstract

This mixed-methods research explores food insecurity experiences and familial foodwork as gendered practices in the context of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families.

Background: CAF families are composed of ~68,000 regular members and 27,000 reservist members (Department of National Defence, 2021). Military life can be particularly difficult for military spouses who adapt routines, living situations, employment, and parental responsibilities, while managing deployment stress of their military-member spouse (Norris & Smith-Evans, 2018; Norris et al., 2018). Military family research has focused on family members' physical and mental health in relation to operational and/or post-traumatic stress (Cramm et al., 2019; Norris et al., 2018; Ostler, 2018; Skomorovsky et al., 2019). Little is known about how military life impacts family foodways.

Military households present a unique context to explore the co-production of foodways and intersectional gendered identities for two reasons: 1) military spouses repeatedly return home after deployments, which may disrupt gendered division of foodwork; 2) military households experience posting relocations, limiting the educational and employment prospects of military spouses, and disconnects military households from supports, all of which may present additional challenges for spouses managing foodwork. Nothing is known about food insecurity in Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families; however, the reduction of household income due to relocations and deployments, and the loss of social networks for financial support, childcare, and transportation, mean that food insecurity is likely.

The spousal foodwork done within food insecure CAF households is likely to be a factor in gendered familial foodways. Foodways are co-constructed alongside gender, race, and class identities (DeVault, 1991; Cairns and Johnson, 2015; Szabo, 2018). Family food practices

connect with gender via activities such as shopping, cooking, feeding others, and eating which inscribe, preserve, and "do gender" (West & Zimmerman, 1987; DeVault, 1991; Cairns and Johnston, 2015; Guptill et al., 2017).

Methodology & Theoretical Framework: Two data sets were collected: 1) an online, quantitative, self-administered survey to assess demographics and food security status of participants using the Household Food Security Module (HFSM), a validated tool used to measure the prevalence and severity of food insecurity in Canada; 2) phenomenological, semi-structured interviews with female-identifying nonmilitary spouses. The data was analyzed in line with Cairns and Johnston (2015) using a toolbox of theoretical concepts, including phenomenological understandings of feminist post-structural conceptualizations of gender as an "achievement" that is "done" through everyday practices like foodwork (West and Zimmerman, 1987; DeVault, 1991; Cairns & Johnston, 2015) and that intersects with other socio demographic characteristics (Crenshaw, 1989).

Findings: Participants understood their roles as good military spouses to be supportive of and subordinate to the military-member spouses' career. The "doing" of good military spouse was related to food insecurity through loss of, or changes to employment and income due to military spousal responsibilities to ensure operational readiness of the military-member spouse; inadequate or inconsistent supports available to military families and/or spouses; and tendency to skip meals during times of deployment or reduced household income, such as directly after a posting.

Preface

This research has been conducted in, K'jipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki, which is the unceded ancestral land of the Mi'kmaq and Wolastogiyik (Maliseet) people. This land is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship, and as such am committed to respecting the land, waters, people, and relationships through my roles and responsibilities as a treaty person.

I am a 30-year-old, white, married, cis-female–a predominant demographic among the military spouses of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families. Although I am married to a heterosexual cis-man, I identify as queer. I was born and raised within a cis-heterosexual, nuclear style family, which could traditionally be described as economically low class. My family struggled with financially rooted food insecurity episodically throughout my childhood, with the quality and quantity of the food jeopardized. I remember my mother sacrificing her own needs so that my younger brother and I could be fed. Occasionally, my mother would visit the local food bank, but this was a rarity due to shame and stigma.

My experiences as a female-identifying military spouse have shown me that income may not be the only risk factor for experiencing food insecurity within this community. For example, in the early years of my marriage we were reposted frequently. During these relocations my employment situation changed continuously. I was employed full-time, part-time, unemployed, and relied on employment insurance as my main source of income at times. Although there was the stress of continuously relocating, the instability in my income made paying bills and feeding myself sometimes difficult. In the early years we kept our finances separate and my partner earned significantly more than I did. Because of this, and my inability to secure consistent employment due to our frequent relocations, I reluctantly became financially dependent on him. I had worked since the age of 12 and paid for most of my needs since then, making dependency on

another person difficult for me. I struggled with asking him for money for groceries and felt ashamed and embarrassed.

Aside from the financial dependency I experienced, which I felt was largely rooted in my status as a young military spouse, the constant relocations made it difficult to establish a food routine. Tasks such as finding new grocery stores and learning bus routes were stressful, and the added layer of never being in one place long enough to establish a support system made this a difficult and discouraging process. I often skipped meals to avoid the stress of foodwork.

We now have two young children and I notice our own familial foodways being affected, not only by deployments, but also through the gendered expectations that come with being a military spouse. I have found it difficult to adapt food routines for my children when my husband is deployed. My husband's absence at the dinner table is noticed by my children; it is an emotional time each day and they act out more frequently. During deployments I find myself skipping meals and feeding my children to avoid food waste and eating less due to the stress and worry for my husband's safety on deployments. I have also become frustrated with my husband's unit expectations for the female spouse to run the household. It has been my experience that my education and employment are considered less important, or less visible, by the military institution in comparison to my husband's duties. This has resulted in my career progression, education, and income being stunted. I assert, based on discussions with other military spouses for this research, that this may be a common and important experience.

I may benefit personally from this research as I am a member of the population being studied; however, I believe that being a member of this population is an asset in creating rapport with study participants and recruitment. This research was funded by Research Nova Scotia through the Scotia Scholar Award and Mount Saint Vincent University Scholarships.

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First and foremost, I would like to thank my partner, Mark, and my children, Hannah and Dylan, without whose love, support, and constant understanding, this research would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the generations of women in my lineage, most notably my Nanny and Mom who have always fostered my love of food and eccentric nature. My Dad for rooting me in my feminist position early in life; my Poppy, for providing me with endless recipes to experiment with; and my brother for being a great uncle, especially when Mark is deployed.

I would like to express my deepest and sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Brady, for the invaluable guidance, advice, and encouragement; the sharing of books, meals and conversations that helped to reassured me, but also which opened my mind to many new (to me) ideas; and for helping me to find my own voice within this research, and a place within a community of critical feminist researchers – a lineage that I am humbled and honored to now be a part of. Academia needs more humans like you.

In addition, I want to thank my committee members. Dr. Deborah Norris for helping me navigate through the military process, particularly with my reflexivity as a researcher and military spouse; and Dr. Brenda Beagan for her gendered food lens throughout this research and challenging me to always think more critically. Thank you both for the continuous feedback, guidance, patience, and for allowing me to pick your brilliant minds. Also, thank you to my colleagues, peers, and instructors for the many conversations and knowledge gained from knowing you.

Thank you to the participants of this research for your vulnerability in sharing your experience; to all military spouses for the visible and invisible work that you do, and the

sacrifices you've made and will undoubtedly continue to make – I see and thank you. Also, to the members of the CAF who make endless personal sacrifices to protect our country, especially my husband, Father-in-law, and the godfathers to my children, Jean Carlo, and Craig.

Also, to my dear friends, Caitlin, Katie, Kat, and Kelsi – for your endless encouragement, life lessons, and love; my mother-in-law, the inspiration for this project; Natalie for endlessly supporting our family; and all my friends and family who have helped to support me and my family. It takes a village.

Additionally, I thank Research Nova Scotia and Mount Saint Vincent University for providing financial support to make this research possible.

Finally, I would like to apologize to those who slip through the cracks in current food, social, and military policy. You are important and your voices will be heard.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Military families are a unique demographic of the Canadian population. In 2018 the Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services reported that there are 63,269 regular Canadian Forces members (Manser, 2020), and approximately 25,000 reserve members (also known as reservists), who include part-time, casual members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) (Veterans Affairs Canada, 2019). In the CAF, a Regular Force member is a full-time employee of the military. Regular members receive more pay and benefits than Reserve members and can be ordered into deployments and postings. In 2018 there were 94,279 family members of regular forces members, which includes 34,910 spouses, 57,640 children (Manser, 2020) and 1,734 "other" dependents (Manser, 2018). Approximately one-quarter of these regular forces personnel are required to regularly relocate their families as a result of postings to various bases throughout Canada, as well as globally. In other words, approximately 10,000 families (children, spouses, and other dependents) are required to relocate each year. Regular relocations can present tremendous stress for military families due to frequent changes in daily routines and living situations, changing childcare and schooling arrangements, lack of support from family or social networks, and financial stress (Manser, 2018; Department of National Defence, 2013).

Military families are similar to civilian families [1]in that they face many of the same challenges such as managing careers, raising children, and maintaining healthy households; however, they are distinctive in many ways. Manser (2020) and Department of National Defence (2013) highlight three areas distinguishing military families from civilian families. These are mobility, separation, and risk. Mobility refers to the requirement for military families to

[1] The term *civilian* is more often used to describes those who are not serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces or police services. Here, *civilian families* describe families in which there is no serving member of the Canadian military.

episodically relocate geographically, known as a posting. The CAF dictate, based on operational needs, when, where, and for how long a family will be posted. Although members are asked for posting preferences, postings are based on CAF organizational needs. As a result, families are often posted during times and to places that are not ideal. The second difference is separation in which families are routinely separated from the military-member spouse. Separations can be cyclical or spontaneous, spanning from 1 day to 15 months, and can have a preparation time of a few hours to months. Lastly, the serving member(s) of a military family have an increased risk of personal harm (i.e., Afghanistan war). Operational imperatives, particularly combat readiness, are embodied within these distinguishing factors of separation, mobility, and risk. The Department of National Defence (2013) notes that there are civilian jobs that embody each of these differences; however, military families combine the three in a way that is unique. For example, long haul truck drivers routinely leave their families for work; however, they are not required to relocate their families or have the same level of risk of personal harm as military members.

Most of the research that explores families' experiences of military life has focused on the impact of operational and/or post-traumatic stress on family members' mental and overall health, resiliency, and on the impacts of deployments and relocation on families (Cramm et al., 2019; Norris et al., 2018; Ostler, 2018; Skomorovsky et al., 2019). This focus is reasonable given the complexities and impacts military work has on members and their families. However, we need to engage in a wide range of experiences of military families to ensure strong representation of these families, and to better inform policy which support military families. The invisible work of the military spouses (i.e., the foodwork, parenting alone, and managing the home during deployments) is one under researched but important aspect of military family life. For example,

think about the last time you acquired food. Now, imagine this with three toddlers and no vehicle. Imagine your family and friends are too distant to call on for help and your spouse is unavailable for the next 6 months. You have recently moved and do not know the grocery stores and have been unable to acquire childcare and/or employment. This is an experience of CAF military spouses. Knowing more about these challenges and experiences will help guide and inform policy to better support spouses and their families.

The CAF defines a deployment as "the assignment of military personnel to temporary tours of duty away from the home" (Military Family Services, 2016). Here, deployments will also include the time a military-member spouse spends away from the family due to international and domestic exercises, courses, and training. Essentially, any time that is spent away from the family due to military requirements that is outside of the military-member spouses habitual work week. These deployments away from the home can vary in length of time and frequency. Hence, some military members may experience longer, less frequent deployments while others experience shorter, more frequent deployments. Military families are known to face unique challenges related to relocation and deployments such as: spousal relationship difficulties due to geographic distances; relationships; separation from extended family and lack of spousal support due to operational demands (i.e., deployments and training); injury, physical and/or mental trauma, or death of the military-member spouse; financial stress; issues concerning partner intimacy; and repercussions to mental health and quality of life of the military spouse (Manser, 2018; Norris et al., 2018).

Research suggests that military life can be particularly difficult for military spouses who must cope with the uncertainty of military life, and who are also often responsible for managing the everyday operations of the household, as well as the emotional and social adjustments of

other members of the family. Specifically, military spouses juggle myriad stressors that include: uncertain employment opportunities and career prospects; shifting parental and household responsibilities that change with repeated deployments; parenting of children as familiar social, school, and family routines change; and the impact of deployment stress experienced by their military-member spouse on the members and functioning of the household (Norris & Smith-Evans, 2018; Norris et al., 2018; Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020).

Another concern for military families that may have a particularly acute impact on female-identified military spouses[2],[3], and that is similarly unexplored in the research literature, is food insecurity. Food insecurity (FI) is defined as "*inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints"* (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020 pg. 3). Food insecurity affects more than two billion people globally (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2020) and 4.4 million Canadians (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Food insecurity has been shown to shorten life expectancy, increase risks of chronic and/or debilitating health issues (Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Global Burden of Disease, 2015; Grunderson, 2016; McIntyre et al., 2016; Olson, 1999; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). What is more, the psychological stress associated with food insecurity experiences (i.e., skipping meals, worrying about acquiring food, reliance on charity or discarded food items) (Elgar et al., 2021) is associated with mental health issues in both adults (Frongillo et al., 2017; Gundersen et al., 2018; Jessiman-Perreault and McIntryre, 2017; Na et al., 2019) and children (McLaughlin et al., 2012; Pryor et al., 2016).

The severity of food insecurity in Canada is measured with the Household Food

[2] Throughout this paper I will use the word *women* or *woman* interchangeably with *female-identifying individuals*; however, I acknowledge that this term includes all women-identified people, including cis and trans women.

[3] Not all Canadian military partners identify as being married, cisgender, heterosexual, women. The focus on women here speaks to the overwhelming demographics catering to heteronormative relationships within the Canadian military.

Insecurity Module (HFIM) of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), a longitudinal, nationally representative survey that is conducted every two years (Health Canada, 2015). The prevalence of food insecurity among military households is unclear because military members are omitted from the CCHS, and there is no other effort to collect such data for military families. Yet, military households may be at increased risk of food insecurity (FI) due to the impact of regular relocation and deployment on the financial and social resources available to military families, which share characteristics that are associated with food insecurity risks (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020), particularly if the families are posted to locations with higher housing costs and general cost-of-living expenses. Therefore, income may not be the only determinant of FI within this population. The reduction of household income due to relocations and deployments, and the loss of social networks for financial support, childcare, and transportation, mean that food insecurity is likely.

Identity work is the process of creating oneself and identifying the social and cultural groups to which one belongs (Caplan, 1997; Howard, 2000; Lupton, 1996). Consumer choices (i.e., housing, clothing, transportation, food) are part of identity work and indicate who one is and how they wish others to perceive them. The foodwork–the planning, provisioning, preparing, and serving of food within a household– and food a person is associated with is a powerful marker of their personal identity, and because food is often a social act, it also constructs how others perceive us (Guptil et al., 2017). While some people may have the ability to choose the food they eat, many do not. Most often this translates to mean that those who have less income have less choice over their consumer habits, in this case food. For example, in the context of military families, a military spouse who has just been posted may have lost their employment as a result and may need to utilize a local food bank to feed themselves and their family. If visiting

a foodbank does not fit within an individual's military spouse identity, especially concerning ideologies of what constitutes successful military spousal behaviour, not only may food insecurity be experienced, but also feelings of failing to be a good military spouse. Hence, foodwork helps to form, maintain, and reinforce military spousal identity. Foodwork also reflects and shapes social inequalities (Guptil et al., 2017); therefore, by learning more about how foodwork constructs and maintains gender in the context of military families, we may also unearth inequalities, such as how loss of spousal employment due to military postings may act as a precursor to food insecurity.

Moreover, how families in general cope with the material and social/cultural deprivation associated with food insecurity is known to have gendered implications. For example, women habitually sacrifice the quality and quantity of their food intake to ensure that there is enough for others in the household, and bear the brunt of stretching insufficient food resources to feed the family (McIntyre et al., 2002; Williams, et al., 2012). Ultimately, the factors that increase military families' vulnerability to food insecurity are also likely to affect how food and feeding are managed within military households as gendered practices. However, research is needed to understand the prevalence and severity of FI among military households, how the unique stressors of military family life (i.e., repeated relocation and deployments) may influence FI, and how these factors affect gendered food practices within military families. Due to limitations of master's level research, this work does not look at prevalence and severity of FI among military households at a national level, rather it serves as exploratory work for future data collection in this area.

Little research has explored the impact on familial foodways —the patterns that determine "what we eat, as well as how and why and under what circumstances we eat" (Edge,

2007)—of military life, which as previously stated, includes repeated relocations as the military-member spouse is reposted in Canada or abroad, as well as repeated deployments of the military-member spouse. I highlight food as the medium of study here for two key reasons– 1) the relationship between foodwork and gender as it pertains to military families is currently unknown. 2) intersections that exist between food insecurity risks and military family experiences. For example, military spouses are routinely asked to relocate, which for many may mean leaving employment (Department of National Defence, 2020). Employment loss and career aspirations supports for military spouses were identified as key areas for improvement (Department of National Defence, 2013). Income is the most influential determinant of experiencing food insecurity (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Aside from this, military spouses are most often women who must parent alone while spouses are frequently away due to operational deployments, which may create conditions similar to single-parent households. Female-led, single-parent households are associated with food insecure households (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). I believe that unknown impacts of frequent relocations and deployment (i.e., lack of social supports, loss of employment, periodic single parenting) further compound the experience of food insecurity, but because of a dearth in research, this experience is unknown.

As previously stated, military families are regularly required to relocate during times that are not ideal and to places they do not always want to go; sacrificing employment opportunities and social networks (Department of National Defence, 2013a; Manser, 2020). Employment and social networks are facets of life which help to form one's identity (Elsback, 1999; Guptil et al., 2017, Willie & De Fruyt, 2014). Food is a significant facet of identity development and expression (Guptil et al., 2017). Having a strong sense of one's identity is positively associated with well-being (Burnette-Zeigler et al., 2013). When appropriate food is not available,

impacting the expression of one's identity through foodways, stress and depression can be experienced, and one's identity can be negatively affected (Wright et al., 2020). Therefore, I believe that the uniqueness of military life may potentially increase individual's risk for food insecurity but may also have impacts on spousal identity and overall health.

Food insecurity is of particular concern because food allows one to express their own identity, but it is also associated with other serious health implications (i.e., diabetes; heart disease; anxiety and depressive symptoms) (Dietitians of Canada, 2019; Ivers & Cullen, 2011; Nord, 2014; Olson, 1999). Therefore, focusing on food insecurity experiences within military families will help to inform appropriate policy, ideally shifting policy which may aid in the reduction of food insecurity, and lessen instances of many other preventable negative social and health outcomes that are associated with food insecurity previously mentioned (i.e., diabetes, heart disease, anxiety and depression, etc.). By understanding familial foodwork the experience of food insecurity, and the ways in which it may be gendered, will help to narrow these important gaps in knowledge and literature. Addressing this knowledge gap will provide a starting point for data collection concerning food insecurity within military families; there is currently no data collection concerning food security rates among Canadian Armed Forces members or their families.

In this thesis I explore the impact of social and financial instability presented by episodic family relocation due to military postings and/or repeated deployments on foodwork as gendered practices in the context of military families. The decision to not include risk, one of the three distinguishing features of CAF family life, was unintentional; however, some spouses did speak to how risk impacted their foodwork within the interviews.

I applied a phenomenological approach to this research, and conducted semi-structured,

one-on-one interviews with nonmilitary, female-identifying spouses of CAF personnel to explore their experiences and understanding of familial foodways and foodwork. I draw on a "toolkit" of theoretical concepts of relevance to the epistemological and methodological approach I bring to this research which enables a critical analysis of the substantive concepts of this research: gender; foodwork; food insecurity; and foodways (Cairns & Johnston, 2015). Specifically, I seek to shed light on experiences of food insecurity among military families, and how the unique stressors of military life impact how military spouses manage familial foodways and foodwork, constructing their gender. No research to date has explored this phenomenon making my research the first of its kind. Hereafter, I will refer to individuals who are spouses to active military members as military spouses, consistent with research on military families. I will refer to the spouses who are serving in the military as military-member spouses.

Research Objectives & Rationale

My research is guided by two main objectives:

1. To explore experience relating to food insecurity among female-identifying military spouses of Regular Forces Canadian Armed Forces members.
2. To explore the ways that the unique stressors of military life (i.e., repeated relocations and deployments) impact familial foodways as gendered practices of identity.

There is no research to inform supports that may redress the impacts on household food insecurity and gendered foodwork routines that are the result of the repeated relocations and deployment of military-member spouses, and that are subsequently managed by the military spouses. Moreover, there is currently no data to describe the experiences, or factors that may contribute to individual/household food insecurity among CAF members and their families. Thus,

there is also no research about military families that considers the ways that the management of household food insecurity comprises gendered foodways, or that consider how and why gendered foodways embody military operational imperatives (i.e., relocation and separation).

This research is of particular importance for three key reasons: 1) it will be the first to document the experience of food insecurity among Canadian military families, and the impact on gendered foodways; 2) identify factors that may exacerbate or protect against food insecurity and that shape gendered food practices in military families; 3) provide evidence that may inform public and organizational policy and programming for military families to better support military spouses in navigating the demands of military life. This research serves as exploratory, pilot data for my upcoming PhD research. This upcoming work will build upon my thesis work, looking at the relationship between food insecurity and gender as it pertains to military life, and a national census-style data collection to assess the prevalence and severity of food insecurity among Canadian military families.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I review and discuss published literature that pertains to my research, including: 1) the impacts of military life on nonmilitary family members; 2) gender and military life; 3) food insecurity and women. This literature review will discuss how gender is expressed through foodwork, as well as implications which are uniquely associated with military spousal status. I will also discuss the gaps in the literature that leave the intersections of gender, foodwork, and food insecurity among military spouses of CAF personnel unexplored.

2.2 The Impact of Military Life on Nonmilitary Family Members

Military life can sometimes have deleterious consequences for nonmilitary family members' physical, emotional, and relational health and wellbeing, with, the extent to which these effects are experienced often contingent upon external, ecological supports (Chartier, 2019a; Chartier, 2019b; Cramm et al., 2019; Department of National Defence, 2013a; Department of National Defence, 2020; Mahar et al., 2018; Manser, 2018; Norris et al.a, 2018; Norris et al.b, 2018; Norris et al., 2018c;; Skomorovsky et al., 2019; Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020). To reduce the burden of such consequences, resources have been made available to members and their families; including education for families, connecting families to one another to establish support systems, mental health supports (i.e., counselling services), and connecting families with their CAF serving members during times of deployment (Department of National Defence, 2020). Resources offered to military families are most often made available through Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC), which are described by the CAF:

> MFRCs are essentially the heart of their military communities. Dedicated staff are frontline service providers, responsible for connecting military families to a wide range

> of programs and services. Their goal is to build strong, resilient individuals, families, and communities.- Canadian Forces Morale & Welfare Services, 2022

MFRC services can be utilized by CAF members and their families by visiting a local MFRC, through their online platform, and/or via telephone.

The Department of National Defence (DND) and the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have been conducting evaluations of these services over the past decade to determine if they address family needs accordingly. An evaluation performed by the DND (2013) examined the efficacy of current support programs offered through MFRCs and other forms of CAF outreach. Outcomes of these evaluations that are notable to this research suggest that available supports are improving. Some of the improvements for families in relation to this research included: better access to emergency assistance, improved capacity to manage general health, crises and stressors, better integration into new communities, increased confidence in ability to manage the stresses of CAF lifestyle, decreased impacts of stressors on families, increased support from families for member's career, greater confidence that the family is supported, and enhanced social functioning and emotional well-being. These outcomes were found to be directly linked with MFRC programing available to families. The evaluation report also noted that although there have been improvements there are still systemic disadvantages for family members that need to be addressed, stating:

> Despite some success in achieving intended outcomes, MFS programs/services are not sufficiently focused on the key military family support requirements. In particular, there are unmet needs with respect to continuity of and/or access to childcare and health care, as well as spousal employment/career support. While it will be difficult for the DND/CF to make significant progress on access to health care and spousal employment support

due to systemic issues, DND leadership and sustained effort are required to address these systemic disadvantages for military families.

Likewise, in the Chief Public Health Officer's report on the state of public health I Canada 2008, inequalities for civilian members of military families identified "unequal access to key factors that influence health like income, education, employment, and social supports" (Government of Canada, 2008, pg. 5). From the Department of Defence's 2013 report, it was recommended that the Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces develop an action plan to address systemic disadvantages affecting military families, which included access to healthcare and spousal employment, and that measurements to track the progress of this action plan should be developed (Department of National Defence, 2013).

Since the 2013 evaluation, there has been ample research aimed at identifying issues facing CAF members and their families (Chartier, 2019a; Chartier, 2019b; Department of National Defence, 2013a; Mahar et al., 2018; Manser, 2018). Research aimed specifically at assessing the program and service gaps for military families identified 145 gaps (26 systemic and 119 program) which impact the use, availability, and alignment, as well as family awareness of programs and services (Chartier, 2019a; Chartier, 2019b). From Chartier, 2019b recommendations for an action plan included: educational goals such as promoting current supports for spousal education, exploring the possibility of allowing spouses to attend military courses, sharing military academic content via e-learning platforms, and promoting the Royal Military College's (RCM) online education services to spouses; to expand the research on counselling programs to 6-7 spouses; spousal employment goals such developing a network of employers for spouses and exploring the possibility of program development for spouses similar to that of the Compensation for Employers of Reservist Program (CERP); and language

development goals including evaluation of the effectiveness of current second language education services for spouses and explore alternatives if found to be ineffective, and to explore the possibility for spouses to register for the same language courses as CAF members (Chartier, 2019b, pg.15). Efforts to implement these findings have been made through a comprehensive military family plan developed by the Department of National Defence (Government of Canada, 2019). However, to date many of the action items, previously mentioned, continue to remain in preliminary stages of development.

Military life has many impacts upon the military member and military members of the family. Regular forces members have been reported to have higher rates of depression and anxiety disorder than the general Canadian population (Pearson et al., 2014; Thompson, et al., 2016). In 2013, approximately 1 in 6 fulltime CAF members reported at least one of the following: major depressive episodes, panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, and alcohol abuse (Pearson et al., 2014). Up to date data on the mental health of CAF members are difficult to obtain from military services since the data are seldom made publicly available. Yet, if we assume that the figures from 2013 have remained consistent, the number of families facing mental health struggles, including military spouses, is concerning. If the 1 in 6 statistic remains the same, based on the 2013 data against the current numbers concerning Canadian military families–10,544 of the 63,269 full-time Canadian Armed Forces members (Manser, 2020) (i.e., 1 in 6) may have been experiencing serious mental health concerns. This could potentially impact upwards of 15,713 of the 94,279 family members, and 34,906 spouses. What is more, Canadian Armed Forces personnel are approximately 86% men (Statistics Canada, 2019), and men in general are reported to be less likely to report or seek help for mental health problems (Galdas et al., 2015). Hence, reported data may underestimate the

prevalence of numbers concerning mental health impacts.

Research indicates that military members of military families may experience mental health concerns resulting from military family members' mental health issues or operational stress injuries (Cramm et al., 2019; Norris et al.a, 2018; Norris et al.b, 2018; Norris et al., 2018c; Skomorovsky et al., 2019). Operational stress injuries (OSIs) are defined by The Royal– an organization that provides mental health care supports to Canadian veterans and their families–as "any persistent psychological difficulty resulting from duties performed while serving in the Canadian Forces or as a member of the RCMP. Difficulties may occur during combat duties or peacekeeping missions, after serving in a war zone, or following other traumatic events not specific to combat." (The Royal, 2022).

Research conducted by Norris et al., (2019c) discovered a significant, but not casual, link between the mental health of military member veterans and the mental health of the immediate family, most notably their spouses. Canadian Armed Forces veterans' mental health issues (i.e., PTSD, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, etc.) create complex changes to the family in such areas as overall structure, routines, and roles which impact caregiving responsibilities and how the family participates within their social community. It is important to note that this research focuses on veterans and their families, not active serving members; therefore, the findings from this research may not be transferable experiences. Also, a bidirectional relationship between mental health in the veteran and the mental health of the family exists; the negative impacts associated with metal health struggles can be mitigated through support services (Norris et al., 2018c).

Similarly, research aimed at furthering the understanding on how the family is affected by veteran mental health issues (mainly PTSD) during times of military-civilian transition found

that OSIs of the serving member could potentially negatively implicated the mental health of family members, creating "*multifaceted and pervasive*" (p. 1) changes within the family's overall structure (Cramm et al., 2019). For example, caregiving and social participation were reported to be more challenging and military members' mental instability often led to disruptions in family functioning. Many family members also reported that they were "walking on eggshells" (p.#) because of the impacts of the operational stress injury(s) on some family members. Spouses reported having difficulty finding time for self-care because the veteran was unable to assist in childrearing activities. Ultimately, this research recommends that families who have a CAF family member suffering from mental health issues seek support and resources, such as therapy and mindfulness exercises. It was also suggested that the CAF continue to provide resources and support for CAF families (Cramm et al., 2019).

The research that has explored the direct impacts of military life on the families of serving members suggests that they experience stress as a result of the routine features of military life, namely deployment and restationing. Specifically, when military families are separated due to deployment, the members of the family must adapt, which often causes "deployment stress" (Military Family Services, 2016; Skomorovsky, 2014). Although there is no accepted, formal definition of *deployment stress* it is often used to describe the stress resulting from factors such as worry for the deployed spouse's safety while away from home; increases in household duties for the spouse remaining home; added relationship pressures and/or complexities due to deployment separation. Deployment stress can be associated with family instability that is presented by changes in the day-to-day routines of the remaining family members when a military-member spouse is deployed. Although, the outcomes of deployment for families fall within a spectrum; responses, stress levels, and experiences may vary in

accordance with intrapersonal, interpersonal, and systemic factors. Such responsibilities may involve managing the household and meeting family members' everyday material needs, but also managing the emotional and relational upheaval related to changing family dynamics and worry for the military-member spouse's safety during deployment (Military Family Services, 2016; Skomorovsky, 2014). Military Family Services (2016) identify myriad factors that influence deployment stress for military families including individual factors (i.e., personal health, coping abilities, previous deployment experiences, attitudes towards the assignment, confidence in self, the military unit and the level of community resources and services available, sense of security in family and community relationships); separation factors (i.e., preparation time available, previous family separation experience, and important family events during the deployment); and deployment factors (i.e, the nature and length of the mission, ease of communication, geographical location, and living/working conditions). These factors intersect to impact military life further compounding the stress of these experiences.

The intersectional nature of the facets of military life are also likely to impact different members of the family in various ways. For example, a systematic review of 26 studies following 9/11[4], observed the impacts of military deployment on US military families with young children (Trautmann et al., 2015). Deployments were associated with an increase in the stress of parents, utilization of healthcare services, child maltreatment, and behaviour problems in children. Adolescent children of military families often have increased experiences of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, and substance use in comparison with children of military families. Younger children rely on their parents for their sense of safety and security; therefore, younger

[4] 9/11 is the common name for the terrorist attacks which occurred on September 11th, 2001. Included were a series of four coordinated suicide-terrorist attacks by the terrorist network al-Qaeda against the United States.

children may have different needs and experiences of deployments then older children and adolescents. Young children who are separated from a parent due to a military deployment experience more behavioural and/or emotional difficulties. These difficulties appear to be experienced less often among children under the age of 3 years and are heightened between for children between the ages of 3 and 5. The frequency of these difficulties corresponds with the duration of the deployment. Also, child maltreatment was heightened for children in the same age group (Trautmann et al., 2015). There appears to be even fewer studies, if any, that look at how intersecting identities and/or axes of oppression such as race, sexuality, disabilities (i.e., mobility impairments, learning disabilities, mental health conditions) and economic status further impact these experiences.

Other resources offered by the Canadian Armed Forces and similar organizations which explore the impact of deployment on military families describes the Emotional Cycle of Deployment. First coined by Kathleen Vestal Logan (1987), in broad strokes the emotional cycle of deployment describes the emotional turmoil that may be experienced by military families as a result of deployment (Military Family Resource Centre, 2015). The emotional cycle of deployment comprises five to seven stages, depending on the publication, here we will utilize the cycle referred to by the Canadian Armed Forces: 1) Anticipation of loss; 2) detachment and withdrawal; 3) emotional disorganization; 4) recovery and stabilization; 5) anticipation of homecoming; 6) re-negotiation of relationship; 7) reintegration and stabilization (Logan, 1987; Military Family Resource Centre, 2015).

This cycle fails to acknowledge how spouses may be implicated within one, more, or possibly all of these phases, with more frequent or varying deployment patterns, and that these phases can be complicated by many factors. For example, if a service member is injured during a

deployment and not able to reintegrate back into the family as they once would, the reintegration phase may last longer. Instances such as this could likely be an important part of spousal education and employment projections being affected. The available literature on this cycle in relation to military families is sparse beyond the Canadian Armed Forces use in family resource materials. However, it may be fair to assume that the uniqueness of military family life– repetitiveness of deployments, and in turn the overlapping in cycle stages, military relocations, and stress associated with the risk of personal harm to the military-member spouse, may have compounding, pervasive effects on family members. Research by Padden and Agazio (2013) suggests that although many couples become excited during the seventh stage, reintegration, members and their families should not expect home to be as it once was before a deployment and are encouraged to find a "new family normal" (p. 566). It is important to note that this research focuses on US military in which deployments can last years, whereas Canadian deployments can vary from weeks to less than a year in length.

Although there is an abundance of literature describing the experience of military deployment for members, and their families, it is mostly focused on USA populations, which may not be transferable experiences since the services, supports, and conditions may be different than those experienced by Canadian families. An American study conducted in 2014 sought to explore female military spouses' perceptions of transitions, adaptations, and capacity to cope with deployment (Marnocha, 2012). Eleven in-depth interviews were conducted with wives of deployed Army Reserve military members. Before and during deployments, wives reported feelings of emotional chaos and turmoil (i.e., increases in anxiety and other emotions), as well as feelings of being overwhelmed, aggravated, and disorganized due to taking over primary responsibility of the family and absorbing the deployed spouses' tasks (i.e., bill payments, car

maintenance, and home repairs). The researchers concluded that US military deployments can have mild to debilitating effects on the family in relation to both physical and emotional health (Marnocha, 2012), and recommend that military wives be referred to support services (i.e., mental health services, support groups, and family readiness units) to help reduce the risk of depression–similar recommendations to Canadian data (Chartier, 2019a; Chartier, 2019b; Department of National Defence, 2013a; Government of Canada, 2008; Mahar et al., 2018; Manser, 2018).

2.3 Gender & Military Life

Negative, stigmatizing, and patriarchal attitudes toward military spouses may add further burden to their experiences and roles within their families. On one hand, military spouses (of all genders) are often glorified by family members and the CAF for their resiliency and crucial role in supporting the operational readiness of military members (Cramm, et al., 2018; Norris et al., 2018). Conversely, Ziff and Garland-Jackson (2020) explain that military spouses are simultaneously seen as being subordinate to and dependent on their military-member spouses (Ziff, & Garland-Jackson, 2020). Within the culture of unofficial CAF communications, spouses are referred to as "dependents", although there is an effort for this to be less common as the military culture shifts toward a more progressive mindset. It is highly accepted that the loss of agency which is experienced by military spouses is normal and perhaps inevitable (Hautinger & Scandlyn, 2013; Taber, 2009; Weinstein, 1997). This research is often referring to female spouses due to the heteronormative nature of the US and Canadian military populations (Manser, 2020).

In line with Moen (2003) this expected/accepted loss of agency suggests that a merging of identities between the self of the military spouse and their status as a military spouse, may

result in pressures for military spouses to participate as extensions of the military themselves through less visible, but crucial support roles which allow the military to operate effectively (e.g.., taking on primary caregiver roles, supporting other military families in times of need, operating online social platforms for support, etc.). In relation to the support roles that military spouses are expected to enact, spouses sometimes also experience negative consequences on their education, employment, family, mental health, and overall wellbeing (Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020).

Stereotypical attitudes have perpetuated harmful and remarkably sexist tropes of the "military wife." For example, an entry in the Urban Dictionary (2013) defines the term "Dependapotamus," which refers to female military spouses, as:

> The spouse of a military Service Member, whose **symbiotic relationship** is parasitic. These creatures seek to take advantage of the trusting nature of the more inexperienced Service Member by **birthing live children to him**, to establish a link that would be more work to be rid of than to simply keep…. Typical behavior for Dependapotami is to sit at home, as they do not work (hence the dependency), smoke cigarettes bought with the SM (Service Member)'s pay, talk on a cellular phone (purchased by the SM), to other Dependapotami, whilst ignoring the children to whom she/it serves as "Caregiver." Often, the Dependapotamus will sell the idea of not working or pursuing an education (High School being the highest level most achieve, though some are incapable of that, even) by claiming to "stay home with the kids.

The derogatory language within this cultural definition could be classified as a microaggression – a derogation, slight, or invalidation, intentional or unintentional, most often directed toward

people of minority or marginalized backgrounds (Lui & Quezada, 2019). Microaggressions often place the recipient of the microaggression in an anxious state and/or result in a feeling of not belonging. Long-term exposure to microaggressions can have detrimental effects on the health and overall wellbeing of victims, being associated with elevated levels of depression and trauma (O'Keefe et al., 2014). Although it is not directly stated, the definition does strongly imply that dependapotami are women in pointing to their role in birthing children[5]. In doing so this definition is perpetuating a stigmatized perception that military spouses, particularly those who are women, are lazy and deceitful, even predatory. Harrison (2002, 2006) proposes that the military has its own unique ideologies regarding gendered work and the performance of gender, specifically regarding female military spouses. For example, although the language referring to military spouses is improving, as mentioned above, military spouses are regularly referred to as "dependents" rather than spouses (Manser, 2018), which reinforces the subordinate role that the military wife is imagined playing in the often heteropatriarchal military relationship. Covertly, more recent research by Manser (2020) suggests that the conceptualization of gender relations in military family life are changing with the use of such language being reduce and more efforts put in place by the DND and CAF to offset challenges placed on spouses through research (Chartier, 2019a; Chartier, 2019b; Department of National Defence, 2013a; Mahar et al., 2018; Manser, 2018) and the development of the Comprehensive Military Family Pan (Government of Canada, 2019)

Research concerning how foodwork, as well as gender identity and enactment is affected by these attitudes and stigmas is even more sparse. Although it does not include an analysis of

[5] Here I use women to describe those that birth children; however, I acknowledge that bodies that birth children encompass trans-men, non-binary, two-spirited, and others who identify outside of cis-female and womanly genders, and traditional understandings of human reproduction, sex, and gender.

foodwork, recent research by Ziff and Garland-Jackson (2020) conducted in the United States analysed two sets of interview data with military wives, exploring patterns in how female military spouses navigated their role as, what the researchers refer to as, the stereotypical "military wife". More specifically, Ziff and Garland-Jackson's (2020) research examined the women's experiences as military spouses as well as employment, and relationships with their husbands. The researchers found that many of the women interviewed policed each other's gender expression and roles. In doing so, they supported and portrayed common military spousal stereotypes; in turn, these stereotypes significantly shaped their own identity. The gender policing manifested in attitudes of what constituted good military wife behaviour, commonly as military spouses being self-sufficient. It was noted that those women who were older and had careers distanced themselves from stereotypes but were still aware of them. Gender policing can be understood as the enforcement or positioning of normative gender enactment through behaviours or physical features (e.g., clothing, hair styles, etc.) that are perceived as acceptable for a particular gender, on an individual or group (Bauermeister et al., 2017). According to Ziff and Garland-Jackson (2020), military wives would often attempt to embody stereotypes associated with characteristics of a favorable military wife and distance themselves from the less desirable traits (Ziff, & Garland-Jackson, 2020). In other words, military wives may be actors in the construction and support of their own oppression by re-enacting stereotypes and social norms. How this impacts upon their relationship with food, foodways and food insecurity is unknown due to a lack of data collection in this area.

Enacting stereotypes can function as a way for people to exert power over others, situations, and self (Hentschel et al., 2019). Gender stereotypes can allow people to make assumptions which may support false feelings of control (Devine & Sharp, 2009; Fiske &

Taylor, 2013); however, they can also lead to faulty generalizing about a person or situation. This is important because these assumptions can affect expectations about performance (Heilman, 2001; Heilman et al., 2015), which in the context of female military spouses may position female military spouses to enact gender roles (i.e., foodwork) that are characteristic of military wives, but may not support the female spouse's sense of self. That is, the female military spouse may participate in gender roles that they do not want to perform but are expected to by other members of the military community because of their gender. In other words, if military spouses are cast as subordinate to military members, both within relationships and in the broader social contexts, and if women are subordinated to men, then one of the few remaining sources of relative power remaining to women military spouses may be to embody gendered expectations of women military spouses to their fullest capability. When power is limited, grasping what is possible, where and how it is possible, can lead to competitive gender policing of self and others. The hegemonic narrative that military spouses may engage in to enact successful military spouse may likely maintain their own oppressions (i.e., reduced career projections and educational attainment), and demonstrates the power of disciplinary within the spousal community. Recall, that food is an essential facet to identity formation and enactment (Guptil et al., 2017). The impacts of gender enforced foodwork within the context of a military family is simply not fully understood in this way due to a lack of research.

Situations of relative powerlessness may be masked by professions of lofty ideals. Ziff and Garland-Jackson (2020) discuss the ways in which the military wife is idealized as part of the military institution. They explain that there are expectations from service members and the military institution that military wives will support and conform to the needs of the military, perhaps as a form of patriotic service. They also discuss the ways in which the military

institution is innately gendered, thriving on patriarchal systems in which the wife plays a support role to her husband's military career (Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020). As a result, military spouses' educational attainment, and work trajectories are often negatively affected through "limited career mobility, lower wages, and dampened aspirations" as well as the loss of autonomy and personal identity (Kleykamp, 2013, p. 144; Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020).

Feminist researchers have shed light on the ways in which the military as a gendered organization marginalizes military wives (Harrison, 2002, 2006), with *"wifely femininity...valued by military officials only insofar as it enhances military masculinity"* (Enloe, 2000, p. 156). Military spouses are typically expected to volunteer to support military family programs, thereby enhancing the unit's operational readiness (Harrison, 2002, 2006). In addition, they often do most of the work associated with raising a family, whether their husbands are on deployment or at home (Norris, 2001).

Financial stress is a common challenge reported within Canadian military families. This financial stress is largely due to geographical relocations from postings which create changes on employment for military spouses and changes in costs of living (Manser, 2020); approximately half of CAF families posted report that their financial situation becomes worse (Manser, 2018). The diminishment on military spouses' employability as well as income, may further create conditions that lead to financial dependence and vulnerability to financial abuse (Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020). In 2008, 5.1% of the spouses of CAF personnel reported being violently abused by their partner; although financial abuse has not been studied specifically (Sudom, 2009). As is the case with family violence generally, the prevalence among military families is likely underreported (Gracia, 2004). However, approximately 50% of domestic abuse survivors residing in shelters in Canada have experienced financial abuse (Statistics Canada, 2019). Also,

studies that explore financial abuse within the United States have reported that between 94 and 99% of women in abusive relationships have also experienced a form of financial abuse (Adams & Greeson, 2008). Given that a main issue facing military spouses is loss of employment, most often due to military postings and deployment demands (Department of National Defence, 2013), and the increased likelihood of military spouses to become dependent on their military-member spouse (Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020), financial abuse may be a factor in food insecurity risk among military spouses more so than the general Canadian population. Therefore, I assert that this phenomenon may place some military spouses at an increased risk of food insecurity due to financial dependence, and in some cases financial abuse. Financial abuse may also mean the entire family goes hungry, but power and gendered violence may shift the abuse to mean that the spouse goes hungry to keep the children fed and husband happy. Due to a lack of data concerning financial abuse within CAF families, this cannot be said with certainty.

2.4 Food Insecurity & Women

The dependence and subordination experienced by military spouses, as previously discussed, may be a risk factor for food insecurity. For example, in a case study of how spousal economic abuse led to food insecurity for one woman, who was a military spouse, Power (2006) identifies two factors that may expose financially dependent women to food insecurity, including 1) financial abuse victims are at an increased risk of food insecurity when they are denied access to financial resources; 2) women who leave economically abusive intimate heterosexual relationships are more likely to live in poverty and are thus at risk for food insecurity. The woman and her child's food security were negatively affected by this experience while her husband did not experience food insecurity.

Food insecurity is a major public health issue with serious social and health-related consequences (Dietitians of Canada, 2016; Grunderson, 2016; McIntyre et al., 2016; Olson, 1999; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Little is known about this experience within the context of military households. Food insecurity is defined as "*inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints"* (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020 pg. 3). This is the operational definition is used to measure the prevalence of food insecurity by the Household Food Insecurity Module Food (HFIM) of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). The HFIM also measures the severity of household food insecurity along three categories: 1) marginal FI indicates potential barriers to food access; 2) moderate FI shows that there has been a compromise in the quality and/or quantity of food consumed.; 3) severe FI identifies disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). FI is a major public health concern (Grunderson, 2012; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020), with over 4.4 million Canadians, including 1.2 million children, being categorized as food insecure in the PROOF Household Food Insecurity in Canada, 2017-2018 report (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Food insecurity is linked to myriad deleterious health outcomes including associations with diabetes; heart disease; anxiety and depressive symptoms; risky sexual behavior; poor coping strategies; and negative pregnancy outcomes in women (Dietitians of Canada, 2019; Ivers & Cullen, 2011; Nord, 2014; Olson, 1999). From the 2020 CCHS on household food insecurity, characteristics of food insecure populations include: low income, reliance on social assistance as a major source of income, and a lack of home ownership. The most at-risk populations include households with children, young adults, First Nations and Indigenous Canadians, post-secondary students, women, seniors, Black Canadians, and immigrants/refugees (Tarasuk & Mitchel, 2020).

The prevalence of food insecurity among military households is unclear because of a lack of routine and reliable measurement. Military personnel are omitted from the CCHS, which means that military households may not be accurately represented in the HFIM data. Although military spouses are not omitted from participating in the Canadian Community Health Survey, military families as a population are not studied specifically. The closest surveying method for active Canadian military personnel is the participation in the Canadian Armed Forces Health Survey (CAFHS) led by the federal government/military, administered by Statistics Canada in collaboration with the Department of National Defence Canadian Armed Forces. The CAFHS is a self-administered survey completed by military personnel that asks about various health indicators such as chronic conditions, injuries, use of health care services and health screening, mental health, health behaviours such as physical activity and substance use, and workplace health and safety (Statistics Canada, 2019). The CAFHS does not collect data about food security among CAF members or military families. However, future development of a survey tool to assess food insecurity among military families, including the unique factors that may contribute to food insecurity among this population, could be administered as an additional part of the CAFHS.

Additionally, correlations between food security and gender, and its implications for quality of life and health outcomes, have been discovered (Forget, 2018; Ivers & Cullen, 2011; Olson, 1999; Dietitians of Canada, 2019; Nord, 2014; Hamelin et al., 1999). Women in general are one of the most at-risk populations for experiencing food insecurity in Canadian society, as well as globally (McIntyre et al., 2016; Matheson & McIntyre, 2013; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Women experience poverty and income dependence more so than their male counterparts (McIntyre, Bartoo & Emery, 2012; Schulz, 2017). Women, who are most often self-identified

caregivers and food providers, are also often limited in their paid work. Given that the greatest risk factor for food insecurity is income (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020) this may explain, in part, why women are more at risk for food insecurity than men. It has also been found that among Canadian households with children, a disproportionate number of food insecure households are female, single-parent led. In the 2017/18 report on the state of food insecurity in Canada by PROOF, 11.8% of couples with children under 19 years of age were found to be food insecure. This rate rose to 21.6% among male lone-parent households and 33.1% within female lone-parent households (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020).

Women experiencing food insecurity may also occupy a specific social position which increases their risk of foodwork stressors. Women have been found to be more likely than men to spend their incomes on their children's needs and food before themselves and will skip meals to ensure their children are fed (Williams, et al., 2012; McIntyre et al., 2002; Jessiman-Perreault & McIntyre, 2019). Moreover, women are often responsible for the majority of household foodwork (Beagan et al., 2008; Bugge & Almas, 2006; DeVault, 1991). This responsibility, in the context of food insecurity may increase the woman's experience of stress (Jessiman-Perreault & McIntyre, 2019). Food insecure mothers also report lower and shorter instances of breastfeeding, which can have negative implications on both mother and child (Frank, 2015; 2018).

The focus on financial constraints in the definition used to measure food insecurity may narrow the scope and context of how we conceptualize, and thus measure food insecurity. The narrowed scope is especially concerning when measuring the prevalence and severity of food insecurity, as well as when seeking to understand the contributing factors and experiences of food insecurity, among unique populations such as military families. In other words, although

social constructions such as gender may impact a person's access to food, food insecurity is currently understood as mainly an economic issue. McIntyre et al. (2016) rely on an alternative definition to explore populations that may be overlooked due to unknown barriers unrelated to income as a measurement of food security. The authors define FI as occurring *"when people have inadequate resources to ensure that they are able to access adequate food in socially acceptable ways"* (2016, p. 83). This definition allows for other underlying causes such as lack of family support, cooking skills, pressure from spouses, time pressures, and/or other unforeseen issues or cultural differences hindering food security in military families. Many military families may have the income to support a food secure environment, but lack important factors such as family support, time, mental health, and other resources that are limited because of the unique context of military life, that also shapes their experience of household food security.

When military families are relocated there are many disturbances in daily routines and many unforeseen challenges which be a barrier to ensuring food security. Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) (2018) highlights that food security is possible when the "5A's of Food Security" are met: 1) availability (sufficient food); 2) accessibility (the physical and economic access to food); 3) adequacy (access to nutritious and safe food that is produced in environmentally sustainable ways); 4) acceptability (access to culturally acceptable food, which is produced and obtained in ways that do not compromise people's dignity, self-respect or human rights; and 5) agency (policies which support food security). Although it is well known that food insecurity is largely understood as an economic issue (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020), there are many lifestyle factors that may inhibit food security that may be characteristic of military families. In line with TMU 5A's of Food Security, issues may arise concerning the second A – accessibility (i.e., lacking or adapting transportation due to relocation, lack of food knowledge due to frequent

posting moves, etc.). Also, there may be barriers to food security which have not been properly identified due to the dearth of research, such as changes in family/social support systems and food security, especially during times of deployment. However, this population remains relatively under-studied.

Moreover, food insecurity continues to be experienced in high income households, further suggesting that income, although a significant predictor of food insecurity, is not the only factor. A recent Canadian study utilizing pooled data from the 2005-2010 CCHS found that food insecurity rates were increased among renters, single-parent households, and those with greater household size and where educational attainment was lower, unemployment benefits were received, chronic disease was present, and smoking and problem gambling occurred (Olabivi & MacIntyre, 2014).

The most comprehensive study on FI among Canadian post-secondary students is a 2016 survey conducted by Meal Exchange, evaluating the incidence of food insecurity among students at 5 universities. Findings indicated that 39.2% of students suffered from food insecurity (Silverthron, 2016). Research by Bessey et al., (2020) concerning student food insecurity in Nova Scotia, found that the main contributing factor to student food insecurity was inadequate and precarious finances, but that students also often struggled with reliance on their family for financial support. Military spouses are at risk of financial dependence on the military-member spouse (Kleykamp, 2013, p. 144; Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020), and have many unique stressors uncharacteristic to the general population (i.e., recurrent deployments, postings, and increased risk of personal harm for military-member spouses); like students, military spouses may face unique risk for food insecurity, but due to a lack of research the barriers to food adequacy are unknown.

Although there is ample research exploring the stress and mental health struggles of military spouses, as well as literature discussing the ways in which patriarchal systems, such as the military, can perpetuate sexist hegemonic narratives, there is a gap concerning how military life may implicate the spousal experience of foodwork, food insecurity, and gender role perceptions. This research aims to explore the experiences of female, military spouses in relation to food security, and how gendered foodwork may be enacted within this population.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I elucidate the theoretical underpinnings of my research. I begin by discussing my approach to this research, which I situate within critical feminism. Next, I discuss the details of the theoretical framework that inform my conceptualization of this research, my research questions, and data analysis.

3.2 Critical Feminism

Feminism is rooted in the Women's Liberation Movement, which has focused on women's rights for nearly a century (Weedon, 1997). At the very core of the movement are questions concerning what it is to be a woman, how femininities and sexuality are defined, and how such ideologies can be redefined and embodied for women. This movement highlights how oppressions implicated by patriarchy are further complicated through race and class (Crenshaw, 1989). Feminist theory uses a variety of concepts that are reflective of the diversity of women globally. Feminism calls for a replacement of the dominant patriarchal system and suggests one that places weight on equity and challenging all social hierarchies including those based on gender identity, but also other social justice issues, such as racism, poverty, and heterosexism. A patriarchal system, or *the patriarchy*, is a system of power in which the needs and/or interests of women are subordinate to those of men. This system notes biological differences between men and women suits an individual for different social roles based on their assignment of sex at birth (Weedon, 1997).

Poststructuralism holds the position that understandings of knowledge or an experience are fluid, ever changing, and unpredictable rather than being a universal truth. It turns away from the perspective of Structuralism, which identifies designs and consistencies within society, in

particular language (Barker, 2010). Poststructuralist feminism is concerned with intersections of knowledge, power, and discourse in the lives of women. Post structural feminism emphasizes gender as an ideological construct that circumscribes authenticity, rather than a biological inheritance, and the discursiveness of individualism and identity (Weedon, 1997). That is, humans are complex and ever-changing creatures that cannot be reduced to a single classification; most notably the social understandings of what it is to be a man or woman, and how to accurately perform and represent understandings of femininities and masculinities that are socially associated with one's biological sex. Biological sex, although for many individuals maps neatly onto their gender identities, cannot encapsulate the complexities of a human's experience and expression of self.

Although there are different approaches to critical feminist theory, my position is that feminism is intersectional, connected through racial and economic oppressions; that femininity itself is socially constructed and is an ever-changing position, idea, and/or enactment and expression, and that it is inclusive to all genders and sexualities. The use of feminist theory for this research allows for reflection and critical examination of the potential issues affecting military spouses in relation to what constitutes the enactment of gender within a military family. Feminist theory is particularly important within this research because the military itself is a male-dominated, patriarchal system. Therefore, applying a feminist lens allows for new understandings of the military life experience, and those who are most affected by it and yet to have their voices heard – women spouses.

3.3 Theoretical Framework: A Toolbox of Concepts

My theoretical framework, in line with Cairns and Johnston (2015), comprises a toolbox of theoretical concepts that I use to conceptualize my research and analyze the qualitative data.

There is no fixed theoretical framework that is specific to conceptualizing or elucidating the subjects of my research, which include, the co-constitution of familial foodwork and gender, food insecurity, and military family life. A toolbox of relevant theoretical concepts allows me to focus my analysis on the topics of central concern to my research questions, and to advance the overarching purpose of my research to explore the experiences of female-identifying military spouses of CAF personnel *vis a vis* familial foodwork. Specifically, the theoretical concepts, or tools, that make up my theoretical framework include: 1) West and Zimmerman's (1987) post-structural theorization of gender as an everyday accomplishment; 2) foodwork; 3) food insecurity. I begin by discussing gender and foodwork as co-constitutive practices and then discuss food insecurity.

3.4 Doing Gender, Doing Food

The theoretical tools that inform this work include post-structural understandings of gender as an "achievement" that is "done" through everyday actions (West & Zimmerman, 1987; DeVault, 1991; Cairns & Johnston, 2015). And the concept of foodways that are the familial food patterns that establish why, how, when, and what we eat (Guptill et al., 2017). In this research gendered food practices are conceptualized as being co-constitutive. That is, the foodwork, or feeding work – the planning, provisioning, preparing, and serving of food within a household – performed by female military spouses is essential in ensuring operational readiness of the military-member spouse, and this foodwork is a performance and role of the military spouse's feminine gender. Hence, this is co-constituted as femininity constituting the woman spouse as food-worker, with foodwork constituting her as good and feminine military spouse.

The responsibility of feeding the family as women's work was constructed in the 19th century. Its main purpose was as a method to instill and consolidate male power. Later, it was

transformed into an attempt for feminist activists to reform the home as a place of female influence and power (DeVault, 1999). The idea of "doing gender" proposed by West and Zimmerman (1987) describes gender as a "*... routine accomplishment embedded in everyday interaction."(p #)* West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that gender, rather than being the inevitable outcome of biological sex, is a performed accomplishment whereby speaking, behaving, and representing oneself in various conscious and unconscious ways and in the context of structural arrangements constructs or "does" one's gender. For example, women have traditionally been expected to home make, that is cook, clean, and raise children (West & Zimmerman, 1987). From a modernist perspective, women undertook these activities because they identified as women. Conversely, from the post-modern perspective of West and Zimmerman's concept of "doing gender," women do not undertake these activities *because* they are women, but rather they accomplish socially constructed womanhood, or femininity, by performing these tasks. Viewing gender as something we enact through practices challenges the idea that gender is a fixed identity or a biological characteristic. When gender is enacted through foodwork, femininities (or masculinities) are being performed at a personal level, but are also interacting with social structures, namely gendered expectations of what it means to be a man/masculine and a woman/feminine (West & Zimmerman, 2009).

In line with West and Zimmerman's concept of "doing gender," Marjorie DeVault, in her now canonical book *Feeding the Family: The Social Organization of Caring as Gendered Work,* explores how foodwork in the context of heterosexual families is a means through which women/femininity and men/masculinity are accomplished. DeVault (1991) notes that family work is strongly gendered and that activities which involve feeding work are largely understood socially as "womanly" or "feminine" activities. DeVault (1991) argues that the work of feeding

the family, or familial foodwork, can be oppressive for women because of the social pressures placed on them to perform most of the household labour and to maintain subordinate roles in the household. Also, the work itself can been seen as menial, unskilled, routine, somewhat dirty, or a 'natural' part of a woman's biological instincts, and thus not really work. The ordinary language used to describe the "womanly" activity of "feeding the family" is rooted in a patriarchal attitude, perpetuating oppressive, feminine ideologies (DeVault, 1991).

In their volume *Food and Femininity,* Cairns and Johnson (2015) also draw on the theorization of gender as an everyday accomplishment that may be "done" through foodwork. For example, when a mother cooks a meal, she is also "doing gender" and reinforcing stereotypes concerning a woman's place in the home. If she does not cook a meal, or does so poorly, she may be viewed as failing to preform her gender, or preforming her gender poorly. The highly gendered context of military culture adds an additional layer to the gendering of Foodwork within military families. Heterosexual families are represented as the predominant family model for military families, wherein female spouses support their male military member husbands to ensure that they are supported and cared for in such a way that allows military men to be operationally ready (Cramm, et al., 2018; Norris., 2001, Norris, et al., 2018; Ziff & Garland-Jackson, 2020). It is likely that the normative heterosexual family arrangement has implications for the experience of food insecurity, the ways in which food is managed within military households, and how military life may influence military spouses' understanding of their gender and how to successfully enact that.

Helping to authenticate the voices of women in research, such as this, partakes in a form of resistance against the oppressive subordinate roles that society, and perhaps the military way of life, pressures women to fulfill. Drawing on methods in line with Cairns and Johnston (2015), I

will show how femininities are negotiated and performed within military family culture in respect to foodwork and food insecurity.

3.5 Food Insecurity

Food Insecurity is traditionally defined as "*the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints"* (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Although food insecurity is indisputably rooted in a lack of sufficient income, this definition may shadow the gendered narratives and inequities that also play a large role in one's risk for food insecurity, specifically within the context of the military family. As previously discussed, food insecurity has implications for gendered foodways, which are not well theorized; however, I conceptualize food insecurity as being part of foodways, and co-constituting gender. That is, food actions that have been characterized within the literature mainly as womanly (i.e., skipping meals and/or reducing food intake to ensure other members of the family are fed), and the ways in which gender roles are enforced within the context of a military family, may have negative implications for food security status.

Chapter 4: Methods & Methodology

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the methodology and methods used to conduct my research. I begin by describing the methodology which is that of a phenomenological lens. Next, I highlight the methods used concerning participants, sampling, recruitment, informed consent and data collection, data analysis, data management, and ethical considerations of this work.

4.2 Methodology

This research is a phenomenological study for which I conducted one-on-one, semi-structured interviews to explore the lived experiences of military spouses of CAF personnel. Phenomenology is one methodology of many that derive from an interpretive approach to research and knowledge creation. Interpretivism recognizes that a person's reality is constructed from experiences within social, cultural, and historical contexts. It also acknowledges that individuals' perceptions of an experience, and how this embodies meaning, are necessarily subjective, meaning that many perspectives of a common experience can exist, rather than a single truth. Conversely, in line with interpretivist approaches, phenomenology rejects the positivist paradigm wherein the ontological and epistemological position on knowledge creations deems that objective truths about the world exist apart from the research process, and that these truths may be discovered through the scientific method. Consequently, phenomenology acknowledges that researchers have an influence on data collection and analysis. Hence, phenomenology understands that the world, and knowledge of it, is inseparable from knowers' experiences and from the research process itself, and that phenomenology produces knowledge that is explicitly inter-subjective and highly contextual (Hennik, et al., 2020). The use of phenomenology and critical feminist theory collide in this research to clarify how sex and/or

gender impacts a person's understand of an experience. Specifically, how a military spouses' gender may impact upon food experiences.

Phenomenology is a methodological approach that focuses on the study of phenomenon or the consciousness of a direct lived experience (Beck, 1992). Phenomenological research aims to understand participants' lived experiences and the meaning derived from those experiences from participants' own perspectives. This methodology allows researchers to identify a shared experience among a social group, discover universal natures or patterns of the experience(s), and understand the essence of that experience(s). Phenomenology is interested specifically in the *what* and *how* of a phenomenon. That is, phenomenology seeks to answer two key questions: 1) *what* was the experience that was commonly shared; 2) *how* it was experienced. Phenomenology strives to discover the underlying structure of a phenomenon, rather than unchanging facts about the phenomenon. Also, phenomenology inquiries into the logic of these structures, recognizing that there is meaning in all actions and experiences, allowing for meaning and reasonable insights (Beck, 1992).

The goal of phenomenology is to follow a phenomenon through a web of experience, unearthing and describing a structure that may have otherwise gone unobserved or misunderstood (Beck, 1992). Through this method we can study the phenomenon from a first-person narrative and suggest that all things contain merit for study such as the natural (the body, physical environment); cultural and social (perception of art, music, food), ideal (logic); political; and the historical (Beck, 1992). It considers the many forms of a personal perception as it relates to imagination, sensory perceptions, memory, trauma, and emotions. Phenomenology is of particular importance in this research because it can unearth structures (Beck, 1992),

particularly those that engender nuances in power relationships such as those that shape familial foodways.

Traditionally, when using phenomenology researchers will engage in a practice referred to as "bracketing." When bracketing, a researcher attempts to set aside their personal worldviews and preconceptions, such as may be informed by their social position, about the phenomena being studied to allow participants' experiences to be centered (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). The primary aim of bracketing is to minimize researcher bias. However, bracketing is sometimes not, if ever, possible, or necessary (Tuohy et al., 2013). The phenomenological approach that guides my research rejects bracketing, and as such, I acknowledge the impact of my own lived experiences and social position on this research, including my research questions and interpretive analysis of the data. I acknowledge that I have preconceived ideas based on my lived experiences and social position about the topic being studied. While a positivistic approach to research would implement various strategies to mitigate that impact, as a female-identifying spouse to a CAF member myself, I believe that I also occupy a unique position to conduct this research that does not hinder the results of the research process. Positivism suggests that insiders are biased, and that only an outsider to a phenomenon can be unbiased, or objective. Although I am an insider in this research, and this is often considered a bias, I consider my insider status an asset; to my ability as a researcher to analyse this data; build rapport with participants; but also, that my own experience as an insider gave me the awareness of the knowledge gap to initiate this work. Without my experience in this population and as a researcher I must wonder if it would have been done at all. I believe that the important factor to be aware of when conducting research as an insider, is the effects that the insider status has on myself as a researcher and working with them carefully. Reflexive writing was the main tool I used to allow my two selves–the researcher

and the military spouse–to critically analyse the themes which emerged from this work. Secondly, having a committee member who is an outsider and expert concerning my topic was an advantage, providing me with exposure to alternative perspectives on this research. I reflect on and discuss my personal connection with this research in more detail within the afterword and limitations sections of this thesis.

4.3 Method

Participants, Sampling, and Recruitment

The population sampled for this research included female-identifying adults aged 19 years or older who live in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), who are proficient in English, and who are the spouse of a Regular Forces member of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) but are not themselves members of the CAF. Participants who did not meet these criteria were ineligible to participate.

I recruited participants for this research using three methods: 1) emails to related organizations and colleagues which requested the advertisement be shared with anyone that may have fit the inclusion criteria for this study (i.e., Halifax and Shearwater Military Family Resources Centres and various staff members at Mount Saint Vincent University); 2) social media platforms (i.e., Facebook posts); 3) snowball sampling. An advertisement picture with an email link was posted to the social media platforms (see Appendix 1.1 Sample Social Media Advertisement). The email and social media posts provided prospective participants with the study information, demographic eligibility, participation instructions, contact information for the researcher, and indication of a prize incentive (a draw for one $50 gift card).

Initially, I aimed to recruit 10 to 12 participants. However, due to difficulty with recruitment related to strains on CAF military spouses throughout the COVID-19 pandemic;

added pressures and wait times for ethics approval, which extended the project by 6 months; and time restraints imposed by the duration of this Master of Science in Applied Human Nutrition program, I was able to collect data from only 5 participants. After recruitment was complete, I randomly selected a participant (using Microsoft Excel) who provided their contact information for prize remuneration.

Informed Consent and Data Collection

Consent for this research was collected from participants using a PDF consent form (see Appendix 1.2: Consent Form). I sent the consent form via my MSVU email account to participants prior to booking an interview or sending out the link and participant code to complete the online survey. Participants were given the option of printing the consent form to print, sign, scan, and or sign with an electronic signature on the PDF consent form, and then return it to me via my MSVU email address. Once the consent form had been signed and returned, participants were emailed a randomly generated, four-digit code, a link to complete the online survey, and a time for their interview was scheduled via Microsoft Teams. The four-digit code was used to keep the name of participants private while also connecting their survey results to their interview.

I collected two data sets for this research: 1) quantitative data collected using a self-reported, online survey that comprised demographic questions and the Household Food Insecurity Module (HFIM) of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS; see Appendix 1.0: Online Survey– Demographics and Canadian Community Health Survey-Household Food Security Module). The CCHS-HFIM is a validated questionnaire used to assess the prevalence and severity (food secure or marginal, moderate, or severe food insecure) of FI at the population level in Canada (Health Canada, 2007).; 2) qualitative data collected via semi-structured

interviews using online audio and/or video meeting technology. Participants were required to complete the online survey prior to participating in the online interview.

The online survey began by reiterating the information found on the consent form (i.e., the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw and procedures for doing so) as did each interview. Before I began recording, I obtained verbal consent to do so from the participants. Participants were reminded that they could withdraw at any time during or after the interview up until the completion of the study, which was estimated at Spring 2022.

Quantitative Data

The online, self-administered survey highlights two key data sets which provided context for the semi-structured interviews. Participants were invited to answer 11 demographic questions, followed by the CCHS-HFIM. Participants could fall into one of four food security groupings: *food secure* which describes households that had access, at all times throughout the previous year, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. Participants who were food secure did not have any affirmative responses to all questions in this section of the survey; *food insecure, marginal* in which members of the household, at times during the previous year, had indicated worrying about running out of food and/or had limited food selection due to a lack of money for food. Participants in this category had no more than 1 affirmative response; *food insecure, moderate* in which households indicated that at times during the previous year they had made compromises in the quality and/or quantity of food consumed. Participants in this category reported 2 to 4 affirmative responses; and *food insecure, severe* which suggests that at times during the previous year, the household indicated a reduction in food intake and disrupted eating patterns. Individuals who reported in this category indicated

affirmative responses to 5 or more questions (Health Canada, 2007). The online survey was estimated to take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete.

I used the CCHS as an elicitation tool to characterize and explore the experience of food security or insecurity within this study sample. I used the answers from the HFIM as a tool to help prompt discussion about food insecurity during the semi-structured interviews. I believe that this method elicited participants' critical thoughts on deeper related issues or experiences as we worked through the interview questions. Using it as an elicitation tool within this project was important for two reasons: 1) the HFIM responses helped to unearth findings that may have gone unnoticed through the semi-structured interview discussion alone; 2) the food security status of participants provided important context to the interview findings and demographic responses. Having the food security status of participants helped to inform the discussion concerning how food in the home was impacted by military life. Also, it helped to identify inadequacy within the HFIM survey and semi-structured interview questions to optimally test for food insecurity within the context of military families– informing my future work in this area. These inadequacies in the HFIM for use with military families will be analysed and the tool modified for future work within my doctoral research. Assessing household food insecurity using the HFIM food security module was important because of the lack of knowledge about food insecurity among military families, and because the feeding work done by military spouses within food insecure households is likely to be an important factor in the gendered practices of familial foodways.

Qualitative Data

Following the CCHS survey, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant. Participants were given the option of an audio-video or audio-only interview to appeal to various comfort levels. The interview guide comprised 12 open-ended questions, and accompanying

probes (Appendix 1.3: Semi-structure Interview Guide). The interviews were divided into four series of questions which included warm up questions, questions relating to food in the home, questions relating to food and the military community, and final questions and closing statements in which participants had the opportunity to share other ideas, concerns, or experiences that they wished to be highlighted in this study and/or as takeaways for the Canadian Armed Forces, and/or Military Family Resource Centres. I tailored the probes based on participants' responses to the HFIM and to the interview questions. The questions for the semi-structured interview were developed by myself with input from my Master's thesis committee. In developing the interview guide I included original questions developed by me, modifications to Ziff and Garland's (2020) interview questions from their research on military spouses and gender enactment, as well as modifiable probes based on participant responses from the HFIM. Interviews lasted approximately 45 to 90 minutes and took place via Microsoft Teams.

Data Analysis

I used Attride-Stirling's (2001) six-step method of thematic analysis to analyze the qualitative data I collected for this research. Using thematic analysis allowed me to identify common themes and patterns or trends within themes (i.e., topics, ideas, common experiences, and/or patterns of meaning). Attride-Stirling's (2001) thematic analysis uses the following six steps: 1) coding the materials using MAXQDA in which a coding system was developed to organizing the text into segments. During this step I reviewed the interview transcripts for consistencies, themes, and trends. Throughout this process I was continually creating, amalgamating, and deleting codes until I was left with many codes. 2) identifying abstract themes present within the data. Once the coding system was in place, I began re-reading the segments of transcripts associated with certain codes until abstract themes began to emerge from

the data. The themes were still vague at this phase. 3) constructing thematic networks and coding. Here I began to group the themes which had emerged from the data, gave them respective names, and identified relationships between and among themes. ; 4) describing and exploring the thematic networks. Once a vague network of themes had been developed, I looked more closely at the data to check for credibility of the identified themes and analyze the material.; 5) summarizing the thematic networks. During this step I organized the themes into global themes and sub-themes to make the data succinct and understandable; 6) interpreting patterns within the networks. In this final step I analysed the data for themes, as well as compared it against the existing literature on related areas of work. During steps four through six, I practiced reflexive writing more often than in other phases of the research process. I used MAXQDA qualitative data analysis software to facilitate the data analysis process. Food security status, which was assessed with the online survey, was determined using the *Determining food security status* document which accompanies the HFSSM of the CCHS. The number of questions answered affirmatively determined the food security status at a household level.

Member checking, also known as participant validation, is a technique used to validate the credibility of the results captured within qualitative research. The results (i.e., interview transcripts, analyzed data, etc.) are returned to the participants to be reviewed for accuracy of their experiences before the data analysis process has been finalized (Birt, et al., 2016). Although member checking can be a powerful tool in validating data, I chose to not utilize this technique for two reasons. The first reason is time. Member checking can be time intensive, given that the Master's thesis is time sensitive (a completion goal of 3 semesters) I believed it was best to omit this technique. The second reason was the possibility participants would disagree with how the

data had been analysed. Since the data was analysed through critical methods, such as feminist theory, participants might not agree with my analysis. That is, the interviews may have been transcribed accurately; however, the participants' political or personal opinions may not align with my interpretation of the data because of the critical and inherently political nature of the theoretical and methodological approach that guides this work–a tension which is not pertinent to ensuring credible data analysis. In lieu of member checking, analytic rigour was ensured by keeping an audit trail, reflexive journaling, testing the emerging analyses against existing literature, as well as against my own experiences as a military spouse.

My reflexive process for this work involved journaling after many phases of this research, including journaling after I read material for the literature review after conducting each semi-structured interview, and after any writing process associated with this project, in particular, chapter 5. Results. I would ask myself questions to challenge my own understanding of the existing literature and when analysing the data collected–questions such as, "am I cherry picking quotes that speak to a predisposed belief I have that is based on my experience, or is this truly a prominent experience of the participants?", "has this circumstance changed or is there evidence of change from the CAF/DND?", "does this contradict my own experience? If so, how have I framed this result in light of my experience?" After a reflexive writing session, I would often go back to my thesis work to compare and challenge my feelings and thoughts to the contemporary literature to look for discrepancies– this was the main way I challenged my insider bias. In complement to reflexive writing, I also utilized my thesis supervisor, Dr. Brady as a soundboard to discuss my ideas and thoughts in order to get an opinion from someone familiar with the literature but also an outsider to the population being studied.

Data Management

All of the study information, including the identifying information of participants, consent forms, and all electronic records (i.e., interview recordings, transcripts) were stored in a password-protected folder on a secure, password-protected computer, and backed up on my Mount Saint Vincent University OneDrive account. Only myself and my supervisor Dr. Jennifer Brady had access to the data. The audio recordings and interview transcripts will be destroyed in 5 years from the date that I complete my thesis (May 2027). No hard copies of the data have been or will be made.

Ethical Considerations

My research obtained clearance from Mount Saint Vincent's University Research Ethics Board, as well as the Department of National Defence (DND)/Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Social Science Research Review Board (SSRRB).

The main ethical considerations of concern in my research are related to informed consent through a consent form, voluntary participation, and confidentiality and autonomy of participants. Participants were fully informed about the survey process, their rights, and instructions concerning discontinuation in the study through a description provided on the first page of the electronic consent form. Participants were also reminded and thanked for their consent before the interview recording and transcribing had begun, ensuring participants participate at their own free will.

The proposed research is categorized as a minimal risk, due to the method of participation and the content of the interviews. However, considering the size and familiarity among those in the HRM military community, participants may be easily identifiable from their transcripts. I took care to remove identifying information (i.e., names, details of specific events)

from the transcripts to protect to participants' confidentiality. I assigned all participants a four-digit number code; however, I use pseudonyms assigned to each participant when I refer to participants throughout my thesis.

In the case that a participant(s) disclosed child abuse was taking place I was prepared to report it to the Halifax Child Welfare Agency. If I believed that immediate or danger of a child was possible, I would have called 911 (as is required by law); however, I did not have to report any instances of child abuse during this research. I would not have reported adult abuse as this is not a requirement by law and would be an invasion of confidentiality.

Due to the complex and sensitive nature of the topic I developed a resource list that was included at the end of the consent form and online survey. The resource list included information about mental health services, military resources, food programing for those experiencing food insecurity, and victim abuse supports.

Knowledge Translation

The knowledge created from my research may contribute to the growing knowledge base around food insecurity within Canadian Military populations, in particular, whether or not FI is an issue among female, military spouses. The findings of this study cannot help to characterize the prevalence and severity of FI among female, military spouses due to the inadequate number of participants. However, the implementation of large-scale research within this population, which I will conduct in the course of a PhD dissertation, may help to inform food insecurity and military family policy. Furthermore, this information will help researchers and policy makers better understand the lived experiences of female, military spouses and how these experiences shape and are shaped by familial foodways, identity, and gender.

Dissemination of the research will include scholarly publication and conference presentations. I will submit abstracts for the upcoming CIMVHR Forum in October 2022 Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research (CIMVHR) and the 2023 Canadian Association for Food Studies conference. Manuscripts of findings will be prepared for a peer-reviewed publication with *The Journal of Military, Veteran and Family Health* and the *Journal of Critical Dietetics*.

Chapter 5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present and discuss the findings of my research. I begin by presenting the results of my descriptive statistical analysis of my quantitative data set, which I collected via a self-administered, online survey. The statistical analysis of my quantitative data describes the demographic profile and food security status of each participant. Next, I present the results of my qualitative data set for which I conducted semi-structured interviews and conducted thematic analysis. Recall that the objectives guiding my research are:

1. To explore experience relating to food insecurity among female-identifying military spouses of Regular Forces Canadian Armed Forces members.
2. To explore the ways that the unique stressors of military life (i.e., repeated relocations and deployments) impact familial foodways as gendered practices of identity.

5.2 Quantitative data

The online, self-administered survey comprised demographic questions and questions from the Household Food Security Module of the Canadian Community Health Survey. I present the results of each set of questions below, starting with the results of the demographic questions.

Demographic Profile

Five participants participated in this research (See Table 1.0 Demographic Profile and Food Security Status of Participants). All participants identified as adult women who were in a married or a common-law relationship with a CAF member, per the inclusion criteria of this study. Although the gender and sex of the military-member spouse were not requested in the demographic questions, and were not an inclusion criterion for the study, in the semi-structed interviews all participants described their Canadian Armed Forces spouses as male. One

participant identified as pansexual while the other four identified as heterosexual. Household income ranged with the lowest reported bracket of $25,000 to $34,999, and the highest at $150,000 or more. One participant identified as Black and the remaining four identified as White. Of the five women, three were between the ages of 25-34, one between the age of 34-44, and one between the age of 45 to 54. Regarding level of education of the military spouse, one participant had a diploma, two had a bachelor's degree, and two had master's degrees. The family composition of the participants also varied; four of the five participants reported having from one to four children under the age of 18 and/or dependents living in their household. Of the five participants, four were employed outside of the home: two on a part-time basis and two full-time. One participant identified as a caregiver/homemaker. Although a small sample, there was notable diversity among the five participants. This participant sample is consistent with the Canadian military family– mostly white, heterosexual families with children (Masner, 2018).

Table 1.0 Demographic Profile and Food Security Status of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Sexuality	Annual Income (CAD$)	Ethnicity/ Race	Age (years)	Marital Status	Education	Family Composition	# of Children	Employment	Spouse Military Rank	Food Security Status
Winnie	Woman	Pansexual	25,000 to 34,999	White	25 to 34	Married/ Common law	Bachelor's degree	Children under the age of 18	1	Employed part-time	Junior NCM	Food Insecure, Severe
Faye	Woman	Heterosexual	75,000 to 99,999	White	45 to 54	Married/ Common law	Bachelor's degree	Children under the age of 18	unreported	Employed part-time	Senior NCM	Food Secure
Harriet	Woman	Heterosexual	150,000 or more	Black	35 to 44	Married/ Common law	Master's degree	No Children or Dependents	0	Employed full-time	Senior NCM	Food Secure
Maude	Woman	Heterosexual	150,000 or more	White	25 to 34	Married/ Common law	Master's degree	Children under the age of 18	2	Employed full-time	Junior Officer	Food Secure
Jane	Woman	Heterosexual	100,000 to 149,999	White	25 to 34	Married/ Common law	Diploma certificate	Children under the age of 18	4	Caregiver/ Homemaker	Junior Officer	Food Secure

Food Secure: These households had access, at all times throughout the previous year, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

Food Insecure, Marginal: At times during the previous year these households had indications of worry about running out of food and/or limited food selection due to a lack of money for food.
Food Insecure, Moderate: At times during the previous year these households had indications of compromise in quality and/or quantity of food consumed.
Food Insecure, Severe: At times during the previous year these households had indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns

Household Food Security Module

In line with the Household Food Security Module (HHFSM) of the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS), participants were placed in one of four categories that corresponded to their food security status based on their responses to the HHFSM: food secure; food insecure, marginal; food insecure, moderate; and food insecure, or severe (see Table 1.0 Demographic Profile and Food Security Status of Participants). Four of the five participants were food secure, and one participant was found to be severely food insecure. Winnie, the participant who is severely food insecure, was the only woman to report that her military-member spouse held an entry level rank (Junior NCM), and accordingly, had the lowest household income compared to the other participants whose military-spouses held higher, better paying ranks. Winnie was also unique in comparison to the other four participants in that she self-identified as pansexual, she was a student at the time of the interview, and during the semi-structured interview disclosed that her four-year-old child is disabled and requires additional supports. Winnie also reported that she was employed part-time, but that this was a struggle given her other responsibilities as a mother, student, and military spouse. The impact on food security status of extenuating factors beyond household income, such as those Winnie experiences, will be discussed throughout the next section where I present the results of the qualitative data. I will also briefly note my recommendations related to the adequacy of the instrument used to collect food security data– HHFSM of the CCHS.

5.3 Qualitative Data

Findings from the interviews are organized into two global themes. The first global theme, the good military spouse, comprises two subthemes that I have titled 1) good military spouses are subordinate and 2) good military spouses are supportive. The second global theme, food insecurity as gendered foodwork, comprises three subthemes: 1) supports and equity; 2) employment and income; 3) food in the home. These sub-themes elaborate participants' understanding of what it means to successfully enact or embody military spouse identity.

Global theme 1: The Good Military Spouse

The first theme of this research, the good military spouse, comprises two subthemes: 1) good military spouses are subordinate; 2) good military spouses are supportive. These subthemes describe how participants experienced their military spousal roles, and how the gendered nature of these roles is co-constituted through household foodwork. Recall, that the theoretical tools informing this research build upon the understandings of gender as an "achievement" that is "done" through everyday actions (Cairns & Johnston, 2015; DeVault, 1991; West & Zimmerman, 1987), and the concept of foodwork that include the familial food patterns that establish why, how, when, and what we eat (Guptill et al., 2017). For the participants of this research, being a good military spouse meant that their foodwork– the planning, provisioning, preparing, and serving of food within a household–was performed primarily in service of their roles as good military spouses who subordinate their own needs and identities in support of the operational readiness of their military-member spouse and his career, and thus of the CAF. It is important to note that food was not always directly linked to gender by participants. Rather, when participants were asked about food they often talked about employment and/or income loss, and closely connected foodwork in their home to subordination, and their responsibilities to support their military-member spouse.

Subtheme 1: Good Military Spouses are Subordinate

This subtheme captures participants' experience of being subordinate to their military-member spouses' career because of the demands of military life, which meant that their own priorities, such as career aspirations and/or desired roles within the home, were looked upon as being less important. For example, Jane recounted her experience of being required to request permission from the CAF before making many decisions about her own life:

> ...with the military, I feel that like everything revolves around the military and there's no, there's no escaping that. It's always in like the back of your mind like, oh no, If I want to go here, I have to tell someone at work [referring to spouses work with CAF], and if I want to do that, I have to make sure that that's OK [with the CAF].

Winnie noted the acutely gendered nature of the expectations put on female-identifying military spouses to be dependent on military-member spouses to control them:

> I had been questioning some of the practices in general… [I said] Oh well, this doesn't really make a whole lot of sense and apparently my husband was contacted and they [the CAF] said, "control your wife,". So, I mean, that's not something that I expect would happen, as much or as frequently with male spouses, because when I had talked to other military wives they were like, "Oh, that's super common. They'll [The CAF] constantly be like, yeah, control your wife. You know you need to to get your wife to shut up," and stuff like that. And then of the military spouses that are a male-identifying gender, they hadn't had nearly the same percentage of that happening…

Winnie also recalled a friend's experience with loss of autonomy and feelings of subordination in relation to the workplace:

> …One of my friends had mentioned that her husband was being deployed for a period and so his chain of command had contacted her office and basically told them that she needed to work less hours so that she could look after the kids without even talking to her first. And just like expecting "Oh well, you're the mom. So, you gotta look after the kids" so I mean, that's something that's really a big problem. I find still to this day is a lot of the gender biases within the military themselves and how they've been dealing with it. And I feel like that's something that definitely needs to be addressed for sure.

Winnie's experience includes the stories of other spouses who are her friends. These shared stories contribute to the wider social context that sets expectations for military spouses. When Winnie recounted being told about the CAF speaking for her friend, she saw this as taking away her friend's autonomy, and placing pressure on her to assume traditional gender roles of caregiving and homemaking. The acutely gendered nature of the expectation that a female-identifying military spouse will simply obey the patriarchal authority of the CAF, reflects the idea that good military spouses are subordinate. The tension concerning implied subordination that exists between the military spouse and the military is likely rooted in the assumption that spouses are themselves extensions of the military. As such they will work to uphold healthy functioning of the military by performing their expected role as the good military spouse.

The strongly patriarchal narratives observed within these experiences, specifically those that speak to a pressure to occupy subordinate roles to the military-member spouse, illustrate the subordination of military spouses by the military institution. I assert that some military spouses may assume gender roles to enact good military spousal behaviours that they simply do not want to do. Also, as illustrated by Winnie's story about her friend, pressures to reduce employment hours may strain military spouses' income, which also has negative implications for personal

autonomy and for food security risks (Health Canada, 2007; McIntyre et al., 2002; Olabiyi, et al., 2014; Power, 2008; Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020).

Conversely, some participants felt that outdated patriarchal gender roles which position military spouses as subordinate are improving. For example, on more than one occasion Harriet appears to simultaneously acknowledge older, traditional models of subordinate gender narratives between spouses and the military, while suggesting that there has been change:

> …The stereotype, if you will, is still there of the wife stays home, follows, follows him [the military-member spouse] wherever his career takes him…takes care of the home and the kids, and like that kind of homemaker kind of stuff that has been in the narrative for a long time…there's that old saying– if the military wanted you to have a family, they'd issue you one–but that's not the case anymore…

In line with research conducted by DND (2020), there is an acknowledgement of the challenges placed on military spouses caused by outdated military family models and culture. Nevertheless, there are efforts by the CAF, and perhaps as Harriet's comment above suggests, within military family culture, to shift oppressive and subordinate values to be more equitable for military spouses, as well as the overall family.

In relation to "doing" the "good" military spouse, participants described a variety of experiences that illustrated this role as a subordinate one within the military family and institution. Here, patriarchal attitudes of the CAF, and what is expected of a military spouse, shape military spouses' identity, and pressure to be a *good military spouse* in ways that benefit the CAF (i.e., ensuring operational readiness of the military-member spouse). For example, Maude said:

> ...The military, they don't try and do this, but it kind of ends up where the spouse is just assumed that like you're going to have to be stay at home spouse because you're moving around so much that how could you possibly start any kind of meaningful career? Or you would make enough money to be financially independent yourself. So, I feel like that's also kind of like a gender issue that I often see.

The most consistent experiences participants described were their feelings of being pressured by the CAF, and/or military family communities, to perform gender roles that did not match the role they wished to play in their family, often including the limitations that these attitudes placed on their careers. As Maude also mentions, she believes that pressures to enact certain responsibilities as a military spouse, that results in being unable to have a "meaningful career," are a "gender issue." That is, perhaps the expectation for women to enact the good military spouse is greater than it would be for military spouses who are men.

There was a common idea among participants that they knew what they "signed up for" when referring to their military life experience, and what might be expected of them as a result. As Harriet said, "you have to make some of those choices of, you know, trying to be your own person. And so not losing that identity, 'cause you know, I mean, I knew what I signed up for…" The phenomenon here describes military spouses casually implying that when they began a relationship with a military member it was their responsibility to know the duties and challenges of the military spousal role. In other words, they were in no position to question or complain about the expectations placed on them by their military-member spouses' careers or the military. However, challenging the notion that they should have known what they "signed up for", participants also noted that civilians do not have a good understanding of what military life is like. As Faye said, "Nobody is understanding that I'm only here because this makes our life work

and he's not even here." Comments like this suggest that spouses blame themselves, or sense that they will be blamed by others and even their husbands, for not knowing, preparing for, and/or accepting their role as a subordinate good military spouse. That is, although spouses recognize the negative implications that their subordinate status as a military spouse might have on their own lives, they continue to accept and perform this highly gendered role. I assert that hegemonic narratives which imply that military spouses are responsible for their own challenges as part of their role as military spouse, because they "knew what they signed up for", may stunt issues of oppression from being rectified. For example, if military spouses are required to adapt their employment and income whilst simultaneously believing that they should have been able to predict and plan for such an occurrence, they may feel deterred from advocating for change because of the implicit assumption that they should have known that such challenges are part of what it is to be a good military spouse.

In closing the first subtheme, good military spouses are subordinate, military spouses discussed expectations for them to relinquish control over decisions regarding their own lives when they conflicted those of the military-members' career. Also, that this relinquishing of control was thought by participants to be gendered and sometimes accompanied by a pressure from the CAF for military spouses to be controlled by their military-member spouse, positioning them as subordinate to the military-member's career. These experiences appeared to manifest as limited employment opportunities for military spouses, which were accompanied by expectations that military spouses were mainly responsible for caregiving, foodwork, and homemaking. The tendency for participants to talk about subordination through loss of employment and control when asked about food, provides insight on how military spouses connect foodwork and other homemaking activities, to oppressive understandings of their roles as military spouses. That is,

foodwork may be understood by military spouses as one of the subordinate expectations of a military spouse as part of their role in the military family.

Subtheme 2: Good Military Spouses are Supportive

The second sub-theme, good military spouses are supportive, describes the pressure felt by participants to support the military-member spouse's career, but also the mental and emotional wellbeing of their military spouse. Being supportive typically translated into ensuring the operational readiness of their military-member spouse. For participants, ensuring operational readiness of the military-member spouse means that participants feel they must ensure that their military-member spouses are, at all times, physically and mentally prepared to execute the mission of the CAF. Many participants recognized that without the support they provide, their military-member spouses would be less successful in their careers and less able to respond to the demands of the military. Hence, participants' roles in the family ultimately supports the optimal functioning of the military itself. For example, when discussing times when her military spouse was posted or deployed, Faye consistently referred to these instances as "our deployment" or "our posting." During one narrative Faye paused her story to note:

> …I'm sure you understand this talk about it being our posting, I talk about our life being our military life because I know without me, my husband would have a very different job. He wouldn't get to do what he's doing.

Faye and other participants are aware that without their continual support and personal sacrifice (i.e., job loss due to relocation, disconnecting from social networks and supports), the military-member spouse would be less successful in their military career and less operationally ready– something the CAF also continually acknowledges.

For Winnie, the only participant from a household that could be classified as food insecure based on her responses to the HHFSM, supporting her military spouse meant shielding him and her child from food insecurity. Winnie recalled not burdening her spouse with the reality that she was struggling with too little income to buy adequate food for herself and her family:

> Well, like when he was away, I didn't really want to stress or burden him. So, I wouldn't even tell him about like our issues with food security...I wouldn't tell my husband I was going to a food bank either 'cause I didn't want him to stress out about how bad the finances were. I just wanted him to kind of keep to his thing [referring to military work] so like his food was never impacted or my daughter's. It was never impacted, but mine was often impacted 'cause I didn't want, you know him to be kind of aware. Like, there's definitely a sense of of shame as a military spouse when you think, Oh well, I don't want to give them an unfit meal, or I don't want to lessen the nutrition value that they should be getting every day.

Winnie notes that she chose not to disclose the family's food insecurity and income issues to her military-member spouse to shield him from the stress associated with worrying about feeding the family, but also to ensure that he was being fed healthy meals, which she notes is her responsibility as a military spouse. Winnie's attempt to lessen the burden on her family by bearing this stress is consistent with other research findings that show that women habitually sacrifice the quality and quantity of their food to lessen the negative impacts on others in the household, especially children, and bear the brunt of stretching insufficient food resources to feed the family (McIntyre et al., 2002; Williams, et al., 2012). My research supports these findings but contributes a unique perspective on how the experiences and management of food insecurity are gendered in the context of military families. Winnie, like other women in

research, may shield members of the family during times of food insecurity. Because of this, it is difficult to determine from Winnie's experience if her skipping meals is rooted entirely in her responsibility as a military spouse to ensure operational readiness; the tendency for women in general to alter their own needs to protect other members of the family; or perhaps what is more likely, a combination of both. However, what is unique about Winnie's recollection in contrast to past research concerning women and food insecurity is that she suggests that her shame, or motivation to hide these stressors from her spouse, is rooted in her inability to successfully be supportive, and thus perform as a good military spouse. Winnie's sense of shame in failing as a good, supportive military spouse suggests that there is a pressure on military spouses to shield military-member spouses from challenges within the home to not negatively impact their operational readiness.

In line with Winnie's retelling of her friend's experience in the previous subtheme, spouses casually discussed the need to leave their employment when military deployments and/or postings arose. Participants' experiences suggest that there is an unspoken understanding that the military-member spouse's career is the centre of the household, and whatever the military-spouse did outside of supporting her military-member spouse's career and ensuring their operational readiness, was less important. For example, Jane discussed continuously feeling pressured to make personal sacrifices, such as leaving her job and social networks whenever her military-member spouse was called to a deployment and/or posting:

> I don't know, my husband, just, it was never in his mind set for him to take parental leave, so it always fell on me to like take a step back. It was always like, especially with the military was always me that had to leave my job to move somewhere else… Yeah, I felt like, as a spouse, I feel that I make a lot more sacrifices in my life then then my

> husband does ‘cause he he’s moving around [referring to deployments]…There’s always someone he knows wherever he's posted so there's always those old friends, those faces he recognizes. And then there’s me and I have him and I have my children, and I’m trying to find new people every time, and like, it sucks making friends as an adult.

Further, the repetitive, and isolating nature described in Jane’s experience suggests that military spouses and military-member spouses may have different experiencing that are inequitable to the military spouse. Jane describes a distinct social deprivation that she experiences when her family has been posted throughout their military life. She notes that her husband consistently has a social network within the military, but that she is continuously isolated and left to find new social circles. On one hand, when military-member spouses are required to relocate due to postings, they may have pre-existing relationships with other military members and their careers remain stable, perhaps making transitions more seamless. On the other hand, military spouses leave employment, social circles, and supports to uphold the CAF’s mission, sometimes without consult before these dramatic lifestyle shifts happen. I assert that the differences in social experiences between military and military-member spouses might position military spouses to be further dependant on their military-member spouse. In this way, military spouses may be forced into a dependant-type role with their spouse both financially from loss of employment, as well as socially due to social deprivation and/or isolating experiences.

Although spouses clearly articulated the challenges associated with their supportive roles as a military spouse, the concern some participants raised was the disrespectful nature of the delivery or decision-making processes by the CAF. Maude noted that she wished she had been consulted in posting discussions, rather than such important decisions being made without consent or discussion with the family:

> Their [The CAF] actions don't say that we matter because everything is always very last minute or it's like, 'You're doing this'. It, it's, it's, they're telling them what to do versus like saying like can you do this? Like, does it work with like your family life like?

Harriet also described her desire to be considered when significant decisions about her family are being made, such as postings:

> … for the members to be to feel supported and be happy, like they need to come home to a happy home. And like it's not just uhm one sided, and so the the the spouse having, feeling valued, not just not just by the, by the military in a sense, but like you know, having respect for the work that we [military spouses] do, whether it's in the home, doing the home thing, or you know in my case, for example, you know, valuing the fact that I have a career and I'm moving up and I'm doing this, that and the other thing. Uhm, in and taking that. And I know there's operational requirements, like I get that, but …one size doesn't fit all across the board and I think there needs to be, you know. Uhm, you need really need to look at at the experiences of members holistically and but also like reasonably…I feel like there's there's some more humanity that could be brought into into how they, how they treat, how they, how they support the members and the members families. Uhm, and it's not just providing services at the MFRC, it's about really valuing the the contributions that the families make and and really taking a look at the whole picture and what makes a military family thrive in their in their settings…

Harriet recognizes the operational requirements of her military-member spouse, but at the root of the experience is perhaps the desire to be treated in an equitable way by the CAF, such that her role in the operations of the military family is valued and treated with respect, rather than in a

way that denotes spouses are oppressively obligated to perform supportive roles in service of the military.

Although participants noted their frustrations with the imbalanced nature of the CAF to dictate major life changes, participants also expressed a sense of pride. This pride was related to their crucial role in ensuring their spouses' operational readiness, furthermore, supporting the effectiveness of the military institution. For example, in contrast to her experience of being devalued by the miliary, Harriet also spoke of the pride in helping to be part of something bigger than herself:

> Some of the, like things that I would consider, like, a little, I mean negative in a sense of like just being, having no control over over your life in a sense with postings and things like that. And but I also think of the positive sides of that in, you know, as a military wife, being supportive of of the member who's in and the craziness that happens, and the good that happens. And and being a part of, of something that's, you know, a little bit bigger.

Harriet was the only participant who did not have dependants, and whose spouse had not been posted that required she relocate, which she reported helped her to maintain long-term employment. She was also of the highest income bracket of participants. The context of Harriet's family life and her comments suggest that military families with no, or possibly fewer dependants that experience no, or fewer, postings resonate less with negative images of military spouses and are more likely to happily support the operational requirements of their military-member spouse. This is important for two reasons. First, it suggests that the role of military spouse is gendered, but also connected to their roles as mothers. Perhaps then, there is an expectation for military spouses to not only enact homemaking and foodwork activities, but also

that mothering may compound challenges for military spouses. If women military spouses without children, like Harriet, can speak about their supportive position as a military spouse with pride, a central difference may be related to not whether one is a parent, but if they are able to have meaningful lives outside of their roles as a military spouse, such as through employment or social circles. It may be that military spouses without children are more likely to enact long-distance relationships with the military-member spouse when postings arise. This suggests that it may not be the supportive duties that accompany the military spousal role, rather the lack of support and options during times of transition, such as those observed within the previous examples in which employment loss and social isolation was experienced.

Discussion of the COVID-19 pandemic arose in some interviews. Participants noted that because their military-member spouses were required to be home more, they were able to provide more "help", including foodwork, more often. Jane explained:

> I mean, he was home more often. So, he was definitely able to like help with that [food and home tasks], which was nice. Even now, like, uh, he's still like, there's the bad habits like it's coming back, right? There's another wave so it's even more home time, but definitely with the more home time, it definitely helps with the the planning of things, and helping around the house more, and in planning or helping with the meals and whatnot. And the kid's lunches.

Participants' references to their military-member spouses as helpers suggest that she carries the responsibility of supporting their miliary-spouses' careers. One way in which the role of the good military spouse was described by participants was in an expectation for military spouses to take on more traditional gender roles, most specifically those pertaining to homemaking,

caregiving, and foodwork during times of deployment. For example, Maude said about this experience:

> My spouse is not very old school. He's pretty modern, and so he's definitely fine with cooking and cleaning and like doing groceries and stuff. But I can see how, especially during deployment season like you're very much forced into that gender role. Whether or not that's your usual way of living.

When discussions concerning pressure to assume various responsibilities of foodwork within the context of military culture, such as cooking, some participants noted that they did not feel pressure from their family to fulfill such roles. Rather, they mentioned an "outside" pressure. In relation to this, when asked if she felt pressure to assume the role of foodworker Faye said, "Not by my family. They know. But like. But yes, outside of that, yes, I think so." I hold that the outside pressure Faye mentions for military spouses to perform foodwork is perpetuated by the CAF rather than the military-member spouse. Therefore, part of successful enactment of the good military spouse role involves assuming foodwork responsibilities.

When asked to describe what they thought of when I said, "military wife," some participants identified CAF expectations that resonated with older representations of gender, but what is more, would distance themselves from such representations. As noted above, Harriet referred to "the stereotype… of the wife stays home, follows, follows him…" Harriet distances herself from her understandings of military wife narratives by *othering* the description, using "the wife" rather than "I" or "we", suggesting that this is what may be expected of a military spouse, but not necessarily a description that resonates with her own experience. Like Harriet, Jane distances herself from the idea of military spouse using terms such as "them" rather than "we", saying:

> Uh, I also see them as mostly like the house person, if that makes sense. I feel like it's a little bit degrading, but like, in my situation, like I don't like. I mean, I'm home most the time anyway, so like anything house related falls on me, the spouse who is the one who's home. Like I, I do most of the child work. I do most of like the planning like the social planning for the children and myself and my husband, and I know I feel like we're the, I don't feel like my husband is mostly out of the house, like work related, and everything else kind of falls on me.

Likely rooted in what Harriet and Jane observe, expectations from the CAF, and stereotypes within their communities, they position themselves in a way that implies that they are somehow different from the standard military spouse, while in some cases, such as Jane's, still simultaneously resonating with these descriptions. Jane also discussed gender dynamics with her husband, the military spouse, that further suggest where Jane's responsibilities ought to be:

> I feel that a lot of the time it's on the woman to, to kind of deal with all the house stuff, even if they have employment of their own. It still kind of falls under that. I know my husband makes jokes about it all the time, that my place is in the kitchen.

Faye also spoke about the relationship between gender and military spousal responsibility. When asked, "How do relocation or deployments impact gender norms specific to your household?" Faye noted, "Well, I'm the mom. I do it all… The idea of gender norms, when he is not here, everything falls to me." In line with Harrell (2001) and Taber (2009), who describe the expectation for military spouses to be self-sufficient during times of deployments, Faye briefly notes that during times of deployments, there is the expectation that she, as a military spouse, must sustain all requirements of the family and home.

In closing the first global theme, the good military spouse, participants describe military spouse as being subordinate to and supportive of their military spouses' career. Participants feel that this role is often enacted through being agreeable with CAF decisions (i.e., accepting postings, leaving, or altering employment); foodwork, homemaking, and childrearing; and shielding military members from stressors that may implicate their operational effectiveness and/or readiness (i.e., withholding financial struggles, skipping meals, and reducing own needs). The descriptions of this role were often highly gendered, noting that activities such as foodwork were womanly, and would be expected and enacted by the military spouse. It is important to note that not all participants identified with negative perceptions of the military spousal role. As previously noted, spouses also felt pride in their ability to support their military spouses' careers, but commonly expressed a desire for more respectful and equitable exchanges between the CAF and their family regarding major life decisions (i.e., postings).

Global theme 2: Food Insecurity

As previously mentioned, the experience of food insecurity has gendered implications. For example, women will continually skip meals and go without necessities to shield other family members from the impacts of food insecurity (Williams, et al., 2012; McIntyre et al., 2002; Jessiman-Perreault & McIntyre, 2019). The global theme, food insecurity, highlights the connection between military family life experiences and risks to food security. I have organized these experiences into three subthemes: support and equity; employment and income; and food in the home. These three subthemes elucidate the key features of food insecurity and financial vulnerability experienced by participants. Broadly, how the risks to household and individual food security were experienced by participants differed with the number and frequency of postings and deployments, as well as the overall experience of military spousal status (most

notably on employment and income changes). This theme highlights how participants experienced and managed the risks to food insecurity as a part of the gendered foodwork they performed in the home, and that was part of their role as a good military spouse.

Subtheme 1: Support and Equity

The subtheme, support and equity, describes the relationship between food insecurity risk and the consistency and quality of supports that are available to military families. Participants frequently shared that they felt confused about the supports available to them and doubted the ability and sincerity of the CAF to address the inequalities at the root of the negative impact on them and their families. Maude notes:

> Well, I would say. Did they [the CAF] have an ethical responsibility to fix the problems of overtaxing the military spouses and that they need to stop asking for military spouses to give more? And doing that crappy little speech? You know whenever there is a change of command, like oh and this couldn't be possible without the support of the family– intelligently, shut up. No one wants to hear that. That's not helping in any way. It's doing lip service to a problem that you're not fixing.

As Maude points out, some women may feel overtaxed by the military system. Although some participants noted that the CAF recognizes the military spouse's contribution, personal sacrifice, and hardships, they felt that there was little done to help support them in tangible ways. Participants also regularly appeared frustrated with what they described as the "lip service" from the military, and that CAF's efforts to support spouses were misdirected. Maude went on to say:

> They need to recognize that just connecting us through MFRC programs that are shallowly funded and poorly resource are not enough. But also, like not even the right

direction to go in. You don't need to be connecting us to each other. You need to actually be providing resources.

The DND and CAF acknowledges that there are spousal inequalities that require attention, most notable to this research the need for employment opportunities for military spouses (Department of National Defense, 2020). For those participants in this study, the efforts made by the CAF and DND may not yet be translating at a working level for military spouses. Therefore, the reality for some military spouses may still be that they are under served, unaware of services, and continue to make personal sacrifices (such as loss of employment) in order to support their military spouse. This is important because of the strong connection known to exist between income and food insecurity.

Participants also appeared frustrated with the lack of recognition placed on them for their personal sacrifice to the military. On this Faye held back tears while saying:

> Yes, I do feel that as a spouse that, like sure they [the CAF] say, they, you know, that we [military spouses] we helped we help our our partners and whatever. Uhm, I just. Their actions don't say that we matter…It's this is your work, and this is number one forever and for always. And anything like what's going on at home will work around what's going on at work. And I feel that there should be a bit more of communication and like a more 50/50 versus like 100% work and 0% home life. Rather than if you could get home life in there that then that's great, but if not, whatever. Too bad, so sad.

Faye speaks to her mistrust of the CAF through noting that although the CAF may identify the importance of military spouses, she doubts their sincerity. One example she uses to demonstrate how this is true for her is in her lack of confidence in the CAF to assist with equitable family balance. When Faye refers to the "50/50 versus like 100% work and 0% home life" she is noting

that, currently, her partner is expected to give 100% to his job (the CAF), leaving their family and home entirely hers to manage, and entirely dependent upon her partner's military career. However, she wishes there was more balance between her partner's military career and the home.

There appeared to be low confidence in the military's ability to rectify inequalities experienced by spouses. Participants were unanimous in their feelings of being under supported and often overtaxed by their indirect roles as military spouses within the military system. Maude details her frustrations with the assumption that the military spouses will rely on each other to fill gaps– taxing an already overtaxed group of people:

> And they're [other military spouses] dealing with their own stuff too, like if one of my friends has four kids. So, like I could drop off my kids one afternoon every once in a while, but like if she's all alone and leaving her with six kids is a ridiculous assumption to make like this, that's so not going to happen. She has more problems than I have. Like it's it's a support system in that you have someone to talk to, but it's not a support system in that you have someone who can do anything for you.

In the previous examples, participants continually note their desire for more support services that must include material resources rather than isolated to social supports such as efforts to connect spouses with one another. Research does shows that community building is important for health – people with more social connections are mentally (Schwartz & Litwin, 2019) and physically (Ashida & Heaney, 2008) healthier; among USA veterans it has been shown to reduce the rate of suicide by helping veterans to make important connections through social networks for resources and supports (Gorman et al., 2022). Although community building has strong merit for military family health, as a main resource participants feel it may be overtaxing military spouses.

In contrast to feelings of frustration regarding a lack of supports, Winnie also noted a positive experience with resources available to military families, through the Military Family Resource Center (MFRC), noting that she was able to obtain a counselor, but that the search for supports was difficult. Like many participants, when asked, "Who supports you?", she was silent for a length of time before responding, saying:

> Uh, you know the Military Family Resource Center has been really good about telling us when you know there's counselors that are available that we can talk to. For example, so, starting next week, actually, I'm going to be starting to see one of the military counselors…And so I think, you know, once you've looked for those resources and know that they're available, you can go find them, but sometimes it's a little difficult to know what's available to you if you don't even know what there is…

Harriet also noted a positive experience of support, this time offered directly by the CAF rather than MFRCs, which was helpful in supporting her own life fulfilment outside of her status as a military spouse. When her spouse was relocated due to a miliary posting she was able to delay joining him through the Imposed Restriction (IR) category: "If IR [imposed restrictions] wasn't an option and I had to move then I am giving up my career, my dreams, aspirations of what I want for myself outside of the home." Imposed Restriction (IR) is an approved delay in moving "dependents" and belongings for one year, with possible extensions up to five years. The DND also notes that this is not a benefit program, rather it is a military status (Department of National Defence, 2022). IR is often accompanied by Separation Expense (SE) which is a benefit that may reimburse CAF members for a portion of the additional living expenses that result from the IR separation if the CAF member meets the prerequisites for this benefit (Department of National Defence, 2022). When Harriet describes IR, she is presumably referring to the combination of IR

and SE. What is also noteworthy is the language used in the description is the DNDs choice to use dependents to describe all of those who did not accompany the military-member spouse in the move, rather than separating spouses from dependents (such as children) in this description. The perhaps unintentional use of dependents that is still often used in military language implies that military spouses are subordinate to military-member spouses.

Harriet describes the experience with IR as a positive one, helping her to keep her current employment and maintain some quality of life that was meaningful to her. As mentioned, IR is often accompanied by a form of income assistance to some degree, to offset cost of living expenses that families take on due to living apart. I assert that income programs or subsidies for military spouses that are required to relocate due to postings may also offset spousal challenges (i.e., loss of employment, reductions in income, and/or increases in cost of due to living apart, etc.) as seen here with IR.

Regarding consistency of supports and programing, Jane noted that experiences and supports can change dramatically from one MFRC site to another, saying:

> the MFRC in [location removed for privacy] was absolutely amazing. They were like. Uhm? There was once where I was really sick and I had to go to the hospital, but my husband wasn't, he wasn't here, he was in Portage. Uhm, and so I was, I needed someone to stay at home with the kids…I think it was quite early in the morning when I ended up calling [the MFRC] and so they sent over emergency childcare. They took care of the kids for me. There was actually a Christmas party going on that weekend, so they actually took the kids to the Christmas party 'cause I didn't want them to miss it…in Moosejaw I knew that I had like that like anyone if I called the MFRC and said this is my problem, there was always a solution available to me…Coming here to [location removed

> for privacy] or in [location removed for privacy], ummm, definitely a very different experience. I don't feel that I could just call them and be like I need help…But yeah, the MFRC experience from [location removed for privacy] to [location removed for privacy]– completely different.

Jane describes that at one posting location she felt supported while at another she did not feel that support was available. Given that there are military bases, and as such, posting locations across Canada, consistency in the supports available to military families, I assert, is an important facet of overall family health. Food insecurity can be episodic, typically during periods of income reduction as is seen with military spouses during times of postings. Having income subsidy programs, like Harriet was able to access, may help to offset many challenges faced by families, especially if the supports and programs and inconsistent or not accessible to all military families and at all times.

In relation to income and food more directly, Winnie discusses the food insecurity realities for her family, expressing how essential family support is to ensure she can acquire food, saying:

> I'll be dead honest with you. Had I not had the support of my family, even with the food banks, I probably wouldn't have been able to give her [her daughter] sufficient healthy meals to be able to cover her.

Winnie was the only participant who was a spouse to a military-member transitioning into the military and was also the only participant found to be food insecure at the severe level. Although there are no national statistics concerning food insecurity rates of military families, this is suggestive that entry level families may be at an increased risk of experiencing food insecurity due to compounding factors such as employment loss of military spouse and loss of family and

social supports if they have been posted. Entry level members have had less time to build social networks within military communities, therefore, these families likely have less social support than other military families, are less familiar with the supports and services offered such as those through the MFRC and have also experiencing culture shocks and new ways of living. New members also have lower income. There is more knowledge concerning the transition out of the military (military member to veteran), but much less is known about the transition from civilian to military member. Regarding how entry level recruits are impacted, Maude said:

> The people who are at an entry level are being disproportionately marginalized and impacted, it's just terrible. And and their spouses are then trapped in a very vicious cycle where they can't be successful at any kind of education. They can't access daycare; they can't access cleaning services or food services. Like, there's a lot of work that needs to go into those entry level positions, and maybe that should be part of those signing packages, you know. Not just a contract between the military member in the military, but the the family in the military too.

Maude describes the situation for some military spouses that include additional challenges that compound a cycle of inequalities that trap military families in financial vulnerability and, potentially food insecurity. The cycle Maude describes is characteristic of military spouses which have also been identified among food insecure people in Canada, such as low income, precarious and episodic employment, and low educational attainment (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020).

While the CAF and DND acknowledges spousal inequalities and makes efforts to lessen these burdens through program planning, Maude notes that changes are not happening fast enough:

> I think the CAF needs to know that every single person has to be heard. And I think until we start listening to every single person; answer or question or suggestion; or ask for support, of any gender, of any background they are not gonna be able to change that idea. Uh, inclusion is so, so, so important and we have to start respecting that in and making sure that everybody is heard… and I think that the traditions that we have talked about in this conversation are changing. Uhm? But I have a fear that they're not changing fast enough.

Complementing ongoing actions by the CAF and DND, some participants suggested compensation to spouses to assist with lessening the challenges faced. On this Faye said:

> …So, the fact that MFRC have had lots of changes in the 20 years we've been in but are still focused on connecting with people who reach out to them or given permission to reach out to things like that. There's not a, there's not a support. There's not an acknowledgement outside of them [the MFRC] to say [that] people can say thank you, that's one thing, but to say that this job, as a parent is already something that isn't acknowledged enough or [that it] obviously is unpaid work. As a parent, everybody who is a parent doesn't get paid for it, but, when you're also moving around the country 'r the world to support someone else. There should be maybe different compensation for that. And they [The CAF] don't feel that there is.

Some participants mentioned a desire for mediation by an "unbiased, neutral, third party" to help identify spousal needs and lessen gender biases placed on spouses. Regarding this Winnie said:

> I feel like they [the CAF] haven't found that neutral ground. So, what they need to do is get an unbiased, neutral, third party that can help bridge the gap between those and facilitate a much more productive discussion and representation of the relationships

between military spouses of female identifying gender and the military itself. Because right now I feel like it's extremely negative right now, so there's very few military spouses that have been in, say, more than five years. Even that I've encountered that don't have at least 10 stories that they can rattle off the top of their head without even thinking of negative experiences that they've had simply because of their gender and being a military spouse.

In sum, participants appeared to lack confidence in the CAF to rectify issues concerning inequalities faced by military-spouses. Spouses felt that there was a lack of usable supports, or were unaware how to seek out supports, and that the kind and quality of supports were inconsistent among MFRC units across Canada. The main supports that were described by participants were the desire for situational income subsidy programs to help offset costs associated with military life; more consistency across Canada for military supports; and knowledge of those supports available. Although these data do not speak directly to food insecurity, it is strongly relevant. As noted, women in general are at an increased risk for food insecurity, women who are unable to sustain stable income and have households with children, are at an even higher risk (Taurasuk & Mitchell, 2020). The inconsistencies and effectiveness of supports mentioned within this section highlight the ways in which military spouses may be disproportionately marginalized, and thus at an increased risk to episodic food insecurity.

Subtheme 2: Employment and Income

Income, or more specifically financial precarity, is the most significant determinant of food insecurity (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). When income is inconsistent, food insecurity may be situational and episodic rather than chronic. In the context of military families, financial precarity could mean that a household may experience food insecurity at one time, such as

directly after a posting, given the household upheaval and potential impact on household income, that may resolve, such as after settling in from a posting and employment and childcare arrangements are made. Military spouses are frequently required to leave employment due to postings and deployment demands (Department of National Defence, 2020), which may negatively impact household income and increase their risk of food insecurity. This subtheme, employment and income, highlights the experiences of participants in relation to the impacts of postings, deployments, and overall military spouses' dependency on their military-member spouses, and how those changes have impacted their food security experiences. The impact of deployment on household food security as a result of changed income was not a frequent feature of participants' experiences. Rather, participants more often talked about the direct impact of deployment on food insecurity as a result of change to foodwork in the home. I will discuss the relationship between household food insecurity and foodwork in the next subtheme section, food in the home.

Consistent with other research findings (Department of National Defence, 2013; Department of National Defence, 2020), in relation to work trajectories spouses continually described the negative impacts that postings had on their employment and income. Jane noted:

> …When we moved from [location removed for privacy] to [location removed for privacy], I had to leave that job that I'd found. It was a great job. I loved it, but we were moving so. And it was it was not like 'oh Jane, like do you want to stay in Ottawa and keep working there? And we'll just stay apart for a few years?' It's, 'OK I got us a house let's move.' And it was like, 'oh, I guess, I guess I'm leaving' and then the same thing. I'd found a job in [location removed for privacy] and then, 'Uh, OK, we're going to Nova Scotia. So, I guess I'm leaving another job.' And it sucks because like when I work, I like

> putting like 100% in the work. And it's like I don't like calling in sick and I just don't like anything negative to come back to me. But it's it's. I have to call in sick because my kid is sick and my husband can't take the time off or he won't ask for the time off and I had to leave because my husband's in the meeting. It just sucks. So. It's definitely yeah, it's definitely, everything military-related is number one always and anything that I do is, 'You'll find another job.'. It just sucks.

Like Jane's experience, Faye also recalls feeling "shocked" after a posting resulted in a significant decrease in household income. She described having to stretch what income was available and, as a result, she worried about her ability to feed her family:

> I remember being shocked at what they were providing for us [referring to supports available to her family during a posting relocation] and then when I had to kind of put everything together and I realized that it was very minimal…Once we broke down numbers like, specifically, money that is coming to us, and what we had access to. Also, how we did the transition and relocation, and how we, how we made sure that uh, on the other end we didn't, we didn't struggle 'cause we have had struggles when we've fully moved in that you don't see money for a little while. So, I guess I've learned it, but it's taken 20 years. So, the next move will be much smoother. I'm sure for everyone…But I don't think outside of the military world people, or even within it, maybe, people don't realize what that cost looks like and how, how much more it actually is. I have spoken to people who thought we got to live for free somewhere. So, that idea, and then thinking about food in terms of that. If you can't afford your rent and can you even afford food, that that scares me a little bit…

Faye explains that the actual costs of moving due to a military posting are a real setback for her financially, and that these relocations impact her ability to afford food. Added to the experiences concerning postings and income loss, Jane recalled a period after a posting when she experienced food insecurity rooted in income changes, but also due to food access issues relating to a lack of transportation and grocery store proximity:

> I, when we first moved, we lived in Winnipeg and the cost of living was higher than we expected. So, we did have to make some changes and we did, uh, struggle with how to…It wasn't about not having what we needed 'cause we were a small family of three at that time. Well, I, I was gonna say with one vehicle… and I would use the vehicle to stock up. Probably more than than I ever have, which is interesting just convenience wise, that's what I had to do, and because I didn't want to take the stroller at minus 45 to the grocery store, I still remember that actually, that moment of OK, we're not going 'cause we can't get through the snow. Yeah, I can see it right now, like what walking out the door and there was a wonderful little convenience store actually, but that's it, they carried quick stuff…

The experience in loss of employment and income due to posting requirements among participants, may mean that food insecurity is likely. The inconsistency between participants' experiences and the results of the HHFSM, which indicated only one participant was food insecure, may indicate that military families experience episodic food insecurity as a result of postings.

In addition to job losses subsequent to postings, other participants discussed the limitations that postings meant for their work trajectories and employability. Maude noted that because she is a military spouse her ability to successfully do her job is challenged:

> My supervisor is a guy who has no kids who is able to move on to get his PhD, and now he's potentially leaving, which means that I might be filling in for his role and there's some discussion about whether or not I can handle it because there's so much going on and I'm like, yeah, I can handle it. I'm I'm fine, just put me in the role, but at the same time there is a recognition of like OK, but you can't do anything really outside of work hours for four months while your husband is on operation [name removed for privacy] or whatever.

Maude's experience suggests that there are more subtle, but equally impactful, negative impacts on military spouses' employment trajectories beyond the more obvious impacts such as employment loss due to postings. Considering Maude's experience, military spouses must also balance home and family life alone, and often in a workplace culture that makes striking that balance more challenging. Employers may make assumptions or provide little leeway to military spouses given their household responsibilities when their military-member spouses are deployed. This suggests that not only does being a military spouse increase the likelihood of job loss due to postings, but also that being a spouse to a military member might deter employers from hiring military spouses because they believe that they are unable to adequately meet workplace demands.

In sum, participants discussed loss of employment and income as a main challenge, which is consistent with findings from other research on military families (Department of National Defense, 2020), and this has possible implications on episodic food security and foodwork challenges. What my research newly sheds light on is how a military spouses' employability may also be negatively impacted outside of posting and deployment times. More specifically, my research indicates that employers may have preestablished ideas concerning

productivity and what employment responsibilities a military spouse may be able to handle. Therefore, in addition to military spousal and family food security being negatively impacted due to postings and deployments, they may be further compromised because of how their employability is viewed publicly.

Subtheme 3: Food in the Home

Food in the home speaks to participants' experiences concerning how foodwork is impacted in the military family in relation to deployments and postings. In response to questions about food and foodwork in the home, most participants spoke enthusiastically and in detail about the meals that they ate as a family, who cooked, and how the table was arranged. Because many participants spoke at great length about their mealtimes, I have exerted a small piece of Winnie's discussion on breakfast in which she speaks to this:

> …yeah so 99% of the time we typically tend to have cold breakfast. However, on like Saturdays, especially where you know the occasional Sunday, we might decide to do like a full hot breakfast or something like that. And typically we do full English breakfast 'cause again, my husband's English so he likes it's big, but making sure that we have things like sausages, bacon, eggs, beans, like whole shebang, hash Browns, toast like full English breakfast… she's really obsessed with Marmite Toast, like obsessed, cannot get her to stop eating Marmite, my husband thinks it's wonderful because it's very British….[we have] kind of a shared responsibility, though. My husband often makes the lunches 'cause he's just making one for himself and he just makes an extra sandwich for my daughter. And and so that that's more typically something that he'll do.

When questions concerning how deployments and/or postings affected meals and food, participants were markedly less enthusiastic. Participants reported worsening of foodwork and

food security; sometimes skipping meals for various reasons, such as decreased "mental capacity" because they feared for their spouse's safety or were busier with running the household alone. When asked how deployments affected food in their home, participants mainly described the emotional nature of mealtimes, and forgetting to eat or lack of desire to eat. For example, Jane said:

> Yeah, but it's like you know there was many times where I wasn't even consciously making the decision not to eat. It was just such constant. Go go, go, go, go. I just didn't even remember. So, I mean, yeah, that's that's something that was an issue. And you know, especially when he's away, you just sometimes don't have the time or the mental capacity to try and think of what to make and then actually go and get all the ingredients and then make it. So, I mean, yeah, it was constant like I'd always make sure that she had had good food, but like I'd often forget myself on those ones when he was away for sure.

Jane also later said:

> … I tend to not eat with the children when my husband is, when my husband has gone, I just find it easier to get like, to get things done. So, like, when the kids are sitting down and eating, I'm cleaning up and then that way when they're done dinner. It's, I could just put their their dirty dishes away and then; sorry, I'm also making their lunches for the next day. That way when the kids are showered and in bed, I come back downstairs and there's like nothing for me to do other than like if I want to get myself food…

When I asked about food in the home during interviews, participants often guided the conversation towards the ways in which they felt unsupported by the CAF and/or how their employment was affected. However, what they mainly said directly about food was that during times of deployments their enjoyment for eating and ability to remember to eat was negatively

impacted. As discussed earlier regarding military spouses supporting and being subordinate, they also mentioned that there was an expectation for military spouses to do foodwork, not by their families, but from the CAF.

In contrast, some participants believed that food security improved during times of deployment because there were fewer people to feed, as Winnie stated:

> …it's really helped in reducing the overall cost of food 'cause before that, our food, as for when it was just the three of us, was somewhere between 6 to $800 a month, trying to work around all those food restrictions, and now it's down to like 3 to $400 a month, so significantly less expensive.

Although discussions concerning food in the home came up less frequently, the implications regarding food I have identified related mostly to mealtimes being emotionally complex, that mealtimes were less enjoyable, or that because they had more to do, they would sometimes skip meals. Some participants also noted that food costs were reduced during deployments, and they saw this as a positive impact.

In closing, participants described the expectations of good military spouses as comprising two main facets—military spouses are subordinate to and supportive of their military spouses' career and to the goals of the CAF. The good military spouse role was described by participants as being enacted through expectations of foodwork, homemaking, and child rearing, and being agreeable with CAF decisions (i.e., willingness to leave or alter employment as needed due to postings and operational requirements of military-member spouses). The ways in which the enactment of the military spousal role impacted upon food security were most notable in military spouses' requirement to leave employment due to postings and alter employment due to deployments. In some cases, their overall employability was lessened because of their military

spousal status when employers questioned their ability to perform the job because of their military family duties. Also, some participants noted reducing their food intake and withholding financial and food challenges from spouses. These findings suggest that food insecurity and gendered foodwork is a significant issue, but no research has explored these connections among military families.

Chapter 6. Conclusions, Implications and Limitations
6.1 Conclusions and Implications

In this research participants describe gender as both an assignment and an enactment– they are assigned particular roles as a woman military spouse by the CAF and CAF family community, and to be successful at these gender roles, they must enact certain tasks, "doing" their gender. Consistent with research by Cairns & Johnston (2015), DeVault (1991), and West & Zimmerman (1987) in which gender is described as something which is "done," here, gender was described in the "doing" of military spouse through which military spouses were subordinate and supportive of the military member spouses' career. The tasks that fell under these assumptions were descried by participants as being responsible for the foodwork and other household tasks, as well as willingness to sacrifice employment, income, and social networks for the military member's career.

This work brings new ideas to the forefront concerning Cairns & Johnston (2015), DeVault (1991), and West & Zimmerman (1987) ideas on the "doing" of gender. Previously, the assignment of "doing" gender successfully has mainly been described as being shaped prominently by social factors. While this remains true in my research, in which spouses clearly articulated the social pressures from military family communities on good military spouse behaviour, what is new is the impact that institutions or organizations, such as the military, have on the assignment of gender, and to relay what is expected of someone to successfully enact, or "do," one's gender.

In line with research conducted by the Department of National Defence (2018), and other researchers such as Kleykamp (2013) and Ziff & Garland-Jackson (2020), participants reported the main challenge of military family life to be the negative employment and income impacts caused by postings and deployments. What is new from this research is that participants

described their employment being negatively impacted simply because of their status as a military spouse. That because they were a military spouse, they were less desirable to employers, decreasing their employability. This finding demonstrates the need for further insight regarding employability and military spouses which is outside of the scope of this work.

One in five participants were found to be food insecure, a higher rate than the national average of one in eight (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). Throughout the interviews participants continually spoke of times when they had experienced food insecurity, most often during periods of transition such as directly after relocations due to postings and newly recruited families– suggesting that, rather than food insecurity being something that experienced chronically, it is episodic, and perhaps dependent upon supports which are available to military families during times of transition. The discrepancies between the HHFS module of the CCHS and what participants reported during interviews suggests that to accurately collect food security data for Canadian military families, modifications are necessary to account for the precarity and situational nature that food insecurity may be experienced for this population.

My work demonstrates the need for more research on the rates of food insecurity among military families, how challenges faced by military spouses may be redressed, and the ways in which intersectional characteristics (i.e., race, sexuality, disability, immigrants, refugees, and newcomers to Canada, etc.) may compound food insecurity for military spouses. Additionally, how being a military spouse impacts social circles, and how employers may view this status to act as a determinant of military spouses' employability, not only identifying that job loss is a result of postings, but how their status impacts their ability to appeal to employers.

The implications for military spouses and military families are at the forefront of this work. Although, due to the exploratory and small-scale nature or this master's level research,

direct impacts to families will likely not be observed yet. Ideally, this work will serve as an invitation for future research to elaborate on food insecurity rates and risks concerning military families, and the ways in which families can be better supported by the CAF and DND. At the very least, this research has hopefully provided a cathartic space for a small number of military spouses–the participants in this study–to air their concerns and have their voices heard.

This research also sheds light on military families and spouses in relation to food security, but also how supports can help to reduce negative implications faced by many CAF families, in particular military spouses. My research will ideally help to inform the retention and support efforts that are continuing to be made by the CAF and DND. Specifically, regarding the desire and need for tangible supports for military spouses, such as income subsidy, especially during transitional and episodic periods of need (i.e., postings, deployments, and training).

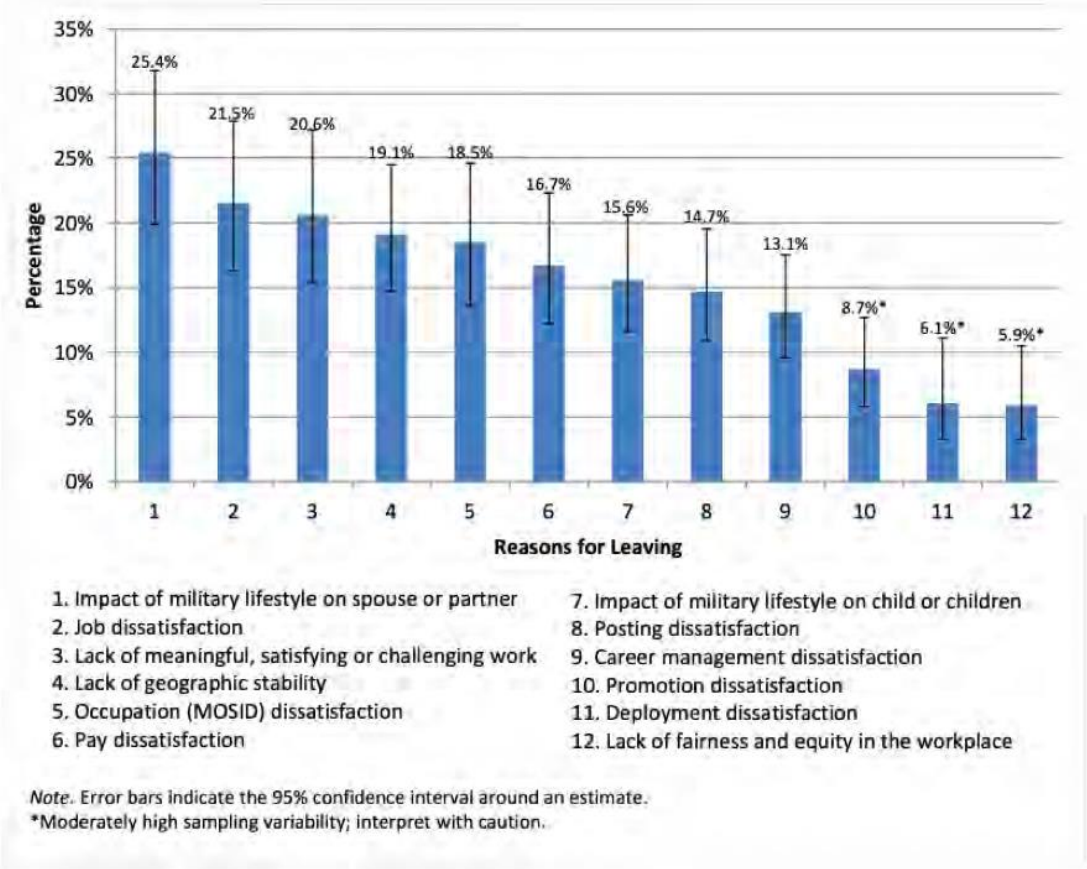
There were unexpected findings from this research that were outside of the scope of my research questions; however, they merit further discussion here. Participants were asked what they would like the CAF to take away from their interview(s) or this research in general. Participants consistently mentioned a desire for compensation for spouses to replace current support services offered; more consultation with families regarding major life decisions (i.e., postings); and for the CAF to be aware of military spouses' frustrations and distrust that the CAF will rectify inequalities and provide appropriate supports to families. All participants interviewed were unanimous in that the CAF needs to do better in making families feel respected and supported.

In light of my findings, the CAF may consider various supports for military spouses to ease financial dependency, the impact on household food insecurity, and on their household foodwork, such as compensation packages. I make this recommendation for three main reasons:

findings from this work, as well as research conducted by the Department of National Defence (2013; 2020), demonstrate that employment loss and income challenges are common issues facing military spouses; the inconsistencies in available supports, and the awareness or access to supports for military families across Canada which were noted in this work and are consistent with other literature (Department of National Defense, 2013; Department of National Defense, 2020); and the continual recognition that the invisible work of military spouses is essential in the support of the military spousal's ability to support CAF missions. As mentioned, income is the number one determinant for a persons' risk of experiencing food insecurity (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020). What is more is the possibility for support programs, such as income subsidy, to raise morale and trust for the CAF by both families and members. With the implementation of income replacement programs for spouses whose income has been negatively impacted due to postings, deployments and other military family needs, the risk for food insecurity would likely be reduced. Although to confirm this with more confidence additional research concerning food insecurity rates of military families is required– work which will be done in my PhD in health research.

Military retention is an issue (Department of National Defense, 2021). In a recent report by the Yeung et al., (2019), the number one reason for military members to voluntarily release from the military was due to "impact of military lifestyle on spouse or partner," see Figure 1.0: Main reasons for voluntary release within the CAF. Hence, I assert income replacement, or subsidy programs, offered to military spouses may have positive outcomes for retention, but may also help to recruit new members.

Figure 1.0: Main reasons for voluntary release within the CAF



Note: "Yeung, Edward, Evanya Musolino,& Emrah Eren. "The 2019 CAF Regular Force Retention Survey: Descriptive Analysis." Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC), 2019, 141."

This research is the first to explore food insecurity and gendered implications of foodwork for military spouses. This work fills knowledge gaps concerning what we know about military families in relation to food security, but also how foodwork, and other less visible forms of work done by military spouses co-constitutes gender roles. This work opens avenues for further research on food insecurity rates and experiences within military families. Also, this work leaves much to be answered regarding support service development for military families. For

example, how might the consistencies, awareness, access, and appropriateness of military family services be strengthened to better support the unique needs of military families so that equity for military spouses is supported within the miliary family—a question the CAF and DND are also asking themselves (Department of National Defence, 2020).

Given the limited nature of this work, this research opens future paths of inquiry such as how race, class, military rank, and disability intersects within the context of military families, as well as the ways in which food security measurements, such as the CCHS-HHFS module, can be modified to better identity risk. I recommend further inquiry concerning how social and financial supports, and gender impact upon food insecurity risks. There is also a need to develop a theoretical model that better elucidates gender and foodwork as co-constitutive in the context of the unique features of military family life, work that will be done with my PhD.

6.4 Limitations

One limitation of this research is the sample size. The original goal was to recruit 12 participants; however, five were successfully recruited for data collection. Although the purpose of this work was never to generalize, having more participants would have richened the data, allowing further analysis of experiences concerning food insecurity and gendered foodwork, and in turn my understanding of the phenomenon. The small sample size also reflects the limited scope and time restraints of a Master's thesis, and the stressors placed on families, namely the COVID-19 pandemic while I was recruiting participants for this research. The small number of participants in this study leaves opportunity for further research to explore the prevalence of food insecurity, and to explore how widely shared my participants' experiences are among military households. Additional research may also reveal nuances in military households' experiences.

Nevertheless, these experiences of five Canadian Armed Forces spouses contained consistencies that are meaningful and merit further research.

A second limitation of this research is the homogeneous demographic profile. The participants from this study mostly identified as white (4 of 5 participants), high income (4 of 5 participants), were spouses to higher-ranking CAF members (4 of 5 participants) and were heterosexual (4 out of 5 participants). The homogeneity of my participants is representative of many Canadian Armed Forces families; however, it excludes those whose experiences may be different due to other factors such as race and sexuality. Also, although this research served to open dialogue concerning food insecurity among CAF families, national statistics identifying severity and prevalence are not known, therefore conclusions concerning food insecurity rates at a national level among CAF families cannot be noted from this research.

There are many compounding variables that may increase individuals' and households' vulnerability to food insecurity, particularly within the context of a military family. In an attempt to simplify a complex experience, I offer the following question, "do you have the means to procure food which meet your nutritional and cultural needs at all times including periods of deployments, postings, and other times of transition, as a result of military family life?". If the answer is no, I believe these individuals are experiencing food insecurity. Food insecurity, like postings, can be episodic. Therefore, because of the irregular nature of military life food insecurity may be experienced. Some military families, as is seen on a small scale in this study, may have the financial means to procure food at most times; however, the repetitive nature of deployments and postings and what these transition means for spouses (i.e., loss of employment, income, and social networks), may mean that food insecurity is likely.

The Canadian Community Health Survey focuses on food access and experiences over the previous 12-month period. Removing or expanding upon the 12-month period in food security questioning, may open dialogue for deeper understanding of military households' food security status. For example, Faye tested as food secure on the online survey but then discusses a time during which they were posted, and she struggled with food procurement, money, and mental bandwidth to successfully feed herself. Allowing for a section within the HHFS module in which people can self-report unique food insecurity experiences may help to add important additional layers to food security testing.

Due to a lack of measurements, I cannot speak to food security prevalence associated with the rank of Canadian Armed Forces members. However, food insecurity may be likely for entry level recruits and their families due to their income, time away from the home for training purposes, and other disruptions rooted in transitioning the member and their family into the military (i.e., postings, shifts in social networks and supports, etc.). The one participant in this study that presented as severely food insecure was a spouse to a new military recruit transitioning into the CAF. However, due to imperfections in the surveying methodology and a lack of routine testing on Canadian military families, food insecurity risk, experience, and prevalence is unknown. This will be further explored within my doctoral research which will highlight food security prevalence and severity of Canadian military families at the national level.

Afterward

I have been writing the afterward for this thesis since I began the literature review, although I didn't realize it. Much of what you will read here, are pieces taken from my journal while practicing reflexive writing over the past several months. I did this hoping to capture a small piece of the process that was involved with studding a population to which I am a member. I've mentioned that I have been a Canadian Forces spouse for about 12 years; to pretend that I didn't hold predisposed ideas of food and gendered in relation to military families, would be simply untrue, immature, and unethical.

I began this master's thesis with an aggressive outlook, containing very personal, internalized narratives concerning what I thought *the* military spouse experience entailed, particularly for those spouses who identified as a woman. The work quickly became a self-righteous, passion project in which I would battle the patriarchy to free military spouses from oppression and stagnant, outdated gender roles. These assumptions manifested, unintentionally, to blind me from important data that would help to guide this work. This was the negative bias that blinded the early stages of my work.

Trying to ensure rigour of the research, I was able to see this bias through reflexive writing. I was also able to do this because I have an expert in Canadian military family research, who is an outsider to the population, on my committee–Dr. Norris. Having an outsider with this expertise was an invaluable asset to my learning process and growth as a young researcher. What was perhaps the most valuable facet of this experience though, was a healing that took place for myself I hadn't known I needed.

Speaking with the complex and wonderful women that I interviewed was not just a process of data collection, it was also a journey of healing that was entirely necessary for me to

complete in order to become a more responsible, ethical, and rounded researcher. As a military spouse I many of my own experiences of my own, that I didn't realize until now, have caused me a great deal of resentment and anger towards the CAF. Separating my 12 years of experiences from current literature which contradicted some of my assumptions was difficult and humbling, but necessary.

When I began planning for this thesis, I was scared of the idea of insider bias, mostly because of my scientific training. Throughout this project, I realized that trying to separate the different facets of my selves– the researcher and the spouse– was fruitless because I will always be both and can never put one to the side. Those "biases" will always be there, but the process of reflexive writing has helped me to approach this research in a way that I am able to recognize, conceptualize, and work within these "biases".

For those that read this that are a member of a population that you are studying, I recommend having a second researcher who is knowledgeable in the area who has outsider status, and to practice reflexive writing.

I will remind myself of this research experience graciously throughout the future. I will remind myself that these assumptions which hindered my research also serve to protect me as I move through life as a military spouse. As a researcher I have grown to accept change by the military system but hesitate to accept this as a military spouse. When you rely on a deeply broken system to fix itself, it can be difficult to find the trust that it won't wrong you again– hopeful but ignorant; forgiven but not forgotten.

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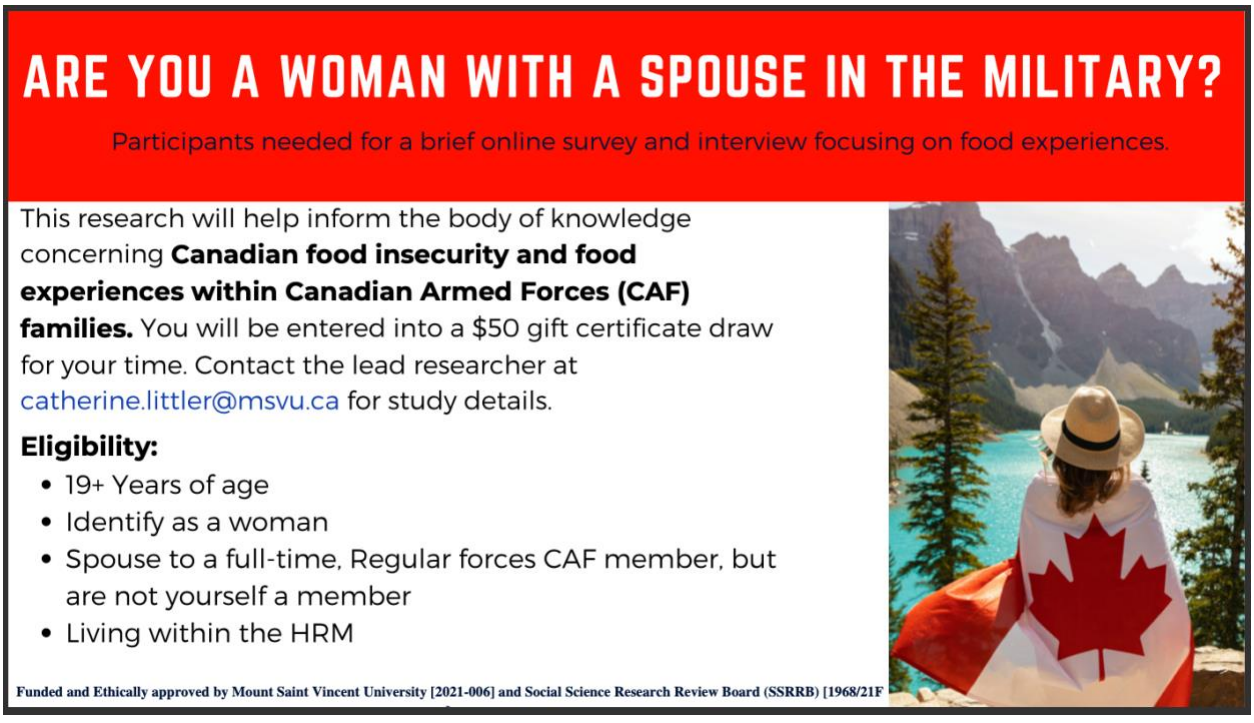
Appendix A: Recruitment Email

Hello [insert name],

My name is Catherine Littler, and I am a researcher at Mount Saint Vincent University in the Department of Applied Human Nutrition & Dietetics. I am conducting research titled, *"**Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel**"*. Would you please consider circulating the following recruitment message to your staff?

Thank you in advance for your consideration. I look forward to your response.

Cheers,



Appendix B: Social Media Advertisement & Statement

Hi there!

My name is Catherine Littler, and I am a researcher at Mount Saint Vincent University in the Department of Applied Human Nutrition & Dietetics. This is a call for participants for my study, *"**Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel**"*.

To be eligible for this study you must identify with **ALL** the following:

19+ years of age

Identify as a woman

Currently a Spouse to a full-time, Regular forces CAF member

Are not yourself a CAF member

Living within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM)

If you fit the above characteristics and would like to participate in the online survey, please contact me at Catherine.littler@msvu.ca. The study should take approximately 60-90 minutes.

As a thank you for your participating in this study you have the option to be entered into a draw for an Amazon gift card valued at $50 CAD.

Thank you for your consideration!

ARE YOU A WOMAN WITH A SPOUSE IN THE MILITARY?

Participants needed for a brief online survey and interview focusing on food experiences.

This research will help inform the body of knowledge concerning **Canadian food insecurity and food experiences within Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) families.** You will be entered into a $50 gift certificate draw for your time. Contact the lead researcher at catherine.littler@msvu.ca for study details.

Eligibility:

- 19+ Years of age
- Identify as a woman
- Spouse to a full-time, Regular forces CAF member, but are not yourself a member
- Living within the HRM

Funded and Ethically approved by Mount Saint Vincent University [2021-006] and Social Science Research Review Board (SSRRB) [1968/21F

Appendix C: Online Survey

Household Food Insecurity Module of the Canadian Community Health Survey

Project Title: Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel

The **Household Food Security Survey Module** (HFSSM) is a tool to measure **household food insecurity**. Household **food insecurity** is the inadequate or **insecure** access to **food.** There are many factors which can place a person or household at risk to food insecurity.

This self-administered survey is the first part of your two-part participation in the study *"Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel"***.**

The purpose of this study is to explore and relay your lived experiences as a female identifying military spouse in relation to food and gender. This research will help build upon the already existing body of knowledge concerning Canadian food insecurity and help to identify the potential unknown barriers female military spouses may be experiencing that could prevent them from living in food security. I hope to provide a critical understanding of these experiences and identify any areas of support for military spouses.

Welcome!

Thank you for choosing to take part in this research. As a reminder **participation in this survey is completely voluntary.** You may withdraw from the survey at any time. This is a safe space, and you are not being judged on your responses to the following questions. There are no wrong answers.

If you have any questions regarding the survey or this study, please contact me via catherine.littler@msvu.ca. If you require assistance or resources related to food insecurity, family violence, or other related Canadian Armed Forces family needs, please see the last page of your consent form for a list of resources.

Thank you again for your participation. By proceeding to the survey, you are consenting to your participation and acknowledging that you meet the eligibility criteria for this study: (1) Identify as a woman, (2) are 19+ years of age, spouse to a full-time, regular forces, (3) Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) member but are not yourself a CAF member, and (4) live within the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM).

Catherine Littler

Department of Applied Human Nutrition and Dietetics

Mount Saint Vincent University

catherine.littler@msvu.ca

Demographic Questionnaire

The following questions concern demographics.
Please enter the ID # you have provided on your consent form for this study. Your ID # is necessary so that we can match your survey results with your interview.
Please write your answer here:

How would you describe your gender?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Woman
- Man
- Non-binary

As a reminder eligible participants must identify as female for the purposes of this study. If you do not identify as female, please contact the lead researcher for clarification at catherine.littler@msvu.ca.
How would you describe your sexuality?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Queer
- Bisexual
- Pansexual

[Insert other choice here]: *"Please do not include any names or personally identifying information or information about military units, training or operations"*

If you feel that none of the options provided here accurately describe your sexuality, please specify other.
Please select the income bracket which best describes your household before taxes.
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Less than $25,000
- $25,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 or more

Please select all that apply regarding your ethnicity/ race.
Black
Chinese
Filipino
First Nation

Indigenous
Inuit
Japanese
Korean
Non-White Latin American (e.g., Indigenous persons from Central and South America)
Métis
South Asian/East Indian (e.g., Indian from India; Bangladeshi; Pakistani; East Indian from Guyana, Trinidad, and East Africa)
Southeast Asian (e.g., Burmese; Cambodian; Laotian; Thai; Vietnamese)
Non-White West Asian, North African, or Arab (e.g., Egyptian; Libyan; Lebanese; Iranian)
Persons of mixed origin
White
Prefer not to disclose
Or please specify _____

What is your age?

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Under 18 years of age
- 18 to 24 years
- 25 to 34 years
- 35 to 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- 55 to 64 years
- Age 65 or older

Note: the eligible age for this study is 19 or older. If you are younger than 19 years of age, please contact the lead researcher for clarification at catherine.littler@msvu.ca.

What is your marital status?

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Single (never married)
- Married/Common law
- Separated
- Widowed
- Divorced

Participants must be a spouse to a full-time Canadian Armed Forces member to be eligible for this study. If you are not **currently a spouse to a CAF** member, please contact the lead researcher for clarification at catherine.littler@msvu.ca.

How would you describe your family composition?

- No Dependent Children
- Dependent Child(ren)
    - Number of children _____
    - Number of children under the age of 18 _____
- Other dependent(s)

What is the highest level of education you have completed?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- High school or equivalent
- Diploma certificate
- Trade certificate
- Some university but not yet graduated
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate

How would you describe your employment status?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Unemployed
- Seasonal worker
- Caregiver/ Homemaker
- Student

Which rank category best describes your military spouse?

- Junior NCM
- Senior NCM
- Junior Officer
- Senior Officer

Household Food

The following questions (Q1-6) are about the food situation for your household over the past 12 months.

Q1. Which of the following statements best describes the food eaten in your household in the past 12 months, that is since [current month] of last year?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- You and other household members always had enough of the kinds of foods you wanted to eat.
- You and other household members had enough to eat, but not always the kinds of food you wanted.
- Sometimes you and other household members did not have enough to eat.
- Often you and other household members didn't have enough to eat.

Q2. You and other household members worried that food would run out before you got money to buy more in the past 12 months?

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

Q3. The food that you and other household members bought just didn't last, and there wasn't any money to get more. Was that often true, sometimes true, or never true in the past 12 months.

Choose one of the following answers

Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

Q4. You and other household members couldn't afford to eat balanced meals. In the past 12 months?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose **only one** of the following:

- Often true
- Sometimes true
- Never true

Food and Children

The following questions (Q5-7) concern food and children under the age of 18. If there are no children under the age of 18 in the household, you may select option 4 - "No Children under the age of 18".

Q5. You or other adults in your household relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed the child(ren) because you were running out of money to buy food in the past 12 months
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Often true
Sometimes true
Never true
No Children under the age of 18

Q6. You or other adults in your household couldn't feed the child(ren) a balanced meal, because you couldn't afford it in the past 12 months?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Often true
Sometimes true
Never true
No Children under the age of 18

Q7. The child(ren) were not eating enough because you and other adult members of the household just couldn't afford enough food in the past 12 months?
(If there are no children under the age of 18 in the household, you may select option 4 (No Children under the age of 18).
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Often true
Sometimes true
Never true
No Children under the age of 18

Q8. In the past 12 months, since last [current month] did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No

If you responded "yes" to the previous question, *Q8." In the past 12 months, since last [current month] did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of your meals or skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?"*
How often did this happen?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Almost every month
Some months but not every month
Only 1 or 2 months
Answered "no" to Q8a
Q9: In the past 12 months, did you (personally) ever eat less than you felt you should because there wasn't enough money to buy food?

Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No
Q10. In the past 12 months, were you (personally) ever hungry but didn't eat because you couldn't afford enough food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No
No Children under the age of 18
Q11. In the past 12 months, did you (personally) lose weight because you didn't have enough money for food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No
No Children under the age of 18
Food Reduction
The following questions concern food reduction, skipping meals, and/or other changes or food adaptations you may have made over the last 12 months.
There are comment boxes available if you would like to expand on your answer. However, it is not a requirement.
Q12. In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No

If you responded "yes" to the previous question:
Q12b. How often did this happen?
Choose one of the following answers

Please choose only one of the following:
Almost every month
Some months but not every month
Only 1 or 2 months
Don't know / refuse to answer
Answered "no" to previous question (Q12a)
Q13. In the past 12 months, did you or other adults in your household ever cut the size of any of the children's meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No
Don't know
No Children under the age of 18
Q14a. In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever skip meals because there wasn't enough money for food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No
Don't know
No Children under the age of 18
If you responded "yes" to the previous question:
Q14b. How often did this happen?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Almost every month
Some months but not every month
Only 1 or 2 months
Don't know / refuse to answer
Answered "no" to previous question
Q15. In the past 12 months, were any of the children ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:
Yes
No
Don't know
No Children under the age of 18
Q16: In the past 12 months, did any of the children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food?
Choose one of the following answers
Please choose only one of the following:

Yes
No

Don't know
No Children under the age of 18
Thank you for your participation in this survey.
If you would like to expand, comment, or clarify something in the survey, please feel free to do so below.
Make a comment on your choice here: *"Please do not include any names or personally identifying information or information about military units, training or operations"*

If you have any questions regarding the survey or this study, please contact me via catherine.littler@msvu.ca. If you require assistance unrelated to this research, please see the list of resources below.

Thank you again for your participation.

Catherine Littler
Department of Applied Human Nutrition and Dietetics
Mount Saint Vincent University
catherine.littler@msvu.ca

Resources and Supports for Participants

Military Family Resource Centre

Halifax	Shearwater
WP106. Windsor Park	Building 14. Shearwater
6393 Homefire Cres	30 Provider Road
Halifax, NS	Shearwater, NS. B0J 3A0
902.427.7788	902-720-1885

For urgent matters 24/7: 902-427-7788.
Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services
Family Information
1-800-866-4546
https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Stay-Connected/Family-Information-Line.aspx
FIL@CAFconnection.ca
Nova Scotia Mental Health Mobile Crisis
1-888-429-8167
Feed Nova Scotia
67 Wright Ave
Dartmouth, NS
B3B 1H2
(902) 457-1900
www.feednovascotia.ca
Services for Military and Veteran Families
The 2020 Strategy Framework - PDF of Family Resources
https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/GovernanceandAccountability/Documents/Governance%20Working%20Group/Services-for-Military-and-Veteran-Families-Strategic-Framework-2020+-FINAL-EN.pdf

Nova Scotia – Intimate Partner Violence Services and Resources
https://novascotia.ca/just/victim_services/family_violence.asp

Submit your survey.
Thank you for completing this survey.

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Guide with Questions and Prompts

Catherine Littler

Department of Applied Human Nutrition and Dietetics Mount Saint Vincent University

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Introduction

- Explain the study purpose, consent, and reminder of digital recording.
- Offer to answer any questions (repeat this offer at the end of the interview as well).
- Reaffirm that it is a safe space and there are no right or wrong answers.
- Explain to participants that if the interview should evoke distress, they can find resources on the last page of their consent form and feel free to ask me about these resources.
- Remind participants not to disclose personal information such as names during the interview.

Interview Questions: Warm up Questions

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1. Would you mind telling me a little bit about yourself?
2. What prompted you to participate in this study?
    - Probe: What do you hope the outcome of the study would be?
3. What do you think of when I say military wife?
4. How do you understand the notion of female military spouse? What roles do they encompass and how is it gendered?

    Probe: has your understanding of the spousal role changed over time? Probe: what is your perception of male military spouses?

Questions: Relating to Food in the Home

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5. Would you mind walking me through what mealtimes look like in your home.

   Probe: How are mealtimes different when your spouse is

   - Deployed
   - Not deployed
   - Getting ready to deploy or recently coming home from a deployment

   Clarification**:** for example, for some of us food quality may decline because cooking can be harder when we are the only one around the play with the kids, while for others it improves because there's not much else to do around the home except cook with the kids.

   Probe**:** Have any of these experiences changed or been heightened since the COVID-19 pandemic? in relation to your eating practices in relation to your support, or lack of support systems.

6. How do you think postings have affected food in your home?

   Clarification For example, many of us struggle with things such as finding grocery stores, transportation, and support after postings. What was or is this like for you?

Probe: How do postings impact how you do things like finding and buying groceries, transportation, supports (family, friends, programs), income, employment, what/when you eat?

7. How do you think your experiences of food as a military spouse have been affected by gender? Might they be different if you identified as a man? For example, feeling as though is it our responsibility as women or military wives to take care of cooking or caregiving.

   Probe: Assumptions of someone at home doing domestic work/ childcare.
   Probe: Do you think women's' paid or unpaid work is viewed as less valuable or less visible? **Probe:** Have these experiences been highlighted in lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic?

8. Gender norms could be described as activities or behaviours that are happening in your home that are perhaps assumed because of your or your partner's gender. For example, some homes might view taking out the garbage or mowing the lawn as a man's activity while women may cook, clean, and do more childrearing activities. How does relocation or deployments impact gender norms in your household concerning who does what?

   Probe: what is it like when the spouse returns?

Interview Questions: Relating to Community

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9. Who supports you and how?

   Probe: Are these supports helpful? How are they helpful/not helpful?

   Probe: Is your access to supports affected by postings and deployments? By your own employment or schooling?

   Probe: Tell me more about this

10. Within the military community what are the messages about food and gender that you hear, if any?

    Probe: What are the messages about gender?

    Probe: What are you hearing within the online military communities in relation to this? What do you see/read about women and/or food roles in relation to military spouses?

    Probe: Have these messages changed since the pandemic?

Interview Questions: Final Questions & Closing Statements

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11. What would you like the CAF to take away from or to know about your experience as a military spouse? This could be in relation to food, gender, how to better support families and/or spouses.

    Probe: What, if anything, do you think might help ease any stressors you might face concerning food and eating in your home?

12. Is there anything you would like to share that I did not ask during this interview?

- Stop recording once questions have finished.
- Thank the participant for their participation in the study.
- Ask them if they have any questions.
- Inform them of when the draw will be done for the $50 incentive
- Explain how the project findings will be distributed and that I can provide them with the results if they would like.

Appendix E: Study Consent Form & Participant Resource List

Study Consent Form

Project Title: *Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel*

Choosing to take part in this research is entirely your choice. There will be no impact on you if you decide not to participate in this research. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what will be asked of you and about any benefit, risk, inconveniences, or discomfort that you might experience. You should discuss any questions you have about this study with myself, Catherine. If you have questions later, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Who is conducting this study?

Researcher: Catherine Littler, Department of Applied Human Nutrition, Mount Saint Vincent University, 166 Bedford Highway, Halifax, NS B3M 2J6, catherine.littler@msvu.ca

Who is funding this project?

This study is funded by Mount Saint Vincent University and Research Nova Scotia.

Why are we doing the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore and relay your lived experiences as a female-identifying military spouse in relation to food and gender. This research will help build upon the already

existing body of knowledge concerning Canadian food insecurity and help to identify potential barriers female, military spouses may be experiencing that could prevent them from living in food security. I hope to provide a critical understanding of these experiences and identify any areas of support for female, military spouses.

Food Insecurity is defined as "*the inadequate or insecure access to food because of financial constraints"* (Tarasuk & Mitchell, 2020).

Who can take part in the study?

Eligibility for the study requires the study participants to self-identify as a woman who is a spouse to a fulltime, regular forces, Canadian Armed Forces member, is not a member of the Canadian Armed Forces themselves, be 19 years of age or older, live in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM), and are able to speak and understand English.

What will you be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in a self-administered survey and an on-line interview (video optional) with myself, Catherine (approximately 60-90minutes).

Are there any benefits or risks in participating?

Benefits: Although participation may not benefit you directly, it may help us learn things that may benefit others. You may feel a sense of accomplishment from participating in this project.

Risks: The risks associated with this research are minimal. You may experience discomfort in talking about issues such as food insecurity, eating practices, and your personal experiences as a female, military spouse as they relate to gender and food. If so, please reach out to one of the organizations listed at the end of this form. You do not have to answer questions which make you feel uncomfortable. The confidentiality of your survey and interview are of the greatest importance in this study; however, there are situations that may place limits on confidentiality. If child abuse is reported within the interviews, I am legally obligated to report it to the Halifax Child Welfare Agency.

How will my information be protected?

All identifying information (names, employment, and military unit specifics) will be removed from the interview transcripts. In publications, you will be given a pseudonym.
Information that you provide will be kept private to the best of my ability. All your identifying information, consent forms, and all electronic records will be kept secure on the researcher's password-protected computer. Only the research team (myself and my supervising committee) will have access to your original information. The people who work on this project (i.e., thesis supervisors) have an obligation to keep all research information private. The audio files of the interviews will be password protected. The audio recordings and interview transcripts will be destroyed 5 years after completion of the project.

What will happen with the findings?

I will describe and share the research findings in public presentations, journal articles, community venues and reports, and in teaching venues. Direct quotes from the interviews will be utilized in publications of this work, associated with a pseudonym.

Compensation / Reimbursement

Participants of this study can enter a draw for a chance to win a small honorarium in the form of a $50 gift card. If you withdraw your participation from the study, even after you have completed the survey and/or interview, you will still be entered into the draw for a $50 gift certificate unless you have either consented to not participate in the draw or make it known to the researcher that you wish to be removed. The gift card will be distributed electronically via the researcher's account at Amazon.ca. Therefore, Amazon.ca will have a record of your email for distribution and gift card redemption. There is the possibility that your email address for gift card receipt may be stored outside of Canada.

What if I decide to stop participating?

Your participation is voluntary, and you can leave the study at any time up until publication.

Please be aware that once this work has been released to audiences or published as part of the study, it will become impossible for us to remove your data from the study.

How do I obtain the results?

You can obtain a brief report of the findings by providing your email on the signature page.

What if I have questions or concerns?

I would be happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research. You will be notified if any changes occur that may affect your decision to participate.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may contact Research Ethics, Mount Saint Vincent University at (902) 457-6350 and file 2021-006. This research project has been approved by the National Defense/Canadian Armed Forces Social Sciences Research Review Board in accordance with DAOD 5062-0 and 5062-1. The SSRRB approval # is 1968/21F.

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to take part in an online interview that will be recorded. I understand that all my identifying information will be removed and that direct quotes may be used in the reports and publications of this work attached to a pseudonym. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time during the interview process.

By signing below, I am agreeing to take part in this study (Part 1: online survey/ Part 2: online interview):

Participant's Name (Printed): _____

Participant's Signature: _____ **(electronic signature accepted)**

Date: _____

Researcher's Name (Printed): _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date: _____ _____

I wish to receive a copy of an aggregate summary of study results (no individual results will be available):

Name: _____

Email: _____

Consent for Direct Quotations

I, _____ (**print name**), hereby confirm that I give permission for direct quotations to be used from my interview conducted as part of this research study, *Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel*

I understand that a pseudonym will be associated with my interview quotes.

Initial: **_____ Initial (electronic initial accepted)**

I understand that the quotes from my interview may be used in publications, for teaching purposes, conferences, community workshops, and other educational and Canadian Armed Forces and/or Military family community events

Initial: **_____ Initial (electronic initial accepted)**

Consent to Share Email for Gift Card Payment

I _____ (**print name**) permit my email to be used to receive a $50 gift card from Amazon.ca if I am selected as the winner of this draw incentive. I understand that Amazon will have my email on file for the purposes of distributing and redeeming the gift card and I acknowledge that this information may not be stored in Canada. I also understand that MSVU researchers will store this email for record-keeping purposes for a period of 5 years.

Please send my e-gift card notification to the following email address:

_____

Initial (electronic initial accepted): _____

Resources and Supports for Participants

Project Title: *Exploring Food Insecurity, Gender, and Familial Food Management Strategies of Female Spouses of Canadian Armed Forces Personnel*

The following is a list of resources and supports available you to contact if you feel you need help or want to talk with someone:

* If child abuse is reported within the interviews, I am legally obligated to report it to the Halifax Child Welfare Agency.

Military Family Resource Centre

Halifax	**Shearwater**
WP106. Windsor Park	Building 14. Shearwater
6393 Homefire Cres	30 Provider Road
Halifax, NS	Shearwater, NS. B0J 3A0
902.427.7788	902-720-1885

For urgent matters 24/7: 902-427-7788.

Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services

Family Information

1-800-866-4546

https://www.cafconnection.ca/National/Stay-Connected/Family-Information-Line.aspx

FIL@CAFconnection.ca

Nova Scotia Mental Health Mobile Crisis

1-888-429-8167

Feed Nova Scotia

67 Wright Ave

Dartmouth, NS

B3B 1H2

(902) 457-1900

www.feednovascotia.ca

Services for Military and Veteran Families

The 2020 Strategy Framework - PDF of Family Resources

https://www.cfmws.com/en/AboutUs/MFS/GovernanceandAccountability/Documents/Governance%20Working%20Group/Services-for-Military-and-Veteran-Families-Strategic-Framework-2020+-FINAL-EN.pdf

Nova Scotia – Intimate Partner Violence Services and Resources

https://novascotia.ca/just/victim_services/family_violence.asp

Appendix F: Determining Food Security Status Analysis Sheet

Determining food security status

We introduced a method of interpreting the data from the Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) with the publication of Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 2.2, Nutrition (2004) - Income-Related Household Food Security in Canada. We have since updated our approach to interpreting the data.

Categories of food security status

The HFSSM asks about the household's experiences of food insecurity during the previous year. These experiences include:

- worrying about running out of food before there is money to buy more
- cutting the size or skipping meals because there wasn't enough money for food
- going a whole day without eating because there wasn't enough money for food

The survey module asks about the experiences of adults and of children.
Depending on the presence and extent of the experience, households can be classified into one of the 4 following categories: food secure; food insecure, marginal; food insecure, moderate; food insecure, severe.

The categories of "food insecure, moderate" and "food insecure, severe" have been combined into an overall category of "food insecure" as they reflect disruptions in the food consumed.

Food secure

These households had access, at all times throughout the previous year, to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members.

Food insecure, marginal

At times during the previous year these households had indications of worry about running out of food and/or limited food selection due to a lack of money for food.

Food insecure, moderate

At times during the previous year these households had indications of compromise in quality and/or quantity of food consumed.

Food insecure, severe

At times during the previous year these households had indications of reduced food intake and disrupted eating patterns.

Food security status at the adult, child, and household level

The HFSSM determines the food security status of:

- adult members of the household, based on the responses to the 10 adult/household referenced questions (Adult scale)
- child members of the household (if present), based on the responses to the 8 child
- referenced questions (Child scale)

The full wording of each question, asked of an adult household member, explicitly asks if the food conditions were "because there wasn't enough money for food."

Depending on the question, a response is affirmative if the respondent answered:

- "yes"
- "often" or "sometimes"
- "Almost every month"
- “Some months but not every month"

The number of questions answered affirmatively for each scale determines the food security status at the adult and child level.

Once the adult and child food security status is known, the food security status of the household is determined. For households without children, the adult food security status is also the household food security status.

To be considered food secure at the adult or child level, none of the questions, in the adult or child scale, respectively, can be answered affirmatively.

Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) Adult scale

- Respondents are asked whether the following experiences were true for themselves or other adults in their household in the last year:
- You and other household members worried food would run out before you got money to buy more
- Food you and other household members bought didn't last and there wasn't any money to get more
- You and other household members couldn't afford to eat balanced meals
- You or other adults in your household ever cut size of meals or skipped meals
- You (personally) ever ate less than you felt you should
- You (personally) were ever hungry but did not eat
- You (personally) lost weight
- You or other adults in your household ever did not eat for whole day

Household Food Security Survey Module (HFSSM) Child scale

In households with children, adult respondents are asked whether the following experiences were true for their household in the last year:

- You or other adults in your household relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed child(ren)
- You or other adults in your household couldn't feed child(ren) a balanced meal
- Child(ren) were not eating enough
- You or other adults in your household ever cut size of any of the child(ren)'s meals
- Any of the child(ren) were ever hungry
- Any of the child(ren) ever skipped meals,
- Any of the child(ren) ever did not eat for whole day

Food security status

The table shows the number of affirmative responses required for each of the food security status categories.

Food security status	10 item adult food security scale	8 item child food security scale	Household status
Food secure	No affirmative responses	No affirmative responses	Both adult status and child status are food secure
Marginal food insecure	No more than 1 affirmative response	No more than 1 affirmative response	Either adults or children, or both adults and children in the household are marginally food insecure and neither is moderately or severely food insecure
Moderate food insecure	2 to 5 affirmative responses	2 to 4 affirmative responses	Either adults or children, or both adults and children in the household are moderately food insecure and neither is severely food insecure
Severe food insecure	6 or more affirmative responses	5 or more affirmative responses	Either adults or children in the household are severely food insecure
Note: In cases where a household meets the condition of two different classifications (that is, different status on the child and adult scales), the household status is given the more severe classification).			