

Mount Saint Vincent University  
Department of Family Studies and Gerontology

Tinker, tailor! Soldier, sailor! Mother?  
Making sense of the competing institutions of motherhood and the military

by  
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A Thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment  
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### Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Forces.

Dedication

In memory of my father Harvey C. Petite who loved his children unconditionally

## Abstract

In 2002, the Canadian Forces opened up the last of the restricted trades to women by allowing them to serve on submarines. No longer are there limitations on the number of women in the Forces or on the trades in which they are employed. Though women now make up 15% of the regular force, there is very little research on their experience; and in Canada, there is no research on women who combine motherhood and a military career. Frequent and often lengthy absences from home and family are a reality of life for Canadian Forces members. The institutions of motherhood and the military have both been described as greedy because they are so demanding of commitment, loyalty, time, and energy. Women traditionally shoulder more of the burden of caregiving, even when working outside the home. Women, balancing a career in the military with motherhood, can be expected to experience tension around the competing roles. Added to this is the traditional male-oriented culture of the military that contributes to an environment that continues to struggle with the integration of women.

The questions that guided the primary focus for this research were: How do women balance the responsibilities of the role of mother with a career in the Canadian military particularly when experiencing work-related family separation? What are the everyday practices performed by women to balance these roles? What ideologies, particularly military and mothering, are embedded in their everyday practices? Ideologies that are socially constructed external to individuals' everyday life are a form of social relations that serve to recreate and support existing power structures or ruling relations. Institutional ethnography was used both as a theoretical framework and methodology, to guide the mapping of the social relations evident in the everyday lives of women who

were both military members and mothers particularly at times of deployment away from their family. Through interviews with eight military women who were mothers of at least one child under the age of 12 and had experienced a work-related separation from family of at least 30-consecutive days in the previous two years, this research uncovered and explained the ways in which the everyday lives of women are coordinated and organized by socially constructed ideologies. As well, the interviews informed an analysis of Canadian military policy for textual documentation of ruling relations.

The requirement of military personnel to put duty ahead of personal considerations and reinforced by everyday practices within the institution, often served to render the women's children invisible. Furthermore, to accomplish this invisibility demands the everyday work of support that encompasses the extended family, paid and unpaid childcare, and often the children themselves. Through the lens of institutional ethnography, this work can be seen to sustain the work of the military institution. This exposure of systemic practices evident in institutions such as the military and motherhood identified implications for policy changes that will benefit recruitment and retention strategies for the Canadian Forces and may further contribute to transformative education that is sensitive to women in other nontraditional careers.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

My mother worked as a secretary to a doctor. I was seven when she went to work for Dr. C. The doctor often drove my mother home in a dark blue Volkswagen “Beetle.” This was a time when the Victoria Order of Nurses (VON) was visibly recognized through the use of “Beetles” as their primary mode of transportation. I distinctly remember concluding that the woman who drove my mother home must be a nurse. How could she be a doctor if she was a woman? Now where did that come from? At seven, my understanding of gender roles saw men as doctors and women as nurses. It was a heady concept for a little girl to grasp: the realization that women could not only be doctors but that they should also be able to choose whatever career they wanted. It was 1963 and my horizon had just been expanded!

In keeping with feminist methodologies that recognise lived experience as a legitimate source of knowledge, this introduction discloses my personal account of how I arrived at both the topic for my thesis and the methodological approach I have chosen to pursue for this research. By detailing the journey to this point, I am able to illuminate both the significance of the study as well as the appropriateness of the chosen methodology. This personal disclosure also serves to identify my own beliefs and assumptions that inform the research process. Unlike a positivist approach to research, there is no claim of objectivity. Using a feminist lens allows the telling of two stories: a revealing of how the research investigation is carried out in addition to the narrative result of the investigation (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). There needs to be an acknowledgement that the researcher is embedded in the same socially organized world that is being researched. The resulting interaction is inevitable and can be illuminated by

using a methodology that embraces ongoing reflection or reflexivity throughout the process. With this in mind, I return to my story.

In the mid 1990s, I began work at a church based society that was formed to help address systemic issues of poverty in its geographic community. I refer to geographic community to differentiate between the church community that was noticeably a congregation of white, middle, and working-class individuals and the community in which their church was physically located. This geographic community had experienced a downturn in its socio-economic make-up resulting in a large population of families living in poverty. Although the mandate of the society embraced community development principles that promoted empowerment of marginalized individuals, it was not long before I experienced a sense of contradiction. It became increasingly obvious to me that there was a hidden agenda to perpetuate the values of the dominant class structure of the congregation rather than address systemic issues of poverty. Even though at the time I did not know it, the contradiction I was recognising was what Smith (1987) termed “a point of rupture” or “line of fault”.

My introduction to Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith was through a graduate course in critical theories. Her approach frames this research project. In her sociology for people, I recognised an approach that uncovers the social organization of ruling relations, the structural framework of the church based society that sought to recreate the existing ruling apparatus of a dominant, privileged class (the congregation) while purportedly serving a community need. In all aspects of my life, particularly work and academia, this exposure has informed my ongoing questioning of who actually benefits from the processes and policies that rule our everyday worlds. The significant outcome of this

personal experience is my choice of Smith's methodology of institutional ethnography to provide the conceptual framework for my research. I will expand further on this brief introduction to Smith and institutional ethnography in a later chapter of this thesis.

My life course eventually brought me to a career path on the periphery of the military: an occupation that historically excluded women, with the exceptions of the traditional trades of nursing and administration. As an employee of a Canadian Military Family Resource Centre, I had the opportunity in early 2004 to spend three days aboard a naval ship where women are an increasingly common sight. According to the Department of National Defence (DND) (1998), in 1998 there were about 6800 women serving in the regular complement of the Canadian Forces, an increase from about 1500 in 1971. This represented almost 11% of the full complement of military members in 1998. Due to the decision of a 1989 Human Rights Tribunal, the Canadian Forces opened all trades to women, with the exception of submarine duty, which took place in 2002.

My experience aboard the naval ship had been designed to provide exposure to life at sea. In conversation with one woman, a mother of two whose spouse was also a military member, a comment with regard to how her husband coped with her recent six-month deployment caused me to reflect. Her comment was a criticism of her husband's need, after only two-weeks absence, to call in his mother to help take care of the home and children. The wife's attitude was that she had to manage everything when he was away without outside help, so he better learn to do so as well.

My first inclination was to agree with the wife. Why should he get help when women are so often expected to manage it all? One hallmark of the women's movement was to make visible the inequitable amount of unpaid labour that women provide both

inside and outside the home (Bezanson, Luxton, & Side, 2004). In 2000, Statistics Canada reported that employed women continue to do more domestic labour than their male partners (Bezanson et al.). As a working wife and mother, I remembered the expectation that the domestic and childcare work was mine and that when my husband looked after our son he referred to it as “babysitting.” At least in the moment, I shared this women’s sense of unfairness, inequality, and even anger towards her partner.

As I later reflected upon this conversation, I started to think about the situation from the father’s perspective. What is it like for fathers when they are the spouse left to manage the home front while their wife is deployed? I was already familiar with research in Canada that looked at the effect of the military lifestyle for female partners of military members (Harrison, 2002; Harrison & Laliberté, 1994, 1997; Norris, 2001). I wondered if there was any corresponding research on male spouses and their experience of deployment. My initial search of the literature failed to find any references even within a large body of work on American military families.

As I considered a potential research question related to the male spouse’s situation, I began to question my reaction to the wife’s attitude. Why was it “wrong” for the father to utilize family support? Why did the mother, when her husband was deployed, not seek this same support? Would she have been criticized or even refused if she had requested the help? What part did gender socialization play in this scenario? And was the wife perpetuating the stereotype of women “doing it all” by insisting her husband should “do it all” as well? In an examination of praise and criticism reported by parents, Deutsch and Saxon (1998) explored the findings of double standards in terms of their potential to perpetuate traditional gender roles in families. The researchers postulated that

“holding up the superwoman ideal is implicitly endorsing inequality” (Deutsch & Saxon, p. 680) by discouraging women from getting their partners to do their share. In this particular scenario, the wife was attempting to get her husband to “do it all”; criticizing her husband was tantamount to trying to make a right out of two wrongs.

Although I believe the male perspective of deployment from the home front deserves to be explored, as I reflected on my experience, I found my interest returning to the mother’s experience. I recalled a conversation at work with a grandmother who was looking after her daughter’s child while both the mother and father were concurrently deployed. On more than one occasion, the grandmother had heard comments such as “How could your daughter leave her child?” with the implication that she was a bad mother. As a mother whose son resides primarily with his father, I am personally familiar with the critical attitude, often nonverbal, that questions how a mother could consciously choose to leave her child. If we do not conform to the societal definition of motherhood, we are in some way defective or inadequate. This led me to consider a mother’s experience of military deployment. What is it like from the standpoint of a mother to leave her children for extended periods of time to work in an environment that, until quite recently, did not welcome women? What work does she do to make this happen? Is she affected by conflicting societal messages around her choices? Where does she find support?

### *Purpose and Focus*

It is from this point that I explored answers to these questions. The primary focus for this research was: How do women balance the responsibilities of the role of mother with a career in the Canadian military particularly when experiencing work-related

family separation? Underlying questions were: What are the everyday practices performed by women to balance these roles? What ideologies, particularly military and mothering, are embedded in their everyday practices?

My intention with this research was to conduct an investigation from the standpoint of mothers who are members of the Canadian military by undertaking a qualitative study that explored the everyday or local experience of mothers and deployment while identifying and explaining the ideological relations occurring at the institutional or extra-local level that underpins their experience. Before presenting the theoretical concepts and the methodology that will be informed by the theories, I will review the existing literature on this topic. I will draw upon these findings to present an understanding of the broader issues that military women experience.

Through this study I will illuminate the systemic practices that make the military a challenging career choice for women, especially mothers. In this study, power is understood to be delineated along lines of gender within the military hierarchy. The intention of this research is to explore the power differential that does exist within the Canadian Forces. Moreover, this power differential has real impacts on the lives of military women. That this is a career choice, for both men and women, steeped in honour and respect is not in question.

Institutional ethnography provides an analytical tool that will be useful to both the military institution and the female military members. Institutional ethnography, through the application of critical methodology, has as a desired outcome social transformation for groups or individuals who are subordinated to existing power structures in ways that may undermine their equality (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; DeVault, 1999; Smith, 1981,

1987, 1999, 2005). By using a critical lens it is possible to conduct a systemic analysis that identifies how existing practices work and the ways in which they may create and sustain barriers and inequities. By identifying these systemic practices, it will be possible to look at how policy and procedural changes can be made that provide benefits to both the women and the institution. Recruitment and retention of women is necessary for the military in order to fulfill the institution's operational mandate. This is a reality of human resource management for the Canadian Forces. Changing policies and practices that eliminate, or at least reduce, the barriers for women will require the commitment of the military institution. Research with female Canadian Forces members in the development of new practices and policies will ensure systems that are fair and equitable for women and indeed, all members.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the introduction, I documented the evolution of my overarching research question: How do women balance the responsibilities of the role of mother with a career in the Canadian military particularly when experiencing work-related family separation? The vast majority of current research on women in the military is from the American perspective and largely addresses issues from the point of view of the military dealing with logistical adaptation to the presence of women. For example, many of the studies have a medical focus responding to reproductive, biological issues for women (Bell & Ritchie, 2003; Czerwinski et al., 2001; Evans & Rosen, 1997; Lombardi, Wilson, & Peniston, 1999; Lowe & Ryan-Wenger, 2003; Powell-Dunford, Deuster, Claybaugh, & Chapin, 2003; Wardell & Czerwinski, 2001). Other research views the issue as a human resource challenge with modern military institutions as employers competing with civilian organizations for a shrinking workforce (Davis, 1997a; Kelley et al., 2001; Ritchie, 2001; Segal, 1995; Winslow & Dunn, 2002). These examples highlight the research gap on how being a woman is impacted by military service. The following literature review will uncover three gaps that my research will address. First, there is minimal research on how women balance a career in the military with motherhood. Second to this is the lack of qualitative research in general on the everyday experience of women in the military. Third, there is a lack of literature from the perspective of women in the Canadian military.

To place this topic in the context of women balancing a demanding career with motherhood, I will begin with a review of the literature on work-family issues in general. Before moving to studies specific to women in the military, I will examine the broader

societal context by providing a brief synopsis of debate in the public sphere on women in the military. I will then provide an historical perspective for women in the Canadian military followed by the current literature. The final section looks at women in the United States Military and concludes with the small body of work that looks specifically at women and deployment.

### *Work and Family*

Women's experience of deployment as active-duty military members falls into the realm of work-family issues. As a field of research, the study of conflict between home life and work life grew concurrently with the increased movement of women into the paid workforce starting in the 1960s. In 2002, Pruitt and Rapoport produced an overview of developments in the field of work-family issues after World War II. The following brief summary, guided by their review of these developments, provides an historical context within which to place the deployment of women by the military.

Though the initial growth of women moving into the workplace may have been spurred by the liberation of women, by the late 1970s economic realities overrode the ideological. In addition to the recession, increasing marital divorce resulted in more single-parent families headed by women. In the 1980s, women began to experience the downside to "having it all" as more energy was expended on "coping with it all." Some of the conflict came from women who chose not to work outside the home and felt disrespected by feminism. With the growing awareness of work-life conflict as women struggle to juggle home and work, came an increase in research into family friendly policies in the workplace. By the end of the 1980s, work-family conflict began to be recognised more as a social issue than a feminist issue, and in the 1990s, the focus shifted

to gender differences as the role of men came under closer scrutiny. The 1990s also saw research funding by corporations to explore work-family issues from an organizational effectiveness perspective. Concurrently, the issue of the working poor was a growing concern as quality of life eroded for many families, particularly those headed by lone mothers. The study of diverse family types, such as same-sex relationships and families with stay-at-home fathers, brought the field into the new century.

In 2001, Health Canada published a study on the conflict that individuals experience balancing work and family life. This study examined the impact of responsibility for dependent care on work-family issues. Not surprisingly, the study showed employees with dependent care responsibilities had more demands on their time than employees without such responsibilities. Although the study showed no difference in time spent in work activities, individuals with dependent care responsibilities were more likely to bring work home (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Employees with dependent care experienced financial strain and were less likely to engage in professional development activities.

Even though this study did not identify the military as a specific job type, the findings are considered to be a fair representation of Canadian society, and therefore can be generalized (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Contrary to past research, Duxbury and Higgins found that mothers and fathers reported spending similar amounts of time on childcare associated routines on a weekly basis. This finding was comparable for eldercare activities. Although it is tempting to interpret this as evidence that men and women equally share dependent care duties, the study also indicated that men and women still consider the woman as having primary responsibility for childcare and women

consider themselves primarily responsible for eldercare. What this study did not uncover was the time spent on the often invisible work of dependent care such as engaging child care providers and arranging health care appointments – what can be considered the management focus of care work. The sense that some family work is still “women’s work” is also reflected in the finding that women continued to engage in significantly more household chores than men and the type of chores were delineated along gender lines.

Mederer (1993) used “household management” as a separate measurement from the accomplishment of household tasks in her study of the division of labour in dual-income homes. Her findings supported that these are two separate aspects of unpaid family work and that women generally are more likely to fulfill the management role. Mederer concluded that women appear to value management work more than household tasks possibly because it gives them more power. However, this power may work against them in that the management work tends to be invisible in the context of their relationships. In his review of the literature from the 1990s, Coltrane (2000) found that studies looking at the management aspect of household labour generally supported this gendered division of labour with women assuming the management responsibilities. The studies he reviewed generally concluded that men were reluctant to assume responsibility. However some studies suggested that women were reluctant to relinquish control. MacDonald, Phipps, and Lethbridge (2005) found that women reported more negative effect from increased childcare hours than men suggesting that the difference may be attributable to women having more responsibility for childcare regardless of who carries out the task. This finding is in keeping with Duxbury and Higgins (2001) as

previously stated that men and women both see primary responsibility for childcare resting with women. What has not been studied is how mothers who experience separation from their children due to work responsibilities negotiate the management aspects of their family life.

Other than the travel requirements, women's military careers can be considered comparable to civilian professional and managerial jobs with respect to the demanding nature of the work. Significant is the finding that women in professional or managerial careers who have children spend more hours in child care than their male counterparts or women in other jobs and their male spouses were no more likely to share this responsibility than male spouses in any other group (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). The authors suggest that for this group of women, the idea of "super mom" is not only alive and well but is largely self-imposed. This interpretation of blame may be reflective of the inability of quantitative studies such as this to explicate, or make clear, the ideological influences and hidden meanings of women's everyday experiences.

It is also important to consider the employer in discussions of work-family balance. The findings of the Health Canada Study suggest that many of Canada's largest employers still believe in the "myth of separate worlds" (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001). Employees report feeling unable to refuse to work overtime whereas employers expect employees will work away from home if necessary to do their job. This level of commitment to the employer is a typical way of life for the military member who can expect to be separated from family on a regular basis due to operational requirements. However, there is growing evidence that institutions, including the military, are realising that human resource practices need to reflect the demands of balancing family and job

responsibilities for both men and women in order to meet personnel requirements (Davis & McKee, 2002). Yet a key finding of the 2005 National Study of Employers conducted by the Families and Work Institute in the United States indicated “supporting employees and their families is NOT the main reason why employers offer initiatives to address the needs of the changing workforce and workplace” (Bond, Galinsky, Kim, & Brownfield, 2005, p. 1, emphasis in original). Almost 50% of the employers asked in this study indicated recruitment and retention of employees followed by productivity and commitment as the rationale for work-life policies and programs. The expectation of commitment is explicit in the Canadian Forces where members are required to place service to country ahead of personal needs (DND, 2002). Indeed, the Canadian Forces is obviously aware of the need to be competitive as a potential employer in recognising that they need to address their human resource policies and procedures in order to attract and retain qualified personnel (DND, 1999).

It is easy to see balancing a career in the military with family demands as a work-life issue. In the next section, I explore the conflicting ideological beliefs on women’s roles in society as mothers and military members.

### *Societal and Ideological Influences*

How do we as women, make sense of the many roles we engage in throughout our lives? There are expectations that we learn first within our families as daughters and sisters. As we move out of the private sphere, we learn from society what is expected of us as women in our work and our relationships. And often, the expectations are fraught with conflict both within roles and between roles. I will present some of the debates related to women in the military as background to understanding the environment in

which military women live. It is not just within the military that women experience resistance and conflicting messages; in the world external to the military, there are also conflicting opinions around women's place in the armed forces, and some of these messages are more vocal than others. I will discuss these opinions without intent to take sides in the debates but rather to represent the kind of messages that may cause dissonance for women, particularly those who serve in the military.

Within the realm of feminism, there is ongoing debate as to whether women should be allowed to fill combat roles in the military. Those in opposition believe women are naturally predisposed to nurturing and caregiving, which are antithetical to war and killing (Peach, 1997). They argue that women are being co-opted by the military agenda and forsaking their real nature to be more like men. However, some feminists also advocate for women in combat and believe it is a question of justice where only through full participation in the defence of a nation are women able to exercise their right to full citizenship and social equality with men (Peach). Here the argument is that women should be free to choose a military career and denial of this freedom perpetuates the oppression of women. This debate offers an example of conflicting expectations for women within the realm of feminism.

Defending one's country is not the only role for which women find conflict within feminism. Perhaps it is not surprising that motherhood and feminism are often seen to be at odds. Marks (2004) points to a lack of respect by feminists for women who choose to stay at home with their children. Yet, Williams (2000) argues that women who chose to stay at home may not be exercising free choice. She contends that women are subjected to social forces such as lack of affordable childcare and workplace marginalization that

they encode as “choice to devote themselves to caregiving rather than to market work” (Williams, p. 188). Again, it is not the intention of this thesis to the debate whether decent wages and daycare are the “right” answers for all women. The point being illustrated here is that there is an expectation that the “right to choose” would be upheld within the bastions of feminism. If feminists disagree about women’s roles, then it would not be unexpected for women to experience conflict from society at large. If as women, we cannot find support for our choices within feminism, is it any wonder that we may also experience internal conflict over our choices?

It is not just feminists who debate the right of women to serve in the military. Women who do choose a military career, particularly combat roles, go to work in an environment that continues to struggle with their presence. Women in the military are subject to expectations to conform to masculine ideals of strength and independence while at the same time being criticised for lacking femininity. Conversely, when women exhibit feminine characteristics they are viewed as weak or dependent and may be perceived as a burden to their unit (Weinstein, 1997).

When such attitudes persist, women may find themselves in an untenable work situation. It is not just the issue of how women do the job, but detractors argue that women in the military present a distraction by their very presence. In their exploration of arguments against women in combat, Winslow and Dunn (2002) heard concerns that units would be distracted and even endangered by a sense of obligation to protect the female members. In 2002, Davis and McKee presented a paper at the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces in Society that challenged current debates on the role of women in the military and suggested that the arguments were largely unfounded and

illogical. However, despite the lack of empirical evidence to support the arguments against women in the military, the attitudes and rhetoric continue. Nevertheless, one wonders how military women work in environments where they experience a lack of acceptance that sometimes manifests as overt hostility.

For women, making a career in the military requires more than acceptance within the military institution. Segal (1995) points to the increasing number of women in the armed forces being linked to the needs of the military but also identifies cultural support as influential. “Cultures often see the mothering role as antithetical to the warrior role; giving life in childbirth is seen as the opposite of taking life in war” (p. 770). However, as women’s participation in the labour force becomes accepted as a social norm, women working in formerly male dominated fields such as the military are more readily accepted.

Nevertheless, despite the movement within Western countries towards gender equality, there exist segments of our society that continue to espouse more traditional roles for women. Often associated with religious fundamentalists, the viewpoint that a woman’s place is in the home has not been eradicated. Recent world events have provided fodder for the point of view that mothers in the military are abandoning their children. The following example comes from the American press; however I contend that Canadian society is not so enlightened that this attitude is nonexistent. Furthermore, the American media is a pervasive presence in the everyday lives of Canadians. At the very least, it is worth exploring the influence of right wing attitudes on women who serve in the Canadian military. Taken from an opinion piece reported by a Christian conservative news service, the following quote is representative of a hostility that military mothers

continue to face. “Then again, given that many mothers dump their kids in daycare to pursue careers anyway, perhaps [mothers enlisting in the military] is the next logical step” (Kirkwood, 2003, section 3, ¶ 3). In response, the particular mother who was the subject of criticism in Mr. Kirkwood’s article recognised this as not only a personal condemnation but as an attack “on all mothers deployed in the service of their country” (Carde, 2003, ¶ 5). When a career choice may appear to reside within the private or personal sphere, opinions about the choice may be public and vocal. How do women who experience this attack of their choice, whether on a personal or public level, cope with the disapproval? Does this type of criticism make it harder for a mother to live each day of a deployment separated from her child?

How do mothers who are military members balance motherhood with their careers? What is their everyday experience of making it work? What is it like for them to be mothers when they are deployed miles away for many months at a time? As mothers we are expected to love and nurture our children and to be there to tuck them in to bed at night. These are social norms that rule within the institution of motherhood.

*Women in the Canadian Forces: Historical and Current Perspectives*

Women’s history with the Canadian Forces goes back to World War I when they served as nursing sisters both domestically and abroad. In response to a shortage of manpower by the second year of World War II, over 45,000 women were recruited into the Canadian Armed Forces. The trades open to women were all non-combatant and the typical pattern of employment was that of the “secretary in uniform” (Pierson, 1983, p. 7) for all three branches of service. With the war over, by 1946 all three women’s services were disbanded with only a small number of nursing sisters remaining in the permanent

force (Bruce, 1985). From 1950 until 1971, an artificial ceiling of 1500 was placed on the number of women allowed to enlist in the military with restrictions to traditional roles such as clerical and nursing positions. In 2005, there were no longer restrictions on the number of women in the Canadian military or on the trade in which they are employed including submarines. This change was instigated by external influences including recommendations by the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in 1971, the passing of the Canadian Human Rights Act (1978) and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedom (1985), and in 1989 by the direction of a human rights tribunal (DND, 2004a). In a 1998 report on gender integration, the Canadian Forces also noted that demographic forecasts indicated a shrinking workforce that meant recruitment and retention of women was critical to meeting staffing requirements (DND). By 2002, females represented over 12% of the Regular Force and more than 22% of the Reserve Force (DND, 2004a).

Currently, there is very little literature pertaining to women, let alone mothers, who are members of the Canadian military that deals specifically with their experience of deployment. In a report on human resource strategies, the Canadian Forces acknowledges this gap and the need for research on how “women negotiate their identity as ‘warriors’ and ‘mothers’” (DND, 2004a, p. 2). In 1997, Davis reported women’s reasons for leaving the Canadian Forces were largely gender-specific and suggested concerns with family responsibility and personal well-being were factors. In interviews, women often reported the belief that family commitment was incompatible with a career in the military, but Davis focused more on the organizational environment than the everyday work of balancing family and a military career. Consequently, she did not report deployment or

work-related separation from family as a specific reason for women's exit from the Canadian military.

References to the experience of Canadian women in the military can be found in Harrison's research on military wives. Harrison (2002) explains unit cohesion as the military cultural requirement for members to devote themselves to the military community to the extent that they are willing to die to save their fellow service members. According to Harrison, historically, the process of unit cohesion has been one of male bonding that excluded and denigrated women and Harrison's results support the continuation of this practice. Ultimately, unit cohesion is desirable because it supports combat or operational readiness, the prime imperative of the military where there is a clear expectation that the military member will put their professional duty ahead of personal or family concerns by being available to respond on a moment's notice (DND, 2002).

Returning to Davis' study on attrition, there is evidence that women not only experienced a lack of administrative or supervisory support but also were often subjected to discrimination and harassment. The Minister's Advisory Board on Canadian Forces Gender Integration and Employment Equity described a similar environment in which, despite the aspiration to establish a climate that accepted and supported diversity, some members actively displayed contrary attitudes and behaviours (DND, 2001). These results support an expectation that women in the Canadian military continue to experience unwelcome, even hostile reactions to their presence.

*Women in the United States Military*

A review of American literature finds more extensive research on women in the military. Some of this can be attributed to the establishment of the Defense Women's Health Research Center in 1994 to address the dearth of research on women in the military (Davis & Woods, 1999). This gap was made abundantly clear through raising awareness of the distinct biological and social differences that women faced during the deployment of 41,000 women during Operations Desert Storm and Desert Shield in the early 1990s. The types of social research addressed are categorized as (a) readiness issues including deployment and post-deployment, (b) wellness issues such as pregnancy and maternal health, and (c) health goals for military women. Davis and Woods defined readiness as "the ability of soldiers to leave their current situations with very short notice for unknown locations, for indefinite periods of time, to perform a multitude of soldiering tasks in often extremely austere and remote environments" (p. 9). Included under the category of readiness was the topic of family issues.

As for the biological differences, many of the articles found in the American literature deal with feminine hygiene issues particularly women's increased risk for genitourinary infections during deployment (Czerwinski et al., 2001; Lowe & Ryan-Wenger, 2003; Wardell & Czerwinski, 2001). For most women, there is a monthly biological reminder that they are female that has to be accommodated. Yet, for women in the army, field conditions may provide challenges that are not only inconvenient but lead to genitourinary health concerns due to unhygienic conditions. One study explored the desire of female army members to induce temporary amenorrhea during field training and deployments through the use of oral contraceptives (Powell-Dunford et al., 2003). For women on a naval or air deployment, there may not be much apparent difference in

hygienic conditions from a shore posting so these findings may not be transferable to the other military elements. Even if the practice of chemically ceasing the menstrual cycle is considered medically safe on a temporary basis, the question that is not posed in these studies is how do women process this denial of a natural biological function on a psychological basis? Does this practice perpetuate a requirement for women to be more like men in order to participate in traditionally male dominated activities?

Maternal health issues such as breast-feeding and pregnancy is another area of research for women in the American military. Department of Defense policy in the U.S., similar to other professions, requires women to return to work six weeks after giving birth and additionally to be available for deployment when the baby is four months old (Bell & Ritchie, 2003; Wahl & Randall, 1996). Concerns related to breastfeeding may be less of an issue for Canadian military women who are entitled to a combination of maternity and parental benefits that provide for up to 52 weeks of leave to care for a newborn.

Research on the pregnancy of active duty military women in the U.S. also examined issues of cost both in dollars and impact on the morale, cohesion, and working relationships within units (Lombardi, Wilson, & Peniston, 1999). Another study examined the effect of pregnancy planning on work-related issues and psychological well-being of the mother (Evans & Rosen, 1997). In general, women whose pregnancies were planned were more likely to experience co-worker or command support, higher psychological well-being, and no deterioration in work performance. This was particularly true for women of higher rank. This rank effect may be influenced by the fact that women who are officers tend to be older, more experienced, more educated, have a

higher salary, have established work performance, and increased responsibility which could result in greater support and access to resources.

Some studies have looked specifically at health aspects of a military career for woman (Agazio, Ephraim, Flaherty, & Gurney, 2002; Norwood, 1997). Norwood provides an overview of the effect on women's health of various military related stressors. Though not conducting research on these issues, this overview does highlight some of the environmental factors that women in the military may face including tension related to belonging to a visible minority in a male dominated organization. Similar to other literature, these articles point to the need for more research around the impact on women of the unique aspects of the military lifestyle such as frequent separations from family.

In one study of health promotion for active-duty military women with children, Agazio et al. (2002) used qualitative methods to describe the experience of being an active-duty mother. The intent of the study was to uncover the barriers and strategies that mothers encounter with regard to their health promotion. The level of ability to balance work-family demands, not surprisingly, was an indicator of the level of health promotion for mothers in this study. In addition to recognising the importance of personal health and well-being, women who were most successful at health promotion cited organization, adequate resources, and support as necessary for success. Not surprisingly, resources and support appear to be related to socio-demographic factors including education, rank, and marital status. The demographic make-up of this study showed almost 70% of the 141 participants were married and 94% were junior non-commissioned officers (NCO) or higher in rank, which could indicate these women had more social support and higher

personal and family income than mothers who were lone parents or earned less due to lower rank. In their conclusion, the authors emphasized the resolve or personal commitment of the successful participants. I suggest that caution needs to be exercised in the acceptance of this conclusion as it may contribute to a blaming of less successful or lower rank women for not have the right attitude.

### *Women and Deployment*

A 2001 article provides an overview of issues that service women may encounter in relation to deployment. Ritchie (2001) highlights women's experiences while acknowledging the challenges for both men and women particularly when working in settings that may be severe or even high risk. Some obvious differences, also discussed previously, are the biological aspects related to gynaecological matters, hygiene, and pregnancy. Both men and women may experience harassment, assaults, or exposure to dangerous and even life threatening risks. However, Ritchie also notes that deployment may actually provide some protection from harassment or assault due to lower availability of alcohol and lack of privacy. It is also her contention that boredom is more of an issue for military personnel on deployment than physical risks. According to Ritchie, the issue that causes the most anguish for both men and women is separation from small children especially if they are the primary caregiver or single parents.

Regulations prevent single parents in the U.S. from enlisting unless they transfer custody of the children to another individual who is willing to act as legal guardian of the children. Members who become single parents after enlistment and dual military parents are required to have a family care plan that provides for care of children on short notice and extended periods. Because these regulations ensure children of deployed members

are physically cared for they are primarily designed to ensure operational readiness of members. This is similar to Canadian policy requiring members to indicate they have a care plan for individuals who depend on them for support (DND, 2002). Unlike the U.S., however, Canada does not have regulations that prevent single parents from enlisting.

The few studies that look specifically at mothers and deployment were also done in the United States. A 1994 study examined the effects of deployment on two groups of Navy mothers (Kelley, Herzog-Simmer, & Harris). In addition to measuring the effect on family functioning, one group was surveyed for self-reports of parenting stress in anticipation of deployment and the other group was surveyed post-deployment. The study found the reports of stress were higher in the pre-deployment group than the reunion group. Differences between the two groups may account for the difference in reported stress rather than the point in the deployment cycle. The mothers in the pre-deployment group were slightly younger and were on a ship that rarely deployed. Thus age and deployment tempo are both factors that may affect levels of stress. Doing a pre-test and a post-test for the same women may have been a more accurate measure of the effect of the timing in the deployment cycle. However, this study did not look at the mothers' experience during the deployment.

A 2001 study (Kelley et al.) looked at Navy mothers experiencing or not experiencing deployment and their reasons for staying in or leaving the military. Both groups were surveyed twice during the same time frame: three to six weeks prior to the departure of the deploying group and again three to six weeks post-deployment approximately eight to nine weeks after the first survey. The study did not show any difference between groups in their intention to reenlist however the deploying group was

more likely to report “commitment to the military” as the reason for staying. Both groups reported similar percentages (one quarter to one third) of women giving work-family concerns as their reason for not reenlisting. The deploying group was more likely to give work-family reasons for leaving the military prior to the deployment and the non-deploying group were more likely to give this reason at the second assessment. The authors suggest that the non-deploying group may have begun to anticipate the approach of their next deployment, thereby increasing their concerns. Mothers who reported being highly invested in motherhood were more likely to report intentions to leave the military when asked prior to deploying. This contrasted with women who saw the separation as having positive benefits for their children who were more likely to report plans to reenlist. Personal feelings and attitudes around parenting and motherhood appeared to play a part in the experience of deployment for women. Again, as in the previous study, there was no attempt to explore the actual experience of deployment for these mothers.

In 2002, Kelley et al. conducted another study that looked at the psychological adjustment of navy mothers who experienced deployment. A deploying group and a non-deploying group were assessed during the same time frames: pre-deployment and post-deployment. The overall intention of the study was to examine self-reported psychological adjustment and to identify the predictors of psychological distress. As well, marital status was a factor expected to play a part particularly in perceived support. The findings of this study implied an increase in symptoms of depression for single mothers who were deployed; although women who were married, regardless of deployment status, was more likely to report increased stress and anxiety. The authors point out that this latter finding was divergent from previous research. Contrary to the hypothesis, maternal

role investment did not predict increased negative psychological symptomatology. This would appear to contradict the findings in the previous study (Kelley et al., 2001) in which women who identified a greater degree of self-concept from motherhood were more likely than women with low maternal investment to plan on leaving the military. However, increased length of service predicted increased reports of well-being, there may be some degree of self-selection, that is, women who were unhappy in the military were not as likely to stay in as long. Again, this study did not attempt to explore the meanings for mothers related to their various roles or how they experienced the actual deployment.

One exception to the lack of research on women and deployment is an unpublished dissertation by Godwin (1996). This study was an ethnography of Navy women's experience with deployment that utilised Bowen's Family Systems Theory as the theoretical framework. Godwin looked at Bowen's definition of differentiation of self "as a process by which individuality and togetherness are carried out by the person within a relationship system" (p. 6) where the workplace, in this case the military, constitutes such a system. Godwin analysed in-depth interviews with 16 women who had been recently deployed for domains. Recurrent themes found that the experience of deployment had positive outcomes for maturity, relationships, and individuality. Godwin concluded that the negative aspects of deployment were short-lived as well as compensated for by more lasting beneficial outcomes. Godwin's sample of 16 women consisted of eight married and eight single women. Only two of the married women and one of the single women had children. There were few differences found between the married and single groups. The main difference found was in the concern for the married women to maintain contact with home. Both groups expressed concern regarding anxiety

related to relationships in anticipation of reunion after six months of separation. Overall, Godwin found that both groups of women expressed personal growth and maturity from the deployment experience despite finding the period of separation long, lonely and often boring.

Married women expressed concerns around marriage and children being incompatible with the deployment requirements of a naval career. One mother spoke of leaving her 11-month-old child as the hardest thing she ever did whereas the mother of a toddler experienced hurt and confusion when her young son took almost a month to readjust to her presence when she returned home. Unmistakably the findings here are evidence of tension between the competing role demands for women. Yet, Godwin (1996) examines the findings on a surface level without attempting to explain the social and cultural meanings that may be present. What are the origins of these tensions? Is the tension due to societal messages that women internalize around the role of women? Or is the tension connected to implicit rules within the military structure that demand adherence to the military way of life?

### *Conclusion*

Explicating the meaning of the tensions Godwin (1996) uncovered in her interviews with mothers who were deployed is the focus of this thesis. Explication requires moving beyond the surface of an observation as the first step in unravelling and explaining how everyday experience is socially constructed. Activities and how we speak of them can be a reflection of the ideological nature of society whether it is the ideology of the institution of motherhood, family, or the military. It is important to illuminate how everyday activities contribute to reproducing social relations. For example, in her classic

study, *Feeding the Family*, DeVault uncovers how “feeding is ‘women’s work,’ and how by doing the work, women are drawn into relations of service to others, subordination of self, and deference toward male partners” (1991, p. 30).

An examination of the preceding review of the literature on women in the military illuminates the major gaps in knowledge about Canadian women’s experiences. The first is the obvious lack of research from a Canadian perspective. The second is that the vast majority of the existing research has been done from a positivist perspective steeped largely in the realm of a medical model. Eight of the articles cited above were from the publication *Military Medicine*. This medical approach highlights where there are biological issues for women such as the feminine hygiene and gynaecological concerns but fails to examine the qualitative experience for women. The significance of this perspective is seen when consideration is given to how women feel about these biological concerns particularly in terms of how they may be treated or perceived by their male colleagues and that this treatment could affect their work-life experience. Even though many of the articles contain a disclaimer with regard to not reflecting the official opinion of the Department of Defense, the focus of the articles is in effect about how these issues impact operational readiness and effectiveness. It is also can not be ignored that most of the available literature is in military journals such as *Military Medicine* or *Military Psychology* and received funding from sources associated with the military such as the Defense Women’s Health Research Project.

The studies that looked specifically at women and deployment (Kelley et al., 1994, 2001, 2002) were essentially quantitative and focused on deficits such as incidents of stress or psychological adjustment for military mothers. Even the study that explored

women's experience with deployment and reasons for leaving the military (Kelley et al., 2001) implicitly suggested that the "fault" is with the women because it is the women who suffer work-family conflict or do not feel committed to the military. There is the suggestion that the military institution needs to develop programs and services that meet the needs of women in order to improve retention, yet there is still the sense that it is the women who do not "fit." This lack of fit can be seen in the concept of the "ideal worker" as conceived by Williams (2000). Essentially, this concept posits that employers expect the personal lives of their employees to be kept separate from the workplace. The ideal employee is available to work nights and weekends if required. Traditional gender roles allowed men to fill this ideal because of the expectation that they had a spouse at home to take care of family concerns. The requirement of the Canadian military that its members put their duty to serve ahead of personal considerations perpetuates the ideology of the ideal employee and thereby recreates a systemic barrier for women given their continuing role as primary caregivers.

In summary, the literature on balancing work and family clearly identifies the importance of this issue for all individuals who have dependent care responsibilities in addition to employment outside the home. However, the unique aspects of military life, such as frequent work-related absences, add a complexity to the lives of female military members who are juggling career and family particularly given that they continue to bear the brunt of caregiving responsibilities. In this context, the preceding review of literature on women in the military conspicuously lacks focus on the everyday experience of how women negotiate the demands of these competing roles. Such an absence is notable given the Canadian military has explicitly recognised that there is a need to gain understanding

of this issue (DND, 2004a). However, as this review shows, the vast majority of research on women in the military focuses on logistical or human resources response to accommodating women and has been largely conducted in the United States. Minimal research takes a qualitative focus on the everyday experience of how women in the military make sense of these seemingly contradictory roles. As shown, not only are these women subjected to a work environment that can be unsupportive and even hostile, but they also must deal with criticism and debate in the public sphere.

In addressing this gap in the research, I restate the questions that this thesis will address: How do women balance the responsibilities of the role of mother with a career in the Canadian military particularly when experiencing work-related family separation? What are the everyday practices performed by women to balance these roles? What ideologies, particularly military and mothering, are embedded in their everyday practices? Before outlining the methodology that will be used to answer these questions, in the next section I present the conceptual framework that provides the theoretical focus of this study. As identified in the literature review, women are subjected to societal messages around the choices they make. To further understand the impact and relevance of how social messages construct meaning in the everyday lives of women, this framework looks at social relations using the theoretical context of institutional ethnography with emphasis on the institutions of the military and motherhood.

Finding balance managing a military career with family is unmistakably challenging. Both these institutions have been described as greedy because they “both make great demands on individuals in terms of commitments, loyalty, time, and energy” (Segal, 1986, p. 9). Ten years after Segal’s observation, at a forum on the health of

women in the military, Poth (1996) notes that military members, regardless of gender, still experience conflict balancing sometimes competing personal and work responsibilities. In the following chapter, I will present institutional ethnography as a theoretical framework focusing on both the military and motherhood as institutions. Using this lens, I begin to uncover how ideologies may be influencing the everyday experiences of mothers who are military members.

### Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I provide the conceptual framework that informs my research exploring the everyday world of women who are both mothers and military members paying particular attention to their experience of deployment or work-related family separation due to operational requirements of the Canadian Forces. In the first section, I provide my understanding of institutional ethnography as critical theory. The next two sections review motherhood and the military, respectively, as institutions organised in ways that reproduce gendered processes of ruling relations. The social construction of gender will be seen as the thread that links these three elements into a cohesive framework.

#### *Institutional Ethnography*

Institutional ethnography, as a critical theory and methodology, developed out of Dorothy Smith's questioning of how knowledge is used as a tool of oppression. Her inquiry was initially informed in the 1960s by her understanding of Marxism and feminism in an attempt to *explicate* "other ways of knowing" from the traditional power base of a male dominated society. The concept of explication involves a disentangling and clarification of practices that are often hidden. According to DeVault (1999), this explication is more about revealing the daily activities and negotiations of individuals that reinforce a socially formulated power structure rather than an exposure of systemic domination. In this study, uncovering or explicating hidden practices originating in the ideology of motherhood and the military is integral to understanding the meaning of the everyday work being accomplished. Illuminating the ideological practices that are

embedded in military women's everyday life will begin to provide answers regarding how women balance their careers with motherhood.

Smith's theories (1981, 1987) led her to examine reality from the standpoint of the informant by beginning in the everyday world of the individual. More traditional approaches to research objectify participants so that the actualities and details of their lives and the context are lost from view. In keeping with the qualitative paradigm, the context of the inquiry is as much a part of the reality as the experience being observed. According to Smith, the actions of the informant are also an integral part of the context. When everyday activities are coordinated by organising practices that originate from a distance, explicating the ruling relations requires starting from the standpoint of informants and the everyday activities in which they engage. In essence, we are actors in concert with organising regimes that create the rules or policies designed to coordinate and control behaviour, often oblivious to what Smith identified as the *problematic* because we accept this reality as told to us. In order to reveal the interdependent relationships, examining the details of daily life is necessary. Institutional ethnography provides a tool for exposing the problematic in our everyday lives and uncovering a *line of fault* (to be defined later).

The problematic of the everyday life does not refer to the everyday as being a problem in the sense that it is troublesome, rather it is about how the everyday world is organised through social relations (Grahame, 1998). "Hence the term problematic organizes an actual character of the everyday world into a systematic inquiry formulated and entered upon as a part of a discourse. It is a mystery arising at the moment it is questioned" (Smith, 1981, p. 4). The analogy of mystery is helpful if we see the process

of institutional ethnography as detective work in which the researcher attempts to uncover and make visible the evidence of how social relations organise the specific activities of individuals. By beginning from the standpoint of the individual, one can begin to understand how the local site of inquiry is embedded in a broader context of ruling relations that organize the local site. In the case of women who are both mothers and military members, how do the ideologies of these institutions, the military and motherhood, coordinate the actions of the women especially in their everyday experience of deployment? This, then, is the problematic to be explored.

Of particular interest here is when the dual roles of military member and mother intersect. Smith talks about the *line of fault* where there is a point of rupture for women.

This inquiry into the implications of a sociology for women begins from the discovery of a point of rupture in my/our experience as woman/women within the social forms of consciousness – the culture or ideology of our society – in relation to the world known otherwise, the world directly felt, sensed, responded to, prior to its social expression. From this starting point, the next step locates that experience in the social relations organizing and determining precisely the disjuncture, that line of fault along which the consciousness of women must emerge. (Smith, 1987, p. 49)

The line of fault then can be understood to represent a disjuncture between what individuals know in the actuality of their everyday world and the dominant ideologies that originate extra-locally and of which individuals may not be fully conscious. Specifically, what are the social relations that organise the activities of women who are both mothers and military members? Is there a line of fault at the point of intersection?

The daily choices and behaviours that individuals engage in, that are consciously or unconsciously influenced by external events, are facets of social relations (Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Social organization happens routinely and often unconsciously or in ways we take for granted. As mothers, we may engage in activities such as making arrangements for childcare automatically without question. Why is it usually the mother who makes these arrangements? What work is involved in making these arrangements? Is this work visible to others or even defined as work? How does one find quality childcare or for that matter, how does one know what constitutes quality childcare? There is an expectation by employers that women who have dependent children will have appropriate childcare in place. What happens when there is a breakdown in those arrangements? How mothers negotiate alternate arrangements can be dependent on the policies and practices of their employer. Clearly, the everyday activity of arranging childcare can be organised and coordinated by rules beyond the local choices of individuals. Understanding these complex relations, then, requires starting with the details of the everyday work that is carried out.

To fully understand the relationship of ruling to which we are subjected, it is necessary to move beyond the everyday of individual actors and the local sites of the everyday activities by moving to other levels of relations. This next step may be to explore what takes place within the institutions themselves. This is the extra-local where the work of the institutions takes place. It is necessary to talk to the employees of organizations to uncover how they do their work and how their work accomplishes the purpose of those in power. Smith refers to a “generous concept of work” as everything that individuals need to know and do as they navigate through their day-to-day lives

(Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 72). Understanding what people do in their daily life is an essential source of data for institutional ethnography researchers. For mothers who are military members, it will be important to look at two standpoints - one in the everyday world as mother and the other in the everyday world as an employee of the Canadian Forces - in order to uncover the intersection of these two roles and expose the line of fault.

There is another source of data beyond the everyday work of individuals and workers within institutions. This is the existence of texts that play a part in social organization through what Smith (1990, 1999, 2005) termed *textual mediation*. Work is often methodically carried out through the “activation” of texts, forms, and policies. Texts then are often tools of ruling practices that are embedded in the everyday. Textual analysis is an important component of the institutional ethnography methodology through which the invisible is rendered visible. How textual analysis will be accomplished will be covered more fully in the methodology section that follows. An example, however, serves to underline the importance of this aspect of institutional ethnography. Referring back to the issue of childcare arrangements broached earlier, knowing what workplace policies are in place that impact this everyday activity will be enlightening. For example, some employers allow workers to take family days when a child is ill, whereas for others use of personal sick days may be necessary, and can sometimes involve deceit related to the given reason for the absence from work. Policies usually exist as standardized documents that direct different users in consistent ways. Textual analysis can be supplemented through interviews with individuals to uncover how their actions are directed or how they activate the substance of the texts. DeVault and McCoy (2002) liken

the role of texts in peoples lives to the “central nervous system” (p. 765) branching out and controlling what happens in different locations.

Institutional ethnography as a method of research inquiry is still relatively new but has found a growing number of practitioners (DeVault & McCoy, 2002). Several of these practitioners, including Smith herself, have looked at women and mothers in different social contexts that involve care work. Smith (1999), along with Griffiths, looked at how educational institutions coordinated the schoolwork women did with their children. DeVault (1991) explored the social organization of caring in her seminal work *Feeding the Family*. In 1998, Naples explored the experiences of mothers on welfare who were able to utilize a college option (as cited in DeVault & McCoy, 2002). Additionally a few studies have used institutional ethnography or have been influenced by it when examining the experiences of intimate partners of military members in Canada and ways that the ruling relations of the military institution coordinate their lives (Harrison, 2002; Harrison & Laliberté, 1994, 1997; Norris, 2001; Poulin, 2001). These particular studies identified how the everyday work of female spouses is integral to the military members being able to dedicate themselves to the military organization. Unmistakably delineated along gender lines, the question then becomes, how is this work accomplished when the woman is the military member? The following two sections look at motherhood and the military as institutions that are constructed and organised in ways that reproduce ruling relations making them ideal sites for exploration through institutional ethnography. What has not been studied before is the intersection of these institutions.

### *The Institution of Motherhood*

In her review of Rich's *Of Woman Born*, O'Reilly (2004) speaks of motherhood as a patriarchal institution defined by men to be controlling and oppressive to women. How do we as a society continue to replicate the rules of this institution? *Of Women Born* was first published in 1977 and is considered to be a seminal work of feminism for identifying the ideological nature of motherhood and the transformative message that women were not failures if they did not find the role of mother fulfilling. Understanding the biology of becoming a mother is the easy part in modern society. Understanding the ideology of becoming a mother is somewhat more complicated.

Prior to the publication of Rich's book there was little exploration of the meaning of motherhood from a feminist perspective. There is now a plethora of literature to draw upon (Glenn, Chang, & Forcey, 1994; McMahon, 1995; Miller, 2005; O'Reilly, 2004; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991; Swanson-Kauffman, 1987; Wearing, 1984). Defining the meaning of motherhood, however, continues to be an elusive pursuit. "(Motherhood) is specifically and fundamentally a cultural practice that is continuously redesigned in response to changing economic and societal factors. As a cultural construction, its meaning varies with time and place; there is no essential or universal experience of motherhood" (O'Reilly, 2004, p. 5). Johnston and Swanson (2003) conducted a content analysis of popular women's magazines to uncover the extent of ideologies and myths of motherhood. The authors emphasize the importance of popular media as a source of ideological beliefs about motherhood. The textual and visual imagery that constitutes these publications bombards mothers with appealing and influential messages that dictate expected social behaviour. Although their analysis supported a traditional view of

mothers who are Caucasian, stay-at-home, and find fulfillment within the private sphere, they also uncovered substantial contradictory myths that may contribute to conflicting expectations. Despite the traditional viewpoint, some media depictions of stay-at-home mothers were negative and though less frequent, mothers who worked were sometimes illustrated in a positive light.

In a discourse analysis of childcare and parenting manuals, Marshall (1991) found that motherhood is constructed as a natural, fulfilling, and essentially positive experience for women. This presentation by “experts” emphasizes the traditional nuclear family structure as normal where the division of labour is not only gendered but supports maintaining the status quo. Deviations from this norm are either not considered or are presented as unnatural or even detrimental to the well-being of children and/or family. Marshall notes the absence of the woman from this reference as a lack of consideration for mothers as individuals. This normalizing of motherhood creates a dilemma for women who do not experience the prescribed view. On one hand, it is the mother who is blamed if the course of motherhood deviates from the ideal. On the other hand, there is a lack of opportunity for women to openly discuss their experience outside of the norm. Miller (2005) reiterates the sense of jeopardy that may silence mothers from disclosing any negative experiences with motherhood. She concludes that when mothers find themselves out of sync with the accepted construction of motherhood, they may consider it unsafe to admit their feelings.

Some of the contradictory messages around mothering can be attributed to social, class, and race differences (Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2004). Mothers are blamed for damaging their children by working outside the home and for not working outside the

home. This apparent paradox can be delineated along social, class, and race lines when considering women on welfare are under pressure to be in the workforce at the same time as professional women are often criticized for placing career ahead of family. Collins (1994) points out how theories of motherhood that ignore social context are only partial perspectives that cannot be generalized to all mothers. In talking to mothers who are members of the Canadian military, diversity of backgrounds may point to differences in the origin of the socially constructed meanings of motherhood for individual mothers. This research intends to explicate the evidence of social construction and identify where its origins may be influenced by race and class.

Women are regularly subjected to various, often contradictory, messages around the everyday work of being a mother. When our everyday reality does not match our expectation or that of the experts, we experience a line of fault (Smith, 1987). We may question our own adequacy without considering the veracity of the criteria we use to judge our actions. We may be unaware of how embedded societal messages are in our consciousness resulting in points of disjuncture between what we know and what we do that can be experienced as discordant or out of sync. Specifically, when women who are employed outside the home feel stressed by family responsibilities impinging on work time, they may be unlikely to consider patriarchal or capitalist ideologies that are socially constructed external to the local actuality of their everyday life yet embedded in their everyday reality. This disjuncture may be experienced as tension or confusion. Through the standpoint of individual women, a point of entry is gained that allows the explication of how socially constructed organization recreates and coordinates the ruling relations. This results in “discovering the social that does not subordinate the knowing subject to

objectified forms of knowledge of society or political economy” (Smith, 2005, p. 10) but acknowledges and embraces the importance of what the subject knows.

A common thread in the construction of motherhood that will be given closer consideration is gender. Gender will also be shown to be a factor in institutional practices within the military. Gender is not simply the difference between males and females. From a social construction perspective, roles and behaviours that are attributable to differences in females and males are contextual. Differences, whether real or perceived, are used to classify individuals and assign roles and expectations. In terms of motherhood, the biological difference relative to childbirth, often leads to the expectation that women are naturally inclined to nurture and care for children. In her 2000 review of a decade of scholarly work on motherhood, Arendell found the commonality of mothering definitions to be “the social practices of nurturing and caring for dependent children” (p. 1192). One of the tenets of *domesticity*, a gender system described by Williams (2000), is the entitlement of children to have mothers who choose to make caregiving the focus of their lives. Williams deconstructs the illusion of choice through a careful presentation of the other two tenets of domesticity: first, employers are entitled to hire ideal workers and second, that men have the right to be ideal workers. The concept of the ideal worker describes an employee who is unencumbered by family responsibilities and is therefore available to meet the full expectations of the employer. I will return this concept in the discussion of the military institution. Accepting as natural that mothers will focus an abundance of time, energy, and resources on their children, engaging in what Hays coined as *intensive mothering*, marginalizes mothers who practice alternative approaches to mothering (as cited in O’Reilly, 2004). Furthermore, when women do engage in

mothering practices they may also be contributing to the engendering through reproducing the gendered nature of the activity (McMahon, 1995). One way this may occur is when mothers do not talk about difficulties they experience so that traditional beliefs and practices of motherhood are not questioned or deconstructed (Miller, 2005).

Smith (1999) traces the historical trajectory of gender and ruling relations. With the rise of the middle class and an economy steeped in capitalism, women were increasingly relegated to the domestic sphere and excluded from influence over ruling practices. This exclusion served not only to disallow women from participating in the public realm but also to create a gendered division of labour that allowed men unencumbered membership in the marketplace. This shift in social organization redefines relations in ways that function to recreate dominant forms of ruling. When gender-defined rules create barriers to women's access to the marketplace they continue to be excluded from full participation in the regimes that define the rules. As the gendered division of labour became more ingrained in society, it became an accepted norm. Women participate in recreating this norm and further entrenching its acceptance by not questioning their role in carrying out the everyday work in the domestic realm. An illustration of the gendered organization of social relations can be seen in the concept of the Standard North American Family (SNAF) as an ideological code (Smith, 1999). SNAF defines the family as consisting of an adult, heterosexual, legally married couple with traditional gendered responsibilities in which the male is the primary financial support and the female is the primary caregiver especially if there are children. Smith compares an ideological code to a biological code in that they both operate on an unconscious level to organise human behaviour. In essence, we are so attuned to the

SNAF organization of the family that we automatically view forms of family as either conforming or deviating from the code. Institutional ethnography provides a lens for making visible the existence of unconscious organization of knowledge such as SNAF.

The preceding discussion illustrates how motherhood is socially constructed along gendered lines that allow men to position themselves as ideal employees in the marketplace. In the following section, I will show how the military is an institution steeped in traditional gendered roles that has depended on the ability of men to function as ideal employees.

### *The Military Institution*

The military is an employer unlike other employers in the broader civilian society. This difference is largely related to the prime directive of defending the security of the nation. For this reason, the Canadian military structure is highly disciplined, strictly controlled and inflexible (Merz & Wilson, 2002). Members are subjected to a process of socialization that begins in basic training, a process that is designed to control and shape individuals to accept without question the military command structure. Unwavering obedience is a necessary requirement of members in times of conflict or emergency measures. Unlike civilian employees, the military explicitly requires its members to put its commitment to the Canadian Forces first. “The Canadian Forces is a professional institution that requires its members to place service to country and needs of the Canadian Forces ahead of personal considerations. Canadian Forces members must remain mobile and deployable to meet the exigencies of the Canadian Forces and to enhance training and experience” (DND, 2002, Overview section, ¶ 1).

The rigid nature of the military creates an environment that by definition is conservative and resistant to change. As an organization, it actively works to reinforce its traditional values and beliefs and thereby continually reproduces existing ruling relations by arguing such rigidity is necessary. For example, in justifying the opposition to recognising the legitimacy of common-law relationships, the Canadian Forces were concerned that the high standards they expected of members would be compromised (Merz & Wilson, 2002). Using findings reported by Parks on the acceptance of gays in the Canadian military, Merz and Wilson, present further evidence of the Canadian Forces as an organization that is slow to reflect the values of the larger society: In spite of the policy changes, military members continued to be reluctant to disclose their sexual orientation suggesting that the long-established attitudes were firmly entrenched. Adopting an ethos of superiority and difference serves to segregate military members from the rest of society in ways that reinforces the expected rules of behaviour within the organization.

When the preceding points are considered in light of the integration of women in the Canadian Forces, it is not hard to imagine this traditional bastion of male command having difficulty accepting female members. In her report on gender integration in the Canadian Forces, Davis (1997b) emphasizes the importance of group process and the key role it may play in how women are accepted into this traditional male environment. When the dominant themes expressed in focus groups conducted on gender integration did not reflect the majority of participants, it is imperative to consider how individuals may feel pressured to succumb to group norms (Davis). Despite a policy of zero-tolerance for harassment in the Canadian Forces, Merz and Wilson (1996) reported that a review of the

literature “cited harassment, both personal and sexual, to be the largest problem related to women in the Canadian Forces” (p. 23).

Militaries have centuries of rules, regulations, and traditions constructed around an environment that traditionally kept women in arms-length relationships serving the needs of the organization in gender specific ways. Whether as “camp-followers” or organizationally recognized as a “legitimate” spouse, the work and activities of women in the private sphere have served to support the function of the military (Enloe, 1983; Harrison, 2002; Harrison & Laliberté, 1994, 1997; Norris, 2001). Even as women were allowed inside the organizational structure, their role was initially organized around supportive functions (e.g., nursing, secretarial, food service) that fit gendered expectations while reinforcing patriarchal ruling relations. Despite all trades being open to women in the Canadian Forces since 2001, the military continues to operate in ways that recreate a gender based workplace serving to marginalize women at the same time power is reproduced in the hands of the predominately male leadership.

Returning to the notion of the ideal employee introduced earlier will serve to illustrate how the military is structured in such a way as to disallow women equal access to full participation. This concept is built upon the belief that employers are entitled to employees who are unencumbered by family concerns, and therefore are available to serve the workplace at the demand of the employer. Williams (2000) chronicles the evolution of the ideal worker through the increasing separation of the private and public sphere with the advent of the industrial revolution and the growth of the marketplace. This separation was made along a gendered dichotomy with men being seen as more suited to the competitive public sphere and women more naturally suited to care work in

the home. This evolution results in an employer/employee relationship in which the employer can assume the female spouse of the employee will fulfill any domestic responsibilities. Williams contends that despite the movement of women into the workplace, employers continue to have an expectation that employees are able to compartmentalize their lives to keep the private sphere separate from the workplace. In 2001, Health Canada conducted a study on work-life conflict that looked at the impact of responsibility for dependent care on work family issues. The findings of the Health Canada study suggest that many of Canada's largest employers still believe in the "myth of separate worlds" (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 63). Not only do employees feel that they are unable to refuse to work overtime, but there is a prevalent expectation that an employee will spend both weekday and weekend nights away from home if required by their job. This level of commitment to the employer is an inevitable way of life for the military member who can expect to be separated from family on a regular basis due to operational requirements and often for periods of months at a time.

Kimme (2004) examines this issue from the perspective of genderless individuals occupying gender-neutral sites:

The problem is that such genderless people are assumed to be able to devote themselves single-mindedly to their jobs, have no children or family responsibilities, and may even have familial supports for such single-minded workplace devotion. Thus, the genderless job holder turns out to be gendered as a man. (p. 105)

Kimme illustrates how institutional workplaces are structured to reproduce the power differences between women and men using examples of professional careers that are

traditionally male-dominated. Training for physicians is designed with intense schedules for interns and residents such that women medical students may be faced with the pressure of balancing pregnancy and motherhood whereas their male counterparts with children are likely to have a spouse to fulfill family responsibilities. Similarly for lawyers and academics, it can be seen that the highest career demands occur concurrent with women's prime reproductive years. The military is also organized in ways that reproduce a gendered structure that favors men. Davis challenges the concept of gender-neutrality as misleading in the context of the military. Although policies may be applied equally, regardless of gender, men and women will encounter identical workplace circumstances and challenges in different ways (Davis, 1997b).

### *Summary*

In summary, both motherhood and the military are institutions that are socially constructed and organized in ways that reproduce gendered patterns of behaviour that serve to reproduce a ruling structure preferencing men. To fully understand how these two institutions overlap, there is a need for research that specifically focuses in this area particularly from the perspective of military women. Arendell (2000), in concluding her review of motherhood literature, suggests the need for more attention to the particular lives of women in their own voice rather than relying on generalizations and over simplified depictions. She further suggests that methods using the paradigm of social construction provide a strong framework for understanding context, relations, and interactions. It is my intention to expand on Arendell's suggestion, to apply just such a method through the application of institutional ethnography to the investigation of mothers who are military members.

## Chapter 4: Methodology

As the researcher, my life experience brings both insider and outsider perspectives to this study. Whereas traditional positivist research methods stress the objectivity of the researcher in an attempt to avoid bias, institutional ethnography acknowledges the experience of the researcher for bringing their standpoint to the inquiry. Griffith (1998), using the research she and Smith did on mothering work as an illustration, points out how at “the beginning of the research process, inside knowledge of social groups is invaluable, bringing an authenticity to the research that is almost impossible to reach from the outside” (p. 375). As a working mother, I am able to relate to some of the same challenges that mothers who are military members experience in balancing work and family life. I have been subjected to many of the same ideological messages such as patriarchy and gendered division of labour that can oppress and marginalize women. As well, my experience working with a Military Family Resource Centre for six years provides me with a level of familiarity for the organizational culture of the military. These experiences helped me build rapport with the women I interviewed.

Yet not having lived the reality of life as a military member also positions me as an outsider to the everyday experience I asked the participants to share with me. I believe that this outsider standpoint served as an advantage as the process unfolded. There can be disadvantages to the researcher who is an insider being subjected to the same social relations that are being sought out thereby rendering them invisible. DeVault and McCoy (2002), as an example emphasize the challenge for researchers to recognise how the use of “institutional language conceals the very practices institutional ethnography aims to discover and describe” (p. 768). The military culture is generally accepted as having its

own language often made up of acronyms particular to the military. Working on the margins of the military organization, I never developed a facility for this institutional language. This lack of understanding allowed me to probe for detailed descriptions of what is actually happening where institutional language is presented and to “learn how such terms and the discourses they carry operate in the institutional setting” (DeVault & McCoy, p. 768).

### *Participant Recruitment*

Due to the specific interest in how mothers manage motherhood and their military careers at the time of work-related family separation, I recruited mothers who had experienced a work-related separation or deployment within the past two years. Deployment, as defined by the Directorate of Military Family Support, refers to any service-related separation that takes a member away from his/her usual place of residence for a 30-day period or longer. Even though a brief absence will cause some disruption to everyday routines, a longer absence requires greater accommodation by the service member and her family. The time limit of two years was chosen as relatively recent in order to assist recall of details and events related to the work-related separation. Mothers were required to have at least one child under the age of 12 at the time of the work-related separation. Twelve was chosen as the upper limit as children under this age are required to have supervised care at all times. Attempts were made to find individuals of different ranks, trades, and environmental (army, navy, or air force) classification. Seeking out participants with various backgrounds was not designed to ensure a representative sample but to uncover common processes that serve to organise and coordinate the experience of the individuals.

Through my connections as a past employee of the Halifax Military Family Resource Centre (HMFRC) and my work as a research assistant on a research project being conducted with the sponsorship of the Directorate of Quality of Life (DQOL), Caregiving, Health and Work of Canadian Forces Members (CHAW-CF) (Brannen, Norris, Petite, Keddy, & Grandia, 2007), I asked acquaintances to inform women they knew who met my research criteria about the proposed research. In addition, I emailed respondents to the survey administered for the CHAW-CF project who had agreed to be contacted for future research with a brief summary of my proposed research and my contact information. Upon contacting me, I first determined the women met the criteria for my study and provided them with more information about the study and determined if they wished to participate. I was contacted by eleven women, two of whom did not meet the criteria and one who chose not to proceed with the interview. Thus, ultimately I was able to locate eight women who were mothers as well as members of the Canadian military. Prior to participating in any interviews, the eight women recruited were asked to read and sign a letter of informed consent that can be found in Appendix A.

#### *Interview Procedure*

The first five individuals were asked to take part in two in-depth and unstructured interviews of one to one and a half hours each using open-ended questions (see Appendix B). Institutional ethnography is a methodology that unfolds as it progresses and seldom follows a detailed plan. According to DeVault and McCoy (2002), “the process of inquiry is rather like grabbing a ball of string, finding a thread, and then pulling it out; that is why it is difficult to specify in advance exactly what the research will consist of” (p. 755). In general, the interviews are the method through which participants can tell their stories of

what they do so that how their everyday work is coordinated and linked to institutional processes may be illuminated. This process may point to unanticipated courses of inquiry in terms of further questions to ask. What is revealed in one interview can guide and direct further interviews. For this reason, a second interview was scheduled to allow for follow-up from previous interview. “What will be brought under ethnographic scrutiny unfolds as the research is pursued” (Smith, 2005, p. 34). The questions for this follow-up were developed after reviewing my interview notes and the transcripts from the first interviews for the first three participants. After conducting the second interviews for the first five participants, a degree of saturation was achieved with no new questions emerging. Consequently, for the final three participants, the additional questions were included at the end of the original questions so that these three women were interviewed only once. This situation also provided a level of convenience for the last participants where they did not have to make time for the second interview.

Questions focused around three areas of interest. First, the women were asked about their experience of recruitment. How they came to join the military was explored along with their intentions for combining motherhood with a military career. They were also asked to explore their recollection of conversations or interviews that were held with military staff at the time of recruitment with regards to family considerations. A second area of questioning encompassed how the participants do the work of mothering. These questions were used to explicate the particular ideologies of motherhood that framed the participants’ everyday mothering work. The third area of interest looked at how their mothering work changes when they were deployed. For these last two areas, particular attention was paid to any accommodation women made with regard to their military

work. Some variance in the interview questions emerged out of the process through probing and in response to the particular of the everyday world of the participants.

To begin the interview, I told the participants about my background and interest in this research followed by asking a few brief demographic questions. The demographic questions were factual in nature and provided confirmation that the women met the criteria required for participation. The factual nature of the questions also provided a non-stressful introduction to the interview as well as a starting point for building rapport. Interviews were conducted in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and were completed over a 12-week period between January and April 2007. All the women chose either to be interviewed in their workplace or in their homes. All participation was voluntary; however permission from the Department of National Defence was required (see Ethical Considerations section). All participants were asked to sign a letter of informed consent prior to the interview (Appendix A).

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. For the process of transcribing the interviews, I hired two individuals who had previous experience providing this service to qualitative researchers. Transcripts were literal and included all verbal expressions (e.g., laughter) heard in the audio recordings and were only edited for identifying information (e.g., names) when quotes were extracted for inclusion in the thesis document. All transcripts were “cleaned” through a process where I read the typed transcript and listened to the audio-recording. This process allowed for the correction of any words that were misheard by the transcribers. Copies of the transcripts were returned to the participants to allow member checking both to ensure trustworthiness of the information provided and to allow individuals the opportunity to withdraw any comments

that they may no longer be comfortable with or, if they chose, to withdraw completely from the study. Only one woman asked for the removal of one phrase at the request of her husband that he felt referred to him in an unflattering light.

#### *Additional Data Sources*

Throughout the interviews, I was attentive to any references to textual materials that might affect or regulate the everyday processes for military women. Texts in institutional ethnography are understood to be any medium that can be reproduced in identical form repeatedly to all individuals (Smith, 2005). It is this replication that allows the coordination of the receivers of the text by presenting the same information over and over to an individual or in the same way to many individuals together or at different times and places. In this way, text can be seen to include written documents, videos, pictures, or audio recordings. Analysis of documents also includes explication of the social relations contained within the texts that coordinate the everyday lives of individuals. Particular attention was paid to references to texts such as policies during interviews that organise and direct the actions of the mothers. In addition to military texts, I also probed for references to mothering or parenting texts that may be coordinate the work the mothers do.

The gathering of some military texts began prior to the interviews. As a past employee of the Halifax MFRC, I was familiar with some of the DND policies that are pertinent to military women who are mothers. As previously mentioned, the process of conducting an institutional ethnography is a journey but it is not necessarily linear. The question I have chosen to pursue began to form several years ago through the intersection of my studies and my employment. Working in a military environment I paid particular

attention to how institutional ethnography research had been done around the everyday work of female military spouses (Harrison, 2002; Harrison & Laliberté, 1994, 1997; Norris, 2001; Poulin, 2001). As this process of study was formalised through stages of identifying the thesis topic, the proposal, and ultimately the gathering of the data, I collected written texts that I had come across through my work. As I read the texts, I considered how they were linked to the organization of social relations. The overarching imperative in the DND family policy provides an explicit illustration of a text that mediates and organizes the actions of individuals in the military: “The Canadian Forces is a professional institution that requires its members to place service to country and needs of the Canadian Forces ahead of personal considerations. Canadian Forces members must remain mobile and deployable to meet the exigencies of the Canadian Forces and to enhance training and experience” (DND, 2002, Overview section, ¶ 1). This one piece of text, more than any other, informed my consideration of the direction I pursued, where I chose to start from the standpoint of military women who are mothers to understand how this imperative coordinates their everyday lives as parents. As I engaged in the interview process I reread the documents to consider how they were linked to what I was learning. This led me back to the interviews for further clarification and influenced the development of the questions in the second part of the interview. There was a moving back and forth as the everyday practices were illuminated to identify the social relations. In some ways this process is similar to triangulation, which uses different sources of information to confirm authenticity of the source (O’Leary, 2004).

In addition to the interviews and textual analysis, I also kept field notes and journals throughout the study. Notes were made immediately after each interview

reflecting on non-verbal cues such as the emotional state of the participant, ideas for future interview questions, ideas to consider in the analysis, and observations about my own personal reactions to what I was hearing. This journaling was supplemented with additional observations made during the cleaning of the transcripts and continued through the analysis process as well.

### *Data Analysis*

This process is one of ongoing data analysis where the everyday experience of the informants is the data and as such is a trustworthy source. Institutional ethnography relies on interviews, observations, and documents as data (like other forms of ethnography) not as the topic or object of interest but rather as the “entry” into the social relations of the setting (Campbell, 1998). The analysis did not identify theoretical frameworks. It explicated the institutional ruling relations that coordinate and organize the actions of the informants and which are embedded in their talk about their experience. The collection of data only stopped when saturation as understood when using institutional ethnography was reached (Townsend, 1998). According to Townsend, “saturation occurs when sufficient data are collected to record how everyday practice actually works within an institutional framework” (p. 19). The final stage of the analysis is the actual writing of the story so that the reader can clearly see “how the conduct of people’s lives is coordinated in relation to ruling ideas and practices” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 99). Using the analogy of a map, this story charts how everyday locations are connected to the extra-local sites where the rules of social organization are produced.

Analysis in institutional ethnography is about mapping the ruling relations evident in the everyday lives of the participants. Through analysing the conversations that

occurred during the interviews, it was possible to identify the context that produced what is said. Concurrently, textual analysis mapped the institutional practices that contribute to this coordination. Identification of common themes that traditionally occur in qualitative analysis is not the intent in institutional ethnography and may actually lead away from the identification of the organising elements at work in the everyday accounts of peoples lives (DeVault & McCoy, 2002; Campbell & Gregor, 2002). Additionally they believe that the use of qualitative data analysis software further entrenches this thematic analysis and so tend not to use such tools. Contrary to this position however, I did use a qualitative software program called Atlas.ti as a means to code the transcripts and provide a data management tool. I identified the links between the everyday work and experience of the informants and the institutional practices mediating their experience. The process began with the first interview. Through the interviews and examination of the texts, the goal was to understand what was happening and how it happened

From the beginning, this critical analytic process served to inform and guide the direction of subsequent interviews and inquiries. Through this ongoing analysis, the goal was to make visible how the social relations that organize individuals within institutions shape the everyday experience of participants. This reflexive process provided a mechanism through which to reflect on my own perception and interpretation of the data I was gathering as I identified how my insider perspective and knowledge informed the process. My writing served as part of the analytical process used in institutional ethnography. “The main analytic point to hold on to, at this point, is the idea of social relations at the heart of your research interest” (Campbell & Gregor, 2002, p. 85). I did not want to categorize the data in ways that may have led away from this focus. The

process of explicating the social relations began as the interviews unfolded. As researcher, it was important to clarify my understanding of what the informant was telling me about what actually happens in the everyday as they go along. Journaling helped to identify where issues needed to be explored in more depth as well as to point out previously unconsidered directions that lead to new questions.

Initially, I coded the interviews for categories or themes that the women shared within the broad themes identified in my interview guide of recruitment, motherhood, and deployment. As this process continued, I added a fourth category of workplace culture. Sub-categories or themes initially focused on the work that was done within this broad framework, who accomplished the work, what influenced the work, and why it was carried out in particular ways. Analysis of the data continued as I wrote the findings from the interviews. Initially I documented the women's stories as chronological accounts of their lives. Working from this point of view, I then went back and began incorporating the various layers and connections between the everyday actions of their work as mothers and military members and how I learned these actions are coordinated. Throughout this process I referred to relevant textual documents and policies and used my journal notes to organize emerging connections and ideas.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Interviews were arranged to take place in a location that was comfortable and convenient for the participants. The women chose to meet either in their workplace or in their homes. Participants were informed that the interviews were being audio-recorded and they were free at any time to request that the tape recorder be turned off without any consequence. Only my thesis advisor and I had access to the digital recordings that were

password protected files on my personal laptop. The only exception to this was when the recordings were being transcribed by the two individuals hired for this task although no identifying information was shared with the transcribers. Participants were reassured that confidentiality would be maintained through the use of pseudonyms that were used throughout the project. A key to matching pseudonyms to the participants was kept in a separate file that was password protected and only accessible by me. The only source of identifying information was the signed informed consent forms that were kept in a locked cabinet in my home office. As well, any potentially identifying information in the interviews was changed to protect anonymity. It should be noted that although these safeguards were applied, given the relatively small community with regards to women in the Canadian Forces in Halifax, there was a potential that anonymity could still be compromised. All participants were made aware of this possibility. The women were also aware that confidentiality would be preserved at all times unless the participant granted permission or if compelled by law in the case of revelations of child abuse or harm to self or others. There were no incidents for any reason where confidentiality was not maintained.

All participants were provided with copies of their transcribed interviews to review to insure they were comfortable with what they said. This provided them with the opportunity if they had any discomfort with all or part of the interview, to have all or part of the interview excluded in accordance with their wishes. As previously indicated, only one woman asked for the removal of a phrase at the request of her husband because he felt that it portrayed him in an unflattering light. Upon successful defence of my thesis, I will provide a summary of the research findings to each of the participants. Participants

were also informed that copies of the complete thesis can be accessed by the public through the MSVU library and the National Library in Ottawa.

The nature of this research met the definition of minimal risk as set out by Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) through the University Research Ethics Board in which the likelihood of distress or harm for participants would be comparable to what might be expected in daily life. It should be noted however that the personal nature of the questions did lead to some unanticipated emotional recollections. Participants were reminded that they could stop the interview at any time if the process created any discomfort. Other than a few rest breaks, none of the women requested stopping or withdrawing from the interviews. Participants were also provided with contact information for confidential services available to all military members if they had experienced significant emotional or psychological discomfort.

Approval was requested and received from the MSVU University Research Ethics Board following the completion and submission of the ethics protocol review, in accordance with the MSVU Senate Policy on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Conduct of Research Involving Humans. The Canadian military also required any research involving Canadian Forces members and families to be approved through the Director Personnel Applied Research (D Pers AR). In addition to ensuring ethical considerations, D Pers AR coordinates all research to reduce redundancy and survey fatigue and to evaluate quality control. One element of this process is the requirement of an internal sponsor for research projects within the DND organization. This approval was facilitated through an addendum to the CHAW-CF research project that was sponsored by the Director Quality of Life (DQOL),

which has oversight for policy related to family support. This was a protracted process that began in May 2006 after the successful defence of my thesis proposal. The approval from D Pers AR was received approximately seven months later. A copy of the approved research document is attached in Appendix C.

All of the preceding safeguards were articulated in the letter of consent that each participant was required to sign (Appendix A). As well, at the beginning of each interview session, these safeguards were verbally expressed to ensure that the participants were giving free and informed consent.

## Chapter 5: Findings

This chapter presents the stories that eight women told about their experience of balancing motherhood with a military career. What is heard in the sharing of their everyday life is that this path they have chosen brings both challenges and rewards. There are both commonalities and differences in their narratives. It is clear that this is not a typical nine to five career. At times, the line between work and home is blurred. As their stories unfold, it is those times of overlap to which I paid close attention. In understanding the stories as data, the application of analysis using an institutional ethnography lens requires “keeping the institution in view” (McCoy, 2006, p. 109). The fundamental question is, “where is the institution, whether motherhood or the military, in the local, everyday world of work through which the women accomplish their lives?” Where applicable I have included textual references such as relevant Canadian Forces policy to illustrate the institutional connections. Using the mapping metaphor of institutional ethnography (Campbell & Gregor, 2002), the following accounts are divided into four broad neighbourhoods (categories) of recruitment, motherhood, deployment, and military environment. Within these neighbourhoods are streets (themes) that help to show the way mothers experience life in the military.

### *Demographics*

To protect the anonymity of the women who were interviewed, the following descriptive information is presented in a format that reduces identifying information. The eight women interviewed had been in the Canadian Forces from ten to 17 years and with the exception of one woman who was in the Air Force, all were in the Navy. Six of the women were regular force members and the remaining two were full-time reserve force members. Half of the women had one child and the other half had two children. Two of

the women also had stepchildren who were not in the home full-time. Biological children ranged in age from two to six years old at the time of the interview. The mothers' ranged in age from 30 to 40. All of the women had been separated from family for work-related reasons in the past two to three years with their most recent separation of more than 30 days in length averaging three months in duration. For two of the women, their most recent family separation was for a six-month deployment. Three of the women were currently legally separated from their spouse. All of the spouses or ex-spouses were currently in the Canadian Forces except for one who had recently left the military. Rank covered a range from Leading Seaman to Lieutenant Navy whereas occupations or trades included cook, nurse, communications, administration, and a ship's officer.

### *Recruitment*

The formal relationship between the women and the military institution began when they enlisted. It is important to explore how they arrived at this point. To accomplish this I looked at what motivated them to join the military in the first place and who influenced them including what part the military plays in this motivation. I also paid attention to the actual recruitment process with consideration for how the women learn about the impact of a military career on family life.

*Family influence on motivation to enlist.* Motivation to enlist in the Canadian Forces for the eight women was mainly as a source of employment that provided the prospect to travel. The opportunity for adventure appealed to several of the women. However, during the enlistment process, none of the women could recall the recruitment personnel initiating any discussions about life in the military particularly with regard to balancing work and family. When asked if they were given any written information about

military life, they could only recall receiving pamphlets about the various trades or occupations to consider.

None of the women interviewed came from families with a strong military background and so they did not have extensive prior knowledge of military life. Only one woman had a parent who had been in the military and another woman had been in the cadets, which provided her with some exposure to the work environment. Three of the women had started working part-time in the reserve force with no clear sense of career direction. This part-time work evolved into full-time work with one woman eventually choosing to join the regular force. Three of the women were actively encouraged to join the military by a parent. Even though these women were directed towards the military, the concern appeared to be focused on the women being employed as opposed to specifically about joining the military. As Christine shares how she came to join the reserve force: “My mom made me. She (said), ‘you’re getting a job for the summer.’”

At no point in their stories of choosing to enlist, was there any evidence of pressure on the women from their family of origin to join the military. Certainly there was no military ideological discourse of tradition, honour, or duty being expressed as an influence on the choice to enlist. Heather did feel the approval she received from her father after she enlisted was influenced by his having a number of family members who had served. For most of the family members of the women however, the military was seen as an acceptable job or career choice at that time even though in the early 1990s it was still a relatively rare occupation choice for women.

A couple of the women did have family express some negative concern for their choice to join the military but generally they found both family and friends to be

supportive. For some the concern came from their mother but for others it was from their father. Here Greta talks about how her father, despite his concerns, supported her decision to enlist.

I think my dad was shocked to say the least. . . . And so he wasn't really all that keen on it. And he had been a cadet when he was younger and hated it. And all that sort of stuff, and he was worried about his little girl going off and joining the military, and I don't know if he was crazy about it, but he was very, very supportive and always tried to help me make the decisions around joining and, you know, being in the military.

Donna's father expressed concern about being geographically separated from his daughter.

Well at first it was just the Reserves so it was a part-time thing, so they weren't really too concerned about it. But my father, like after I left home, he was a bit, you know, he wasn't – not mad but he wasn't happy cause he knew he would miss me and he was always afraid that I would eventually have a family and be away from them.

Heather was one of the women who experienced concern from her mother.

My mother was devastated. . . . Her parents remembered the riots from VE day riots from, you know, the '40s, and she had always been told that sailors were of a certain ilk, and she thought it was – because I had chosen that, she just assumed that that would be – stray me away from what she thought was important. My mother always equated success as a woman with how many children you have,

and how clean your house is, and me choosing a career like that didn't necessarily surprise her, but she thought it would mean that I wouldn't have a family.

For these women, the family concerns appeared to originate from negative personal beliefs and understandings about what a military career entailed. Additionally, there was recognition that this was a choice that deviated from the norm of career choices for women and as Heather's mother noted, this choice was believed by some to preclude motherhood.

From their stories, common beliefs about a military career offering adventure, education, and financial stability, could be seen to be motivating factors. There was no misunderstanding that this was the message that was conveyed in the long time recruitment slogan of the Canadian military, "There's no life like it." Here Beth shares her motivation for enlisting and how her mother was supportive of the idea that a military career was a positive choice and may even be fun.

My mother was actually almost a little jealous of me because when she graduated from high school in England, she wanted to join the Wrens (Women's Royal Naval Service [WRNS]) for a couple of years, and my grandfather vetoed it. So when I said I am going to join the military, and I think I am going to go Navy, she was...she was happy for me because it was going to get me out of the house and all that fun stuff, and she knew it would be a good career choice. (Beth)

*Economic motivation to enlist.* All of the women saw the military as a job that offered stability and adventure, but Greta and Heather were additionally motivated by support offered through the Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) to finance their secondary education. In an economic climate where access to post-secondary education is

constrained financially for many, a policy that supports education for recruits makes the military an attractive employer. This financial incentive requires a service commitment of a number of years in return for the amount of support given. This financial benefit not only motivates career choices that individuals make but, as could be seen from Greta's experience, was also attractive to parents who often shouldered the financial burden of their children's career plans.

When I was in high school, my mother actually attended a graduation of the year ahead of me and she – there was a guy at graduation who was awarded the ROTP scholarship and I remember her coming home and telling me about it after she saw – because it was a massive scholarship and, you know she was telling me this guy has all this money to go to school and I thought wow! Anyway, didn't really think much of it until the following year when I was coming up to figuring out what I was gonna do with my life and not having a clue, and so I decided to go to the recruiting centre to check out what the options were with the military.

Heather was part way through her university program when she considered joining the Reserve Force to help offset the cost of her pursuing law school. Here she describes what happened during her interview for the reserves.

I basically went through the testing process, the interview process, and when I was in the middle of my interview actually – they stopped my interview and basically, the counselor went out and got two other officers and came in and he says “look, you have really good scores on your aptitude test,” he said “plus you would make an excellent candidate for ROTP.”

Heather's intention at the time was only to serve the three years required to pay back the two years financial support she received and return to law school however, she reconsidered that decision when she found she enjoyed the work. There is no way of knowing if her path would have been different if she had not been directed away from the reserve force, but this example still obviously shows how the recruitment methods of the military influences the choices individuals make.

*Recruitment process.* When it came to choosing their military occupation, a few of the women felt they were pushed toward the trade of the recruiter and not necessarily given a complete representation of the demands of the trades for which they were recruited.

Well, yes, I fell into the category of those who were blatantly lied to. . . . He [the recruiter] was a radio operator or something along those lines because he was desperate to get me into that trade. "Oh, it's the best. You don't stand duty watches, and you have the best watches at sea. You always get time off in foreign ports." Well, we do not have the best watches at sea. In fact, we have really, really crappy watches at sea. You know, 12 hours a day working. And then duty watches and foreign ports for duty, more often than most of the rest of the ship's company. Like I say, luckily I enjoy it and I was good at it so it kind of compensated for the fact that what I was told was not true.

Heather felt that filling quotas based on gender equity influenced how individuals were directed towards trades.

[W]hen I went through – there weren't a lot of women in MARS [Maritime Surface Subsurface Command], in the Navy – so they just tried to steer you

towards where they wanted those little quotas filled so to speak.

Both of these situations illustrate how the military institution may manipulate the recruiting process to fill their staffing requirements in a way that is less than transparent. Even though this can turn out to be mutually satisfying, as was the case for Heather and Beth, Fiona shared a concern that this practice continues and illustrated how the result is not always positive.

They're told a lot of things that they shouldn't be told. A lot of people enlist – they'll take a trade that they don't want, and they're being told that they can remuster, which means change trades – when they get in. “Just take this trade so you can get your foot in the door and then you can change.” It's not that easy. It takes many years to change trades. And a lot of people – like I just got posted off one of the ships, and we had a girl on board – she's married with four kids, and she took a Navy trade cause she was told once you get in, you can change any trade that you want. They won't let her. So now she's getting out cause she's got four kids and she's away all the time. That's not what she wanted.

The Department of National Defence has a recruiting website with information for potential members. In a section on frequently asked questions, the following is the response given with regard to changing trades:

It is possible to change trades once enrolled, but such moves are dependent on the needs of the Canadian Forces. For example, if you are serving in a trade that has an abundance of people, and wish to move to a trade that has personnel shortfalls – making a move may be quite simple. However, if the trade you are in is short of people, changing trades *may not be authorized* (italics added). (DND, 2008a)

Obviously, neither the military nor the individual will want to find themselves in a situation where the trade is not a good fit. If individuals are not given a full understanding of what they are committing to when they enrol, this can be seen as analogous to not receiving informed consent before undergoing healthcare treatment. In a civilian organization, if an individual finds themselves in the wrong career, the process of disengaging from the organization is usually relatively simple and involves giving a reasonable amount of notice. To resign from the military is more complex and requires permission from superior officers if the individual has not fulfilled the terms of their contract.

Greta found the recruiting process romanticised the military and the reality of a military career gradually set in as she spent more time in the military.

You know, I had a very romantic view of it at the time and I think the recruiting process sort of reinforced that for me – the pictures of the nurses working with their lovely uniforms on, and you know it was quite romantic to me. . . . And right around the time when I graduated was when the mandate started to change from peace time in Garrison health care to operational health care for the military because Bosnia was really in high swing. And we were being deployed a lot more often and then the deployments started to come up, and then I started thinking “whoa – what did I get myself into?” But, you know it just became more and more a reality gradually as I spent time in the military.

Noticeably, the method of entering the military is unlike the application process for civilian employment. Though all organizations need to hire to ensure they have the right people in the right jobs to fulfill their mandates, in the civilian process there is

usually a clearly defined job description that outlines a specific job with specific hours for which an individual applies. With the military, individuals are applying to an institution where there is a lack of separation between the organization and the individual's private life. An applicant to the military is applying to a way of life that permeates both their family and work life. It is not clear how visibly the recruitment process makes this reality for a potential recruit.

The following statement is taken from an interview guide for potential recruits downloaded from the Canadian Forces recruiting website: "Canadian Forces occupations offer *adventure* (italics added) and challenge, test your physical and mental stamina, and instill such qualities as self-reliance, confidence and pride" (DND, 2007, p. 1). The use of adventure to appeal to potential recruits is a common recruiting strategy for the military. Obviously, any organization is going to present itself in the most positive light particularly if they are facing a shortage of personnel. The question becomes, does this romanticize the organization as Greta experienced? So even if the challenges of employment are presented, will the applicant fully consider the potential downside of the employment? This consideration of an individual's understanding of the ramifications of a military career can be seen to have even greater importance for young individuals who may be at a stage in their lives where they are not giving much contemplation to future plans for a family. Here Beth recalls her experience of the enlistment process.

No, that [military life] wasn't covered at all. I mean I was only 19 at the time. I was still pretty young. I think that [the recruiter] was more concentrating on the adventure of being in the Navy as the big draw versus. . . Maybe if I had walked in there with a husband and child already, it would have been a different outlook

on things. But yes, it was more concentrating on going out and having fun and seeing the world sort of thing. And that is what appealed to me anyway. I wasn't looking for a family-type environment then anyway.

Beth's experience was typical of the women's stories. Based on the experiences of these women, there was little evidence that the recruiting process at the time included any consideration of ensuring the recruits understood the implications of enlisting in the military for their lifestyle. Additionally, all of the women stated that they were at a stage in their life where they were not very future oriented with regard to their plans for having a family and so it is difficult to determine in hindsight if being provided with relevant information would have had any impact.

*Summary.* Prior to beginning the interviews with the women, I had some expectation that I would hear stories of a strong military tradition in their families. However, this was not a motivating factor for the women I spoke with. The stories they told indicated adventure and financial benefits as more likely incentives for enlisting in the military. Regardless of their reason for joining, all of the women were young when they joined and were not overly concerned with long-term goals particularly with regard to family aspirations. Despite the impact that a military career has on family life, there was little evidence that this was given any consideration by the military during the recruiting process for the women. How they were directed to choose their career paths within the military also appeared to be less than transparent for some of the women. Given that different occupations are more demanding than others and therefore have a greater impact on family life, points to the need for a fully articulated understanding at the time that choices are being made. In the following section on motherhood, that reality

of that demand becomes more evident.

### *Motherhood*

Before exploring how women coordinate their work as parents, I examine how they recollect their childhood beliefs of becoming a mother for evidence of the dominant mothering discourse. Additionally, the women shared their recollections about gender roles that were evident in the families in which they were raised. It is our families of origin that often provide the rules for how we will choose to coordinate our families in adulthood. Even when we choose to deviate from what we observed or learned, we will assess where we are in relation to those rules.

*Expectations of motherhood.* All of the women were asked if they fantasized about having children when they were growing up. There was some evidence of a dominant mothering discourse as they shared their memories. Growing up, some of the women dreamed about a traditional home with a husband and children, but as Beth explains, it was not a fantasy that governed her actions.

I had a vague image. I wasn't one of those children that was dreaming of being married and having children. That is not me at all. But it was always there in the back of my head, that yes, eventually I would get married and the picture perfect 2.3 kids and all that stuff. It wasn't a concrete dream or vision, it was just I knew it would happen eventually.

For Elaine and Fiona, being a stay-at-home mother was part of this childhood fantasy but they easily accepted this as an unrealistic or "naïve" expectation. According to Elaine,

When I first thought about being a mother, I expected to be married and have kids at home, and I'd be home looking after them, and I'd have the husband that went

out and worked and had the job, but well – I have to laugh – it doesn't work out that way.

*Family of origin.* How gender roles were organized in their families of origin was explored in the interviews to determine how the organization of responsibilities in childhood influenced the ordering of their adult households. All of the women grew up in homes in which household responsibilities were divided largely along traditional gender roles with mothers being largely responsible for the work inside the house such as cooking, cleaning, and childcare. Fathers' household work was considered to be the heavier work particularly outside the house although several women do recall their fathers helping with indoor chores albeit in lower amounts. For six of the women this division of labour still tended to be true for their mothers who worked outside of the home. Even where mothers were employed outside the home, the fathers were considered to be the main financial support for the family. Only one of the women came from a home where her mother was a homemaker and did not work outside the home. Another woman grew up largely with her grandparents where only her grandfather worked outside the home. In general, all of the women came from homes where either the family roles were unmistakably delineated according to gender or where differences were explained as being deviant from the norm. This can be seen in how the women participated in the activities of daily household life.

All of the women were expected to help with chores around the house while growing up. For the women who had brothers, generally there continued to be a split in the types of chores that were expected of the boys versus the girls. As Christine recalls, "Well, I have four brothers and two sisters. The boys did the outside stuff, and the girls

did the inside.” Fiona and Heather, who identified themselves as “tomboys” growing up, enjoyed being outdoors and participated in chores that were usually the responsibility of their brothers or fathers.

You know, I mowed the lawn, shovelled the driveway, you know, I helped stack wood. I could use an axe – you know? Those little things that traditionally, you know, like my younger sister wouldn’t have done any of those things. (Heather)

By describing themselves as “tomboys,” these women were evaluating themselves in relation to a norm that defines chores according to gender.

*Timing of children.* Half of the women I spoke with had unplanned but welcome pregnancies. The other four women planned their pregnancies with three of them attempting to coordinate the timing of their children with their anticipated work schedules. The attempt to plan the timing of pregnancies shows how the military culture permeates the very personal choice of having children such that the women attempt to minimize inconvenience to the military. So instead of a choice by the woman alone or with a partner, the military triangulates the decision. In essence, when the women make the choice to time their pregnancy to accommodate the military institution, the military can be seen as an invisible party to the decision making process.

Most of the women were subjected to some level of negative attitude in the workplace related to their pregnancy, and this occurred whether their pregnancies were planned or not. For women who were posted to a ship at the time of their pregnancy, this was related to Canadian Forces policy requiring the woman to immediately be posted to a shore position. A common reaction to pregnancy was that women planned their pregnancies to avoid going to sea. Elaine talked about the reaction to her second

pregnancy.

And while I was on the course that's when I got pregnant with my second child. Because it was planned – because I wanted – I knew I wanted two kids and I knew I wanted them close, so it was planned for me. So I was ashore both times. And it was actually the second one – when I was on the course that I got pregnant – and I was the only female on the course, which is usually what happens, and um – a posting message came in for me to go to a ship. So of course they all thought – oh that's why – she's actually pregnant again because she's going back to sea. It's like nobody took into consideration that I was pregnant before I even knew about the posting. It was just, you know, their way of thinking.

In response to her colleagues who saw women's pregnancy as an excuse to avoid deployment, Heather retorted, “Yeah, people are gonna dedicate the next 18 years of their life to raising a child to get out of a two-month trip. Like to me the logic just defies. . . .” Nevertheless, despite Heather's belief, Alice reported knowing women who did get pregnant to facilitate being sent ashore. It is conceivable that a woman who may have planned on having children might attempt to time a pregnancy to avoid having to be deployed. Unfortunately, this reality probably contributes to the perpetuation of negative attitudes where other women will be suspected of timing their children to avoid some work assignments even when this is not the case.

All of the women were aware that pregnancies were often seen as an inconvenience particularly by superior officers because of their work restrictions. Here Greta relays a familiar response:

I remember my supervisor at the time telling me something about being young and having kids out of the way, and I remember thinking that's kind of strange. I mean she was supportive but kinda – her overall tone was sort of “let's get this over with so that you're available again,” you know? For training and deployments and all that kinda stuff. It was – it seemed to me – for her it was a little bit of a pain in the butt, to be honest, that I was pregnant and that I was out of the running for things and you know, that we were short people, and we needed bodies and I was out of it.

Faced with negative reactions such as these, it is understandable that women may attempt to plan the birth of their children to accommodate anticipated work schedules and mitigate unsupportive responses.

Timing of pregnancy was also discussed as a factor in career progression by a couple of the women. Beth, who had her child after being promoted to Master Seaman, saw her career progressing faster than friends who had joined at the same time as her. Her friends, who had chosen to have their children while they were still Leading Seaman, were just now achieving the rank of Master Seaman. Heather points out that there are few women role models who have achieved the same level of career progression that she had and the only other woman in her occupation and rank who had children became a mother after achieving that qualification. Although Heather persevered to achieve this distinction, here she speculates on whether her choice was the right one.

Well, when I found out that I was pregnant, I had been selected for a year-long course. . . . And basically I needed that course to finish my last two-year tour at sea, and my son was three months old when I went back to work and then I took

that course for a year which had a sea phase at the end which is the first time I went back to sea. And then joined a ship in the busiest job I ever had at the same time having a young child back at home. So I'm thinking, you know maybe I should've waited til I was done that sea tour before I had kids. But who's to say? Even though she was not obligated to return early from her maternity leave, based on the attitudes of some female colleagues, there was an implicit challenge to succeed.

I've had other female officers who are single, no children – who have told me that oh well, whenever women decide to have kids in this trade it means they're done – they don't pull their weight anymore – they sit in the shore office.

This attitude was reinforced by Heather's male colleagues.

I've actually had male colleagues tell me that I've sort of renewed their faith in the fact that, you know, women aren't just here for show. Some of them will actually continue working through having children.

Exploring these attitudes, it is possible to uncover an implicit message that, at least in some military occupations, to combine a career and motherhood, women will need to make their children invisible to the workplace if they want to succeed.

Two other mothers timed their return to accommodate training opportunities.

Elaine had originally planned on a six-month, unpaid extension of her leave after the birth of her first child when women were only entitled to six months of maternity leave.

Donna returned to work when her daughter was ten months old to take a training course that would allow her to move to a trade required less frequent absences from home.

Ironically, this course necessitated her being away from home for three months. Here she talks about how difficult she found this. "I didn't like it one bit. It just broke my heart to

leave. And I missed my daughter's first birthday, you know, which was hard too. But, um yeah – I didn't like that at all." From a career perspective, accommodating military training schedules might benefit the women when they truncate their maternity leave. However, it is the military that sets the schedule for courses. What is it about how training schedules are determined that women feel they need to return to work early? Are they getting a message that they can not succeed or achieve career satisfaction unless they follow a pace that is determined externally to their private life? In combining a career with having children, women need to organise their private lives to accommodate the institutional structure to be successful. Where the military does accommodate pregnancy and parental leave, the message is plainly one that emphasizes the inconvenience to the organization.

*Peer support.* Not all the messages the women received about combining a family and working in the military were negative. Other women in the military who had already had their children also had some influence on early opinions for the women about combining a military career with motherhood. As Fiona observed,

I saw other women in the military having their children and having their families and it was quite manageable – you know, just working full-time and being here and the same as any mom doing any other job.

Many of the women received positive support particularly from female colleagues. This positive feedback is a key source of encouragement for many of the women not just at the time of their pregnancy but later as mothers balancing the demands of parenting with work responsibilities. Several of the women comment directly on the importance of this peer support from their female colleagues who also have children. This informal network

is also seen as key to learning about policies and formal supports available through the Canadian Forces particularly that pertain to family. Here Alice and Fiona talk about having role models or mentors and the sharing of information.

My support is still my other female friends that are in the military and that have had children. . . . Pretty good information comes from the ladies that are in the Forces, yes. And I do believe that is the big thing. (Alice)

I was working for a lady [name] – she was a single mom with four boys. . . . So she was a good mentor for me. . . . And well she had her family, but the other three women that were in the office – also had kids, so we discussed a lot. Like I talked about, like what did you do in this case? You know there was a lot of times – we were a really close-knit bunch. So that helped a lot. (Fiona)

For most of the women, the majority of their friends were in the military, ex-military, or members of military families. Some of the women relate this to experiencing a lack of understanding from civilians for the military lifestyle. Here Elaine explains this lack of understanding particularly with regard to leaving their children when deployed.

I think civilian people – they don't have that. . . . I don't know if they just can't – they have a mindset of "I could never do it – I could never just get up and leave my kids for that period of time – that's not for me. . . ." Well, most of my friends are military cause that's what I deal with all day – that's who I know, that's who I work with.

A few of the women talk about camaraderie and sense of community as an important benefit of being in the military. Here Beth and Greta respond specifically to a question about what they like best about being in the military.

There's the sense of community for one thing. I mean yeah it's a job, but it's still a lifestyle as well, and so you can make friends and maintain friends and no matter where you are in Canada, you've still got that – you can keep that same group of friends. (Beth)

The family feeling that you get from being in for a while and knowing lots of people – I mentioned before about the fact that the military is a small family and it's true. You really get to know people and you feel a sense of community.

(Greta)

Undoubtedly, the unique demands of military life affect the constitution of friendships and community networks for Forces members. Shared experience fosters understanding and camaraderie while at the same time reinforcing shared experience and solidarity when individuals minimize association with others who are not members of the same circle. Women who are combining a military career with motherhood will be influenced in choosing like-minded individuals with whom to associate.

*Shared parenting.* All of the women described their partner/ex-partner helping with the work of parenting. The range of help and support described varied from minimal to equal sharing of childcare related tasks. When asked who she received support from as a parent, Greta's immediate response was her husband.

I think my husband is probably the first person whose support I look for, because we have to get it together – we have to be – you know we're in it together – we have to be consistent.

Heather's situation is at the other end of the range as she described her husband as uncomfortable in the role of parent while he was on parental leave. "And then, he didn't

enjoy it when he was home. He found it very difficult – he’s not very home-oriented.”

The three women who were currently separated from their partners, described the fathers as being very involved in the lives of their children despite having separate residences. All three had shared custody agreements that allowed the children to spend time living with each parent. According to Beth, her ex-husband “is fully supportive. He is still totally involved in her life.” Christine’s appraisal of her daughter’s father meant she was confident in the care she received when Christine was away. “He’s an awesome dad – such a good dad.”

The five women who were with their partners gave varying descriptions of their shared daily routines. For some, sharing of parenting work tended to be divided according to individual strengths or availability. Here Alice acknowledges that she and her husband had different abilities in matters of discipline:

My husband does a lot of it. And he has a certain way without the yelling and stuff like that – that my son seems to react to differently. I get mad and my son just doesn’t – he doesn’t listen.

Fiona talked about how she and her husband shared chores with the supertime routine:

It’s just whatever can get done. If he’s at home – cause he’s a shift worker so we see very little of him. . . . When he’s home, he does all the cookin’. . . . If it’s mealtime, he’s cooking and I’m doing diaper changes and stuff. If it’s not cooking meals – it’s whoever’s closest.

When providing descriptions of parenting work, all of the women talked about sharing the childcare chores but their descriptions sometimes showed how the division of labour was not necessarily equitable. Here Greta described her family’s morning routine.

I go to work earlier than [my husband] does, so what usually happens is I get up and have my shower then I get the kids up, get them having their breakfast at least, hopefully dressed while he's having his shower and then I leave to go to work and he takes them to daycare and goes to work after that.

This description illustrates how the bulk of the work of getting the children ready in the morning fell to Greta while her partner's responsibility was mainly limited to transporting the children to daycare.

A few of the women talked about how their partners tended to leave the childcare responsibilities to the women particularly early in parenthood.

For the first year after I went back to work, he kind of...because I had been a stay-at-home mom for that first year, he just kind of let me carry on being the mom even though I was back at work. (Beth)

The assumption of the caretaker role belonging to the woman was apparent in the reaction of a few of the partners when the women returned from work-related absences as Beth shares: "So, it's um, there was a couple of incidents where, you know I'd come home from sea and so he automatically says 'here you go – she's yours again.'" When faced with this reaction, some of the women found it necessary to renegotiate the division of labour with their partners.

All of the women talked about how the sharing of childcare tasks was often complicated by the children's preference to have their mothers care for them.

I know that when we're both home, they always want me – like I have to give them baths, I have to put them to bed. They always ask for me. They want me to do everything. (Donna)

Notably some mothers identified that after they returned home from an extended absence, their children showed less dependence on them and expressed more willingness to receive care from their father.

But now it's much more equal in that they will actually request that Daddy read them stories or whatever, so that's something that's changed for sure. (Greta)  
When this occurred, the women framed it as a positive outcome of family separation.

*Family management.* One element of shared parenting that the women were specifically asked about was the “family management” aspect of parenting. This was defined as the planning side of parenting as opposed to task accomplishment such as knowing when to make an appointment for immunisations as opposed to simply taking a child to the appointment. Without exception, all of the women felt that when it came to managing the planning side of raising their children, they took more responsibility for fulfilling this element of caregiving.

I think that – I feel like I'm the one that knows what's going on – like more so – like I'm the one that knows something's coming up, like they need their shots or they need to go to the dentist or they need to do whatever. . . . I feel like it's me that, um, kinda keeps up on what's going on, yeah. (Donna)

For some women, the tendency of the male partner to step back and assume the woman will take care of the management of caregiving contributes to this unequal division of parenting work. Greta illustrates this as she attempts to quantify how she and partner divide responsibility for family management.

I would say it's probably about 60-40, 60 me, 40 him. I think he would leave it to me if I didn't do it, or sorry if there was a choice – he would let me do it. So you

know, I'm sure that if I – but it was usually me who's thinking about it, and if I ask him to do it, he'll do it, but – so that's why I say 60-40, maybe it's 70-30. I don't know – it's somewhere around there. Not completely off, but [laughter].

Other relationships demonstrated difficulty or unwillingness by the woman with relinquishing the responsibility. Here Elaine talked about how she not only made the doctor's appointments for her children, but that she believed she might miss important information if her husband took them.

I basically take those tasks on myself – I do all that. And I know I shouldn't, but I do, yeah. . . . Because I prefer that – it's not that their father can't do it – he's quite capable of doing it, but I prefer to be there so I know what's going on. This difficulty in relinquishing control can be seen as a method of “gatekeeping” by restricting the involvement of the father.

In some situations, reticence on the part of the father to take on a more active parenting role may also serve to reinforce this gendered caregiving. As Heather's situation shows, sometimes the inequality results from a partner who feels incapable of fulfilling a more active parenting role.

So originally the whole plan was for him to take on a lot of those roles and it didn't end up working out that way . . . and he has a lot of trouble sometimes, he doesn't always know what to do.

Alice observes that sharing of the management aspect of parenting may be complicated by a need for continuity. She points out that on occasion tasks have been left undone in her home due to confusion over who was responsible for completing the chore.

This need to have clarity around who is in charge may also contribute to a tendency to rely on the woman as the traditional expert.

*Choosing to work.* When asked about how they felt about their choice to work outside the home, most of the women considered that being a working mother was the right decision for them. Several of the women believed that being a stay-at-home mother would not be a good option for them personally even though they were very happy with their decision to be a parent. According to Donna, “I know if I just went home and I didn’t have a job and I stayed home with the kids, I know that – I don’t think I would be really, really happy.”

A couple of the women talked specifically about how they were conflicted about their choice. Greta talked about how she focused on the benefits she saw for her children.

Because there’s a part of me that feels like I should be home with my kids, you know? But then I try to look at the positive side of it – you know, the socialization that they get at daycare and the kids that they get to meet and the things that they learn that they wouldn’t learn with me and all that kinda stuff.

Several of the women also talked about their belief that because they were more content working outside the home that this made them better mothers. Other advantages the women listed included setting a positive example for their children, fostering independence, and increased opportunities due to financial security. Only Heather felt quite strongly that mothers should be at home with their children and that personally she should be at home with her son.

In our conversations, some of the women talked about how having a comfort level with the childcare they had in place when they returned to work affected the ease of their

transition. In addition to having her parents living with her to help with childcare, Alice had her best friend since childhood as a paid caregiver on a part-time basis. This was an important factor in her returning to work. “I would have never went back to work if I didn’t feel that [my son] wasn’t going to be raised well. But he’s being raised by family members. He’s not in a daycare.” For Alice, her family and close friend were able to act as surrogates in her absence and provide an approximation of the ideal. Without that, she would have chosen to stay at home.

Most of the women however did not have the advantage of family or friends to provide care. Here Christine talks about how her daughter’s reaction when meeting her new caregiver gave her peace of mind. “And when she first met the babysitter, she went on the floor and crawled right over to her. And that is not her character. So I was comfortable with who [was looking after her].” Greta also described how having childcare she was comfortable with eased her transition back into the workplace.

She was nine months when I went back cause [my husband] took three months of parental leave. And so I felt that she was still quite young and I couldn’t imagine how other moms did it before when they were only three or six months old – having to go back. And it was quite traumatic for me. I found her a wonderful babysitter for her though and the transition went quite smoothly I think, for her.

For both Christine and Greta, caregivers had to provide more than just the custodial care of their children. For Christine, there was a reassurance knowing that there was an emotional bond between her child and the surrogate caregiver. Greta was able to facilitate her transition by having her daughter’s father as the initial substitute followed by a caregiver who was able to ease her feelings of conflict over not staying at home.

Heather, who held the personal belief that mothers should be home with their children, found it “excruciating” to return to work after the birth of her son. Her situation was unique within this group since she returned to work when her son was only three months old. For Heather, this timing was necessary so that she could complete a year-long training course for which she had been selected and that was required for her career progression. When planning their family, Heather and her partner had intended for him to become the stay-at-home parent upon his retirement in a few years. For Heather, in relation to the full-time mother ideal, having her child’s father as the primary caregiver was an acceptable alternative. To allow her to return to work at this point, they arranged for him to take the remaining nine months of parental leave. Unfortunately this plan fell apart when they found the role of “at home” parent was one that her husband was not comfortable filling. So instead of feeling supported, Heather found herself under increased stress.

So he was gonna be the one who stayed home – that was our plan. And then, he didn’t enjoy it when he was home on parental leave – he found it very difficult, he’s not very home-oriented. So it was fine, I’d come home and they’d both be fed and clothed and clean, but . . . supper wouldn’t be cooked, the laundry wouldn’t be done – those types of things. So originally the whole plan was for him to take on a lot of those roles and it didn’t end up working out that way, so then balance became a huge issue.

This experience did nothing to dispel Heather’s belief that mothers belong at home with their children and may actually serve to reinforce her position.

*Return to the workplace.* Various factors appear to influence if the return to work after having children is smooth or stressful. Several of the women talked about how they liked their current work situation. Those who were happy in the job to which they were returning found the transition easier than those who did not. Those with two children talked about how having a second child sometimes contributed to the challenges. Fiona, who has two children, talked about going to back to work after the birth of her second child.

When my son was born, I didn't want to go back to work. And I don't think I thought about work [while on leave] – but the difference was, after my first one I still enjoyed my work – I liked where I was workin'. When I came off maternity leave with my son I hated my job. And he was a busy baby – that was the difference. Where my oldest one slept, he didn't sleep, you know? Where she wasn't cranky, he was. So he challenged me a lot more, plus I had a three-year-old at home, so that's the difference.

Fiona's experience reflected the reality that it can be difficult to separate home life from work life.

Separation of home demands from the workplace was not an uncommon expectation that the women experienced when they returned to work after their leave. A factor some of the women talked about that impacted the ease of their return to work was the level of demand they faced in the workplace in the first few months particularly if they were posted to a ship.

I came off maternity leave in early February, and by – I think it was the end of February – like two, three weeks later I was gone to sea. I was put right on a ship,

and yeah – gone to sea. And that there I think is a big concern of a lot of females these days that are coming off maternity leave – because they’re not getting that period to adjust. You’re just off maternity leave, and then you’re on a ship and you’re gone. (Elaine)

For Fiona, the demands started before she had even returned to work which she believes illustrates a lack of support for mothers in the Canadian Forces.

I went into work – actually even before I returned to work, they started in – ‘ok, you have to go on courses and when you come back you have to pass your Express test’ which is our physical fitness testing. There’s no “welcome back” um, you know ok, “this is our forecast of what’s gonna happen.” It’s just like “you have to do, you have to do” – kinda like “forget about your kids – just come back.”

It is easy to see how the women get the message to compartmentalize their lives and completely separate their lives as mothers from their work life.

*Paid childcare.* At the time they were interviewed, all of the women were happy with the quality of the paid childcare they had in place even when the location and hours were not convenient for a couple of families. Among the eight women there were a variety of paid childcare arrangements ranging from part-time supported by family for Alice to full-time licensed daycare for four families. Two women had private childcare providers in the home of the care provider. Fiona had one child in daycare full-time while her eldest child was in school and was cared for privately before and after school. This complicated her routine because of the different locations.

The work of finding childcare was described as stressful by several of the women and often involved extensive waiting lists and personal networks.

Just through people you work with, advertisements at school – pretty much word of mouth, and you just do interviews and do a lot of askin’ around, and pray to God that your instincts are right. (Fiona)

Fiona’s description illustrated how this is work that transcends negotiating a simple business transaction. Childcare is evaluated in relation to personal expectations of quality and standards and required a level of trust that the children will be safe.

When they did find suitable care, almost all the women described themselves as lucky. This reflected both the challenge of finding adequate childcare and the sense of relief the women feel. Here Beth, whose daughter is in the daycare run by the Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC), talked about her experience:

It was a little stressful because I didn’t call the MFRC early enough to get her on the list. I didn’t necessarily know how much of a waiting list could be there. So I was lucky in the fact that one child moved away so an opening became available very quickly....And then of course trying to find somewhere to put her until the opening became available, that was harder. But then luckily a friend of ours, his wife is a stay-at-home mom whose kids are all back in school. And so she started taking in a couple of little ones, and she offered to take my daughter. So it wasn’t as bad as it could have been but it wasn’t easy either.

Being able to trust the care their children receive is an element necessary for mothers to be able to separate from the role of motherhood from their work life. This was not only a self-imposed expectation, but was also an expectation of the military as the employer.

Furthermore, the work life of a parent in the military demanded a work schedule that is less standard than generally required in the civilian world.

Due to the non-standard work hours of the military, flexibility in available childcare is emphasized as a welcome source of support for the women. Formal childcare centres are not necessarily able to accommodate the work hours of military members. Beth, who was the only woman who used the MFRC childcare centre, talked about how the daycare understood military life and was a source of support for her.

[The MFRC daycare has] got the best hours. They open at 6:30 in the morning, and they'll keep the child until 6:00 at night if an emergency arises. They don't like to do that. But it is not like in other daycares. Most other city daycares, where if you haven't picked the child up by 5:00, they are sitting there on the doorstep with the child dressed and ready to go. So just that alone is a weight off.

Heather's daycare arrangement illustrated the contrast to Beth's situation. Here she talks about a trade-off she made to ensure quality of care for her child and the resulting inconvenience to work schedules.

It's a difficult balance. Most daycares don't have the hours military people do, so one of us is late – whoever drives him to daycare is late. There's nothing we can do about that. We were on 13 different waiting lists, and this is the only one where we could get him in, and it's, you know ten minutes in the opposite direction. We live so close to work, yet we have to drive in the opposite direction to bring him there, so. But it meets our needs in terms of it's an excellent daycare. He enjoys it.

When available daycare centres were not able to provide flexibility, the women were sometimes able to find private childcare that accommodated non-standard work hours including overnight care. Here Elaine talked about her care provider.

I don't have to worry about giving them breakfast – she gives them breakfast down there. And the workday – some nights I have to work later, it's great cause I just call her up and say I'm gonna be a little later – no problem whatsoever, do you want me to give them supper? It's great like that...she's a godsend. I don't know what I would do without her – she's taken them all night sometimes for me.

This requirement for flexible, even overnight care was evidence of how military life crosses the boundary into the home life of the women. Women in the military, when seeking childcare, have the additional work of finding care that meets the flexibility requirements of the military institution. Furthermore, this requirement by the institution, illustrates an expectation that care providers will accommodate this requirement. So not only is the military institution seen as coordinating the everyday work of finding childcare, but additionally, creating a demand for this level of care, influences how care providers may carry out their work.

Although all the women were happy with the quality of the current care they had in place for their children, a few told stories of times when this was not the case. It was in situations when the care was not available or working that the unique challenges of childcare required by military members was more fully illustrated. Fiona's family had experienced several situations that demonstrated the implications when childcare is not working or falls apart, especially when there is no family to provide support. When her first child was only a year old, Fiona and her husband were posted nine hours apart and

their daughter required medical treatment that involved steel braces on her legs. Extended family lived in distant parts of the country. “I was on shift work, my babysitter quit because she didn’t want to take care of a child that was unable to walk, and I was left with a one-year-old, shift working, and my husband’s gone.” Even though she was able to find replacement care, it was only available during the day and at a much higher cost than regular care. Initially, she was turned down in her request to revise her work schedule to straight days and had to take her request to a higher rank before it was granted. Increased cost for childcare was an ongoing factor for Fiona’s family in order to accommodate her work-related absences and her husband’s shift work. She estimated that they had paid an extra \$5000 in the past year to cover childcare from private caregivers who were unwilling to provide tax receipts. At the time of this interview, Fiona had recently had to fire the caregiver who had been providing overnight care when required due to concerns about the quality of the care. Fiona’s situation illustrates how even when childcare is in place, changing circumstances can easily disrupt well made plans. For Fiona, this awareness was accentuated by the contrast to her first childcare experience when posted in another community: there she had had a retired couple who were neighbours and like surrogate family provided flexibility that included overnight care. In the face of these challenges, it was evident that childcare to accommodate working for the military can lead to both financial and emotional burden in an effort to avoid work-life conflict.

Most of the fathers were not actively involved in finding childcare. In Beth’s experience, this was because her daughter’s father did not see this as “daddy” work. Generally, the mothers took on the work of finding childcare without question. One

exception to this occurred for Greta when she was on pre-deployment training and the existing care arrangements were not satisfactory.

I told him you have to find something that you're happy with while I'm gone, because it has to work for you. It has to work for you guys, not me – I'm not involved in it. So he took that on no trouble at all and he did that no problem.

However, Greta's observation, "but I think that if I had been here I think I would have been the one to do it" points to the gendered division of caregiving responsibilities as being the status quo.

*Summary.* The path to combining motherhood and a military career for the women I spoke with was not always smooth. On one hand, the women were influenced in their decisions on career and family by how they perceived traditional views of motherhood. The woman (Heather) who believed most strongly in the traditional role of mothers was also the mother who appeared to be the most distressed by the challenges of balancing the competing demands of motherhood with a military career. On the other hand, although this was reinforced by her husband's difficulty with being a more active parent, for some of the other women, the practice of "gatekeeping" sometimes contributed to an unequal distribution of childcare responsibilities particularly with regard to the management aspects of care.

Within the workplace, the women experienced both positive and negative situations with regards to combining their career with motherhood. They were happy to combine work and parenting and found peer support particularly from their female coworkers in the military to be an important source of encouragement. The sharing of common experiences provided guidance within the workplace as well as a valuable

resource on balancing roles in addition to providing general parenting advice. However, the women were also aware that pregnancy was often viewed as an inconvenience requiring the accommodation of work assignments such that some of them attempted to time their pregnancies or return work to minimize that impact. The women experienced pressure to compartmentalize their lives and may have inadvertently reinforced that pressure by making choices (e.g. shortening their maternity leave) that served to support the perpetuation of an ideal standard that did not include children.

The requirement for childcare that accommodated the non-standard employment aspects of a military career created additional work for women in finding adequate care for their children. Assessing appropriate childcare was also influenced by their beliefs about motherhood. Extended family, when available, was able to provide some of the support related to the demanding hours. The mobility requirement of the military however often led to living in communities far from that source of support. Even when the women did have paid childcare in place, they were aware that the care was vulnerable to change on short notice and often had an increased financial burden.

Balancing work and family provides a challenge for all mothers regardless of careers. The unique aspects of the military complicate the balance. In the next section, this becomes even more apparent for the women when they needed to accommodate work-related family separation such as deployment.

### *Deployment*

A requirement of a military career is to be absent from home for periods of time ranging from days to six months and sometimes more. The reason for these work-related absences may be for training or operational requirements. Operational absences of more

than 30 days are known as deployments. All of the women had experienced a work-related absence from home of at least 30 days in the two years prior to being interviewed. In this section the impact of this work obligation on family life is illuminated.

*Preparing to deploy.* The degree of preparation for absence from home varied for the women and involved logistical aspects such as childcare arrangements in addition to specific plans for helping the children cope while they were away. When asked about childcare arrangements during the time they were away, some women indicated that planning involved having a contingency in place for times when the routine childcare was not sufficient. For the women who had family available to support them, this was the obvious solution. For Fiona's family, with her husband working a shift schedule, the only available option was after hours paid childcare. Other fathers had more regular work schedules that allowed them to handle childcare responsibilities outside of work hours. Generally, the mothers made the prearrangements and fathers only got involved when established plans fell apart when the mother was away such as previously discussed with Greta's husband making new childcare arrangements.

In some circumstances, when the unexpected happened, friends were drawn into the support network as illustrated by Donna's situation when she was delayed returning home.

Well the night I came back they were all gonna pick me up at the airport and everything, but my flight was unable to come to Halifax so I had to spend the night in Toronto which was hard. And my husband had to work the next day because I was supposed to be home and it was a weekend, so he had to work – he was scheduled to work. And so friends of ours babysat the kids.

Again we see how the accommodation of military requirements extends beyond the military member alone and may be taken up by family, friends, and paid caregivers. The Canadian Forces has a policy that acknowledges that emergency situations may require the implementation of emergency childcare assistance (DND, 2002). The wording of the policy however recognises that the family care plan (FCP) is first and foremost the responsibility of the serving member. In fact, the member may be subject to disciplinary action if it can be shown that they did not “in good faith” develop an adequate FCP such that it is only where “breakdown of the FCP is beyond the control of the member” that emergency childcare assistance can be accessed (Preparation and Amendment section, ¶ 4).

Preparing their children to cope with their pending absence depended on the personality and age of the children for some of the mothers. Some of the children were felt to be too young to comprehend in advance that their mother’s were going away or to have an appreciation of time frames. Others found their individual child coped better when there was not a lot of discussion prior to the departure.

To try to prepare them – well especially the younger one didn’t really understand – he was too young at the time. . . . It was hard on him even – soon as I even mentioned that I had to go away he’d start crying. He didn’t [want] to hear anything about it. (Elaine)

Other mothers made more elaborate preparations from pre-buying birthday or holiday presents, setting up calendars, to making video recordings reading favourite bedtime stories. Here Fiona talks about a map she set up for her daughter.

I had prepared my daughter – we went and got a big map and got colour-stick pens and stuff, and she was gonna map everywhere I was – every time I sent an email, she was gonna map it out.

Some of the preparations the women made clearly fell in the realm of household management or parenting work. These arrangements ranged from organising doctor's appointments to freezing prepared meals for use while they were gone. Obviously, the requirement for this planning is necessitated by the demands of work-related absences.

Also evident in this work, is how even the everyday behaviour of the children was coordinated by the institutional requirements. As Fiona related how her daughter mapped her mother's geographic location, it was seen as adaptation to her mother's absence. As part of their rationalization of the requirement to be away from their family, the women sometimes framed the experience in terms of the benefits for their children. Here Fiona made sense of how she worked to make her absence more acceptable for her daughter.

So she looks forward to me goin' away because she knows she gets all these extra little things that some kids don't get – like that's real bongo drums from Africa.

You know, she takes great pride and when her friends come over she gets to show them. So I call it a form of bribery, but whatever works.

This framing of work-related absence as having benefits for children of deployed military members is reinforced by the military institution. Discourse framing the experience for children as a positive growth opportunity is common in the military family support environment (personal knowledge). A website created for Canadian military youth ([www.connectingcfyouth.ca](http://www.connectingcfyouth.ca)) refers to the following benefits for youth when a parent is deployed: the deployment fosters maturity; encourages independence and responsibility;

and increased family involvement (Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, 2006). When children are active participants in the deployment experience, they too are furthering the work of the military.

The following scenario provides an example of how paid caregivers can also be actively engaged in supporting women through deployment. Even though the children's father was the primary caregiver of the children while she was away, Elaine made sure her childcare provider was aware of her absence.

I made sure that, you know, the babysitter knew I was gonna be away and that I'd be contacting her through emails and call her so that if she had any questions about what was going on with the kids, I'd know about it.

For Elaine and the other mothers, the work of parenting unmistakably continued while they are away.

*Parenting work while deployed.* All of the mothers stayed involved in the parenting of their children while they were away but the extent varied according to individual circumstances and personalities of both the parents and the children. Some of the women were very comfortable with backing away and allowing the fathers to manage more of the day-to-day home life on their own. A couple of the mothers expressed that this approach was important for both the dads and the children.

I was really wary of kinda stepping on his toes, because I wasn't there . . . [and they talked] about what a good team Daddy and the kids are when Mommy's away. And that was something that [my husband] had initiated actually saying that to them, and they loved it. They would say it all the time – “we're a great team when Mommy's gone” – it was so cute.

A few of the mothers felt they needed to stay more involved in the management of the daily life of their children. Some of the mothers initiated this involvement by reminding the fathers of tasks they needed to complete which were sometimes very detail oriented.

Reminding him of things, like when my daughter was starting daycare when I was gone, and I just – I kind of reminded him that he has to give, you know the babysitter our health card number – just to remind him of the little things that he had to do. (Donna)

As Elaine expressed here, the motivation for this level of control was her own peace of mind based on an evaluation that as a mother her care was the ideal.

I know they're taken care of at home, but it's just – I don't know, it's – if they're taken care of up to my standard I guess. [laughter] You know, if they're being taken care of the way I would take care of them.

Here Fiona, who provided her family with a detailed daily calendar supplemented by weekly reminders gave an explanation for what she admitted could have been seen as micro-managing.

It might seem like we're micro-managing, but it's not – my husband's just not a future-planner. He's not the type. . . . My husband's like, quick to the moment. He would remember like five minutes before that there's an appointment. He's not one to sit down and think on a Sunday night; "Ok, what is it we gotta do this week?" It's just not his personality.

For Heather, the detailed involvement was initiated more by what she saw as her husband's lack of comfort in the parenting role when what she described as the rare

occasion that he was on his own without help from her family. “And my husband – I give him advice everyday...and he’ll say ‘I don’t know what I should do’ . . . and he has a lot of trouble sometimes, he doesn’t always know what to do.” Beth, however, talked about why it was important for her peace of mind to deliberately create some distance from the daily routine at home.

I’d think about it a lot – I’d worry about it, but I’d try not to anyway because it makes it very difficult when you’re away – if you start worrying you can get really yourself into a pretty serious funk. So you’re better off to just try to think only about the good stuff and carry on with your job. (Beth)

Noticeably, the degree of parenting work carried on from a distance was influenced by the individuals and circumstances of each family. In particular, the involvement of the fathers was different in each family. Some were comfortable taking on the role of primary caregiver while the mother was away but were likely to return this status to the mother when she returned. How they maintained contact and the frequency of contact while deployed also played a part in the parenting role of the mothers.

*Family contact while deployed.* When asked how they stayed in contact with their families when they were away, the women described three typical methods: (a) internet, (b) telephone, and less frequently, (c) letters or postcards. All of the women used the internet for email when available and some also talked about sharing pictures or using chat programs to correspond with their family. As new technologies are developed, new methods of staying in-touch also evolve.

Because you can take pictures now with a cell phone, and you can also videotape stuff, and send it right to each other’s cell phones. We used that a bit. (Alice)

Type and frequency of contact with children was sometimes dictated by the individual child. Christine's daughter sometimes found it easier to have less frequent or shorter phone calls.

We would talk and I would write her letters. Like I wrote her letters all the time, and sent her packages and stuff. But she is the one, she doesn't like to talk to me on the phone when I go away. Well, she hears my voice and then she misses me. So she would usually talk. . . . At first I would call every day, but then she was like, "Okay, call every second day." And then even then sometimes she wouldn't talk to me – "I am watching TV."

Contact with fathers and older children using email was obviously a method of choice for communication when it was available.

Well the computer is a big thing – we use the internet – we ensure that they're set up. We – my six-year-old is really good at goin' down and checkin' everyday to see if there's email from mommy. (Fiona)

Accessibility when at sea was restricted by time, privacy, and bandwidth. When away on course, individuals would also have to seek out computers for private use. Even when computers were available, telephones were still a frequent communication tool. Use of ship phones for private calls had not always been allowed and a few of the women spoke about their appreciation for this increase in support.

But now they have a "mommy phone." It's just a term they use for it. And they never used to have that when I first went onboard the boats. And now they give you a card with a certain amount of minutes on it. And that was a big. . . . That was a big thing for me. It was like "Wow, I get to phone home." (Alice)

Sometimes staying in touch had financial implications however as Fiona recalls. “Yeah it depends where you are – like sometimes you get to call everyday, like if I’m on course, like I’m in BC last January. And when I came back here I had a phone bill that was over \$900.” None of the women used web cameras to any extent as a means of contact even when they had the technology at home. This was partly due to availability where they were deployed or on course. A few women mentioned they knew other military members who found it a very positive experience but as Greta shared, even though the technology was available during her deployment, her concern was that her children were too young.

I was a little apprehensive about that with my kids being the age that they are, they’re a little – their attention spans are a little short and I felt like they wouldn’t really understand and I was worried about having them be able to see me and not be able to touch me, or wondering where I am and why I’m not coming home.

Being able to have regular contact with home noticeably allowed women to be more actively engaged in parenting work while away if they chose or felt the need to be involved.

*Attitudes of others.* As discussed in the sections on recruitment and motherhood, all of the women felt they were supported by their family and friends in their choice to be in the military and this extended to times when they had to be away. Upon hearing that the women were going away, the reaction was usually an offer of practical support.

Everybody was offering support, offering help to him, and saying, “If he needs, tell him to call me and I’ll take her. I’ll do this. I’ll do whatever.” So they were more. . . . I think they were more worried about his ability to cope than her ability to cope. (Beth)

As Beth points out, there may be a gendered component to the offered support. How support is gendered is more visible when viewed in relation to the father's absence as illustrated in Heather's response:

When my husband goes away, [my son] doesn't go anywhere, no one comes to help out. I do everything. (Heather)

As many of the women discussed, their circle of friends tended to be within the military community at least partly because they understood the lifestyle. Here Greta shared an experience where the initial reaction of a peer, who had left the regular force for the reserves in order to avoid deployment, was not positive.

And I remember talking to her early on when I first knew that I was going . . . and I was still in the stage where I started to cry every time I talked about it. And so she said things to me like "oh I couldn't do that – I don't know how you could do it." And I was quite offended by that. I felt very unsupported by that. And I was hurt by her comments because I had to do it – I felt like I had to do it. And so, it was very difficult but then after I went away and did my pre-deployment training and I came back. . . . It was the first time I had ever left my kids . . . and I ran into her at [work] one day and she took me aside and she said – "how did it go? Did it go ok?" Cause she knew it had been the first time. And I said "you know it went really well." I was glad to have that opportunity to leave them for a short period of time before I went away for the long time. And everybody did fine and it really did a lot for my confidence at that point, and so she said "you know, I have to be honest with you – my kids are older now. . . . I regret not doing it. I regret not doing a tour. I wish that I had." Because she said "I look back and I see that I

don't know if I was as important in my children's lives as I thought I was at the time." And so I was really buoyed by that – it really did a lot for me to hear her say that. And I realized someone with a little bit more mothering experience than I had could look back and say "I really wish that I had done something like that for myself." And so as difficult as it was to leave them, and as difficult the possibility of having to leave them again is, I know that they're ok, and I know that there are a lot of benefits to it besides my own.

This example illustrated how the attitude of others was important and helped the women cope with the stress of being away from their families. Seeking out supportive attitudes and ignoring or avoiding negative opinions was one way women coped with the work-life conflicts of a military career.

Few women had experienced direct negative reactions from members of the civilian community with regard to the deployment aspect of their career. However, having support within their extended support networks in the community was clearly important and sometimes involved increased effort to put it in place.

My daughter's teacher, I'm not so sure how she feels about it – she kinda sometimes gets a look on her face when I say, "ok I'm gonna be gone for three weeks" or whatever – I feel she's a little bit different, but the principal is good – he's really really good, but he's married to an ex-servicewoman. [laughter] which is kinda why – I tell you she's goin' to a different school than she was supposed to – she was supposed to go to [school name]. I took her outta there before she started kindergarten and put her into [another school]. Mainly because, um, I found the principal was awesome down there – like I said he was married to an

ex-servicewoman so he's totally, totally understanding of our situation and you know the kids need that. The kids need to know that, if he sees that she's a little bit upset, he knows I'm away – I tell them every time one of us is goin' away, and he can understand.

Without a doubt, building the support network required that helps the women maintain balance between their military career and family life required considerable coordination and effort that most women working in a civilian environment do not have to face.

*Workday experience while deployed.* When the women were separated from their families for deployment or training, their everyday experiences were understandably different than when they were home.

Um, pretty routine. You get into a routine and it's like – that movie Groundhog Day – we always compared to that movie . . . because basically that's what it's like [laughter]. It's the same thing over and over again. (Elaine)

Elaine's description of her deployment experience underscored a common theme of boredom while they were away from home, particularly during their downtime. The experience was somewhat different if the absence was for a training course as opposed to a deployment. Here Alice related how camaraderie on a ship can actually help.

When you are in Borden, there wasn't a lot. Go to your room. I would make a phone call and watch a bit of TV. It was fairly quiet, and not a whole lot. And not that it was lonely; it was just very boring because you are away from your family. It's different when you are on the boat because you live with 45 people, and you've got nowhere to go. You see these people. You interact with these people all the time. Camaraderie makes it easier to be away from your family. It helps, it

doesn't make it easier. It just helps. It helps you get through that day because no matter what, you miss your family.

Camaraderie was mentioned by several of the women as a key factor in making it through the times when they missed their families the most.

You know, I was lucky there was [sic] three other women on board the ship when I was there that were also moms and had young kids, so you know we talked about it, and cried over it, and stressed over it together. (Fiona)

On Greta's recent deployment, she found the support came from the officers as well as her peers.

My supervisor over there was really good at saying, you know – “today's your daughter's birthday, just wanted to see how you were doing” and that kinda thing. You know, he paid attention to that a lot...and you know – very supportive of people being in touch with their families, and I think in general everybody was sympathetic to everyone missing their families because we all did, so we were all in the same boat, and it was quite a supportive environment. I think we had a really great group of people over there, and it really made a difference to know that I if I felt sad that I could be sad, you know, people would understand.

Noticeably, most of the women found comfort in having others with whom they shared the common experience of being separated from their children. It would appear that this was a situation that the military understood and encouraged, at least to the extent that it did not interfere with operational requirements. Nevertheless some women felt a strong expectation to always keep work and family separate. Heather's experience illustrates the affect of successfully separating her family life from her work life. “The

only person who's probably ever seen me get upset from being away is my cabin mate. In fact most of the guys . . . say, "I can't even picture you as a mother." It is noteworthy that Heather was in the most male-dominated career and effectively had no women as peers who were also balancing motherhood. Based on her experience, of the women I spoke with, she was under the most pressure to compartmentalize her life.

Sometimes being away and not having to balance work with family responsibilities had some positive benefits. Some women found they had more energy with being able to exercise daily and only be responsible for them selves despite what were often long, demanding workdays. For most, they did not even have to be concerned with meal preparation. This contrasts with the demands they balanced when home, and effectively illustrated the level of burden they often shouldered in combining motherhood with their career.

*Tempo and reunion.* Some of the women talked about the importance of routine to their home life. In particular, they discussed how their return home after an absence involved adjustment to the routine both for themselves and their family members.

Oh it was great but it was kinda awkward because you'd been gone so long, so you didn't really know what the routine was, so you more or less had to get into their routine as opposed to them being into your routine, so I find that that was a little bit – took some getting used to, cause their likes and dislikes have changed especially over long periods of time like that – so you've gotta learn what those are. (Elaine)

The tempo or frequency of the absences and its impact on routine was discussed by some of the women. Alice, who was a naval reservist, estimated that she was only home 94

days of her son's second year. This tempo was typical for the reserve boats and Alice speculated that the impact on home routines would be easier if she had been regular force even with a four- or six-month deployment.

So it probably would have been easier. And if I had gone Reg Force, I would have taken long trips. You know, when they go NATO, six months, four to six months. It's almost better when your family, for me and the experience from my girl friends who have had children and their husbands go away, they are able to get into a routine. Instead of me coming back and forth and ruining that routine all the time because I find it very important to have that [routine].

This frequent tempo was not unique to the reserve force however as Fiona related a similar experience in her regular force position. "For two years . . . it's been pretty much gone for a week, gone for a month, gone for a month and a half – it's been really hectic." Despite this hectic tempo, Fiona still considered herself to be lucky she had not had a six-month deployment. Even so, she continued to suffer anxiety and worry about her family every time she had to go away even for one night.

Ultimately, as both mothers and military members, the women I spoke with engaged in work negotiating the experience of leaving and reunion for themselves and their children as well as with their spouses/ex-spouses. When the tempo of their work-related absences was frequent, even if they were for short periods, there was an awareness of how disruptive this was to both emotional as well as logistical aspects of family life.

*Summary.* With regard to parenting, women do a lot of work to negotiate work-related absences starting with the preparations they made prior to deployment, while they

were away, and upon returning home. In some cases this work involved detailed coordination of what happened at home while the women were away. To accomplish this work while the women are physically absent required the involvement of support and cooperation from family including spouses/ex-spouses, extended family and even the children themselves. For some of the women, it also included paid caregivers who provided services beyond the traditional daytime care.

Concerning absence from their children, the women were most likely to talk about negative reactions from civilians. In response, they are most likely to turn to the camaraderie they found within military circles. For some of the women, this was the time when they experienced the most supportive work environment at least emotionally from peers and superiors. For some there was a more explicit recognition in the workplace that they are parents when they are deployed than when they are home. The notable exception was Heather who worked in the most male-dominated of occupations of the women interviewed. For Heather, there was still the perception that she was expected to keep her parental status invisible.

### *Military Environment*

In this section, I look at the military environment starting with the culture as experienced by the women. In addition, I will briefly examine some Canadian military policies specific to family. Finally, I will explore the career management process as experienced by the women.

Despite over 15 years of integration for women in the Canadian military, there was evidence that discrimination continued to be an issue in the workplace for at least some degree. Examining the culture in which the women worked provides insight into the

institutional influences on the everyday lives.

*Workplace culture.* Several of the women talked about gender stereotypes still being present in the work environment. In particular, the women talked about experiencing a lack of understanding from some of their male co-workers when it came to balancing work and family life.

Well they're all male – all the parents I work with are male. Sometimes they don't get it. Because they're like "oh my wife takes care of that." I'm like guess what? I'm still a wife! So they don't feel the same guilt. They don't really feel the same, you know, need to be home. And sometimes they'll say "geez, you know, there's no way my wife could do that – she could never go away. She could never..."

And I say, "Then try and picture how difficult it is for me?"

Although these may be the attitudes of individuals rather than the overarching military organization, there was still evidence that these attitudes contributed to a climate where women's family responsibilities can cause their commitment to their jobs to be called into question. Here Heather talked about the reaction of her superior officer to her insistence that she needed to take her leave entitlement in a block to spend time with her children rather than taking it a day or two a week over several weeks as her supervisor preferred. This was after she had accommodated operational work schedules by not taking any summer vacation.

Um, he talked to me in January, which was almost a complete month later, and he was saying "I'm considering, you know, moving one of the guys up because I don't think you're dedicated to this job." And he's told me since then that he, you know, that would've been the wrong decision and he admits that now. But at the

time, I was scared.

Being a visible minority was compounded by the “small town” aspect of the military and also contributed to the stress women experienced.

Um, it’s kinda like living in a small town – everybody knows your private business. You know, because we are a relatively small military and so, it’s hard to get away from stigmas and that sort of thing, so it can be a lot of added stress added to that. I think that’s probably for me one of the hardest things – you know, the small town mentality the military has. It’s especially for me as a female because there’s so few females in the military especially at my rank and stuff. But it’s – we stand out more – we’re more noticeable, we’re more obvious. (Beth)

Whether their perceived shortcomings were on or off the job, the women were conscious that any resulting criticism included gender as a factor and that they would be held up as an example to other women.

Interestingly, being singled out as a positive example to her peers was not a position that Elaine found enjoyable.

I think the only thing that used to bother me was like when I was gone for six and a half months there – because there was a lot of other females there at the time that were mothers, and some of them would just bring up certain things, like “well I can’t do this – and you know I can’t go away for this time because of my kids – and everything else” so I found a lot of the senior people personnel would use me as an example to them – “well she can do it and she’s a single mother, so why can’t you do it?” I didn’t like that part of it and I found a lot of them would do that.

Of the women interviewed, all had unique family circumstances that they made work not just because of who they were as individuals but because they were able to coordinate the support network they needed to be successful. Yet, being held out as a role model rendered their network invisible to others without consideration for personal contexts by making it appear that the women themselves possessed some personal characteristics that allowed them to meet their work demands single-handedly.

There also existed a belief that individuals should have known what to expect as a military member and as such should not complain about work family conflict.

I don't know if it's naivety or not that when you first join, you've got to realize that you are going to go all the time. You are going to go, not all the time, but you are going to go. And that you have to be ready to leave your child. And I don't think some people, because I have met women that suddenly it's like, "I am going to be gone for how long? Oh, I can't leave my child." Well, you're a sailor, and that was your choice. (Alice)

This sentiment of "you knew what you were getting yourself into when you enlisted" was one I overheard on more than one occasion in the six years I worked at the Military Family Resource Centre. This was by no means offered in any official context. These were informal statements by individuals, some of whom were military or family members, commenting on their perception of hypothetical military members who struggled with balancing work and family demands. There was a judgement that sometimes military members had not done enough work to personally rectify their work-life dilemmas. There was an acceptance that the nature of military demands was inexorable. As such, there was a lack of consideration that it could be any other way.

*Family policy.* Within the military workplace there are many policies that interface with families. Many of these relate to leaves and work accommodations that are also common in civilian workplaces and may also be legislated to some degree by labour laws. Some of the obvious policies include the following: vacation, illness, bereavement, compassionate, pregnancy, and maternity or parental leave. In an effort to be seen as an employer of choice, the Canadian Forces maintains that family-friendly policies, such as maternity and parental benefits, “assist both female and male members to balance the demands of military service with family responsibilities” and that such policies support “gender equity by encouraging both parents to share family responsibilities; and employment equity by encouraging the recruitment and retention of women” (DND, 2000, Overview section).

One only has to look at a diagram of the Canadian Forces Family Network see a visual representation of how military families are embedded within the military organization (see Figure 1). Negotiating this support network is not always clear to individual members as Beth pointed out.

That’s a really hard one because there’s so many different forms of support that come from so many different places, whether it’s generated by Ottawa, through the hospital, through the MFRC, the chaplains, through your own unit. It makes it very difficult for everybody to know where everything is. And a lot of people don’t – so there’s a few people that will know where everything is – the chaplains are a big one that can point you in the right direction.

All of the women were comfortable with researching policies on the DND intranet but as Christine pointed out, sometimes a person wouldn't know to look for something in the first place.

Cause I find sometimes in the military if you don't ask, then they're not gonna tell you. Especially for little benefit things – I don't know why, but like needing new shoes. [laughter] But sometimes, if you don't ask, you're not told.

Most of the women were familiar with the Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) but other than Beth who used the daycare, only a few had attended any activities or used casual childcare and none had used support services such as Emergency Childcare, Parenting Workshops, or Deployment Assistance (DND, 2002). It is notable that while the services offered by the family support programs are available to all members of

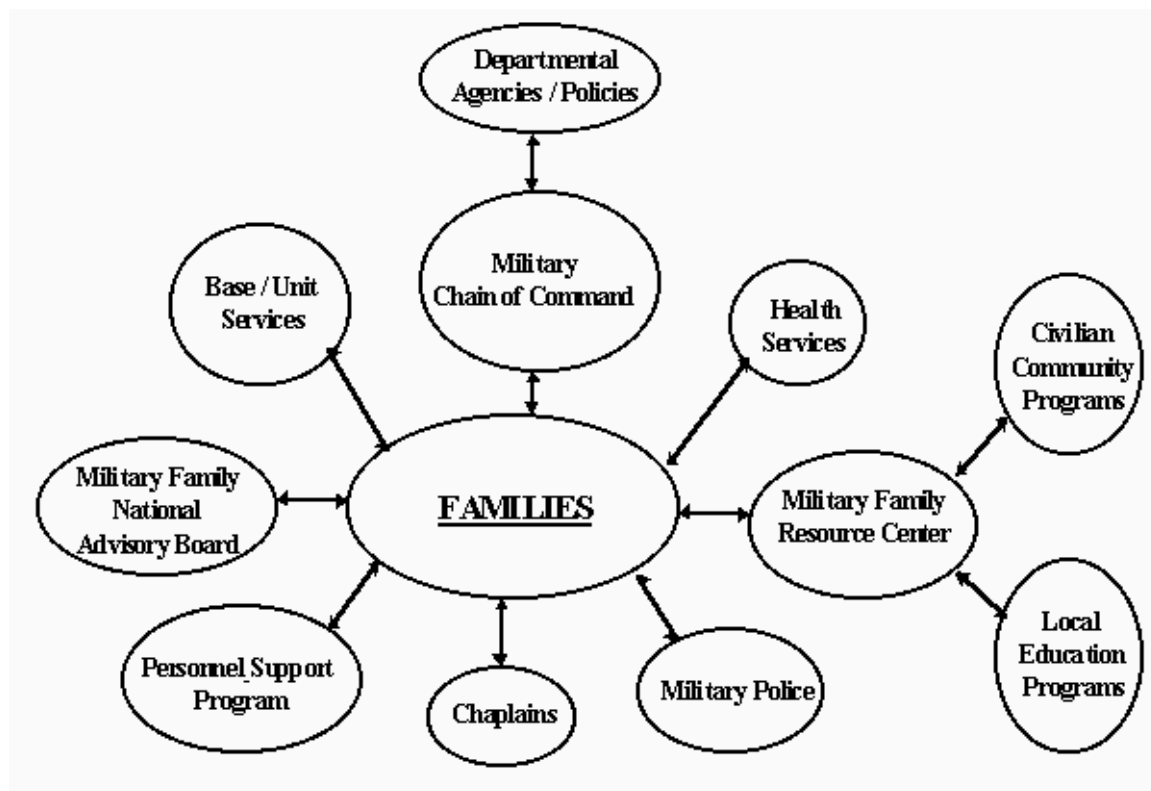


Figure 1. Canadian Forces Family Network (DND, 2002)

military families, they have been historically designed to address the needs of female civilian spouses. In essence, it is the family other than the serving member who is the focus of the programs offered. This separation of the member from the family further serves to perpetuate the rendering of the family as invisible in order to allow the member to accomplish the work of the institution without distraction. Even though a couple of the mothers thought highly of the MFRC and the services offered others were not very positive based on the experience of other Canadian Forces members. Here Heather explained why she had never looked to the MFRC for support.

Well I know that, for instance the MFRC, is supposed to provide emergency daycare, but I know whenever I've required for my subordinates it's never been there. So, I don't understand what it's there for because it's never worked for anyone who's ever worked for me who's needed it.

Unlike civilian organizations, Canadian Forces members are required to file a signed declaration stating they have a family care plan in place at all times for any individuals for whom they are financially responsible as part of a policy simply titled Families (DAOD 5044) (DND, 2002). When asked about this specific policy, most of the women were only peripherally aware of this particular policy. Despite the fact that the policy was implemented in 2002, and was required to be updated prior to a deployment, a posting to a new unit, or when family circumstances changed, Greta was only aware of it as it related to deployment. Although Alice was aware of the purpose of the plan, based on her experience with a subordinate, she did not think it was very effective.

I think often it's another piece of paper, because if they do take it seriously, I would not be having trouble with a member of my department, trying to figure out what he can do, you know, with his responsibility of his child.

This belief was echoed by Beth who saw the document as designed primarily to benefit the military as opposed to helping Canadian Forces members.

I think you have to do it each time you're posted. So that you've got something there for your bosses – it's basically a CYA for the military – a “Cover Your Ass” – so you can't turn around and go, “well I'm sorry I can't sail – I have nobody to look after my daughter.” “But wait a minute – when you got here, you signed that piece of paper you said you did. So pack your stuff and get going.”

*Career management.* Once a year, all military members meet with a career manager who specializes in their particular occupation or trade. This is separate from their yearly Performance Evaluation Review (PER) that has parallels in the civilian workforce performance appraisal processes. Career management is the military's attempt to coordinate the existing personnel complement with the operational requirements of the Canadian Forces. The career manager has the challenge of coordinating postings, promotions, and training courses while considering any compassionate grounds, restrictions to deployment, family considerations and accommodation of dual military couples. This process is of particular relevance to the overlap between work and family for the women. It is during this process that the women have the opportunity to raise issues of family concern that may have an impact on their work life or from another point-of-view, the opportunity to raise work issues that impact their family life.

During this process, the women spoke about negotiating future postings to attempt

to negotiate the balance between their employment and home life. Beth and her spouse had the same career manager and were able to make an agreement that worked for them as a family.

Well when I got pregnant I was on ship so I had to get posted ashore – once you're pregnant you don't stay on ship anymore. So when that happened, we went to the career manager and [my husband] said “ok send me back to sea so that while she's ashore, I can get my sea time in so that when she's done with all that stuff, and she gets sent back to sea, I can come back to shore again.”

The career manager was able to accommodate this request for Beth but she and the other women were aware that these types of agreements were not guaranteed. Ultimately, operational requirements were the deciding factor.

Interestingly, even when assignments were not favourable to women's circumstances, they may still have options to renegotiate. Recently Beth found herself posted to a position that required working 12-hour shifts even though she had indicated that this was not workable for her because of childcare requirements and her husband's six-month deployment. Beth was able to find someone willing to trade with her and to gain all necessary permissions to allow the change. This process was facilitated through her knowledge of how the process works and knowing individuals who were able to assist her. These appear to be informal channels separate from the official avenues of career management.

Whether formal or informal, “who you know” was a common refrain among the women when referring to how they negotiated changes in their work life to benefit their family responsibilities. Here Christine talked about the process of changing her trade or

“remuster,” which she did to move to an occupation that required less sea time in order to be away from her daughter less. “Well I got my remuster in February – and mine was fast though because I know the Chief and she kinda pushed it through for me.” Noticeably the work required to balance their careers and motherhood, required detail knowledge and understanding of formal and informal rules and regulations within the institution as well as individuals with the power to assist in negotiating these processes. Heather, who recently received a posting notice that favourably reflected a request she had made, sums it up. “It really just depends sometimes on who you have, and what your relationship is with them.” The Department of National Defence appears to be aware that “who you know” is perceived to create unfairness in the career management process and introduced system changes to address the issue of “buddies of the CM [Career Manager] (DND, 2004b, slide #77). Even though this change was addressed in 2004, the interviews conducted in 2007 appeared to indicate that this may still be an issue.

Ultimately, some of the women talked about how they would choose their family over work if they felt the level of conflict between the two was not acceptable. Women in the Reserve Force had more flexibility with the opportunity to move back and forth from part-time to full-time depending on availability of contracts. Even though they did not have the job security of the regular force, this ability to choose appealed to managing their family life. Women in the regular force were not ambiguous about what choice they would make if in a position of irresolvable conflict between motherhood and their military career. As Elaine stated, if forced to choose, her position was clear: “Because if [the children’s father and I], you know are told we’re being deployed at the same time, well I know – there’s no way – I would have to say no – no I’m not going.”

*Summary.* Within the military, there is a culture that continues to have difficulty accepting the full integration of women. Acceptance and success appears to depend on the invisibility of family responsibilities. Even though individual attitudes may still be troublesome toward women, official military policies strive to be gender neutral and offer support to all members, male and female, who have family responsibilities. In addition to similar policies in civilian organizations such as maternity and parental leave, the military has policies that attempt to respond to the unique aspects of military life. Yet, at least in the experience of the eight women interviewed, most saw little benefit from these enhanced policies. In particular, the Family Care Plan was seen as designed to meet the needs of the military and not to benefit the members.

The process of career management within the military is understandably a complicated process. Whether official or not, it is at this point that a member's family situation is most likely to intersect with their career when the member makes the career manager aware of any circumstances or special needs not already known that may require accommodation. The helpfulness of this process appears to depend on the individual effectiveness of the career manager and may also include elements of "who you know." As the women reported from their experience, awareness of policies and processes that intersect with their family life also appears to vary among individuals.

### *Findings Summary*

Returning to the metaphor of a map presented at the beginning of this chapter, these stories represent the journey the women have taken in pursuing a career with the military. The recruiting experience of these eight women shared a commonality of youth where there was little concern with their personal future at least in relation to either

personal or societal expectation of marriage and children. Their motivation to enlist generally followed two themes. The first was the economic reality of earning a living. This included the current employment climate and job availability at the time they enlisted as well as the cost of pursuing a secondary education. The second motivation was the romantic appeal of a career that included adventure and travel; a recruiting strategy that was actively promoted by the Canadian Forces at that time. Certainly at the time these women were entering the Canadian Forces, the recruiting experience gave little consideration to informing individuals about the impact of a military career on family and focused on the staffing requirements of the military.

Tension between motherhood and a military career appeared to be strongest for mothers who constructed their beliefs of motherhood along traditional lines. This tension was further complicated for women who were subjected to traditional gender role expectations within the military institution. Mitigating factors that served to ease some of the tension that the women experienced were related to a positive support network including the children's father, extended family, friends and coworkers, and paid childcare. The requirements of a military career created a substantial amount of work for the women to establish an effective support network particularly with regard to adequate childcare whether paid or unpaid.

Having an effective support network became even more critical when the women were faced with deployment. This unique aspect of military life demanded a level of coordination that compelled the cooperation of all elements of the family support network and extended to the children as well. Additionally, when compared to the civilian community, the dissimilarity in lifestyle demanded tended to lead the women to closer

ties to their military comrades which further contributed to a normalization of the demands.

The military culture as experienced by the women privileged members who were able to render their family responsibilities invisible. Although military family support policies recognized the reality of family responsibilities, for some there was a perception that the recognition existed to maintain the invisibility. Few of the women perceived that they had actively benefited from current family support programs offered through the local Military Family Resource Centre. Notably, the formal and informal aspects of the career management process were also a time when work and family intersected for the women. All of the women talked about using this process as an opportunity to negotiate work situations that were compatible with their family circumstances. This included conditions requiring formal application of compassionate policies as well as circumstances where knowledge of influential individuals and informal systems facilitated favorable outcomes.

## Chapter 6: Discussion

In conducting the research on the everyday experience of women in the military who were also mothers of young children, I paid specific attention to the intersection of these two aspects of their lives particularly when the women were separated from their family for work-related reasons. In the previous chapter, I explored the answers to the following questions as presented in the words of the eight women interviewed. How do women balance the responsibilities of the role of mother with a career in the Canadian military particularly when experiencing work-related family separation? What are the everyday practices performed by women to balance these roles? What ideologies, particularly military and mothering, are embedded in their everyday practices? My original point of interest was how the women balanced motherhood and a military career when deployed away from the home. After hearing their stories I have come to understand the work they do at times of separation requires a broader perspective that also encompasses how they manage their parenting work when not away from home. In fact, their stories sometimes uncovered that the daily balancing of motherhood and a military career was more challenging when not deployed long term. For example, some of the women spoke about the difficulties of negotiating the frequent tempo of short-term absences. In this final chapter, I present the meaning and relevance of their answers using a framework based on four significant areas or themes that emerged and merit further discussion: (a) recruitment and career management, (b) family support network, (c) invisible families, and (d) workplace culture.

Before entering the discussion on these themes, I present some observations that came into view as a result of the process of listening to the women's stories and reflecting

on what I heard in the context of the framework of institutional ethnography. Using a social constructionist lens, it became apparent that the interaction of motherhood and the military only provide a partial map of the women's lives even when the dimension of gender is overlaid. Giving consideration to the complexity of interactions that occur over the life-course for individuals provides some idea of how complicated and multi-dimensional the map needs to be, and it is not static. Consider how the women I spoke with were an average age of 20 when they joined the military. None of them were married or had children at that time. Fourteen years later their lives had changed considerably through intimate relationships that brought children and sometimes stepchildren into their lives. These women who joined the military have many different concerns in the present than they had 14 years ago. Just as military careers are not static, neither are the domestic lives of individuals. This consideration of a changing life course provides a further lens for considering the following discussion. For some of the women, the couple relationship ended and required a new way of relating as parents of the children they shared, and the children that came into their lives developed through stages that change as quickly as the parents got used to them. For mothers with more than one child, no two were the same. Additionally, in the workplace, there was training to learn new skills to be applied in new jobs in new work spaces with new coworkers and supervisors. What becomes obvious is the spheres in which women spend their everyday lives are very dynamic, and there is an expectation that the women will manage and control the domestic sphere so that it does not interfere with the work domain.

### *Recruitment and Career Management*

Chronologically, the recruitment process is the first opportunity for new military recruits to learn how the military lifestyle may impact family life. Ongoing opportunities to examine how work and family intersect are presented through the annual career management process.

Contrary to expectations, the women did not come from families with a strong military connection. Previous research has shown a connection between the career choices of children and their parents' occupations (Laband & Lentz, 1983). However this study only examined male children. Besecke and Reilly (2006) suggest a possible gender difference in their examination of factors influencing the non-traditional career choice of women in science and technology. They found it may be more important for girls pursuing science careers to have more generalized support from parents and the absence of gender-stereotyped discouragement than a parent employed in the sciences. So although all of the women I spoke with felt they had family support for their choice, none of them had extensive prior knowledge of the military lifestyle.

At the time of recruitment, all of the women I spoke with were young, single and had little thought for how a family and children would be incorporated into their lives. Their immediate concerns were more likely to involve travel and adventure. At that time, this was an attitude and demographic status that the military capitalised on as reflected in the recruitment slogan: "There's no life like it." Even for the women who did anticipate becoming mothers in the future, there was little consideration for any potential requirements of how parenting would be balanced with a military career. It is important to consider here that family life is not static and what is of concern at one point in the life

course will likely change in the future. So in the future, family concerns such as child or eldercare may become issues even if they are not anticipated at earlier points in time. The military needs to acknowledge the transitions through the life course as they promote awareness of family policies to military members. Thus although a new recruit may have no interest in a policy such as emergency childcare at the beginning of their career, this is highly likely to change at a future date.

On several occasions, in the six years I worked at a Military Family Resource Centre, I heard the expression: “they knew what they were getting themselves into when they enlisted.” This sentiment, from both staff and military members, was the expression of a belief that individuals were sometimes ill-prepared for balancing their work responsibilities with their parenting responsibilities. This attitude blames the individual for failing to fully anticipate future events. Most individuals can recall situations in their life where the reality of a situation or how they reacted was markedly different than they had anticipated. Certainly a common refrain of new parents is laughing at their own misconceptions of how they thought they were going to parent as they learned appreciation for how much more demanding the role of parenting turned out to be. All of the women I spoke with gave examples from their lives of experiencing a disconnect between their anticipation and the reality of parenting. A marked example of how a well crafted plan can wreak havoc was presented by Heather in the unanticipated reaction of her husband to being the primary caregiver of their child. Ranson (1998) found in a small sample of women interviewed about their decisions to combine motherhood and a career that, particularly for women in non-traditional careers, the reality was different than the anticipation. This reality emphasizes the necessity for the military to keep in mind the

transitory nature of the life course particularly in relation to family demands. This understanding therefore has implications for how family policy is developed, promoted, and made accessible to military members. What is pertinent to a new recruit in terms of family concerns will vary over the cycle of their military career.

The literature on work and family indicates that recruitment and retention of employees is an issue for both civilian and military institutions (Davis & McKee, 2002; Bond, Galinsky, Kim, & Brownfield, 2005). Despite some camps that contend women do not belong in the military (Peach, 1997; Weinstein, 1997; Winslow & Dunn, 2002), the increasing participation of women strengthens their acceptance both within the institution and the society at large (Davis & McKee, 2002; Segal, 1995). With regards to reasons for leaving the military, literature that looked at attrition indicates that women often give family concerns as a reason for seeking release from the service (Davis, 1997a; Kelley et al., 2001). Does the recruiting process help to identify a realistic impact of a military career on family life so that women know what to expect? Would women be as likely to cite family concerns as a reason to leave if they felt they had a clear understanding from the outset and that they were supported throughout their transitions?

The message of the recruitment campaign “There’s no life like it,” at the time the women I spoke with were enlisting, presented the military as an opportunity for travel and adventure. Currently, the recruitment website for the Canadian Forces continues to advance adventure as an appealing element and further capitalizes on a romantic and altruistic motivation through the use of the slogan and images of “Fight Fear” (DND, 2008a). In addition, it promotes the opportunity for subsidized education as an incentive. It is not clear from the website, how transparent the recruiting process makes the

awareness of the demanding nature of a military career (Poth, 1996; Segal, 1986). What comes in to question is the possible existence of a “line of fault” for the new recruit who may accept the military’s attempt to organise and coordinate the enlistment behaviour of individuals without fully understanding the implications for family life. This line of fault (Smith, 1987) may represent a disjuncture between the dominant view promoted by the military of a romantic career steeped in honour and pride and the reality of the “greedy institution” (Segal, 1986) that requires long, hard hours and frequent absences from family. To accurately reveal the rules and regulations that manage the recruitment process would require a systematic questioning of military recruiting personnel and policy review. In keeping with the application of institutional ethnography as a conceptual framework, this is a moment where moving beyond the level of the everyday is identified. Unfortunately, the ability to achieve this was beyond the scope of this thesis but is included under recommendations as an area for future investigation.

In a recent survey that examined perceptions of gender integration in the Canadian Forces, satisfaction with the career management process was indicated by both men and women service members (Goldenberg, 2006). All of the women talked about using this process as an opportunity to negotiate work situations that were compatible with their family circumstances. From their explanations of how the process worked, there are evidently formal and informal aspects to this process. Even though it was beyond the scope of this project to investigate this area in depth to include interviews with personnel who work in this area, it is noteworthy for further investigation. As discussed, individuals may experience several family transitions over their life cycle and throughout their military career. Explicating how these are not strictly parallel paths and

that intersections are inevitable may uncover understanding and opportunities that can be utilized in future policy development that recognizes the transitory nature of life.

The Department of National Defence should conduct an in-depth systemic review of the policy and procedures involved in the recruitment and career management procedures. This process should incorporate both a gender and family-life lens with a goal to the development or revision of policies that are sensitive to gender and family needs throughout the life course. Pursuing research in this area will uncover how discourse of family is framed and received during the career management process. Given that the women reported some lack of awareness or understanding of family related policies, it may be found that the career management process may serve as an opportunity to provide Canadian Forces members with up-to-date information.

#### *Family Support Network*

As an ideal employee, the female military member exists separate from her family and the work of maintaining the domestic sphere becomes the responsibility of family members and requires the existence of a dedicated family support network.

The recruiting website for the Canadian Forces does provide links to family services offered through the military but with a focus on the concerns and questions of family members. This perpetuates the impression that the ideal female worker (Williams, 2000) for the military is a woman who comes with an extended family available to step in as caregiver on a moments notice or at the very least a support network (paid and/or unpaid) that allows her to compartmentalise her life. There is undoubtedly a requirement of the military member to meet the operational readiness of the military institution and the expectation that family are there to support this obligation.

Dominant discourse on motherhood defines as normal that women will be the caretakers and nurturers of young children. Whether this is intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) where women are particularly focused on raising their children or the Standard North American Family (SNAF) (Smith, 1999) where the role of women is subjugated to men as the financial head of the family, or the ideal worker (Williams, 2000) who turns out to be a man with a female partner to look after home responsibilities, women are subjected to recurring messages that construct the role of mothers as natural. The discourse is so prevalent that even when women choose not to be full-time or stay-at-home mothers, they will still organise or evaluate their mothering work according to the dominant discourse (Ranson, 2005). This evaluation involves comparison to role of “full-time” mother as ideal. Ranson explored the discourse of full-time mothering and how mothers reframe the caregiving of their children by others in relation to this ideal. Working from a framework suggested by Uttal (1996), this may mean seeing caregivers as surrogates, partners or custodians in relation to how the women view themselves in light of full-time motherhood. In viewing the advantages for their children, the women are able to provide a rationalisation for not conforming to this ideal. Even the recognition that their own needs would not be met by being at home full-time is reframed in terms of what is best for their children in the sense that they believe they are better mothers.

In a pilot study of caregiving, health, and work of Canadian Forces members, the majority of parents reported using a combination of paid and unpaid childcare but that this care was not adequate in meeting their needs all of the time (Brannen et al., 2007). This finding is supported by the interviews, where it can be seen that support systems are constructed by the women through a combination of paid and unpaid childcare. Unpaid

care is usually provided through an extended family or friend network. When they are not available, the alternative is paid childcare. The experiences of these eight women illustrate ways in which childcare arrangements do not always meet the needs of the women in their efforts to meet the demands of the military. This visibly explicates the relationship between the provision of childcare and the needs of the institution. In essence, the decisions made at the institutional level, in effect organise the work of arranging childcare in the local everyday world of the women. This then is the social organization or coordination that is made visible through the lens of institutional ethnography (Campbell & Gregor, 2002; Smith, 1987).

Research has shown that young children's readiness to interact with fathers is less when the mother has been established as primary caregiver (Feldman, 2000; Lamb, 1977). The question here is whether this preference is reinforced by the tendency for the women to be the primary caregiver. If men and women act according to traditional caregiving roles leading to children showing a preference to interact with their mothers, the child's behaviour then acts to influence the continuation of this gendered division of labour. Women participate, often unconsciously, in recreating this norm and further entrenching its acceptance by continuing to engage as the primary caregiver in the everyday work of childcare. Support for this viewpoint is found in the experience of some of the mothers interviewed where the preference for the mother was affected by work-related absences. The willingness of Greta's young children to receive care from their father even after their mother's return provides a striking example of how societal rules of behaviour can be learned both nonverbally and at an early age. When the mother

is the primary caregiver, the child reacts in ways to other caregivers that reinforces the mother as the primary caregiver.

The work of childcare is gendered, and for these women, who are military members and mothers, the management of care work (Coltrane, 2000; Mederer, 1993) is seen to be taken up by them. Furthermore, several of the women engaged in what Allen and Hawkins (1999) termed “maternal gatekeeping” activities as a consequence of their reluctance to relinquish control of childcare responsibilities. They conceptualised this gendered gatekeeping as socially constructed along three dimensions: standards and responsibilities for parenting, external validation of maternal role, and disparity of gender roles within the family. Gaunt (2008) explored gatekeeping as an element of parenting control by women that may restrict the level of parenting interaction by fathers. Furthermore, fathers such as Heather’s spouse, who are reticent to take more of a role in caregiving, also contribute to reinforcing the gendered division of childcare work.

From this perspective, it can be seen that women in the military are directly doing the everyday work of the institution when they are in the workplace as well as the work of organising the everyday family needs that allow them to meet their commitments to the institution. Not only is this work extra-locally organised by the military institution, but it is also impacted by the social construction of motherhood. When women accept responsibility as primary caregiver of children without question or act as “gatekeepers” towards their support providers, they are complicit in the recreation of the gendered social construction of parenting (McMahon, 1995; Miller, 2005). Although this may be a contributing factor to a lack of collaborative caregiving, it needs to be contextualised to avoid over-simplification and a blaming of the women themselves.

Obviously, this is a complex interaction of beliefs and behaviour. On one hand, fathers may limit their engagement in parenting when the mothers are present in deference to perceived skill proficiency or they may feel ill-equipped to handle the responsibilities. In other situations, the mothers may be engaging in gatekeeping behaviour that effectively restricts fathers from more active participation. Furthermore, to avoid thwarting effective management, consistency in the role of manager may fall to the mother by a gendered default.

The requirement for adequate childcare is a necessity for both the family and the military institution. Previous studies have indicated the relationship between civilian female spouses of military members and the accomplishment of institutional work (Enloe, 1983; Harrison, 2002; Harrison & Laliberté, 1994, 1997; Norris, 2001). When the female spouse is the military member this expectation is transferred to the male partner and extended family to fill that need. For these eight women, their spouses and ex-spouses were also military, which pushed more of the expectation out to the extended family. Thus, the work required to support the military member in order to fulfill the mandate of operational readiness of the military is transferred to the family network. Depending on the constituent make-up of an individual's extended family this means that grandparents and siblings are supporting the work of the military institution.

Children are also conscripted into this work particularly in response to their mother's required absence through deployment and training. Fiona's involving her daughter through the mapping of her travels is evidence of how children can be socialised to the viewpoint of the military as an opportunity for adventure and travel and to ease the acceptance of separation from their parent. This work can begin very early in the

children's lives as seen with Greta's children being enlisted by their father to work as a "team when Mommy's away." The military reinforces this inclusion of children in the work that supports the institution through discourse that frames being a child of a military family as having benefits for personal growth.

The support work required extends beyond the family network. Childcare needs for military families are often not standard in regard to a regular schedule of Monday to Friday, nine to five. In particular it is the exceptional demands in response to the unique aspects of military life that create the greatest stress on the support network. As illustrated by the interviews, this can include interpersonal (e.g., worry about availability of adequate care) or financial stress (e.g., increased requirement of part-time night time caregivers who often do not provide receipts). Additionally, individual family circumstances vary with regard to availability of extended family support sometimes as a direct result of the military member being posted geographically distant from their family of origin. It can not be assumed that military families have an extended family support network willing or able to step in at a moments notice to provide care. Consequently, military families are often dependent on paid caregivers to supplement or substitute for family provided care. This exploration makes visible how the military institution requires the everyday work of childcare providers to meet the unique demands of the military life through the supply of services that support the military member's requirement to be ready to do the work of the military. The support network that women depend on to fulfill their caregiving work expands through the immediate family of partners and children, extended family and friends, and an arrangement of paid caregivers.

The Department of National Defence needs to acknowledge that the operational demands of the institution extend beyond the service member to the family support network however that network is constituted. An in-depth policy review should be conducted with the goal of developing or revising family support policies that recognise the impact of operational demands as complex and affected by unique family circumstances and gender stereotypes. In particular, the military needs to explore ways to support the unique care demands that families have to meet in order to meet the demands of operational readiness. As a point of intersection between the institution and the family, this needs to be viewed as a joint responsibility.

### *Invisible Families*

In fulfilling the requirement to be “ideal employees,” women in the military may organise their everyday lives in ways that render their families invisible. This is particularly noticeable in the management of pregnancy and parental leave.

From the moment their pregnancies are made known to the military command, women who are expecting children are aware that their condition creates an inconvenience for the institution. All of the women I spoke with gave examples of attitudes they experienced in the workplace that confirmed this viewpoint. Although their pregnancies and subsequent leave are accommodated through policy, the sense that they create a dilemma for the institution is apparent. A few of the women felt that there was a lack of sensitivity for the transition they experienced in returning to work after the birth of their children. Three of the women talked about accommodating training schedules by returning to work early from maternity leave. The most compelling example of this was Heather’s return to work when her son was three months old. One could argue that this

accommodation benefited the women's careers. I contend that this is an example of women rendering their children invisible in order to fulfill the role of ideal employee (Williams, 2000). Extrapolating from dominant discourse on motherhood, this ideal employee is more likely to be a man whose family, if he has one, is largely invisible because there is the expectation that a female partner will assume responsibility for all domestic matters. The condition of employment, to be available to meet operational requirements of the Canadian Forces, creates and coordinates this necessity.

Research that looked at the pregnancy experience of women in the U.S. military (Evans & Rosen, 1997; Lombardi, Wilson, & Peniston, 1999) found that timing of pregnancy was more likely to result in positive reactions of coworkers and supervisors when the pregnancy and leave was least disruptive to military schedules. When women receive positive encouragement for adjusting their personal life to meet work demands, this reinforces their behaviour. It sets an example for other women and creates an expectation in the workplace that this is the choice that women will make. The stories these eight women tell provide evidence that this is also the experience of women in the Canadian military. When Heather's male colleagues tell her they couldn't picture her as a mother, it is a direct result of the hard work she does to make it appear as if her son is invisible to the military.

As already discussed, the ideal employee has been historically constructed as male with a female spouse to manage all domestic responsibilities. This attitude was evident in the military for the women in the attitude they experienced from some of their male co-workers who considered domestic concerns the purview of their wives. This gendering of family is echoed in some of the literature on how parenting is constructed

(Marshall, 1991; Smith, 1999). When looked at from the standpoint of the woman in her everyday life then it becomes possible to see how for mothers in the military, to be an ideal employee, the woman works to make her family essentially disappear. The ideal female worker for the military is a woman who comes with an extended family available to step in as caregiver on a moments notice or at the very least a support network (paid and/or unpaid) that allows her to compartmentalise her life into separate spheres.

It was the recognition of this separation of the private sphere from the public sphere as she negotiated the world of academia that was the early impetus in Smith's (1981, 1987) formulation of institutional ethnography. In her own experience, Smith recognised a line of fault resulting from a bifurcated consciousness that rendered her domestic life invisible in order to work successfully in the academic institution that was organised to the benefit of the male employee (1987). The line of fault then is understood to represent the disjuncture between what individuals know in the actuality of their everyday world and the dominant ideologies that originate extra-locally and of which individuals may not be fully conscious. To reiterate, for women who combine motherhood with a military career, to be seen as successful and meet the operational demands of the institution requires considerable work to render the family invisible. Support for the belief in the existence of a "myth of separate worlds" is found in many of Canada's largest employers (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001).

Smith (1987) also considers how we are actors in concert with the organising regimes that create the rules or policies that are designed to coordinate and control behaviour, often oblivious to how we accept this reality as told to us. In keeping with Smith's theory, the literature on the social construction of motherhood examines how

women contribute to reinforcing the dominant beliefs about motherhood (McMahon, 1995; Miller, 2005). Consider the attitude already discussed with regard to joining the military that individuals should know what to expect. When the women share the belief that they knew what they were getting into and subsequently rearrange their home life to meet the demands of the military, they are actively participating in reifying the dominant discourse of the institution. They are complicit in a close-mindedness that is unable to think outside of the accepted paradigm. It is possible however that this paradigm can be challenged. On one hand, the Canadian Forces has already shown that the military is capable of change in response to changes in the broader society (Merz & Wilson, 2002). On the other hand, that there is still room for improvement is also identified in the Canadian literature on women's integration (Febbraro, 2003; Winslow & Dunn, 2002).

The Department of National Defence needs to conduct a systemic review of the experiences of women with regard to pregnancy and related leave while recognising that women's role as mothers may require accommodation in order to achieve equity. This necessitates an understanding that achieving gender equity sometimes involves unequal implementation of policy. Furthermore, to address any backlash of resentment or discrimination will require an educational plan that may include updating of the Canadian Forces Standard for Harassment and Racism Prevention (SHARP) program which provides training to the military leadership. Of note here is the recommendation made by some of the women themselves that there needs to be sensitivity for the time of transition in the period immediately following the return to the workplace at the end of parental leave.

*Workplace Culture*

The military environment in Canada continues to face challenges with regard to the integration of women.

The current global political climate with wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has raised the profile of women in the military, yet there is a lack of research that specifically addresses women's experience of balancing a military career with motherhood. Recent literature emphasizing the integration of women in the military tends to focus on the work environment and needs of the military institution (Carreiras, 2006; Febbraro, 2003; Korabik, 2002; Loughlin & Arnold, 2007). In her comparative study of gender and the military in Western democracies, Carreiras (2006) looks specifically at the issue of women combining family and military. Her research does reinforce that women are dually burdened and are more likely to leave the military for family concerns than men.

Some studies have shown that family supportive policies are sometimes perceived as detrimental to equitable treatment of women in the workplace (Caproni, 2004; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005). The Canadian Forces reported that 39% of male respondents and 49% of female respondents felt that taking parental leave was detrimental to their career (Goldenberg, 2006). Certainly the experience of the women interviewed provides some elaboration on this point of view. As Beth reported, her delay in having children appeared to benefit her career path with regard to promotion over that of her peers. Heather wondered if she should have delayed having children rather than cutting short her maternity leave in order to accommodate training required for her career progression. As Smithson and Stokoe (2005) found, use of gender neutral policies such as flexible or part-time work that support work-life balance are still more likely to be used by women

and as such are viewed negatively. This finding is certainly echoed in the recent DND survey on gender integration, which concluded that as women were more likely than men to take parental leave, they would be impacted more by the perception that taking parental leave would have a negative impact on their military career. Carreiras (2006) concludes that family supportive policy on its own will not result in full integration of women, however, without it, integration can not be achieved. In understanding that issues of gender equity in the military are multilayered involving personal, interpersonal, institutional, and societal rules of organization, it will take transformation on all these levels to affect long-term change. As such, policy that does not consider the interplay of these various systems will fall short of addressing the issues.

Past literature that looked at the integration of women in the Canadian military identified the existence of insensitivity, harassment, and discrimination based on gender (Davis, 1997b; Winslow & Dunn, 2002; Harrison, 2002). Importantly, a more recent survey of Canadian Forces members conducted on behalf of the Department of National Defence (Goldenberg, 2006) on gender integration concluded that women continue to experience insensitivity and discrimination. Though they did not relate any accounts of harassment, all of the women I spoke with gave examples of encountering negative attitudes from individuals in the workplace related to gender that suggest an atmosphere of insensitivity and discrimination. Goldenberg also concluded that the continued existence of these attitudes points to the need for increased training on gender sensitivity and discrimination.

Within the workplace, the women I spoke with find a source of informal support from other women they work with, particularly if they have children themselves. Most of

the women spoke favourably of their female peers. The types of support mentioned included information, mentor, role model, sharing common experiences, and it sometimes extended to instrumental support such as childcare. Several of the women also explained how their closest friends generally consisted of other military personnel. For some this resulted from the importance of sharing a common lifestyle that, in their experience, civilians did not always understand. By surrounding themselves with like-minded individuals, they did not have to explain or defend their life choices.

The work of building this protective network can extend into other areas of the women's lives. For example, Fiona chose her daughter's school, even though it was less convenient, based on her knowledge that the school principal was married to a military member. This sharing of a common experience, challenges, and goals in raising children as a mother in the military can be likened to the cohesion or camaraderie that is an integral part of the military culture (Harrison, 2002; Harrison & Laliberté, 1994; Siebold, 2007). Siebold proffers a model of cohesion that in part explains the bonding that occurs between group members as having elements of social control resulting from the acceptance of norms and behavioural expectations. It is seen as a necessary requirement for operational effectiveness and is often the outcome of individuals sharing sometimes intense and difficult experiences. Cohesion for the mothers is an ongoing process that is reinforcing as individuals search for acceptance and corroboration of their choices and in turn are socialised to accept their choices as normal. This process then serves to contribute to the organization of the women's daily lives that further serves the needs of the military institution.

Seeing other military women successfully negotiate the balancing of work and family tensions can provide positive role models for women. However, it is also important to consider the context in how role models are presented. There is an inherent danger in perpetuating a superwoman myth. This can unintentionally result in seeing women who struggle with balancing the competing demands of caregiving and a military career as deficient. Harrison and Laliberté (1994) discussed how the belief that military wives were strong and self-reliant served to operate as social pressure for the woman to judge themselves accordingly. As well, the authors assert that the military institution promotes this belief because it serves to support the operational readiness of the military member. Elaine's discomfort at being singled out as a role model by her supervisor with the assertion that "she can do it" was a result of her awareness that every woman's circumstances were individual. A comparison of the circumstances for Alice, who had live-in grandparents to assist with her son's care, with Fiona's situation, whose family and in-laws lived in other provinces, provides a quick illustration of how situations can not be judged out of context. If service women believe they will be seen as deficient if they do not achieve an ideal standard, they may be unlikely to reach out for support and ultimately may choose to leave the military. This obviously has implications for retention concerns for the military.

As discussed in the previous chapter, few of the women made use of programs or policies designed to assist military families and in fact questioned the effectiveness of such policies. In the experience of the women or their colleagues, they found that they did not meet the criteria for the support when they did attempt to access it. Several of the women expressed the opinion that policies such as the Family Care Plan that required

Canadian Forces members to have a care plan in place for dependent family members was of little value to them personally and in essence was a tool designed meet the needs of the institution. The opinion that family support policies are designed by institutions to serve the needs of the organization first and foremost is supported by the findings of the 2005 National Study of Employers (Bond, Galinsky, Kim, & Brownfield) where almost 50% of the employers indicated recruitment and retention of employees followed by productivity and commitment as the rationale for work-life policies and programs.

The Department of National Defence needs to acknowledge that the institutional culture continues to exhibit challenges for recruitment and retention of both women and men that can only be addressed through close examination of all policies and procedures using gender and family sensitive lenses. Making paradigm shifts requires an openness to critically examine entrenched processes and behaviour, follow through on identified policy changes, and the provision of training and leadership that models clear behavioural expectations.

#### *Limitations and Future Research Recommendations*

As a qualitative study, the small sample size for this project does not lend itself to generalized results applicable to the larger population and can not represent such aspects as the geographic and environmental differences for women in the military. As well, given the self-selection of the participants, voices contrary to those of the participants may not be represented. These limitations are offset by the benefit of developing a rich insight into the motivations, feelings, and behaviours of the participants in relation to their activities of everyday life as mothers and military members. For example, hearing Alice's story of extended family support in contrast to Fiona's challenges with paid

childcare in the absence of geographically close family, offers an awareness of the impact of the disparity individuals experience that would not be available from a larger, quantitative study.

Due to time and resource constraints, it was not possible to pursue another level of institutional interviews that would be generally included using institutional ethnography as a theoretical framework. Specifically, given the interest in examining the moments when individuals' family life intersects with work life, there were other military personnel identified (e.g., recruiting personnel, career managers, maternity care nurses) who could have provided a further perspective of how these two cultures interface. Follow-up on this level of interviews in conjunction with in-depth policy analysis is recommended as an area for future research. An in-depth systemic analysis is of particular relevance given the identification of systemic issues in the experience of the women especially in light of the institution's desire to affect change that improves recruitment and retention of women. In contrast to similar recommendations identified in the previous sections specific to the Department of National Defence, the recommendations here are suggested for external researchers. Acknowledging that it can be difficult to separate bias from critical self-examination and opening the process to impartial and independent review can provide the institution with invaluable insight into the complex interaction of formal and informal practices.

Another limitation to this study is that it only provides the perspective of the women. To build on the stories of the women, it would provide a greater understanding of how family support works from the standpoint of fathers, extended family and other care providers. In regard to paid childcare, given the need for the military to have

adequate care available to support families, research that directly reaches this population may provide valuable insight into ways this can be facilitated. What are the barriers that care providers face that may make it unattractive to provide the non-standard childcare that military families, hence the military institution, require?

Another interesting area for future investigation is the experience of fathers in the military who take parental leave after the birth of their children. Three of the spouses of the eight women interviewed, took some portion of parental leave while they were Canadian Forces members themselves. Although this is a small sample and as already noted should not be generalised, anecdotally I am aware of several other military fathers who have taken parental leave since the implementation of this policy. Given the gendered nature of the military institution, this is an interesting observation worth following up. Furthermore, previous studies have suggested that encouraging men to participate more actively in family supportive policies in the workplace may help to contribute to cultural shifts that will move away from a gendered use of family policies (Brandth & Kvande, 2002; Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

### *Conclusion*

The original impetus for this research was a curiosity about how women in the military who have young children balance the competing demands of motherhood and a military career particularly when they are deployed or separated from home for work-related reasons. Understanding that both motherhood and the military are demanding institutions, my interest was in explicating how the rules of these institutions organise the everyday lives of the women. This thesis, through the stories of eight women, illuminates the work carried out by these particular women in their effort to balance work and family

life. Their stories explicate how the military institution, in requiring the women to put their duty to serve ahead of their personal lives, often renders their families invisible. This requirement organises not only the everyday work of the women but their immediate and extended families as well as paid care providers whose support and cooperation is necessary for the military to meet its operational mandate. How this work is carried out also depends on the extent to which the women personally accept socially constructed definitions of motherhood. Even though the sample size is too small to generalize, in the experience of these eight women, those who subscribed to more traditional views of motherhood expressed greater interpersonal stress in striving to juggle the competing demands particularly at times they were separated from their families. Even if some of the women appeared less conflicted with their choice, it was still obvious that a great deal of work went into meeting the challenges of their dual roles. Although they were not always happy with the military institution and regardless of any tension they felt, it was obvious that all eight women were proud of the work they did to fulfill their responsibilities whether as mothers or members of the Canadian Forces.

Ultimately, the Canadian Forces is concerned with recruiting and retaining well-trained professional personnel. This requires a level of institutional introspection that systematically addresses the relationship between family and the military workplace. Such a process demands a level of open-mindedness that encourages cultural shifts. Yet, historically, the military has been known as slow and even resistant to change. This thesis provides an entry point for such a systematic review. By illuminating the everyday experience of female military members who balance motherhood with a military career, it is possible to see how the institution, despite a commitment to employment equity,

continues to recreate a gendered workplace where women need to render both biological differences and their families invisible in order to succeed. In a very real sense, the military requires the women to accommodate the institution rather than the institution accommodating the needs of women. As society changes with men taking more active roles in the lives of their children, the issues for work-family balance will cease to be just women's issues. Statistics for 2006 show the Canadian Forces is experiencing changes in the demographics as the percentage of women has increased to 15% of the total service, the average age of female recruits has risen to 27, and the number of dual-member families is at 8.4% (Brannen et al., 2007). The implications for family policies that adequately address these changes are imperative if the military is going to achieve its personnel requirements. To achieve the goal of "employer of choice" for Canadian women and men involves more than rhetoric. In order to demand a commitment to the military, the military will need to show its commitment to *all* of its members.

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Appendix A: Informed Consent Form

**Title of Study:** “Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor...Mother?: Making sense of the competing institutions of motherhood and the military.”

The purpose of this study is to explore from the standpoint of women in the Canadian Forces who are mothers, their experience of everyday life as both mothers and military members. Of particular interest is the experience of mothers while separated from their children for work-related reasons for 30 days or more (deployment, training or other operational requirements). I am interested in uncovering how institutional practices and policies of a military career intersect with beliefs and values about being a mother in ways that may influence or coordinate the everyday work of motherhood. Ultimately I hope the value of this study will illuminate ways to ensure that systemic practices of the Canadian Forces ideally are supportive of mothers but at least not detrimental while recognising that recruitment and retention of women is important to the operations of the military. Because children under the age of 12 require supervised childcare, participants in this study have at least one child under the age of 12 while experiencing family separation of at least 30 days within the past two years.

This study is being conducted as a requirement for receipt of a Master of Arts in Family Studies and Gerontology through Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). Information will be gathered through two one-to-one interviews. Agreeing to be interviewed is voluntary and the interview can be stopped at anytime. You may choose to answer all or some of the questions asked according to your personal level of comfort. The second, follow-up interview will be scheduled within four-six weeks after analysis of the first interview. There are no repercussions if you should choose not to participate or to not complete an interview including the follow-up interview. Participation in this study has no affect on your employment in the Canadian military.

No participant will be identified by name in any reports nor will your name be released to any other group or agency including the Military or Department of National Defence. A pseudonym will be used in any reports and any other identifying information will be revised to protect your identity. Participants should be aware that the military community can be considered a relatively small and close community and as such, total anonymity may be difficult to guarantee. All participants will have the opportunity to review a transcription of their interview(s) and may choose to change any part or even exclude the entire interview(s) from the study. A summary of the research findings will be provided to each participant after successful completion of the thesis. A complete copy of the thesis is accessible through the MSVU library and the National Library of Canada ([www.collectionscanada.ca/thesescanada/index-e.html](http://www.collectionscanada.ca/thesescanada/index-e.html)).

I will meet with you at a location and time that is convenient and comfortable to you. Questions will focus around your everyday experience of motherhood and your military career. Some general demographic information will be gathered for background information only. Interviews will be taped. At any time during the interview you can request to stop the tape recorder if you should change your mind or wish to take a break. Duration of the interviews will be 1 – 2 hours and will be transcribed into a document for

your review and clarification. Other than when the tapes are being transcribed, only my thesis adviser and I will have access to the tapes. Once transcription is complete, the tapes will be secured in a location accessible only to me. Transcribed documents will be password protected and only accessible by me.

There is no expectation that any duress or distress will be experienced as a result of these interviews. It should be noted however that the personal nature of the questions may lead to unanticipated emotional recollections. You are reminded that you may stop the interview at any time if the process creates any discomfort. If you experience significant emotional or psychological discomfort, there are confidential services available to all military members. Access to these services can be made 24 hours per day, 7 days per week through the Canadian Forces Member Assistance Program (CFMAP) at 1-800-268-7708 or the Halifax Military Family Resource Centre (HMFRC) locally at [REDACTED] or toll free at 1-888-753-8827.

If you have any questions about this project or the interview process, please contact:

Kathy Petite  
Graduate Student  
Department of Family Studies and Gerontology  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, NS B3M 2J6  
[REDACTED]

You may also contact my thesis adviser:

Dr. Deborah Norris  
Department of Family Studies and Gerontology  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
Halifax, NS B3M 2J6  
(902) 457-6376  
[deborah.norris@msvu.ca](mailto:deborah.norris@msvu.ca)

If you have questions about how this study is being conducted and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved in the study, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board (UREB) c/o MSVU Research and International Office, at 457-6350 or via e-mail at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

## Consent

**Title of Study:** “Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor...Mother?: Making sense of the competing institutions of motherhood and the military.”

I have read the information provided with this form and understand the purpose of this research. I have been provided with the opportunity to discuss this research and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I understand that this study in which I have agreed to participate will involve a confidential interview involving my experiences as a mother and military member. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time and for any reason without penalty. I understand that there is no obligation to answer any question or participate in any aspect of this project that I find invasive. I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential and that information will be stored securely so that only the researcher and her advisor will have access to the data.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant Name (please print)

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

phone: \_\_\_\_\_

email: \_\_\_\_\_

I have fully explained the procedures and purpose of this study to the above participant.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

cc: participant

Appendix B: Interview Guide

## Interview Guide

Where pertinent, specific details were probed to illuminate how things are done. Some of the introductory questions were designed to gather general background information and ease into the more detailed questions. Following the demographic questions, the interview guide is separated into three sections reflecting the areas of interest discussed in the methodology: Recruitment, Motherhood, and Deployment. Not all questions may be relevant for all participants therefore flexibility was required.

### *Demographic Questions*

The following questions are designed to provide details and information that will provide a place to begin the interview.

1. Number of Children \_\_\_\_\_
2. Ages of Children \_\_\_\_\_
3. What year were you born? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many years have you been in the Canadian Forces? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are you in a married or common-law relationship with an intimate partner?  
\_\_\_\_\_
  - a. If yes, is your partner in the Canadian Forces? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is your rank? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What is your trade? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What element (Army/Navy/Air Force) of the force do you belong to? \_\_\_\_\_
9. When was your last period of deployment, training or other work requirement that separated you from your children for at least 30 days? \_\_\_\_\_

### *Recruitment Questions*

1. Please tell me about how you came to enlist in the Canadian Forces?
2. Tell me about the process of enlisting?
3. Who did you talk to? Please describe any interviews. How did they describe life in the forces?
4. Were you given any written information about being a member of the Canadian Forces?

5. How did your family feel about your decision to enlist?

### *Motherhood Questions*

1. Growing up, did you envision having children in your future?
2. How would you describe your family of origin? Who was responsible for the various roles within your family (e.g. meal preparation, house cleaning, etc.)?
3. Please describe your feelings and expectations about being a mother. How has the reality of parenthood compared to your expectations?
4. When you were enlisting, were you already a mother or did you consider becoming a mother in the future? When you made the decision to combine motherhood with a military career, what were your thoughts about combining these roles? How would you describe the reality compared to your expectations?
5. While you were pregnant, what was the reaction of your coworkers and superior officers? What type of information or support was provided related to pregnancy and parenthood in the Canadian Forces? Were your duties restricted? How did you learn about your rights and benefits around pregnancy and parenthood as a member of the Canadian Forces?
6. Describe how you feel about your choices regarding work and family? How would you describe the attitude of others to your choices.
7. Do you get help or support with being a parent? Who helps or supports you as a parent?
8. Have you used any resources such as books or magazines or workshops on parenting? (probe for specific details)
9. What was it like for you to return to work after the birth of your children? Who looks after your children when you are at work? After returning to work, how would you describe the reaction of your coworkers and superior officers?
10. How would you describe a typical workday starting with what time you get up?
11. When your children have appointments, who makes the arrangements and takes them to their appointments?

### *Deployment Questions*

1. How old were your children the first time you had to be away from them overnight? What arrangements did you make for their care?

2. How old were your children the first time you had to be away for more than 30 days? What has been your longest absence from home for work-related reasons? What arrangements did you make for their care?
3. How did you feel about leaving your children for work-related reasons? How would you describe the attitudes of family, friends, and acquaintances with regard to your absence?
4. What types of things did you do to prepare for being away from your children?
5. How do you stay in touch with your family? Are there things you did while you were away that you consider to be parenting? How do you stay involved in the day-to-day life of your family?
6. How would you describe a typical workday while away from home starting with when you get up?
7. How would you describe the attitude of your coworkers and superior officers with regards to your parenting role while away from home for work-related duties?
8. How would you describe the reunion with your family after a prolonged absence?

#### *Interview Part 2*

1. What would you say are the best aspects of being in the military?
2. What would you say are the hardest aspects of being in the military?
3. What would you say are the best aspects of parenting?
4. What would you say are the hardest aspects of parenting?
5. Management aspect of parenting?
6. Have you ever felt pressure or judgement about how you parent? (e.g. toilet training, discipline)
7. Were there differences when your child's father was away?
8. Health care provider for child?
9. Do you have a career manager? Can you tell me about how that works? What about annual review process?

10. How do you access information such as personnel policies when you have questions?

### *Textual Analysis Guide*

The Department of National Defence (DND) maintains a publicly accessible website on the Internet at [http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/home\\_e.asp](http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/home_e.asp). A search of the site will be carried out to find texts, documents, and policies using, but not limited to, the following search terms that were chosen for the potential overlap with home life:

- Family
- Gender
- Children
- Marital status
- Pregnancy
- Housing
- Deployment
- Recruitment
- Posting
- Annual leave

The search may be expanded based on references to specific texts, documents, or policies as part of the interviews with informants.

Preliminary data analysis can be conducted on the texts, documents, and policies identified in the preceding search through the examination of the following themes:

- Gender analysis
- Family and work overlap

Further analysis will be dependent on the analysis of the first level of data from the interviews with informants. Particular attention will be paid to texts, documents or policies referenced by the informants. This next level of analysis will explicate or identify the links between the levels as evidence of the social relations of ruling. When reference is made in an interview to texts, documents, or policies that coordinate or influence the everyday behaviour or actions of the informant, the referenced text will be analysed and coded for evidence of social relations.

Appendix C: Director Personnel Applied Research Approval

## Director Personnel Applied Research Approval

National Defence Headquarters  
101 Colonel By Drive  
Ottawa ON K1A 0K2

### D Pers AR RESEARCH REVIEW BOARD DECISION

22 November 2006

Serial Number: 513/06

Title: Pilot Study of the Caregiving, Health and Work of Canadian Forces members (CHAW-CF)

Organization: DQOL

#### Review and Discussion:

1. The general idea of any research on individuals is to provide a product respecting the rules of the scientific approach and following the established research practices of the behavioural sciences. Your research proposal satisfies these two requirements and is therefore approved.

2. Your project is assigned survey coordination number: 513/06. **The following text shall be displayed on the front page of your consent form(s):**

Director Personnel Research and Evaluation authorizes the administration of this survey within DND/CF in accordance with CANFORGEN 145/02 ADMHRMIL 079 UNCLASS 131028Z DEC 02. Authorization number: 513/06.

Le directeur de recherche appliquée sur le personnel autorise

l'administration de ce sondage dans le MDN/FC en accord avec le CANFORGEN

145/02 ADMHRMIL 079 UNCLASS 131028Z DEC 02. Numéro d'autorisation :

513/06.

3. You are reminded that any changes to the approved protocol or any untoward incidents or injuries arising as a result of any subject's participation in the study shall be brought to the attention of the D Pers AR Research Review Board Chairperson, Brian McKee, in writing immediately.

4. This approval is an extension to D Pers AR approval #367/05 to include interviews to approximately 10 Canadian Forces women in Nova Scotia. Approval is

granted until 31 December 2006 and the distribution must be complete by this date; otherwise, the protocol will require further review

5. To ensure that the survey co-ordination function primarily serves practical rather than research interests, D Pers AR requires the following documentation to complete our records:

- a. an electronic copy of any research reports arising out of this request/project, and
- b. electronic copies of data that produced the reported results.

6. **The following disclaimer shall be presented as the first page of the research report.**

*“The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and are not necessarily those of the Department of National Defence or the Canadian Forces”*

7. Please accept our acknowledgements for your contribution to research within the Canadian Forces and the Department of National Defence.

S.A.T. Eyres Ph.D.  
Colonel  
Director Personnel Applied Research  
[REDACTED]