Family Stress and Coping in the Military Environment:
Perceptions of Canadian Military Spouses

By

Laurie Anne Johnson

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ABSTRACT

Family Stress and Coping in the Military Environment:
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There is a lack of current research into the needs of
the families of Canada's military. The purpose of this
study was to increase the available knowledge about how
Canadian military spouses manage the demands made upon them
by the military environment. A sample of military spouses
completed a family assessment measure (Moos and Moos's 1994
Family Environment Scale). Data from this measure were used
to guide the second part of this study, in which a sample
of military wives were interviewed in-depth about their
experiences managing the stressors resulting from having a
partner in the Canadian Forces. Significant stressors
identified by these wives included posting and deployment.
While support from other military spouses was seen as a
significant factor in coping with stressors, formal
resources for military families were generally not viewed
as positively. This research indicates that while the
military environment can be challenging to spouses and
their families, these spouses overall see themselves as
competent and independent. They see their families as
cohesive and expressive, and with low levels of conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER ONE

CANADIAN MILITARY FAMILIES AND FAMILY STRESS THEORY

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the rationale for this study, and describe some of the significant aspects of the military environment and how it can affect families of military members. It will examine practice and policy issues relevant to this population. It will also discuss the perspectives of the investigator.

Families and the Military

To be a member of the Canadian Forces usually means being a member of a family. Two thirds of Canadian military members have a spouse, partner, or child (Rosebush, 1995). The nature of military job demands generally affect military families significantly, as these demands often involve parental absence and reintegration into the family; increased risk of physical or psychological harm to the military parent; family relocation every two or three years; disruption to family education, employment and socialisation; separation from extended family; and continuous uncertainty about the future.

Increasing Demands on the Canadian Military

With increased international tensions in the last decade, the Canadian Forces are experiencing demands that have not occurred since the Korean War. This increased pace of operations can be attributed to a period of international instability, as well as policy decisions in the Federal Government to reduce military personnel. After the 1994 Department of National Defence White Paper (Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, Military Family Services Program, 2002), the Canadian Forces downsized by almost 30%, from 88,000 personnel in 1989 to 60,000 personnel in 1999.

Canadian Forces have been engaged in combat or peacekeeping operations continuously since the 1991 Gulf War. In November 1999, overseas deployment was at its highest level since the Korean War, with about 4,400 troops on missions around the globe (Government of Canada, Department of National Defence, Military Family Services Program, 2002). While overseas deployments stand out as placing the highest demand on the Canadian Forces, related factors also influence the current state of the C.F. Those military members who are not deployed face increased workloads. Other members are deployed in Canada and the United States on a schedule that sees them rotate in and

out of their homes with only brief time with their families.

Given these changes in the structure and function of the Canadian Forces, it seems timely to explore the demands made upon Canadian military families, and to develop a better understanding of how these families manage the stress in their lives.

In particular, this study aims to explore these questions:

- What are the demands made upon the female partners of military members by the military environment?

- What are the personal or family characteristics that these female partners think have helped them cope with and adjust to these demands?

- What impact has the military environment had on the coping characteristics of these female partners?

- How do these female partners assess the resources available to military spouses? How have these resources affected their abilities to cope with and adjust to the demands of the military environment?

Family Stress Theory and relevance to military family research

Rueben Hill wrote "the families of married professional soldiers may defeat the best plans of the

military system…there is no escaping the necessity for the military system to cope with the claims of …families"(McCubbin, Dahl & Hunter, 1976, p.12).

Family researchers have examined the role stress plays in family well-being, recognizing that families that are overburdened with difficult events that exceed their resources may find it difficult to function effectively (McCubbin, Cauble & Patterson, 1982).

Various models of family development and family stress management, in particular the ABC-X Model and its later variations, have been applied to military families to increase understanding of how families generally cope with stress and how services and resources might be better delivered to families to increase their quality of life. There are a number of studies on military families using variations on the ABC-X model, including Lavee, McCubbin, and Patterson's(1985) empirical test of the Double ABC-X model on 1227 Army families; Bell, Schumm, Elig, Palmer-Johnson, and Tisak's(1993) test of the ABC-X model with Desert Storm Army families; and Bowen's(1990)use of the ABC-X model to develop the SRA Model of Family, Strength, and Adaptation in the Army. Black did research into deployment using the ABC-X model to develop practice guidelines (Russo, 2002);Frankel, Snowden and Nelson used

the Circumplex Model of Family Systems to explore stress in deployed Navy personnel families(1993).

Family stress models have been adapted and reworked extensively throughout the last fifty years. Family stress models have grown more systemic and contextual rather than linear, and now include elements of family appraisal, family cohesion, family adaptation, family types, family systems, and family support. Newer models examine how the "pile-up" of stress affects families, how the qualitative differences between predictable and non-normative stresses can affect families, how boundary ambiguity can make managing stress much harder, and what fosters resiliency in families (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han & Allen, 1997; McCubbin, 1995; Boss, 2002).

This study will present an opportunity to elaborate and expand upon some of the more significant concepts in current family stress theories to understand their applicability to Canadian military families.

Relevance to Empirical Findings

Military populations are in some ways a "captive audience" for researchers, and this may explain why a number of significant studies were conducted with these families in the past. Many of these studies have focused on

the qualities of military families who have successfully adapted to the stress of military family life and have made recommendations about policies and practices the military could implement to increase families abilities to manage stress (Russo, 2002).

Other research has made empirical conclusions about protective factors for military families that can be provided by military institutions, including family support resources, child care and timely and accurate information about military operations(Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino,2000).

The Social Work Knowledge Base and the Military Family

The term stress has been used to refer to events that tax or exceed an individual's or social system's psychological or physiological resources, as well as human reaction to these events. Stress has been identified as a factor in mental and emotional health (Monat and Lazarus, 1991).

Individual and family stress management has been studied at length over the last fifty or so years by a number of theorists working in a number of academic disciplines. One of these disciplines is social work with its focus on the enhancement of individual, family, and community strengths and well-being. The study of family

stress is important to understanding normative family transitions, to understanding the adaptation families make to life changes, and to explain family behaviour (McCubbin and Thompson, 1987). A comprehensive understanding of the role stress plays in the well being of families can enhance the quality of social work practice and policy. It can provide insight into what preventative and intervention strategies are the most helpful in supporting families in managing stress.

Social workers may benefit from gaining an understanding of military families. As demands grow on the military, there is a likelihood that there will be greater demands on the resources and capabilities of military families to deal with these increased stressors. This requires a response on the part of practitioners and policy makers who work with military families.

<center>*Practice*</center>

Unlike American military families, Canadian military families receive the majority of their health and community services from civilian care providers. Military social workers and chaplains still provide some services to military families, but in many cases, civilian organizations and helpers provide social work services for military families (Knox and Price, 1999). This study may

assist practising social workers in having some further insight into the structure of the Canadian Forces as it affects families, into the unique stresses faced by military families, into what characteristics of military families impact on stress management, and into ways military families can be supported in optimising their strengths and resources to cope with challenges.

Policy and Advocacy

This study may also be helpful as an aid to exploring what policies of the Canadian Forces its families find helpful or hindering in their ability to manage stress. Such clarification may be of use to government and non-government military family support services in developing policies. A legacy of the study of military family stress is the recognition of the positive benefits experienced by families who cope with stress through collective social action to change potentially unhelpful or oppressive military family policies. Such findings may be helpful for community members who are interested in maintaining and generating positive change in the military family community.

Perspectives of the Investigator

Malterud (2001) has written that in qualitative inquiry researchers must make a commitment to reflexivity. Qualitative researchers must establish a methodology for assessing their subjectivity. They need to recognise, make overt and document those perspectives and biases that affect the research process.

The investigator in this study has been married to a member of the Canadian Forces for twenty years. As a military wife, and as someone who had been involved for many years as a volunteer with military spouses and families, I had a number of pre-conceptions and beliefs about stress and military families. It was critical to this research that I became and remained aware throughout each stage of the study about my biases. Being reflexive involved continuously checking out my assumptions about what demands from the military environment these women would find stressful and what supports they would find helpful. For example, my own experience of being far from extended family and my hometown because of my husband's career has caused me a fair amount of regret. However, most of the women I interviewed had different experiences of living apart from their families of origin and their hometowns. Overall, these women saw living apart as being

helpful to their personal development and their abilities to be independent. This finding challenged my pre-conceptions and beliefs about what I had always thought of as a common stressor for military families.

I also found it challenging while doing this research to set aside my role as "expert" in this community. This meant that when women described experiences with certain resources or systems I had to be careful not to give in to any impulses to give advice about how I thought service delivery should occur, or to slip into my role as a family service volunteer and solicit evaluations of services. To do so might have cut off these women as they described their perceptions of community supports, and valuable data might have been lost. Such restraint may seem to be an obvious measure for anyone undertaking this kind of research, but it was surprising how difficult it was at times to keep the "expert" role in check.

Such challenges were dealt with during the data collection and analysis phase by regularly consulting with my advisor, and consultation with fellow students also engaged in research. The extensive use of a logbook allowed documentation of personal reactions to the process and to the findings.

Summary of Chapter One

This chapter examined the current demands made upon the CF in the last few years, and discussed how these demands can affect the amount of stress families of CF members experience. Theories of family stress management were briefly examined as they might apply to military families. Practice and policy implications for the study were discussed. Finally, the investigator examined her own perspectives and ways of dealing with bias, a critical step in reflexive qualitative research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine what demands the Canadian military makes of the female partners of its members, and what ways these women coped with the stress that results from these demands.

The questions explored in this study include:

- What are the demands made upon the female partners of military members by the military environment?

- What are the personal or family characteristics that these female partners think have helped them cope with and adjust these demands?

- What impact has the military environment had on the coping characteristics of these female partners?

- How do these female partners assess the resources available to military spouses? How have these resources affected their abilities to cope with and adjust to the demands of the military environment?

This chapter will critically review the available literature on Canadian military families that has

informed this study. This review begins with a look at the limited literature, much of it sponsored by the CF, available on Canadian military families. It next examines the somewhat larger body of literature available on military families in the U.S., noting that caution is needed in generalizing this research to Canadian military families. The next section discusses the relevant literature on family stress management that may inform a better understanding of military families.

Research into Canadian Military Families

Canadian military families share a set of common experiences that make them unique. These experiences include a lack of control over family moves resulting from military operational requirements, frequent or long-term absence of at least one parent on work-related duties, and the potential for physical and emotional injury that may occur to the military member in the performance of duties (Mombourguette, 1995). In spite of these unique experiences, family researchers have not produced an extensive body of theoretical or empirical research into Canadian military families. As part of a review of the literature on Canadian military families, the investigator did holdings searches of the libraries

of the Universities of Alberta, Manitoba, Toronto, Victoria and Winnipeg. Searches done under "Canadian Military Families" turned up less than a half dozen holdings. Academic database searches, including Sociological Abstracts, Family and Society Studies Worldwide and Social Work Abstacts yielded similar results. To further the search for relevant literature, the investigator contacted Commander Heather Armstrong, Family Policy Team Leader, at the Department of National Defence (DND) Quality of Life Directorate to inquire if she was aware of any significant academic research on Canadian military families. Commander Armstrong stated that to the best of her knowledge there is not a large body of research on Canadian military families and spouses. She attributed this lack of research in part to the methodological challenges in accessing military families. Confidentiality protocols generally prevent the CF from providing identifying information about civilian spouses to researchers without a member's permission. This leads to a general practice of surveys and questionnaires being given by researchers to military members to bring home to their families, and this appears to limit the response rate and sample size in such research.

Some studies have been conducted on Canadian military families. Hiew (1992) looked at 66 families of deployed CF members, and found that social support was a positive factor in facilitating family coping strategies. Harrison and Laliberte (1994) did research with the female partners of military members. They found that in many cases the Canadian military environment required wives to sustain the social order and operational effectiveness of the military, while its demands increased these women's economic and social vulnerability. Mombourquette (1995) studied spouses of deployed peacekeepers and compared them to the spouses of non-deployed peacekeepers, and found that although spouses of deployed members were more anxious about the physical welfare of their husbands, they overall experienced higher levels of general well-being than women who had their husbands at home. Mombourquette theorized that this could be due to more distressed families being identified during pre-deployment screening and thus not deploying, or it could be due to the greater freedom and independence wives may experience when their husbands are absent. More recently, Harrison (2002) interviewed 126 military spouses to examine the issue of woman abuse in military communities. Her results

indicated that significant stressors for military families include deployments, the economic dependency posting causes in wives, financial difficulties, and the authoritarian nature of the military workplace.

The Canadian Forces itself is a primary source of research on Canadian military families. Caution may be needed in using this research as a source of theoretical or empirical data on military spouses, since in most of these studies the focus is generally on military members, not on the experiences of female partners. However, these studies can be illustrative of the areas where family needs and the operational effectiveness of the CF may be in conflict. This research can potentially identify sources of stress for military spouses and families, or identify where there are gaps in research. Examples of this include Little (1999), who prepared a conference paper discussing how operational effectiveness of military members can be affected by family concerns, post-deployment stressors, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Combat Stress. Myklebust (1999) in research done for DND, expands on this discussion by looking at the impact family problems have on the abilities of CF members to perform their duties. He cites research done by the American Army after Operation Desert Storm that seemed to

indicate that wives who "conveyed their unhappy feelings and problems…to soldiers via…phone and by mail…distracted and upset the soldiers, resulting in a reduced sense of unit cohesion" (p.6). He theorizes that the conclusions of U.S. military research apply to Canadian soldiers, and "effective family support reduces spouse distress and alleviate(s) family dysfunction that can distract soldiers from the task at hand and compromise the mission" (p.6). Canada's Department of National Defence sponsored research on Quality of Life initiatives taken with members deployed to Kosovo and Macedonia in 1999. Five focus groups were conducted with a total of 94 members and spouses (Flemming and McKee, 2000). Subjects in this research perceived that family support services failed to deliver as promised during pre-deployment briefings, that services to families were inconsistently delivered and poorly administered, or non-existent, and that communication with members in the field was very difficult. Some spouses stated they believed if they complained about services, their partners would be "red-flagged" and their careers affected.

Other research done by the CF on the needs of military spouses acknowledges the difficulty in reaching these spouses when surveys or questionnaires are given to

the military member to take home to his partner to complete (Siew, 2002). The Directorate of Military Family Support (DFMS) recommends that each Military Family Resource Centre conduct a "Needs Assessment" regularly on its community, but no guidelines are provided to address the quality of the research methodology (Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, 2001).

General Research on Military Families

As Harrison (2002) has written, American military family research is a considerably more substantial body of work than that which exists in Canada. When this research is funded by the U.S. military, it generally serves to study what policies will allow families to best tolerate the demands of the military environment. Although this literature is guided by military interests, it can also be useful in describing characteristics of military families and how they manage military demands (U.S. Department of Defense, Office of Family Policy, 2003).

Military family stress literature is not limited to research sponsored by the U.S. military. There is a body of research on military families that is primarily based

on U.S. military families. In the absence of sufficient studies on Canadian families, this research needs to be examined, albeit with caution in generalizing to Canadian military families, as there are significant differences between the two Forces.

One difference is in the delivery of medical, social and educational services, with American Forces generally providing direct services, while the Canadian approach has been to allow the not-for-profit and public sector to deliver services at an "arm's length". This is particularly the case in family support services, where the intent is to instill confidence in confidentiality and to put more control into the hands of civilian spouses on how services will be delivered (Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre Business Plan, 2003). Other significant differences between the two institutions include official bilingualism in Canadian Forces, potentially greater concerns amongst Canadian Forces about funding and equipment, and a relative emphasis on peacekeeping, and search and rescue operations in the CF. Although it might seem there would be similar issues and stressors for all Canadian military families, each environment-Navy, Air and Land-has its own

culture and makes unique demands on families (Department of National Defence, History of the Airforce, 2003).

Another reason for caution in evaluating a number of studies on military families is their age; the last decade has seen an almost complete change in the military lifestyle, and this has rendered many of the recommendations and assumptions of military family research out-of-date. Comparatively few military families in Canada now live in military housing, and thus miss the benefits and stressors of living in a homogeneous social network. The pattern of geographical relocation has been disrupted by changes in DND policies, and families no longer expect to move every two or three years. The resulting attachment to a civilian community can mean even greater disruption when a posting message does arrive. Even the life span of military family life has changed with the option of later retirement (CF Health and Lifestyle Information Survey, 2000).

Military Families: Empirical Findings

There are a number of available empirical studies in general on military families. Those that focus on stress management in military families generally examine the specific stressors and resources of military families and

the adaptation of families to the demands of the military (Russo, 2002).

A great deal of military family research focuses on what characteristics of families predicts their ability to manage stress. There is an assumption in much of this literature that families who adapt best to military life are those who meet the demands of the military and enjoy the military lifestyle (Bowen, 1994). This lifestyle often requires a great deal of energy and resilience on the part of the non-military spouse to cope with the stressors of military life (Stoddard, 1978, Harrison, 2002).

Research on Stressors

One area of research into military family stress has been to examine if there are higher levels of mental health problems in military families, the "military family syndrome" described by LaGrone (1978). Further empirical research has not supported LaGrone's identification of higher psychopathology rates amongst military children, but has found that lower rank, with its lower pay, less housing choices and less control over work situations was a significant factor in family stress (Jensen, Xenakis, Wolf and Bain, 1991).

An analysis of American data from five major studies (Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino, 2000) concluded that stressors for military families included:

-Separation due to deployments;

-perceived danger to spouses through military training and combat;

-relocation, although this stressor was offset somewhat by military relocation services;

-poor quality housing on military bases and the cost of living off-base;

-distance from extended family;

-financial concerns, particularly for lower ranks.

Hogancamp and Figley(1983) identified stressors experienced by spouses experiencing deployment, including boundary ambiguity, anxiety of anticipation of loss, shifts in family roles, and the stress of uncertainty about the activities or well-being of the absent partner. Further research into stress in military families was done by Russo and Fallon (1999) who found that military families with a disabled child found it significantly more difficult to adjust to the demands of the military environment than those families without a disabled child.

Research on Resources

American research on external resources that appear to buffer military families from stressors include higher rank (with its attendant higher rates of pay and control over work situations), higher education, adequate housing, employment and educational opportunities for member's partners, recreational facilities for children and youth, and the provision of timely and accurate information about operations and missions (Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino, 2000).

In a study of military families who were potentially at risk due to war operations, protective factors varied in their impact by ethnicity and family life cycle stage (McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson, Han & Allen, 2001).

Patterson and McCubbin (1984) found that families who experienced the least amount of distress around deployment were those with internal resources that included an acceptance of the military lifestyle, optimism, self-reliance and self-esteem, and coping strategies that were balanced between independence and cohesion. Optimism was also an internal resource to wives in a study by Wood, Scarville, and Gravino (1995) that found social support from family and friends, military family support groups, good marital

relationships, and wives' employment were significant factors in coping with military demands.

Bowen and his associates (2003) found that the ability of Air Force families to adapt to military demands was increased somewhat by formal support networks provided by the military resources, and informal, voluntary community-based social networks.

Research on Appraisal

There are some indications that a positive perception of the military and the commitment it requires from members and their families can increase families' abilities to manage the stress of military life (Rosebush, 1994). Rosen and Duran (2000) studied 776 Gulf War American families and found that a lack of satisfaction with the "fit" between the military and the family made it more difficult for a family to tolerate stressors, and that spouses' perception of military support for families was an important factor in retention of military members.

Research into the experiences of adult children of Missing In Action soldiers in Southeast Asia indicates that it is helpful for families to find positive meaning in the type of ambiguous loss that can result from

wartime service (Campbell & Demi, 2000). Research on American Naval wives found that women dissatisfied with Navy life were likely to be even more so during their partners' deployment, and this dissatisfaction was predictive of poor adjustment to deployment (Frankel, Snowden, Nelson, 1993).

Family Stress: Theoretical Literature

Family stress theory is the study of how families manage the demands, changes and hardships they encounter throughout life. This is a large area of study, and one that is still evolving. It can be challenging to gain a comprehensive overview of research in this area. There can be inconsistency in how constructs are defined and epistemological approaches and areas of focus can vary significantly within the same field. Burr and Klein (1995) noted that innovations in family stress theory have created a significant problem for theorists and researchers, as these innovations have primarily been systemic and contextual, while the original models that still inform newer research were linear and static.

As discussed in Monat and Lazarus (1991), Han Seyle, who studied stress from a biological perspective in the 1930s, was the first researcher to introduce stress as a

concept that could affect human functioning. Seyle distinguished between external events (cold, heat, infection, and trauma), calling these demands stressors. Stress was the resulting response of the affected organism.

Later researchers were interested in studying multiple dimensions of stress, including the stimulus (or event) that creates the stress, the characteristics of the individual or social system experiencing stress, and the construct of stress itself (Monat and Lazarus, 1991).

The ABC-X Model of Family Stress
Theories of how stress affected individuals evolved into theories about how stress affected human systems, including families. One of the most influential of these theories is the ABC-X model developed by Rueben Hill. Almost all studies and discussions of family stress in the literature refer to this model, either by rejecting it as too stagnant, limiting and linear (Walker, 1985, Burr, 1994), using it as a spring-board for newer concepts (McCubbin and Patterson, 1982; McCubbin and Thompson, 1987), or using it as a practical, heuristic guide in exploring stress and families (Boss, 2002).

Family stress theory emerged as a significant area of study when Rueben Hill, influenced by the earlier works of Koos and Angell, published his book "Families under Stress: Adjustment to the Crisis of War Separation and Reunion" (Hill, 1949, Walker, 1985). Hill wanted to study families, believing that as America made the transition from an agrarian to an industrial culture, it would be the family that carried the burden of maintaining social order (Hill, 1949). In his efforts understand families, Hill looked at how families coped with the stressor of wartime absences of fathers, and the equally significant stressor of adapting to the fathers' return.

Hill studied 134 Iowa families and developed a theoretical model of family stress. He described a "roller-coaster" course for a family's adaptation to stressors. This model assumes a stable, homeostatic existence for families until an event, or stressor, upsets the family's stability, leaving it disorganized. When the family's efforts to regroup resolve the crisis, the family returns to a homeostatic state. Hill's models of family adjustment are quantifiable, measuring if families rapidly or slowly adjust to change, and if they make a good, fair or poor adjustment.

In order to explain the factors that influenced the severity of the crisis and the type of adjustment families made, Hill identified the following variables: A-is the provoking event, hardship or stressor; B-is the family's resources or strengths at the time of the event; C-is the meaning attached to the event by the family; X-how severe the crisis is for the family.

In Hill's original model, the ABC factors were causal, combining to cause X, the crisis in families that families had to adjust or adapt to in order to regain their ability to function again (Burr, 1994).

Elaboration on the ABC-X Model

McCubbin & Patterson (1982) adapted this model to one they called the Double ABC-X model to help facilitate an understanding of why some families seem to manage stressful events better than other families faced with similar concerns. They recognized that a significant limitation of the ABC-X model was its assumption that families dealt with single stressors in isolation. They developed a theory that in addition to a stressor event, families had to contend with additional stressors that came from their own stage of family development and from

their own efforts to cope with the stressor. They called this second A variable "stress pile-up". The Double ABC-X model is far less linear than the ABC-X model, allowing theorists to look at what families do over a span of time to adapt to a crisis and examine the interaction of variables that impact on family stress: multiple stressors, family resources, and coping behaviours.

McCubbin and Thompson (1987), and McCubbin (1995) elaborated on the Double ABC-X model with the introduction of the T-Double ABC-X Model of Family Adjustment and Adaptation. This model made the following assumptions: that hardships and changes were a natural and predictable part of family life; that families can develop strengths that can protect the family from non-normative stressors, and foster adaptation following a crisis; and that families benefit from external relationships and resources during times of family stress or crisis. This model presents the concept of "family types" (the T) as a further way of explaining and predicting how families adapt to stressors. It predicts that families who manage stressors effectively would be high in family hardiness (defined as a sense of control over outcomes and an active, not a passive, approach to dealing with stressor events); would have a view of

change as beneficial; would value shared and predictable time spent together as a family; and would have a sense of family coherence (defined as emphasis on loyalty, pride, acceptance, shared values, respect)(McCubbin and Thompson, 1987;McCubbin, 1995).

Olson and associates (1983) further developed family stress management theories to create the Circumplex Model of Family Systems, which proposed that there was a direct relationship between cohesion, adaptability and family functioning. This model describes a family as generally most functional when its members are able to find a balance between being attached to one another and being autonomous, and when there is flexibility around roles and relationships.

Critiques and Applications of the ABC-X Models

Walker (1985), and Burr and Klein (1993) critique Hill's original model and the subsequent variations on it described above as having limited usefulness, stating that these models are linear and deterministic.

Burr and Klein (1993) pointed out that the ABC-X model and its antecedents fail to recognize that for many families there is no "pre-stress", normal or homeostatic state. The families that cycle constantly through crises

have the most difficulty managing stress. They argued that these models are flawed as they present stressors, even piled-up stressors, as occurring sequentially, when families may well experience new stressors simultaneously, before they have had time to adjust or adapt to earlier events. They emphasized that family stress is caused by a number of factors, including events or hardships, family coping strategies, family resources, and the family's perception of one, some, or all of these factors. They suggested taking a systems approach, not a deterministic approach to family stress theory. This allows practitioners and theorists to view stressors as multiple inputs entering the system, with stressors and stress reactions conceptualized as ongoing, constantly interacting and changing.

By contrast, Boss (2002) does not favour abandoning the conceptual value of the ABC-X model and its variations. She argues that these models need to be stripped of their linear qualities and become systemic without making them unnecessarily complex. She advocates a practice-based family stress model that particularly focuses on meaning and perception, stating that the best opportunity for intervention and change often lies in the family's appraisal of the situation.

There can be heuristic value in incorporating a number of elements and concepts from the ABC-X model and its subsequent elaboration into developing or expanding upon theories about family stress, with the caution that the variables in this model not be viewed in isolation or as causal of one another. For the researcher into family stress, the original variables of the ABC-X model and those models built upon it can have real conceptual value, particularly when they are reconstructed from a more systemic and contextual framework, as was begun in the Double ABC-X model. These models can be helpful in understanding family stress, with the caution that one views each variable as not necessarily determining another, but instead influencing several processes in the system. Change to any one of the variables, for example, increasing the resources available to the family, will have an impact on all the other variables.

Family Stress: Empirical Literature

Thomas and Ozechowski(2000)in their discussion of validity problems associated with the Circumplex model, point out there is a lack of empirical evidence underlying most theoretical models of family functioning. However, there are a few significant empirical studies

that have findings closely related and illustrative of the models of family stress previously discussed. Two of these studies include Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen, and Wilson's (1983) study of 1140 families, and Lavee and Olson's (1991) examination of stress and coping amongst the same sample. Both these studies examined families as a means of empirically testing family stress models.

Another significant piece of research on family stress (Olson and associates, 1983) led to the development of the previously discussed Circumplex Model of Marital and Family Stress. This study examined 2692 American families along a series of family dimensions (family types, family resources, family stress, family coping and family satisfaction) as they related to family developmental stages. The authors observed that well-functioning families change their levels of cohesion and adaptability as needed to deal with situational stressors and changes in the family life cycle. Other findings from this study were that more stress resistant families proactively developed and focused on their strengths, had positive coping strategies, and access to basic resources. Families appeared to prefer to access informal rather than formal supports. When formal

supports were used, women were more likely to use them. If families had to use formal supports, they would prefer this to be for a short duration. Families preferred either that formal supports helped them with family developmental tasks or provided information on specific stressors experienced by families at the time they felt they needed support.

Measurement of Individuals within Families

Olson and associates' (1983) study addressed a common criticism of many family studies: that they generally collected data from only one member of the family, yet their findings purport to measure the family as a whole. There has been a need in family research to collect data from couples and families that would not blur individual differences inside a family.

In order to address this issue, the researchers in Olson's Circumplex model study collected data from both marriage partners, and in studying the adolescent-staged family, from an adolescent child in the family. Data was analyzed for agreement between family members, and in general, this agreement tended to be rather low, casting doubt on the concept of researchers' abilities to measure a family as a single entity. This finding highlighted

the importance of family researchers treating members of a family as individuals with their own views on their families.

Research on MIA/POW Wives

Another study that offers empirical and theoretical evidence intended to reflect on overall family stress theory also had findings relevant to the study of military families. The Missing in Action, Prisoner of War (MIA/POW) research was done with a sample of 216 Navy wives in the mid-1970s (McCubbin and Patterson, 1982). Data was generated primarily through in-depth interviews and legal case studies. This research is significant for those interested in working with military families, in spite of its flaws from its lack of discussion of gaps in methodology and any problems with validity. This study drew attention to the harmful impact rigid and hierarchical military policies had on military families, and illustrated the positive role that social action could have on oppressed individuals' experiences of stress. McCubbin and Patterson's research also introduced many new concepts into the study of family stress. It generated the Double ABC-X model with its discovery that the coping efforts made by these wives

produced additional stressors in the family system, that is, stress pile-up. An example of this was how the wives out of necessity took on the "father" role in their families and began behaving with more autonomy and authority than they had earlier in their marriage. This behaviour was met with disapproval and censure from the military establishment, from the wives' own families and in-laws, and this reaction in turn created more stress.

The above study introduced the concept of role or boundary ambiguity, and did so in the larger social and political context of the time. The Vietnam War was unpopular and destabilizing to America, and in contrast to the wives studied by Hill during the Second World War, these wives lived in a country that had no social norms or procedures to support them in their distress. When these wives attempted to clarify their husband's legal status as alive or deceased (to access economic resources for the family, or to move into new relationships) they were met with unhelpful and stymieing responses from military and legal systems. They found the power of attorney their husbands had given them upon departure had lapsed; if they wanted a legal determination of death, military policies meant their husbands' back pay could

not be released, although this was usually the largest part of the estate.

Families in this above study coped with the intense stress of having missing or imprisoned members through the interaction of family resources (self-reliance, family integration, social support, and collective social action) along with appraisal factors (spiritual beliefs and the ability to bring meaning to their experiences). This study also examined the impact family developmental stages had on the quality and quantity of stress the family experienced. The normative stressors that occur in family development appeared to contribute to a phenomenon they labelled stress pile-up.

Family Typologies

Family stress models have been used to explain how organizational characteristics of families affect their members' adaptation to stressors and stress (McCubbin, 1995). Assessment of family typologies has been done using a variety of models and measures, including the Circumplex Model, the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment, and Adaptation; the Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale; and the Family Environment Scale (Campbell and Demi, 2000; Fisher and Fagot,1998;

Frankel, Snowden, and Nelson, 1993; Lavee and Olson,1991; Moos, 1994; Olson, McCubbin, Barnes, Larsen, Muxen and Wilson, 1983). Moos (1994) makes use of family typologies, or family members' characteristics, in his Family Environment Scale (FES) model. Family characteristics include cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, control, organization, personal growth, and independence. Family environment refers to the external context that makes demands on the family. This model provides a framework to understand the mutual influences that family environment and family characteristics have on each other.

Family typology models have been criticized as limited by the respondent's subjectivity, for failing to distinguish between individual and family characteristics, and for methodological unsoundness (Fisher and Fagot, 1998; Thomas and Ozechowki, 2000; Walker, 1985). Other researchers have defended these models, contending their judicious use can be helpful in understanding family stress management, particularly when combined with other data (Lavee and Olson, 1991; Reichertz and Frankel, 1993). An example of this type of research is that done by Smith (1988), who gathered data from 18 military families through Moos's Family

Environment Scale and from qualitative interviews. Family characteristics were also examined using the FES by Waysman, Milulincer and Solomon (1993) in a study of wives of Israeli combat veterans, and by Eastman, Archer and Ball (1990) in a study of navy sailors and their wives. Each of these studies found expressiveness was a significant characteristic in those families that demonstrated successful coping.

Summary of Chapter Two

There is not a substantial amount of available literature on Canadian military families. The literature that does exist suggests certain demands are significant for these families. These demands include problems with family support services, concerns around confidentiality of services, and the difficulty in communicating with deployed military members. American research into military families have found that spouses identify sources of stress that include deployment, relocation, and the attendant stressors of family role ambiguity, anxiety, and loss that can come from military demands. This literature further indicates that certain resources, for example, timely and accurate information about military operational demands, and employment and

educational opportunities for spouses, buffer military spouses from stressors in the military environment. Personal and family characteristics that appear to help in coping with the demands of military life include optimism, self-reliance, acceptance of the military lifestyle, and an ability to be flexible in family roles between independence and cohesion.

The literature on family stress reflects the complexity of this area of study. The original models of family stress were linear and static, but innovations in family stress theory have grown systemic and contextual. Some writers have suggested dispensing altogether with family stress models, while other researchers have argued that these models continue to have conceptual and heuristic value. They suggest future research should view the variables of family stress models not as sequential, causal elements, but as contextual, interacting with and influencing one another. This approach can help illustrate the mutual influences of the perceptions and characteristics of family members and the demands and resources of the family environment.

This study examines the experiences of the female spouses of members of the Canadian Forces. It explores how these women manage the demands the military

environment makes upon military spouses. This study will investigate how these women appraise both their personal and family characteristics and the resources available to them. The framework for this exploration will be one that looks at these variables of demands, appraisal of characteristics and appraisal of resources as systemic, mutually influencing and interacting with one another.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter discusses the purpose of this research and defines terms used in the study. It addresses the rationale for methodology and instrument choices. It reviews the methodology used to recruit and screen the research subjects. It includes information on how instrument administration and data analysis occurred in this study

Research Needs

The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge about Canadian military spouses. It attempts to generate new insights into how these spouses cope with and manage the demands the military environment makes upon them. It examines how these women appraise the characteristics they find in themselves and in their families that can affect how well they cope. It looks at what military spouses think of the resources that purport to help them.

Little descriptive or explorative data exists on Canadian military families. Little data appears to exist

that explores the impact recent changes in the Canadian Forces may have had on families and the type of stressors they experience.

Much of the existing research into stress and military families is based on American military families (Bowen, 1994). It is not apparent if findings from the literature on American military families can be applied to issues faced by the families of Canada's Forces, with its unique historical and cultural traditions and equally unique manner of delivering supports to these families.

The literature on military families tends to use linear and causal approaches in discussing family stress theory. There appears to be very little use of a systems-based and contextual family stress model, such as that proposed by Boss (2002) with its concept of the interplay between variables, to better understand family stress in Canadian military families. Therefore, this research was an attempt to generate new awareness of Canadian military families and their attempts to manage the stressors and stress of military life. It is hoped that the results of this study may provide new insights into intervention strategies and policy developments helpful to the well-being of Canadian military families.

Defining Constructs Used in this Study

The following constructs used in this study are defined to clarify discussion of methodology and the research.

Stress

Stress, family stress, and the often associated term crisis, are defined a number of ways in the literature (Boss, 2002; Goldberger and Breznitz, 1993). Monat and Lazarus (1991) speculate that there are a variety of reasons for this, but the primary reason is because it is often difficult for theorists to agree on definitions of any complex phenomenon.

Rueben Hill (1949) called his famous study of wartime families "Families Under Stress" yet the word stress does not appear in the index to his book, and is used most sparingly in his study. Hill used the word crisis instead. Hill defined a family crisis as a unexpected jolt 'that not even worry anticipated' (p.8) and discussed how such jolts cause a sense of increased insecurity that may block a family's usual pattern of action, or force it to create new ways of managing. In this definition, Hill does not distinguish between the event and the result.

Walker (1985) defines stress as involving multiple and interconnected levels of a social system. He sees Hill's definition of crisis as flawed because he does not separate the event from the family's response to it, making it difficult to recognise the inter-related processes of stress and family responses to stress.

Burr and Klein (1993) suggest that stress needs a systems-type definition. They point out that stressors, or events, produce stress reactions in families, and these reactions can themselves become stressors. This interplay of stressors and stress reactions creates a need for a contextual approach to defining stress.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define stress as a particular relationship between person and environment that is seen by the person as taxing or exceeding his available resources, thus endangering his well-being.

Monat and Lazarus (1991) caution against defining stress only by its response. They argue that the stimulus (or event) that creates the stress is equally as important in defining stress, as are the characteristics of the individual or social system experiencing stress.

McCubbin and McCubbin (1989) call family stress a demand that forces the family to adjust or adapt. They define stressor events as those that produce tension in

the family system that calls for management.   Stress occurs when the family's resources cannot overcome this tension.

Boss   (2002)   cautions   against   blurring   the distinction between the stressor event, which she defines as an occurrence that is of significant force to provoke change in the family, and stress, the reaction to the event.   Boss states that it is the family's perception of the event that determines the degree of stress felt by the family.   The community and cultural context of the family influence what a family defines as a stressor event.

It   appears   that   the   literature   on   family   stress management   has   established   the   importance   of distinguishing between stressors, events or demands on a person,   or   family,   and   stress,   the   reaction   to   such demands. This study uses both the terms "stressors" and "demands" to define events, changes, and demands made upon   individuals   and   family   systems.   The   reaction   to stressors and demands are defined as "stress".

Coping and Resilience

As with the term stress, a variety of definitions exist in the literature about the concepts of coping and resilience.

McCubbin (1995) defines coping as what individual family members and family units do to manage the demands stressors place on them. He states that not all coping is positive. Some families may cope by engaging in harmful or dangerous behaviours. Boss (2002) has defined coping similarly, as the activities families engage in to manage stress, and further defines effective coping as only occurring when there is no detrimental effect to a family member because of the coping behaviour. Pitzer (2001) postulates that coping involves both behavioural and cognitive strategies, since the family's perception of stressors can be a stress management strategy.

This study uses the terms coping and stress management to describe the positive and negative strategies families use to deal with stressors and stress.

Appraisal

Family stress theorists define appraisal as the meaning a family gives both to a stressful event and to the perception the family has as to the helpfulness of resources available to them to deal with such events (Boss, 2002; Burr and Klein, 1994). Other related terms include perception, definition, evaluation and

assessment.   This   study   defines   appraisal   as   the
cognitive and affective meanings that military spouses
give   to   stress,   stressors,   and   their   perceptions   of
resources available to them.   Appraisal is also used in
this study to describe the assessment by military spouses
of their family and personal characteristics.

Resources

Family   resources   are   the   external   and   internal
assets available to the family.   External resources can
include   formal   supports,   social   networks,   child   and
medical care, employment, education, income, and housing
(Gottleib,   1998).   Internal   resources   can   include
characteristics of independence, self-esteem and a sense
of control, family integration and cohesion, and family
experiences (McCubbin, Cauble, & Patterson, 1982; Moos,
1993).

Adaptability

Adaptability is the ability of the family system to
change   its   power   structure,   role   relationships,   and
relationship   rules   in   response   to   the   family's
situational and developmental needs.

Family as a construct

Military family studies, and research into family stress frequently discuss "family reaction" "family adaptation" "family resources". Frequently in the literature, families are viewed and assessed as a whole, an organism greater than the sum of its inter-related parts (Boss, 2002).

Researchers have raised concerns about viewing the family solely as a singular entity. Walker (1985) cautions against viewing the family as a collective entity without paying sufficient attention to the characteristics of individual family members and their responses and reactions to stressors. He calls for awareness of each family member's perceptions regarding stressors, and how these perceptions combine to affect family stress management. Olson and McCubbin (1983) also discuss how when husbands and wives complete family assessment scales, there can be a low level of agreement amongst married partners. This calls into question the reliability of data that purport to measure "family" responses. There is a research tradition of having one member of a family be a spokesperson in studies on military family stress. McCubbin and Patterson (1982) gathered data from wives of MIA/POW soldiers; Black

(1993) used data from the U.S. Military's 1993 Survey of Spouses; Bowen, Orthner, Zimmerman and Bell (1994) gathered data from spouses on their adaptation to the military (Russo, 2001). This research tradition has been carried on in this research. The perceptions of female military spouses will be the sources of the data in this study.

Military Spouse and Military Family

Traditional definitions of the military family have referred to a heterosexual couple, legally married, with children (Rosebush, 1994). Although there have been dramatic changes in society in the last fifty or so years that have expanded the view of what constitutes family, the majority of military members continue to be men in committed relationships with female partners (Canadian Forces Health and Lifestyle Information Survey, 2000).

The purpose of this study is to explore how female military spouses manage the demands and stressors of the military environment. It is, therefore, clear about what the terms military spouse and military family mean in the context of this research.

Although the term "partner of a military member" is more inclusive of diversity in relationships, this study

used the term military spouse, as it is consistent with much of the literature on military families. The women in this study were all legally married to military members and the terms "spouse" and "wife" are used in discussing the findings.

The term military family is used consistently throughout the literature (McCubbin, Dahl and Hunter, 1976;Olson and McCubbin, 1983; Martin,Rosen and Sparacino, 2000). Its use here does not imply a lack of autonomy on the part of families as they relate to the military. As used here, military family will mean the military member and partner who live together, whether there are children living in the home or not. This definition does not preclude same-sex partners, blended or remarried families, "common-law" relationships, or couples without children.

Research Paradigms

Historically, there has been some debate amongst social scientists as to what type of research approach, quantitative or qualitative, yields the best way to get at answers to questions about our world. Reichart and Cook (1979) take the view that the two methods are quite compatible and not as embedded in paradigm as others have

claimed. They have described a "shopping list" of attributes of each approach. They describe qualitative research as subjective, concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's frame of reference, grounded, discovery-oriented, descriptive, rich, and assuming a dynamic reality. They describe quantitative research as objective, seeking the causes of social phenomena with little regard for the subjective state of individuals, ungrounded, verification-oriented, reductionist, hard, and assuming a stable reality.

When the goal of research is to explore in-depth and intricately a subject that has not been the focus of much prior study, the nature of this exploration lends itself to qualitative research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Qualitative methodology can lead to a greater understanding of human interaction with less frequently studied phenomena. The intent of this study is to explore new and descriptive information on Canadian military spouses. The qualitative methodology chosen for this study was the best way to obtain in-depth and subjective understanding and insight into Canadian military spouses.

If quantitative research is the domain of theory verification, qualitative research can generate new

theory and reformulate or clarify existing theory. Qualitative research is exploratory and descriptive, and seeks a deeper understanding of the context of the culture, family or individual. This can lead to more awareness about the population studied, and this may in turn generate further research (Munhall, 2001).

Mixed Methodology

Although this research was primarily qualitative, the first part of the study used quantitative methods to enhance the qualitative approach. Mixed methodology (the use of quantitative and qualitative research) can be used effectively in the same research project (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Reasons for using mixed methodology may include illustration, clarification or validation of findings. The use of quantitative methods in this project was intended to provide descriptive and demographic data to develop a better awareness of the types of military families in Winnipeg. The descriptive data helped to guide and inform the remainder of the study.

Quantitative Instruments Phase of the Research

Use of Quantitative Instruments

Quantitative instruments were used as part of this research. A short demographic questionnaire and a family assessment measure (The Family Environment Scale) were selected as quantitative instruments, and administered to 52 female military spouses in the Winnipeg area. It is important to note that while quantitative instruments were used in this part of the study, this research was primarily qualitative. These quantitative instruments were not used as a method of random sampling of the military family population in Winnipeg. Nor were the results of this part of the research intended to be generalised to the larger population of Canadian military families, as might have been the case in quantitative research (Malterud, 2001). The goal was instead to provide descriptive and demographic data about the types of military families in Winnipeg. It was thought the data from this part of the study would be helpful in informing and guiding the analysis of findings from the qualitative research.

See Appendix A for consent forms, survey questions, FES questions and a schedule of interview questions used in this research.

Survey

A short demographic survey with questions about the characteristics of military families was designed specifically for this study. These questions were based on those variables that seemed to be significant in the military family literature in affecting family stress management (Harrison, 2002; Russo, 2002; Stoddard, 1978). These questions included member element (Air, Army or Navy), type of deployment (short-term or long-term), length of relationship, career length, the number and age of children, spousal employment and housing type. This survey was pre-tested with four women who would be excluded from the study as they were married to retired military members. These women stated they found no difficulties comprehending or completing the survey, and no changes were made to the survey as the result of the pre-test.

Family Environment Scale Theoretical Framework

The Family Environment Scale (FES) (Moos, 1994) was administered along with the demographic survey. The FES was chosen for a number of reasons. The FES fit closely with the theoretical approach that guided the research. It provided a framework to view the inter-related and

mutually dependent characteristics of military spouses, their families, and the military environment. In the FES theoretical model, family characteristics like cohesion, organisation and elevated personal growth dimensions have an impact on how well families manage stressors. Reichertz & Frankel (1993) found that certain family typologies (i.e. conflicted or under-organised) were associated with difficulties in family adjustment. Nice, McDonald & McMillian (cited in Moos, 2000) found cohesion and structure helped stabilise the stress of separation and geographical mobility found in Navy life. Smith (1988) found that independence and expressiveness were significant characteristics in healthy coping styles of military families.

Utility of the Family Environmental Scale in this Study

The FES use in this study was intended not as a purely psychometric measure, but as a way to inform and guide further exploration of the environment and characteristics of military families. However, the psychometric properties of the FES, when combined with the data from the survey, meant there was a possibility of generating suggestive data about the families in this

sample. If, for example, there a notable difference in expressiveness amongst families experiencing different types of deployment, it would be interesting to see if this finding could be explored more fully with subjects in the qualitative sample.

The FES appeared to be reasonably easy and relatively quick to administer in a group setting, could be hand-scored, and was an instrument familiar to the investigator's advisor. It was pre-tested with two women, one a military spouse, one from a civilian family. The results were discussed with these women, and both thought that it seemed to reliably reflect their perceptions of their families.

The FES is one of the most widely used measures of family characteristics available to researchers (Chipuer, 2001; Kronenberger and Thompson, 1990). It has also been used in several studies with military families (Moos, 2001).

Moos (1994) claims that the FES subscale internal consistency ranges from .61 to .78. Test-retest reliability at two months ranges from .68 to .86, and at four months ranges from .54 to .86. Moos further states that the FES constructs have been shown to have validity

through their correlation with other constructs and measures.

The FES is available in four forms: Real, Ideal, Expectations, and a children's version. The Real version of the FES was used in this study.

The FES consists of 90 true-false items. Other versions of the FES have been used that are multi-point, rather than two-point (true-false), however both answer formats have shown comparable reliability and subscale intercorrelations. The FES has been used with a number of populations world-wide and has been adapted for cross-cultural norms (Moos, 1994).

As with most research instruments, the FES has its limitations. It has been subject to structural criticism when family-level scores are computed by averaging the response of several family members. This criticism was not relevant in this case, as this study intended to measure the responses of only one family member. The reliability and validity of the FES has been questioned, and it has been noted that reliability varied with different kinds of families (Reichertz and Frankel, 1993). Eastman, Archer and Ball (1990) noted that internal reliability for the FES scales when used with Navy families were .10 to .20 lower than reported by Moos

in his work. Moos (1994) responded to such observations with further data and discussion of the conceptual and empirical development of the measure, and maintained that the large body of research available on the FES supports the reliability and validity of the instrument, although it may have less reliability with specialized populations. The instrument was used in this study with the permission of Dr Rudolf H. Moos (See Appendix B).

Family Environment Scale and Survey Sample Group

The quantitative instrument sample group in this study consisted of 52 adult civilian female partners of members of the Canadian Regular or Reserve Forces living in Winnipeg area who agreed to participate in the study by completing the FES and the survey. The researcher does not speak French, and was concerned that explanations and directions when administering this part of the research would be compromised by translation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Therefore, the FES and the survey were distributed only in English. Most of sample group completing the FES and surveys were participants at events and activities sponsored by Winnipeg's Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC). The Board of Directors of this organisation had given permission to approach

individuals using their services (see Appendix B). About one fifth of the sample was military spouses who were colleagues, friends or acquaintances of the investigator.

Administration of Instruments

In almost all cases, the investigator distributed and collected the FES and survey on-site. This allowed potential participants to ask about the research, and likely increased the rate of return. Individuals approached about participating in the research frequently asked if the investigator was a military spouse. When she responded in the affirmative, they agreed to participate in the study. Several women made comments that they were happy to help with research as they thought increased awareness of the circumstances of military families might improve services for military families.

Before administering the instruments, each group or individual was told about the purpose of the research. Directions on how to complete the instruments were then given. The researcher was particularly careful to emphasise to the respondents that the FES was intended to measure each spouse's perception of how her family behaved, and urged each woman to answer the questions about her family from her own point of view.

behaved, and urged each woman to answer the questions about her family from her own point of view.

Spouses in each group were also asked if they might be interested in participating in the interview phase of the research. Three of the interview respondents were obtained this way.

Each FES and survey had a consent form for participants to sign, and a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, any risks it might hold for participants, and the voluntary nature of the study. Those who completed the instruments were given a pen as a token gift.

When the instruments were completed, they were immediately separated from the signed consent forms, and sealed in envelopes. These were removed from the site to be opened later. As a further safeguard in assuring confidentiality, completed instruments were mixed together and not sorted by the date they were gathering. Some writers on research recommend labelling data by the site it was collected (Reichart and Cook, 1979). This was not done because the researcher was concerned that her familiarity with the community and her relationships with several of the subjects might make it possible for her to identify respondents by demographic information. The

ability to identify respondents seemed even more likely as a number of the women wrote comments in the margins of the FES and survey. Mixing the returned instruments lessened the risk of identification of respondents by the completed surveys or FES.

Data Collection Sites

The first site was a well-baby clinic, sponsored by Manitoba Health and the MFRC. Well-baby clinics are a part of the MFRC's New and Expectant Mothers program. The researcher's attendance had not been announced to program participants in advance. This clinic was held on a Friday morning in November on the second story of the Junior Ranks Mess on the south side of 17 Wing Winnipeg. This second story site was being prepared as a drop in centre for partners of Battalion members who were scheduled to go overseas to Bosnia the following March. During data collection, workmen moved in and out of the room installing plumbing fittings. Each of the seven women at the clinic had very young infants and children with them the day they completed the instruments.

Distributing the instruments in this setting was challenging. The women arrived at different times and upon arrival began to socialise with each other and ask

questions of the public health nurse and the coordinator.

It was difficult to catch everyone's attention to explain

the study, and to make sure directions were understood.

This process was also affected by considerable noise from

the workmen.   Although each woman readily agreed to

complete the instruments, this process took much longer

than the literature on the FES and pre-testing of the

scale had indicated.   Most of the women would answer

several questions, put the instruments down to deal with

children or speak to friends, and then return to the

instruments a short time later.   It was anticipated that

the instruments would be completed by each subject in

less than 20 minutes, but most of the women in this group

took at least twice that time to finish.   A similar

degree of challenge with data collection occurred when

administering the instruments at a MFRC "coffee morning"

and at a preschooler/parent story-time group.   The women

presented as enthusiastic and cooperative, but most had

to attend to children or speak to staff as they worked on

the survey and FES.   About 18 instruments overall were

completed by subjects in what could be considered

distracting circumstances.

Data collection at the fourth and fifth sites

proceeded more smoothly.   These sites were a French

language class and a volunteer meeting. These women were in quiet setting where they could attend to the instruments, and each set of instruments was completed in about 15 minutes. 11 sets of instruments were gathered at these sites. Nine other sets of instruments were gathered from staff at the MFRC and women the investigator knew personally and in most cases there was no opportunity to observe the circumstances under which these instruments were completed.

The co-ordinator of a French women's group invited the investigator to attend and distribute the instruments at a potluck dinner. Despite the fact that the FES and the survey were in English, the co-ordinator stated she thought that most of the women present could read English quite well. Nevertheless, it was hard to determine if the reading level required from the FES might have affected data collection. Four of the sixteen military spouses who began to complete the instruments were unable to finish the FES because they stated the reading level was too difficult for their English language skills. Five other women who completed the FES asked to have idiomatic expressions in the scale explained to them. The group leader had suggested the instruments be administered toward the end of the meal, as this when

they usually heard from any guest speakers. By the time their meal ended, most of the women were actively socialising with each other. Although they listened with apparent interest to the explanation of the study, the researcher spent the next hour circulating through the room, answering questions, and on occasion politely redirecting some of the spouses back to the survey and FES.

The women in this group wanted to know why translation was not available so those Francophone military spouses who wished to could participate in this study. Some individuals stated that they were concerned that the perspectives of Francophone military spouses would be left out of this study. They said that this seemed particularly important given earlier comments made by the investigator that there appeared to be a lack of available research on Canadian military families. The investigator explained concerns about compromising data through translation. After this discussion, the participants appeared satisfied with the decision to distribute the instruments and conduct the interviews only in English. At the end of this evening, two Francophone women who spoke and understood English quite well volunteered to participate in interviews.

Data Analysis in the FES and Survey Phase

Reliability and Validity Issues

Methods of gathering data must be trustworthy to ensure the validity and reliability of the research. Some ways that data can become undependable include errors in gathering data, including participant error in completing instruments, data transcription errors and interviewer affect on informants.

As stated earlier the conditions under which some of these instruments were administered, including distractions and possible English reading difficulties, might have affected the reliability of the data.

12 instrument sets were discarded before data analysis began as these instruments gave the appearance of possible unreliability. Such data had a number of missing questions or the appearance of being completed without sufficient attention, for example, all the "true" boxes on one page checked off.

The demographic information and the data from the FES from the remaining 40 subjects were entered into a computer data analysis program, the Statistical Software

for the Social Services Package (1997). In order to assess the internal reliability of the data, alpha reliability coefficients for each of the scales were calculated.

Qualitative Phase of the Research

Grounded theory

This study was undertaken in part because there was little evidence in the literature that existing family stress theories were applicable to Canadian military families. Rather than beginning with a theory, then proving it, this research began with an area of study and allowed theoretical meanings to emerge from it. This theory-building approach is called grounded theory. In grounded theory, data is not only labelled and described, but also examined for relationships. This in turn enables the researcher to explain and predict what is happening or will happen in the area of study. Theory building research has several components to it. Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe the stages of theory building, cautioning that it is more than providing understanding or "painting a vivid picture". The first stage is describing: telling the story, making it both detailed and graphic. The next is conceptual ordering: classifying events and objects along specifically stated

dimensions. Finally, there is theorising, the construction from the data of an explanatory scheme that integrates concepts and relationships.

In the qualitative research tradition, the researcher develops a deeper understanding of the subject she is studying by immersing herself in the culture of the people that are the subjects of her research. The researcher uses her observations and the stories the subjects tell of their experiences as the source of her data. This means the researcher must be self-aware and recognise her own biases in conducting research.

A common data gathering method in qualitative research is through semi-structured interviews. This was the method used in this study.

Interview Sample Group

The interview sample group was made up of wives of military members who agreed to be interviewed in-depth about their experiences. This was a purposive sample group. Its members were selected for several reasons, as determined in pre-interview screening: they had not experienced any non-normative stressors in the last 12 months and they were articulate and comfortable with discussing personal issues. They were eager to discuss

the topic of stress management in military families, and most stated they hoped this research would improve conditions for other military families.

Screening

Members of this sample group were asked if participating in this study might put them at any risk for domestic violence. Response to the possibility of domestic violence must be dealt with in a way that as much as possible ensures the safety of family members. Harrison (2002) has indicated that military wives in abusive relationships may have different vulnerabilities than abused women in the general population in part as they may be more isolated and less aware of resources in the community. A protocol for referrals to services was prepared in case any woman who volunteered for an interview indicated vulnerability to abuse. However, none of the women who volunteered to be interviewed disclosed that they were at any risk for abuse.

Women volunteering to be interviewed were carefully pre-screened for non-normative severe family stress occurring in the last twelve months. This was intended to keep the focus on family stress that arose from the demands of the military environment, and to prevent potential harm to subjects. Subjects were asked if they

had experienced such non-normative stress as the death of a family member or close friend, the injury or diagnosis of a severe illness of an immediate family member or of self, or separation or divorce. Two individuals who had volunteered to be interviewed and who stated they were undergoing an unusually stressful time in their lives were excluded from being interviewed. Potentially helpful community resources were suggested to the two women excluded from study. One other woman who had expressed an interest in being interviewed moved from Winnipeg before she could be screened.

Those individuals who experienced normative family or military family stressors in the past twelve months, for example, the birth of a child, a young adult child leaving home, a posting, or deployment, and who wished to be interviewed were included.

As discussed earlier, translation can compromise interviews, and meanings can be lost in translation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). The interview participants were pre-screened to establish their comfort and fluency in speaking English.

Recruitment of Sample

Several military spouses heard about the study through speaking to me or through other members of the

community appeared were eager to volunteer to be interviewed. Many participants made statements like "I am all for it, if it helps out families". In this case, snowballing, the technique of recruiting sample members through word of mouth was effective.

Study participants in this phase were encouraged to make as informed a choice as possible to be involved in this study. The women in this sample group were informed in writing and during pre-screening about their role in the study and the role the information they provide had in this research. They were told of the nature and purpose of the research, that questions of a very personal nature would be asked in the interviews, and what would happen to the data when the research was finished. They were informed that participation in the study was voluntary, and that choosing to participate or not in this research would not affect the type of services they received from the Military Family Resource Centre.

Precautions that helped minimise potential risks to subjects were taken in conducting the interviews. In addition to the pre-screening protocols discussed above, informants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time. They were told before the interview began

that they would be provided with resources for support if they found the experience stressful or disturbing. When each interview ended, the investigator spent up to another 45 minutes with each subject to ensure she was comfortable with her level of participation in the research. This also allowed for review of notes and perceptions of preliminary findings with each subject. This process, called member-checking, is an effective way to increase the validity of findings in qualitative research and will be discussed more thoroughly later in this chapter (Gerdes and Conn, 2001). The investigator also provided her phone number to all interview subjects and encouraged them to call if at any time they felt any distress over, or wished to further discuss, issues raised in the interview.

Data Collection in the Interview Phase

Semi-structured Interviews

Data collection in this part of the study was achieved through semi-structured interviews of one to one and half-hours in duration. Semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to focus on specific themes and questions, but permit the interview process to be flexible enough to develop additional questions, or to

probe for deeper meanings from interview subjects (Handwerker, 2001). A question schedule that guided each interview was developed, but if a subject raised other experiences or issues, these were incorporated into the discussion. As each interview progressed, the question schedule was reviewed to make sure all the questions had been addressed.

All interviews took place in settings that the subject and investigator thought would mean a minimum chance of disturbance or distraction. Children were present at three of the interviews, and they provided little distraction. Three interviews were completed at the MFRC offices when there were few staff or visitors present. One occurred in a local coffee shop, well away from other patrons. Three were done in participants' homes. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. Tapes, computer files, and any hard data on study subjects were locked away. Tapes and computer files were erased once they were processed. Because qualitative research and grounded theory frequently requires the substantive use of quotes, the identity of informants was disguised as much as practical during description. Most place names, the names of military bases, and the names

of work units of husbands were not identified (Knapp, 1979).

Data Analysis in the Interview Phase

Reliability and Validity Issues

In undertaking research, data gathering and analysis should be done carefully and dependably. Some ways that data can become compromised include errors in gathering data, including transcription errors and interviewer influences on subjects, and errors in coding and interpreting data. Qualitative research is particularly vulnerable to reliability and validity errors, and steps were taken to ensure the reliability and consistency of data analysis in the second part of the study (Handwerker, 2001).

A number of factors need to be considered to ensure data is prepared, coded and analysed reliably and consistently. In interviewing, it is critical to really understand the subject's ideas. The researcher needs to use probes to establish the subject's meaning, but also needs to be careful that she is not leading or dominating the subject with her own perspectives. The researcher needs to ask for clarification, summarise, and have the subject elaborate. She must ensure that she and the

subject share the same definitions of constructs. She must avoid offensive or ambiguous questions and must stay focused on the interview and the subject at all times. Data will be less reliable if the informant is tired, rushed, lacks interest in the topic, or is discussing a very stressful issue (Handwerker, 2001).

Taped transcriptions of interviews can be unclear or misleading. This seemed possible given the research topic, when there was terminology that would be unfamiliar to a transcriber not connected with the CF ("T.D.", "Qs", "roto" for example). For this reason, the investigator decided to do the transcriptions. To establish reliability and skill at transcription, she transcribed the first interview tape and then had a professional transcriber do the same. The two transcripts were compared for discrepancies. With the exception of a few place names ("St John" for "St Jean") and some inaccuracy with military terminology, the two transcripts were consistent.

As the researcher provides an analysis of each interview she needs to ensure she is coding her data consistently. This can be better assured if she codes and then recodes her data after a period of time has passed (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). After going through

the transcript of the first interview several times, a number of meaning units began to emerge. Meaning units are words or phrases that appeared to describe a discrete experience, activity, emotion or similar phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These meaning units were labelled by colour coding and recorded in a code book. This coding was set aside for about two weeks, and then the data was recoded and checked for consistency. Overall, the labels given to the meaning units did not change from the original coding.

Another important way to maintain reliability in qualitative research is by having a second colleague check the researcher's coding to look for potential errors and biases (Boyatzis, 1998). In this case, the investigator's advisor coded the first transcript using her code book. He then examined the transcript she had coded, and determined that he had labelled the meaning units as the investigator had. This second evaluation of the data can help establish the trustworthiness of data analysis (Boyatzis, 1998).

Reflexivity can increase validity in qualitative research. This is the process of the researcher continuously checking her own biases during the research process. Validity is also more likely to occur through

the process of member checking or asking interview participants to verify the accuracy of the data gathered (Gerdes and Conn, 2001).

Both these steps were taken with this research. An extensive logbook was used to note reactions, biases and concerns that arose while conducting the research. The investigator met regularly with her advisor to discuss issues that arose out of the research. These discussions provided the opportunity to recognise and put in perspective themes and concepts that emerged from the data that had personal meaning for the investigator as a military wife and a member of a military community. This was particularly important when the investigator had had experiences, both positive and negative, in common with the subjects.

Member checking, or confirming findings with the interview subjects, occurred throughout each interview. After a question had been thoroughly discussed, or during a natural pause in the discussion, the investigator would describe her understanding of the answers provided by each subject. This provided an opportunity for each subject to clarify or expand on her views or experiences and increase the accuracy of the data collected.

Coding the Interviews

Coding data in interview-based qualitative research allows categories or themes to develop in the context of a theoretical framework. As data collection proceeds, these categories or themes become more developed. Interviewing continues until subjects provide data that begins to be repetitive. This indicates that each of the categories or themes has become saturated: that is, no new or relevant data emerge (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The process of coding began by reviewing the transcript from the first interview and breaking this data down into the smallest pieces of information that could stand alone. As discussed earlier, these meaning units are discrete data, ranging in size from a word to a paragraph that describe a single experiences or phenomenon. As these meaning units were reviewed, categories that grouped meaning units together were developed. This allowed for assignment of category codes to the meaning units. For example, the meaning units dealing with communication between husbands and wives included all references to e-mails, letters, telephone calls, the quality of discussions between spouses at different stages of deployment, and difficulties communicating with husbands while they were in the field.

Constant Comparison

Once sets of categories were established, the process of seeing how these could be grouped into larger themes began. These themes did not emerge all at once from the first transcript. This research was intended to be theory-building, which meant that this conceptual ordering gradually emerged (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

As the interviews were conducted, the investigator listened to the subjects to hear if they would discuss experiences or perceptions that clearly related to categories and themes that had emerged in earlier interviews. If a category or theme did not emerge, the subject was asked if it might be part of her experiences. Such probing had to be balanced against not leading or directing the perceptions of the subject. The investigator was direct about this process, stating "This may not apply to your situation, but other women have said they have experienced the following—". Sometimes a subject would confirm that she had similar experiences and this process would generate more descriptions and details around a theme. At other times, a subject would say that her experiences had been different, and offer some ideas as to why this might be. In either case, this

approach appeared to allow fresh knowledge and insight to emerge from each interview. It also allowed for the constant comparison of new data with data that had been already recorded. Gerdes and Conn, (2001) define constant comparison as the search for patterns, insights and themes that unfold from the research process as new data interacts with already collected information.

Sorting the Data

By the third interview an extensive amount of data was gathered. A framework for sorting and making meaning of the material began to emerge. Preliminary sorting of the data continued while keeping the methodology open to new insights or discoveries. The investigator continued the process that began with the first transcript as each of the three transcripts was reviewed. The code book was used to identify systemically which meaning units fell into which categories.

The next step was to disassemble the collected data by pulling out the meaning units in each transcript and reassembling them into the appropriate categories. This was done using Word 98 word-processing software. This software allows a computer user to move text back and forth between document files easily and accurately using

the "copy and paste" feature. Each interview transcript was in its own Word document file. A new series of Word document files labelled by each category was created. Each transcript document was opened in turn in Word, and each meaning unit was blocked on and moved into the appropriate category document file.

By changing the font type in each transcript document file, it was possible to track each meaning unit back to the transcript source. This helped maintain transparency around the research process.

The new data gathered from each of the subsequent interviews was sorted by this method. The data collection process was saturated when it was apparent that no new categories were emerging from the data.

Emerging Themes

Moving or disassembling the data from each transcript and reassembling it into separate documents made it possible to view the data more abstractly and thematically.

The investigator had been immersed in conceptual and empirical models of family typology and family characteristics during the literature review and earlier research in this study. Such immersion led her to see a

conceptual fit between the unique themes that appeared to be emerging from the categories, and the family characteristics defined in Moos's work (1994). These emerging themes were labelled as expressiveness, cohesion, organisation and independence. These conceptual themes were used as the framework for the analysis of the qualitative data. The same word-processing sorting process used to organise the meaning units into categories was used to move each of the categories into themes.

Summary of Chapter Three

The terms used in this study were defined in this chapter. This research was primarily qualitative, with quantitative instruments used to guide and inform the qualitative research. Instruments were administered and surveys conducted with subjects primarily drawn from users of military family support services. The data analysis of the quantitative instruments was done with statistical software (SPSS). The qualitative data was analysed through coding and developing categories and themes. These themes were based on the characteristics defined in Moos's work (1994). As data emerged, they were compared to data previously gathered and sorted.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter reviews the quantitative and qualitative research findings in this study. The demographic findings, and results of analyses of the quantitative data are presented. The qualitative data is presented with substantive quotations from the interview subjects. These help illustrate the impact the demands of the military environment have on the characteristics and resources have on these spouses.

Quantitative Findings

Demographic Characteristics

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample of 40 Winnipeg military spouses who completed the quantitative instruments used as part of this research. This data describes variables that seem to be significant in the military family literature (Harrison, 2002; Russo, 2002; Stoddard, 1978). No Navy spouses completed the survey. Respondents were somewhat evenly divided between Air Force and Army families (55% Air Force, 45% Army). Most (67.5%) of the spouses described their partners' absences as "revolving door". Most of the respondents were in relationships of relatively longer duration.

TABLE 1

Demographic Characteristics for Sample of 40 Military Spouses

Variable	Number of Subjects	Percentage of Sample
Partner's Element		
Air Force	22	55.0
Army	18	45.0
Deployment Type		
Longer Term	7	17.5
Revolving Door	27	67.5
Not Deployed	6	15.0
Length of Relationship		
Less than 3 Years	7	17.5
4 – 7 Years	8	20.0
8+ Years	25	62.5
Partner's Career Length		
2 – 5 Years	3	07.5
6 – 10 Years	9	22.5
11 – 20 Years	14	35.0
20+ Years	14	35.0
Number of Children		
0 Children	3	07.5
1 – 2 Children	30	75.0
3+ Children	7	17.5
Age of Oldest Child		
0 – 5 Years	19	47.5
6 – 12 Years	12	30.0
13 – 19 Years	8	20.0
20+ Years	1	2.5
Employment Status		
Employed Outside of Home	26	65.0
Not Employed Outside of Home	14	35.0
Student Status		
Full-time	3	07.5
Part-time	7	17.5
Housing		
PMQ	17	42.5
Off-Base	23	57.5

Only 17.5% had been were in relationships for less than three years. Very few (7.5%) of the respondents had partners who had CF careers of less than six years. 92.5% of these spouses had one or more children, and the children's ages ranged from infancy to young adults. 65% of these women worked outside the home, and 24% were full or part-time students. A majority (57.5%) of respondents lived in off-base housing.

FES Findings from the Sample

40 FES instruments were collected with the survey, and the results from these instruments were analysed first for internal reliability and then with the results from the demographic survey for significant findings.

Internal Reliability of the FES

Moos and Moos (1994) report internal reliability coefficients for the FES range from .61 to .78. In research done with US Navy sailors and their wives, Eastman, Archer and Ball (1990) suggest that the internal reliability coefficients derived from data in their study were typically .10 to .20 lower than those reported by Moos in his work. They report internal reliability scores from Navy wives of .70 for the cohesion scale, .71

for the conflict scale, .54 for the expressiveness scale and .52 for the control scale. Chipuer (2002) in a study of 130 non-clinical families found internal reliability in the FES that ranged from .38 for independence to .77.

Internal Reliability in this Study

During the preliminary data analysis in this part of the study, Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were calculated for each of the ten scales of the FES. The following scales as shown in Table 2 were determined to have moderate, but acceptable internal reliability for the purposes of this study as established by earlier research done on military spouses (Eastman, Archer, and Ball, 1990). Additional analyses were done on these scales.

Table 2
Comparison of FES Subscale Internal Reliability from Three Samples

FES Subscale	Winnipeg Military	Eastman, Archer & Black	Moos Normative
Cohesion	.54	.70	.78
Expressiveness	.59	.54	.69
Conflict	.63	.71	.75
Intellectual-Cultural Orientation	.76	Not Reported	.78
Active-Recreational Orientation	.59	Not Reported	.67
Moral-Religious Orientation	.55	Not Reported	.78
Control	.53	.52	.67

Comparison of FES Subscale Scores Between Normative Families And Military Spouses

Table 3 shows the FES scales scores and standard deviations as shown in the Moos (1994) sample drawn from 1570 non-distressed, normative families. The mean scores in this sample were calculated by averaging the response of husbands and wives. The subscale scores of the forty female spouses of military members who participated in this study are also shown.

Table 3

FES Subscale Means & Standard Deviation

Subscale	Winnipeg Military Spouse Sample (N = 40)		Moos Normative Sample (N= 1432)	
	M	SD	M	SD
Cohesion	7.88	1.38	6.73	1.47
Expressiveness	6.73	1.80	5.54	1.78
Conflict	2.20	1.74	3.18	1.91
ICO	6.38	2.13	5.56	1.82
ARO	5.85	1.98	5.33	1.96
MRE	4.90	1.89	4.75	2.03
Control	4.0	1.89	4.26	1.84

These data show that Winnipeg military spouses scored similarly to the normative sample on the cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, intellectual-cultural, active-recreational, moral-religious and control scales. This sample group did not appear to be distressed as measured by the FES.

Analysis of Relationships between Demographic Variables and FES Subscales

Analyses of the data included a series of t-tests to examine the effects of the following demographic variables: element, deployment type, relationship length,

CF career length, number and age of children, female partner's employment status and type of housing on the responses to the FES scales used in this study. Bernulli corrections for multiple comparisons were done on this data, and no significant differences were found at the adjusted alpha level of .006.

Qualitative Findings

Findings from the Interviews

This section of the chapter presents the findings from interviews with seven military wives. These findings are drawn from the responses women gave during the semi-structured interviews. This section first describes the demographics of these interview subjects, and then briefly reviews stressors of military life as identified by these wives. In-depth examples of these stressors and how women attempt to manage them are next presented in this section. These findings are organised around the personal traits, or family characteristics that seem to be most affected by the military environment. These characteristics are based on the typology model developed by Moos and Moos (1994). This section concludes with the perceptions the interview subjects have of the external resources-both informal and formal-they have used.

In order to help substantiate the findings, direct quotations from each of the respondents are used whenever possible. These quotations provide explicit examples of the context of these women's lives. These examples can help illustrate the stressful situations, characteristics, and resources experienced by these respondents. It is the relationship between stressors, family characteristics, and resources that have been identified in the literature as significant to a family's abilities to cope with stress (Boss, 2002, Burr and Klein, 1993, Olson and McCubbin, 1983, Walker, 1985).

Demographics

Table 4
Demographic Characteristics of Seven Military Wives

No.	Age	Relation length (years)	Element	Career Length (Years)	Housing	#Children: Age of oldest child	Work	Military Family Support
1	Mid 20's	2-5	AIR	-5	PMQS	3:4 Yrs	NO	Moderate
2	Mid 20's	2-5	ARMY	5-10	PMQS	1:7 Mos.	NO	Moderate
3	Low 30's	2-5	AIR	20+	PMQS	2:8 Yrs	NO	Moderate
4	Late 30's	20+	ARMY	20+	OFF BASE	2:8 Yrs	YES	High
5	Late 30's	10+	AIR	15+	PMQS	2:6 Yrs	YES	High
6	Mid 40's	20+	ARMY	25+	OFF BASE	1:Adult	YES	High
7	Mid 40's	20+	AIR	25+	OFF BASE	2:Adult	YES	Moderate

Seven women were interviewed for this research. They were asked to describe their family composition, length of time they had been married, how long their husbands had been in the CF, and how closely they felt they were engaged with military family supports, including the Military Family Resource Centres.

Table 4 describes demographic attributes of these informants. Each woman was legally married to a member of the Canadian Forces. Four women were married to Air Force members, three to Army members. All the women interviewed had children currently living with them. When asked about their familiarity with military family support services, three of the women said they were very involved with the MFRC (as Board or staff members), while the remaining four said they were involved at a moderate level. They were occasional users of MFRC activities and resources, but stated they were not particularly familiar with the structure, policies or history of the MFRC. Only two of the seven women had come from military families; the rest were generally quite unfamiliar with the Canadian Forces and did not know what to anticipate when they married a CF member.

Four of the women were in their late 30s to mid-40s. These women stated they felt quite experienced now with

the CF, as they had all been married to their husbands from ten to over 20 years, and their husbands' careers were between 15 to over 20 years long. These women all worked or studied outside the home. Only one of the four women lived in military housing (Private Married Quarters, or PMQs), and only one had been in Winnipeg less than two years. The others had been in this city for five years, ten years and 13 years.

By contrast, the other three women interviewed lived in PMQs. They had been in Winnipeg less than two years. These women were comparatively younger, and in shorter-term relationships. Two of these women's husbands had been in the CF for less than five years. These women did not currently work outside the home.

All the women interviewed had experienced a mixture of deployment types, from the "revolving door" or frequent, shorter absences, to longer-term (over a period of months) absences.

Stressors from the Military Environment

The women in this study were asked what, if anything, they found stressful about having a husband who was a member of the Canadian Forces. They were asked what stressor seemed hardest for them to manage and how these stressors had changed as their families had grown.

Each of the women interviewed identified two types of experiences that made significant demands on them and their families. These stressors were deployment and posting. The ways these women were changed by and adapted to these stressors varied considerably. As one woman said, "the stressors change. I don't think they every absolutely go away, but they are just different every time". Another woman described how the military environment had made a variety of demands upon her over the years, but how she also thought that she had benefited from many of the experiences she had had with the CF.

> **With this life, you need to give up parts of your own life, it involves sacrifice, but you get back in return. When I was young, I felt some resentment, I made comments…this career could be a drag, kept me from my family, from my mother, I was very young when I married. So I made sacrifices…I came from military, so it was a bit easier…**

One woman explained that "The only people who can put up with the military are really adaptable, you have to adjust, but the onus is on the wife to do so".

Deployment

All these women had experienced both short term and longer-term types of husband absences, and all agreed a partner's absence could be a stressor for the family.

However, there was no real agreement amongst these women about which type of absence was more challenging.

One woman had been married for well over 20 years, with her husband in the Army, and deployed for longer duration, for most of that time. Recently he had taken on new duties and was now gone for only a week or so at a time. She stated this was a vast improvement on her earlier experiences. She found this type of absence much less disruptive to family routine and found communication with her husband much easier when he was gone for shorter periods.

Another woman who had experienced ten years of longer deployments, and whose husband was now in a "revolving door" pattern had a different perspective. She stated she certainly missed her husband when he used to be gone for long periods, but found it much easier to maintain a routine and organise her household with such a schedule.

Overall, deployment affected a number of family characteristics, including communication style, organisation and control, and family cohesion. These women found themselves making significant efforts to

adapt their family functioning to the demands of deployment.

Although wives saw deployment as a demand that required them and their families to adapt, it was not always viewed negatively by these respondents. Several women commented that in some ways, absences strengthened a marriage. One woman stated with a mixture of humour and seriousness that her husband's travel gave the couple a break from quarrelling. Another woman said she liked to joke that her 20-year marriage had lasted because of her husband's absences, as they had had so little time together it seemed they were still on a honeymoon.

One woman commented that a husband's absences were a time to find herself by recognising her strengths and independence.

> I don't wait about for him. If I go out, I go out, I know he can manage. This really frees you up…so many husbands and wives are less independent.

Another woman found her husband's absences gave her a chance to make meaningful connections with other women.

> When your husband is gone it is a chance to be with the community. If he wasn't gone I would have missed out on being in the community.

Posting

Another significant demand these women said was placed upon military families was posting, or the need to move to different communities depending on military requirements for their husbands. Three of the women interviewed had been in Winnipeg for a relatively long time. One was due to be posted this summer, and was not unhappy with this as it meant she would be moving closer to extended family. She also thought her children were young enough to make new friends upon moving. Another woman, who was not sure if she might move this summer, stated she had really enjoyed the last decade in Winnipeg, and was somewhat concerned that if her family moved it might not be a positive experience for her children, particularly around education. Another woman's husband had joined the Reserves after a long military career, and posting was no longer an issue for her.

The four women who were newer to Winnipeg had all posted recently, and viewed posting as a stressor that demanded considerable accommodation on the part of families. Women spoke about how the disruption from posting affected their children's education and social experiences. Moving between communities appeared to make it harder for these wives' to meet their own educational

and career goals. Like deployment, posting called upon these wives to accommodate their families' needs to military demands.

Overall, women described posting as a potential stressor that seemed to be more disruptive than deployment. This was true even for the three women who had not moved very often in the last few years when they looked retrospectively at how posting had affected their families in the past. It may be that these women found it harder to use external resources to cope with the demands of posting when posting by its nature removes women from their support networks.

Posting also appears to make it much harder for women to maintain organisation in the family system. The woman who was looking forward to moving this summer recalled a time earlier in her marriage when the demands of the military environment were very unsettling.

> So we sold our furniture and everything, and then they said, oh you aren't going to (Europe) right now, you have to go to (Other Base) for a year of training. And I go but I just sold all our furniture, you told us to do so. So we are living out of boxes. So that was a very hectic…between those postings. It was very stressful.

One woman with considerable experience with posting had moved with her family every three years. She spoke

about the difficulties posting presented for her children.

> My daughter stayed behind this last move, and that was mainly due to her not wanting to leave her friends. She had formed some really good relationships, and I think she saw, when we moved to our last posting, that it was really difficult to start again for her. She is not extremely shy, but I think she is shy at starting relationships, but when she builds them, she sticks with them. And that was one of the main reasons that she stayed behind. It has been hard on our son, too. He is a very quiet person…I know that the both of them didn't want to do this last move. Both of them are in their teens, and weren't really willing to move anywhere that we said…once they become teenagers, they don't really want to move, they want to stick with their friends, ant they want to be in an area that is familiar to them.

A few of the women saw a positive side to posting. One wife thought posting gave her a unique opportunity to meet people across Canada and overseas.

> I felt the world was my community…I kept in contact with many people across the country, we have a unique bond, these are casual friendships, but everywhere I go I see someone I know.

Another woman thought that posting had given her immediate family an opportunity to be closer than might have happened had they stayed in the small town from where she and her husband had met.

> Being away from the small town, being away from extended family makes us closer. If my extended family had been with us we wouldn't have been as independent and focused. Focused on us as a family.

Internal Resources: Family Characteristics

Moos and Moos (1994) developed a model (The Family Environment Scale) of family typologies that measures the social environment of families. This model was based on characteristics of families that gave them their "personality". Some families are more outgoing and friendly; some families spend significant energy on being competitive or highly organised.

These characteristics can affect how a family is changed by and adapts to the demands the military environment makes upon family members. In turn, the demands of the military environment can affect the characteristics of families. Family characteristics can act as internal resources to individuals as they cope with the stressors they find in their environment.

The Family Environment model provides a framework that allows researchers to examine the mutually influences the external context of the military environment and a family's characteristics have on one another.

During the coding of this data, certain characteristics from the FES arose repeatedly. These characteristics became the framework that guided the grouping of the respondents' descriptions of their

experiences by themes. The most significant themes that emerged were family cohesion, expressiveness, independence and system maintenance.

Expressiveness

One characteristic that emerged as important in affecting how these women coped with the demands of the military environment was expressiveness. It was particularly important in how these women communicated with their husbands. In the FES model, expressiveness examines the extent of how openly family members speak to one another, how freely they discuss their personal problems, and how much they are able to act spontaneously. Expressiveness can be a supportive factor in easing the stress of military demands, but having to limit expressiveness to suit the needs of the CF was seen as a source of stress.

All the women interviewed described deliberately making changes to the ways they communicated with their husbands in response to military demands. This theme was apparent on many levels. All the women noted that deployment in particular led to them altering the quality of expressiveness in their relationships.

Expressiveness When An Absence Is Anticipated

All the women identified making changes to expressiveness before an anticipated deployment, whether this meant their husbands were away for a short period or for a long time.

Some women made a notable effort to hold back on discussing things too openly with their partners. These women pointed to a need not to disrupt their husbands' abilities to perform their CF duties. For one woman, it was an issue of safety for both her husband and the people who depend on him.

> **You don't want to be sending your husband out to fly if you have had a huge fight in the morning, the toast is burnt, the kids are screaming, and he's going to have to fly with all that stress and people in the aircraft.**

One newly-wed woman spoke about how torn she felt before her husband left for a difficult overseas mission. When a social worker asked her if she wanted her husband to go, she struggled with ambivalent feelings. She said felt that by expressing her feelings too openly, she risked holding her husband back from doing the job that meant so much to him.

> **Telling him he can't go, he's part of the military, and telling him to stay home and be miserable? It's who he is…of course, I don't want him to go, but I can't say that.**

For another woman who had experienced many long-term deployments, there was relative lack of spontaneity in verbal exchanges with her husband before each departure.

> **I had to be selective in my words and actions. There is a kind of angst before departure; you need to be more conscious of what kind of words you use.**

Other women observed that they deliberately increased the amount of communication between themselves and their husbands before an absence. They described a sense of urgency to share as much as possible before separation. One woman explained, "it is more intense…you have to say everything you need to say before he leaves". One family used the period before departure as a time to be openly expressive.

> **We talk as a family before my husband goes away. I think the communication really helps. Being open about what is going to happen. It kind of prepares you for the eventual deployment.**

Expressiveness During Absence

A husband's absence during deployment makes great demands on the quality of expressiveness in CF marriages. Every woman interviewed commented on the ways being apart affected this fundamental aspect of her relationship with her husband.

These women said that they had to put a great deal of thought and energy in modifying how expressive they could be with their husbands during deployment. Some women found it important to minimise the amount of information they shared with their husbands when they were in the field. As one woman said:

> You have to postpone it (a discussion) sometimes. Sometimes I think you want to hold back information. If things aren't really going well on the home front, and you know he is in a tricky situation while he is away, you don't want to be putting more stress on him.

Another thought it best to:

> Wait until there is a better time to discuss things more rationally...it doesn't always seem like such a big problem as it did in the beginning, or you can talk about it a little more clearly.

Experience helped this same woman know when to be more open in her expressiveness with her husband, and when to restrain herself.

> You learn to serve them information gradually, and kind of get them up to speed with what has been happening and then, hopefully, things will run a little bit smoother.

One woman found herself making a great effort when speaking on the telephone to her husband overseas to hide any distress she felt about missing him. She did not want her husband to be burden with her sadness while he was on a difficult mission. She described the experience

of suppressing her feelings: "keep a smile on your face. Don't cry. Don't talk about the bad. Tell him you love him".

Other women took a different approach. They too were deliberate and self-aware in their verbal interactions with their husbands, but this deliberateness took the form of being open with their husbands about issues that arose.

One young wife said it was important to her own emotional well-being to speak openly with her husband.

> I find there is not a lot I hold back from him, because I find if I don't (communicate) I end up brooding.

For another woman who had been through many deployments, it was important to share news about how the family was progressing. When she had not been able to do this, she felt her husband had missed important milestones.

> What I learnt from the first tour, when my husband came back, he knew nothing about my routine. He knew nothing about my daughter. He didn't know she was already walking, because I couldn't tell him that on the phone, we didn't have that ability to communicate.

The same woman thought regular communication during deployment strengthened her marriage.

> So communication is the key. Even little things.
> Even big, big, things. We are married, this is 50-
> 50, if I just wrecked the car, I want him to know
> about it. I don't want to deal with this when he
> comes back and says, why didn't I know about it…I
> learned a lot from the first tour. Because I didn't
> tell my husband what was going on. I kept it all
> in.

Several women spoke about how they arranged speaking to their husband in the field. Having a plan for regular communication appeared to be a source of comfort. One woman explained:

> I got a phone call every week. I know for a fact
> there was other wives who got a call more often.
> But we had set up prior that we would call, we would
> talk, every Sunday.

Another commented that she could depend on her husband to call, although the nature of his work might affect when that would be.

> He usually reassures us that he will be in contact.
> When he arrives, and then once or twice a week
> calling us depending on where he is, and if he can
> get to a phone.

Sometimes it appeared that trying to maintain communication with a partner in the field, particularly when deployment conditions were difficult, became a stressor itself.

One woman had been injured in a road accident. The military authorities had told her that her deployed

husband would be informed but this had not happened. He

was understandably shocked when she wrote to him.

> They did not tell him. As much as they told me they
> were going to tell him… He goes to the nearest
> phone, puts in over a $100 because he doesn't know
> what the cost is over there, and says what in the
> world is going on? I get this letter, and it says,
> the first two lines say, by now you know, I was in a
> car accident, the car was written off, and I have
> somebody living with me, because I was in a
> concussion…so the fact that he did not know caused
> him more stress than if he had been told at the
> beginning. My letter did not bring it out in a
> roundabout kind of way, it was right straight out…it
> was right in his face.

Another woman experiencing her first deployment

found it stressful to wait all week for a highly

anticipated telephone call with her husband. She

described this intense and emotional experience.

> *It* was hard, because all day long, I'd get up early,
> set my alarm for 7 o'clock in the morning, on
> Sundays, which of course is the day everybody wants
> to sleep in, and I would sit there. And I wouldn't
> want to go to the bathroom, I wouldn't want to go do
> laundry, and I wouldn't want to get myself in a
> position where I couldn't be right there. And when
> the phone would ring, my heart would leap. And
> talking to him, I have 10 minutes. He's hard to
> hear, because of course it is a satellite phone,
> there is a time delay. It's not in the best of
> situation, you can hear the wind, you can hear
> what's happening behind him…and you just want to
> hear him talk, and he just wants to hear you talk.
> And you go, tell me, tell me something GOOD that's
> happening. What are you doing, what are the other
> guys doing today? And if they are in camp, it is
> kind of boring. They are playing cards, They are in
> the trench, smoking, waiting for the heat to go
> down. It's boring, and they want to hear what's
> happening to you. So you just get to the point

where you start to get that connection back, and
then it is, well, the other guys are standing
behind, they want to use the phone, and you go NO NO
NO NO! And then you got to wait. You got to wait a
whole week. And you spend the rest of the Sunday
trying to…get yourself back to a place where you can
go to work the next day.

Operational Demands and Technological Problems Affect
Communication

These wives chose how they expressed themselves with

their husbands. However, they did not always have control

over the quality of these communications. Operational

demands and communications technology affected

expressiveness.

You don't have the communication.

The first time, we had no way of communicating.
There was no phone or nothing.

They were the first ones going into Bosnia. It
wasn't cleaned out. There were no communications
set up. So it was two months before he could talk
to anybody.

There would be a blackout, if there was something
happening, if they were on a mission, if they were
digging up bodies and didn't want the media to find
out, there would be a communication blackout. And
that way none of the husbands could say this is what
we are going to be doing, and the media couldn't get
hold of it.

These wives seemed to find it quite hard when their

expectations that communication would occur were not

fulfilled. One woman felt she had not had the possibilities of communication difficulties sufficiently explained to her.

> I got a phonecall…he left on a Thursday, and it was Sunday and I got a call from rear party, saying they had got there, they had landed, and there was a communication blackout, and I wouldn't be hearing from him. That kind of freaked me out, this was the first phone call, but it was from official sources…and that…that…I lost it. That wasn't what I was expecting right off the bat.

She went on to say:

> There was some communication blackouts that I didn't know about until afterwards…I would get no call, and I would get worried. I could go for two, three weeks, and then I would get a call and he'd say there was a communication blackout. Nobody had told me there was a communication blackout, so I didn't know what was going on.

Another woman commented that she found that technology was not the answer to more effective communication that she had thought it might be.

> They didn't get email set up for a long time, and when they did get email set up, there weren't enough computers, and everybody wanted to be on them at the same time. So it was hard.

Still another woman said that she found speaking to her husband on the phone while he is gone is not as satisfactory an experience as talking to him directly, as she misses out on the unspoken ways he communicates with her.

> Communication is very important in a relationship, the thing we have had to work on. On the phone you know he isn't always telling all he feels, but face to face you can get at things.

Another woman who had experienced the changes in communication technology over the years thought technology had made it much easier to communicate with husbands.

> The phones, just being able to use the phones. When we went back to Bosnia, it was full system set up there, phones set up, email set up, so we could communicate there.

One couple were able to communicate about the husband's safety following a serious incident using an informal, but effective, network of family and friends overseas and in Canada. Her husband's colleague had been able to contact a family friend in her hometown after the serious incident; this friend then passed information to the wife's mother.

> My mum called me, and said he was okay, and this was before I even got a call saying my husband was fine…You don't really get a call from anyone unless there is a problem, so (usually) you sit by the phone dreading, and worrying…it was at least six hours before I heard from him. But I had already heard from my mum. So I could go to work, knowing he was okay.

Expressiveness Upon Returning

Several women described holding back on expressiveness in order to gradually ease their husbands back into family life. One woman found it hard to be this patient.

> When your husband comes home and you want to fill him in on all of the information that has gone on with your kids, and he is kind of standing back going, "Don't bother me with all of this information; just kind of give me a day or so to put my feet up", and you're kind of excited to tell him what has been happening with the kids and your life. So, that's kind of hard to juggle that, too.

Another found it easier to hold back her expressiveness, as she became a more experienced wife.

> As you go on in your relationship, you begin to realise what's happening there, and, you know there's got to be a little bit of down time and then you can kind of start giving out information that's important.

One found it fell to her as a wife and mother to help her children and husband resume communications.

> Just giving them time with the kids, you know, kind of quiet time so they can kind of catch up on their news too, so that not everybody is kind of jumping on their lap and telling them what has happened in the last while is a better way to do it then all at once.

Another woman said friends and military authorities had advised her to gradually integrate her husband back into family life, but could not manage this, and found

herself sharing her feelings directly with him upon return had advised her.

> No, I don't hold back. When I was a younger mother, it was-the door opens and BLAUWWW and everything is right there, I couldn't wait. Now I think that might have overwhelmed him but I didn't care. I just needed someone else with my son. I needed the support.

These wives commonly held the view that the CF maintained operational effectiveness by encouraging the suppression of expressiveness between husband and wife during the various phases of deployment.

> We were told, don't tell the guys. Don't make them stressed.

> One of the COs came out and said, Listen, what happens in the field stays in the field…even the married guys…don't bring it home with you. That's what he said, what happens in the field, stays in the field.

In the case of women whose husbands were preparing for longer-term deployments these messages came during the pre-screening (DAG) meetings and briefings offered by the CF to wives. One woman thought this screening only took into account the potential that a deployment would lead to marital breakdown, not that a wife required support.

> When we went to the screening (for Afghanistan) I had just had (an operation) and was totally unable to care for myself, but I had to answer the (social worker's) questions, yes or no. And because I could

not say no to any of them, he was DAGed green and ready to go…it was the way they worded the questions, it was not a problem with you (that would prevent deployment) but your marriage, that if it wouldn't fall completely apart he could go.

Another young wife felt the pre-screening process could lead to marital conflict.

And one question I remember…it was a bad scene. I was in tears. And one question she asked was, do you want him to go? And I thought it was kind of a loaded question, because of course I don't want him to go. Why ask me that, because you know the answer. And if I say I want him to go, well, it'd be that she didn't want him to go. I felt it would be put between (partner) and I, like we had a disagreement. You know, he wants to go, I don't want him to go. We have, um, this disagreement sitting between us. And I know my husband well enough to say, he's a soldier. It is what he is, it is what he's trained to do, he loves his job. He's very patriotic. And for me to sit down and tell him I don't want him to go, I mean, what am I going to do? Tell him to stay home? Tell him he can't go? That was the one question I really remember. Hard question. And I thought, why are you even bothering.

One woman stated she had heard military authorities advising wives to do their best not to disturb husbands in the field, but felt confident that if she needed her husband he would be there for her.

Every time we have the briefings, the COs have emphasised what supports are here, MFRC, rear party, so that the guys can stay in the field…I never had something happen where I felt I needed him, but I know I would not have hesitated…he would not put his job in the field before his family, he would have come back.

In contrast, another woman saw the CF as being helpful in making arrangements so she could share the birth of her first child with her husband overseas on a mission.

> Rear party, they would let him-he could call. My dad got in touch with rear party, they called him. So he was calling the hospital once an hour, every two hours…he was concerned.

Several women commented that they hid their feelings in conversations with people close to them as well as with their husbands, so that these people would not be worried, or overwhelm the wives with their concern.

> Phone bills were astronomical. You couldn't call mum and say how do I do this, because you didn't have the time. You were calling home to say, everything is great, and you were lying on the phone. You didn't want them worrying…

> Everyone at work knows the situation. And you can say to them, no, he's good. Everything's fine. It's going well. And once again, you're lying through your teeth. Because you're not feeling it's going good, it's not fine.

In contrast to the practice of suppressing expressiveness with family and acquaintances, all the wives remarked that they cherished their ability to speak openly with other military wives who would understand their experiences. Simple recreational outings became an opportunity to share stories with other military wives.

As one woman said, "I got to talk to a lot of the mums when we went to swimming in the morning". Other women concurred.

> You could relate with each other and kind of vent a little bit, because they knew what you were going through.

> Coffee mornings for the mums, or whatever, so you could get together and talk and, you know, grump again about how you're feeling, or if the kids needed to access some recreational facility they could give you the information.

> There were people there, there was the computers, there was the postal service, and there are people there to play hostess. And that is what I tended to do…I would talk to some of the other wives.

> Sometimes I refrain (from talking about things that might upset him when he goes to work), but now I have my own network around here, I am developing that…if I need to vent, there's my friends.

Language

Although most of this discussion on expressiveness has focused on how this characteristic is moderated during deployment, other demands and stressors in the military environment also affect family characteristics. Posting or moving between communities can affect expressiveness. Being able to talk to other spouses going through similar experiences in coping with CF demands was found to be helpful by these wives. When

women moved to communities where most of the other wives do not speak their language, it can be hard to make these connections and certainly affects expressiveness. The bilingual nature of Canada and its Forces make the potential for isolation by language a demand unique to Canadian military families. Several women described this.

> The first four months, we moved to (Base), my husband had to go on a French course. That was fairly difficult, moving from (Community) to (Base), and I wasn't fluent in French, so that made it difficult. Somehow we got through that.

> Getting into Germany, not knowing the language, we were not prepared to go over there.

> Not knowing the language, that was a big stress in itself.

> It was a struggle not knowing English very well at first but it is a real joy now to be bilingual.

Family cohesion

The wives in this study also spoke about how family cohesion was affected by the demands of the military environment. In the Family Environment model, family cohesion refers to the amount of commitment, support and help family members get from one another. It assesses how much energy or intensity is put into relationships and how much closeness there is in the family.

Each of the wives interviewed for this study discussed how they had to continuously appraise and adjust the amount of emotional closeness they had with their husbands. They felt they had to balance their own and their children's' needs for intimacy with their husbands against the competing demands placed on these men by the CF. This meant at times wives had to hold back on family cohesion to ease the strain on their husbands. Marriage partners had to renegotiate intimacy when husbands returned home. How much of a stressor this process was for these women that seemed to depend on the type of demands made by the military and family environment.

Cohesion When An Absence Is Anticipated

The women in this part of the study reported that they particularly noticed making changes in family cohesion during the various phases of deployment. Some of these changes occurred during the pre-deployment phase. One woman said she and her husband and child took time to do family-focused activities before a longer deployment. This helped define them as a family, and was a process that she felt helped during the ensuing separation.

It didn't have to be something big, something as simple as a trip to Fort Whyte, or watching old movies together does it.

Another woman and her partner also had to decided how they defined themselves as a family, in part because they had to register their relationship in the eyes of the military authorities so she could have the rights of a marital partner during deployment. This meant she and her partner formally declared themselves as a common-law couple to military authorities, allowing her to receive information and resources from the C.F.

> **When he went to (mission) we decided that just so I could have the rights of a wife, we could keep in touch, we went in and declared common-law, and I had all the papers signed, so that I could have the power of attorney, and have all the rights, and get all the information.**

Some women found that by taking steps to reduce the feelings of intensity around their husbands' absences, the feelings of stress around deployment were also reduced.

> **I'd get crabby before he went away-not really fights, but I'd get down…so we learned not to make it such a big deal. Now…it is just a day at the office. We don't make as much of a fuss…for example, instead of driving him to the airport, he takes a taxi.**

Cohesion During Absences

One woman, who had been pregnant with her first child during her husband's deployment, found comfort in preparing letters and packages for him.

> It was really therapeutic for me. I thought about what he needed, who he was, what would touch him. What can I send that is probably disposable, cause he can't pack it around with him, what he can stick in his pocket? Lot of beef jerky…But it was good, I could spend one Friday, Saturday getting the stuff, one Friday, Saturday, getting it packed, then off on Sunday.

Other women found deployment a time where they became more self-sufficient and learned to evaluate how much they needed to share their problems with their husbands.

> You start taking longer walks, or going to the gym more or doing something like that, or finding friends you can talk to a bit. And then, by the time you get around to it, it doesn't always seem like such a big problem as it did in the beginning.

Women expressed concerns about how their children dealt with their fathers' absences. One woman noticed her son struggling with his father's upcoming deployment. She felt her son had become much attached to his father, as her husband had not been absent for quite some time.

> My son is getting to the age where he loves his father. He has been home two years now. They are so close. For his dad to go, we have big time separation issues. For his dad to go for six months now, we are anticipating behaviour problems…he is scared of his father going, he is trying to make up

for that by being the class clown. When his father goes away, if these problems worsen, I don't know what I'd do.

This same woman reflected how her children had been confused by their father's absences when they were smaller.

> And it would get to a point where you would hear the kids, and they would see anybody in green, and go "Is that daddy, is that daddy". They didn't know them well enough.

Cohesion Upon Returning

Women also were concerned that their husbands had missed important milestones in their children's development and this made a father's ability to reintegrate into the family harder.

> At times I think he's kind of felt left out; I think especially when the kids were growing, and when he went away maybe they were in diapers and when he came home they weren't in diapers. And, he's still thinking in the past, and you're on to the future – there's that lag in there and it's hard for them to catch up and realise that the family has changed while they have been away, because they tend to think that it will stay in the same little time-frame as when they left. So, yeah, that is really difficult for them.

A new wife talked about how she and her child had to become reacquainted with her husband.

> He came in our house as a stranger. It was just like dating all over again. Introducing him to a child he didn't know. So that was very tough.

As with expressiveness, most of the wives said that pamphlets and lectures given by military authorities had suggested how they should relate to their husbands before, during and after deployment. The wives felt they had been advised to slowly ease these men back into family life.

> Everything was baby steps. Everything was careful. I felt I had to be really careful. I felt I didn't know what he was, what he had been through, what he wanted to see. At the same time, when he, when they were going through their whole reintegration process, they were told just agree with everything. Just you know, say yes, go along with it, agree with it. Do what you need to do to keep the peace.

One woman found this advice was not in accord with the way she and husband really related to one another.

> And we both found, you know, because that is what the wives had been told, that these guys had been through this situation. Keep calm, keep things going. And we were just kind of passing, saying what do you want to do? Oh, whatever you want to do. Well, why don't we do this? Okay, that's fine. And it got to the point where I just wanted to go stop it!

This woman was aware that such behaviour placed artificial constraints upon her relationship, and she and her husband soon reverted to a type of intimacy that felt more natural and comfortable to them.

> We are much more vibrant! We can both kind of build up on each other, and build up, and build up, and

build up. And this was a kind of pressure, there.
Trying to be nice. Trying to PLAY nice. And of
course, we've got the new baby. And we were trying
to play nice, and we were trying to figure
everything out. But that didn't last long with us.
That was a couple of weeks.

It appeared these wives were very aware of what type
of intimacy worked best for their marriages. They were
prepared to dismiss advice from military authorities that
did not fit with the needs of their marriages. It would
seem that these wives had the ability to reduce or
increase the amount of closeness and cohesion within
their marriages in ways that reflected their
circumstances and that made sense for them and their
families.

> When we were first married, he would return from a
> trip and want to take a breather…would disappear to
> take a break for a while. That was fine, but when
> he did that over a weekend, I put my foot down. So
> we negotiated that he could take Saturday for an
> alone day for himself, but I drew a line around
> Sunday. That was a family day, we go shopping, for
> walks, to the zoo. It's his turn to do stuff around
> the house, like snow shovelling. I hand the
> children over to him, it's my turn to go out and do
> things I couldn't while he was away.

As time went on, these women seemed to see
themselves as developing expertise in negotiating
intimacy in their marriages. A wife with over twenty
year's experience in the military environment explained
how she had learned to judge how much cohesion she and

her husband needed. "You can see patterns and you kind of know when to back away or when to kind of jump into the situation." She added:

> You go on in your relationship, you begin to realise what's happening there, and, you know there's got to be a little bit of down time. I guess you get to know your partner over time and what their stress levels are, or what provokes them. So, you learn to back away at certain times.

Demands of the Military Environment Can Increase Cohesion

Two stories told by women in this study particularly illustrate how accommodating to the demands of the military environment can make significant changes in family characteristics. In these cases, the stressors of deployment apparently resulted in greater family cohesion than might have otherwise occurred.

For one couple, a life-threatening accident acted as a catalyst for the couple to make a deeper commitment to one another.

> There was (a serious incident) and it was an eye-opener for me. I realised we had just been going along…I had to make concessions. It changed my perspective, I realised how much he meant to me. It was me who was there with him, he had asked for me, and I realised how close we could be. He asked me to help, and it made us stronger as a couple. You know, stress is not always a bad thing, I think it gives you a chance to know what is important, to grow. My sister bugs me (about being an optimist),

> but when things are really low, they have to get
> better. Things turn up...I am an optimist at heart.

For another young couple, the demands of an overseas

deployment during a difficult military mission led them

to first live together, then later to formally marry, as

they felt their experiences with deployment had greatly

strengthened their relationship.

> We didn't know what our future held at that time,
> but we moved out here together, so we knew there was
> something serious. Otherwise I probably wouldn't
> have come with him...So we knew it was something
> serious, it was a big enough deal to declare common-
> law. We would have gotten there anyway, I don't
> know if it would have been this fast...A lot of that
> was because of what we had been through. We decided
> if we could get through that, it was kind of the
> worst of the worst, of what we had to face...It was
> something we did for us.

Confidence in Husbands Increases Cohesion

A sense of confidence and commitment in the strength

of the bond between husband and wife seems to lead to

greater family cohesion. When women were asked what they

saw as helpful to them in managing the stressors of

military life, several women spoke about the pride and

confidence they had in their husbands.

Women spoke about how they trusted their husbands

and how this trust made them surer of their husbands'

safety when they were in situations of possible risk that

can accompany CF operations. One said:

> Knowing him, he is not irresponsible, doesn't do
> silly things. He is cautious. I trust that he will
> not get into a troublesome or dangerous situation.

Another woman credited his military training for

increasing her confidence in her husband.

> In the Army, he is self-contained, independent, he
> is prepared and organised. His military training has
> given him the skills to be independent.

Such trust extended into feeling secure about the

commitment between married partners during frequent or

long absences.

> (I have a)...strong sense of trust. Must have this if
> he is gone all the time, know he won't cheat. He
> doesn't think about it, I don't think about it.

Being Apart from Extended Family Affects Cohesion

Posting around the country usually meant these

military couples raised their children away from extended

family. Rather than presenting a difficulty for these

women, several subjects described being apart from

extended family as a positive experience. This was in

spite of the concerns about posting made by extended

families that worried about the choices these wives made

in marrying someone in the CF. One woman said:

> Mum didn't want me going over there in the first
> place...to her going to Germany meant war, she still

remembered the war… In a letter home I said I went to a concentration camp today, thinking of it as a tourist thing, she's not thinking of it that way.

Most of the women interviewed seemed to value being apart from extended families as they saw this as leading to an increase in cohesion between married partners and their children. One woman, whose father had been in the CF, spoke about how close she still is to her siblings, something she attributed to the amount of moving they had done while growing up. One woman explained that when she had married, she had left a very small community where most of her extended family had lived for generations.

My family didn't know anything about the CF, it was hard to leave them, they were so upset. Not about him, but about his job. They worried about what he did…if I was still there with my family I would have to do everything with them; it would be hard to set limits. This way we are closer as a family.

Two other women who agreed that being away from extended family seemed to increase how close they felt to their husband and children shared these sentiments. Said one:

My parents worry because I am not in Quebec and they worry about me having to speak English…but I think our family now is myself and my husband and the children. They want us to come visit every summer and that is hard, we want to travel West sometimes…

While the other added:

> Being away from the small town, being away from extended family makes us closer. If my family had been with us we wouldn't have been as independent and focused. Focused on us as a family.

Family Organisation

How well military families can organise and maintain their household and family systems is affected by the demands of the military environment, in particular, by posting and deployment. In turn, a family's ability to be organised can make it easier to cope with these stressors of military life. When husbands are frequently absent, the responsibility of maintaining household organisation almost always falls to wives, and this can be stressful.

Family Organisation When An Absence Is Anticipated

The ability of the spouse and her partner to deal effectively with organisational issues played a role in mitigating any stress the women might experience before deployment. This was apparent whether the deployment was revolving door or longer-term.

One wife described the efforts made to organise the household before her husband left.

> I guess just preparing ourselves before he goes away helps a lot with the stress, and if there is any major stuff to be done around the house, like if the

washing machine is broken down, or what ever it is, repair that before he is gone. That certainly helps with how things progress when he is away…I think being organised actually helps. It just makes things flow a lot smoother. You have a plan in mind, where to find something, or who to contact if your husband, if you need to get hold of him right away, like he'll leave the contacts on the base for me or friends to call if I really need something. I think in that way it gives you a little more security, feeling there is some supports there, organised in that respect.

Another woman commented:

I'd say there was anticipation, work and preparation, that there was a real sense of counting down, sometimes for months, prior to him going, making sure that the household was running smoothly before he left, making sure repairs to home and car were in place, that the legal stuff and paperwork was in place. Power of attorney, taxes, that kind of stuff.

Family Organisation During Absences

The women spoke about how it could be difficult to manage household organisation and maintenance during husbands' absences. One woman compared the differences she had noticed between revolving door absences and longer-term absences.

With the revolving door, you don't have enough time. It's no good to get yourself in a workout mode, you can't do it, he's not gone long enough. When he comes back he expects the routine of supper on the table at 4.30 or whatnot and you say I just started this schedule, it might not work into his schedule. So you have other things. You say, I may be able to plan this meeting on a Tuesday night because he might be home to drive the kids but you never know

when they're going to get the snowball to go on exercise, or what's going to happen.

With husbands gone so much of the time, these women found themselves the marital partner who took on the most responsibility for household control and organisation. Several women commented on this as being a burden at times.

> It's expected of you to have more control with the kids, because you are the structure, you are the stable part of the family.

> It's all on my shoulders, he's doing all this stuff, he didn't have a lot of time for us-all the responsibility is mine, whether he's gone or here, it is all mine.

> Sometimes, I felt stuck with all the problems, and he is in a hotel, he has it easy.

> I felt he dumped it all on me when he left, it's me that has to deal with everything...

Family Organisation Upon Return

There is a need to reorganise household management and control when the husband returns. One woman acknowledged the strain this put on her marriage.

> There is always that adjustment period, because you've been the one with, how should I say, the household power. When they are gone away, you get to decide everything, so when they come home there is that struggle-I don't know it could last a couple of days or it could last a week-about whose kind of controlling the household.

Another woman said she took responsibility to carefully control the tempo of reintegration.

> When he comes back he slips back into our routine, he makes the adjustment to the household...he enters the routine we have. We don't make a fuss. He talks to the children about where he was and keeps it low key. I am strict on routine: meals together, bedtime, and he enters the routine, the children are fine with that.

Family Organisation and Posting

Deployment was not the only military demand that affected family organisation. A family move to different parts of Canada, or even overseas, was cited by all the women as having a disruptive impact on their abilities to organise and maintain the family system. One woman said posting was by far the most significant stressor she had experienced as a military wife because of its impact on family organisation. When asked what was the most stressful aspect of being a military family, one woman responded:

> The worst stress has come from moving from one province to another, and we have moved right across Canada...it means your life is going to be upheaval, every couple of years, and you are pulled across the country, and away from family and friends.

Another woman talked about having to move several times in a short period. This was even more challenging as she and her husband were newly in a relationship.

> We were married 10 days, then we were separated for
> three months, he went to (North) and then came back
> for a weekend, and it took us six months before we
> could get a PMQ. It was fully a year almost after
> we were married before we could be settled, and that
> was no fun. He had to go to (Base) to get ready to
> go to Germany. So it was one, one, one, right after
> everything.

Posting at the end of a military career can also be

unsettling.

> We are only posted here for three years, so, you
> know, maybe another year and one-half we will be up
> for another leave, and then what do we do, because
> my husband can retire at any time.

Posting to a part of the country where a family was

separated from ill or ageing relatives was cited by one

woman as challenging to family organisation.

> You can't get to them. You have to take time off
> work and you have to decide do they (the husbands)
> go by themselves or does their wife come with them,
> and how are you going to arrange that, and who's
> going to look after the kids?

Posting was cited as creating problems with finances

and economic stability, whether it affected housing, or

the career options of wives. Several women commented on

this.

> It takes a lot of financial juggling...every time you
> move, too, I find that the first year or so that
> you're back, even though you're going to get all
> these bonuses or moving expense allowance, you seem
> to be in the hole and it takes awhile to catch up
> again. And, I think that is a bit of a burden,
> because I don't think you ever really maintain a
> stable income.

You never know if you are going to be able to afford
a house in the next area that you move to, or if it
is a good idea to buy. Because, I know in the past,
we have seen some cases where a Base will close down
and a person is stuck with their home, or they ran
into some kind of difficulty…you always kind of
juggle that one around – whether you should buy a
house or whether you shouldn't.
There is always the problem of, like, your husband
is employed, but are you going to get employed…I
have never had that problem because I have never
had, like, one particular job. I seem to jump from
one job to another.

You're all struggling, and I know that for some
friends of mine too, that are nurses, they always
start at the bottom of the heap again.

I had been doing Distance Education and that, yeah,
took a lot of juggling too, because we weren't in a
location that had a University when I first started,
so I had to do Distance. Um, yeah, and that's been
difficult, and I wasn't actually accepted and, at
the time I was accepted, my husband got his posting,
so, off we went.

Family Organisation and Other Demands

Although deployment and posting were frequently

cited as having an impact on family organisation, other

demands from the CF, and perceptions of possible

stressors, can affect how well families cope with

organisation. One woman, when asked what she had known

about the CF before she had married, spoke about her

worries about finances.

There was a lot of information in the media about
pay. About families not getting enough money, and
having to go to foodbanks. And I guess I got
worried quite early in the relationship that if it

continued, I would not be able to live the life I had been accustomed to. And that worried me…the worry of not being able to support my family that did worry me, that did stress me out a little bit.

Anticipated worries appear to stressful even if eventually the family routine is not disrupted. There can be a sense of urgency in the type of demands the CF places on members and their families.

One woman described living in Germany this way:

We had to have the PMQs ready in case there was (an evacuation) with civilians, living on civy-street, the Canadians, that is, to come in, and that was one of the stipulations you had living in PMQs. You had this extra furniture, you were given this extra furniture, in case it was you had to house extra people. So that was interesting, everybody was on standby, have your place ready, in case you had to take somebody in…We were not allowed outside the gates of the base, we were not allowed to go to (Germany towns) in case…because, they were scared for your safety.

The nature of the Canadian Forces means operational demands may change quickly. This can lead to a sense of inefficiency and confusion that can disconcert the most organised wife.

So we sold our furniture and everything, and then they said, oh you aren't going to Germany right now, you have to go to (Other Base) for a year of training. And I go but I just sold all our furniture, you told us to do so. So we are living out of boxes…that was a very hectic three years, between those postings. It was very stressful.

One woman had to travel a great distance before her baby was born.

> **Because the military couldn't guarantee R was going to be there for the baby's birth, I was shipped back to Canada. She was actually born in Canada.**

Another woman had an experience where her husband was absent on military duty, and thus unable to answer her questions about his employment status at a time the government had announced cutbacks to military personnel.

> **I was very anxious that he might not have a job, we had no money, and I was going to be alone for the birth with the other children. I knew I would be so tired.**

Some situations seemed almost deliberately designed to disrupt family life. One woman summarised this type of disruption succinctly:

> **We sold our house when they said he was posted, then he wasn't.**

Another woman described moving under less than ideal conditions.

> **We had a really little PMQ, and I was five months pregnant with another child but they wouldn't let us move into a bigger Q until he was born, so we had to move right after our second child was born. I didn't much like that.**

Almost all women remarked upon the stress they felt each year when "active posting season" began, and they would

wonder if they would get a message that they were soon to move.

> **Basically you know that your husband comes and goes, that every year come spring, you don't know what you're doing. You have no control, you don't know if you are coming or going.**

Independence

One family characteristic that was discussed often by these women was that of independence, or self-reliance. In the FES model (1994) independence is a characteristic that measures how each family member thinks things out for herself and how much she consults with other family members before making a decision.

Independence from the Opinions of Others

The demands of the military environment affected these women and their abilities to be independent. Overall, these women discussed how they saw military life making them more self-reliant. Most of these wives spoke about how important their independence was to their abilities to adapt to the demands of the CF. These women all said they saw themselves as self-confident and independent. Two of the wives had come from families where their fathers were in the military. They spoke of a sense of self-reliance and confidence that growing up in Europe had given them. One described how when she was

in her mid-teens she had been very comfortable taking trains on her own to other countries. Another spoke about how she had been so fluent in German she had been able to pass as a German teenager. Other wives without military backgrounds also spoke about youthful experiences that had made them feel confident enough to tackle the later demands that would come from being married to someone in the Forces. Such independence showed itself in how several of the women had to challenge the views of friends and families when they first announced they were contemplating marriage to a member of the C.F. They found people close to them discouraged such marriages as they were worried about the stress caused by military life would mean for their daughters. As one young wife said:

> I had a few people kind of tell me, family members, you know, say it wasn't going to be as easy as I thought at the time…I didn't really believe anything they said, so I just went ahead and got married.

One woman described how her mother had wavered between anxiety and pride about her daughter's choice of partner when her future son-in-law deployed to Afghanistan.

Another woman had a future mother-in-law, herself a military wife, who actively discouraged her from marrying

a CF member as she had found the demands made upon her by the military very difficult. She rejected this advice, and remarked that it was ironic that now her own daughter was dating a military member. When asked what advice she would give her daughter, she said:

> I probably would have a talk with her and say "Is this really what you want?" and she would probably look at me and do the same thing I did and say, "Yes, I am in love. Leave me alone and let me go."

Independence and Household Management

When these women began to married and began to raise families, they noticed that being a military wife meant that much of the time they were responsible for household duties and child-rearing.

> I seemed to be the one who drove them everywhere, if they needed swimming, or going to karate or hockey, or whatever, once your husband's away, you have to play the role of two people.

In discussing family organisation, women had said how being almost solely responsible for household matters could be a burden. When these women discussed independence, it became apparent that most of them also saw some benefit to being the person primarily in charge of the household. One woman found that she enjoyed feeling freer to decide her schedule and plan family

activities to suit her needs when her husband was not around.

> Monday nights, you got your swim lessons. Tuesday nights, piano lessons. You can't say-whose going to drive tonight? You know it's all dependent on you. So you work your schedule around that. You don't book meetings around that. You don't have nobody to depend on you but yourself. However, you don't have to worry about getting home to do the supper. Because if you want to go to the gym, there's nobody waiting on you. The kids, I found, are more understanding than their father. He's watching the clock, but the kids are not. So you can go and do what you have to do for yourself, leave the kids at the day care or the library.

Several women said they recognised that while they felt fairly capable in coping with military life, they also had to make sure they made room for their husbands to feel a necessary part of the family. One woman discussed how she modified her independence to keep her husband more involved in family life.

> I have a "honey, please do-" list and I put things on it. Things I could do myself, say putting up kitchen cupboards, I might do some of it, do the research, even go buy the cupboards, but even though I could, there is nothing I couldn't do, but I won't, I leave things for him. So when he gets back there is something for him to do.

CF Expectations and Independence

A few women believed that the CF had expectations of them to behave in certain ways, expectations that might curtail their abilities to be independent. One woman

speculated that her outspokenness about problems experienced by wives caused military officials to judge her husband negatively.

> We had a family business right next to our house-
> that was my evening job. I ran that store for my
> parents. I think that gave me a lot of
> independence. To the point, it did cause problems
> for his career. I am the first to admit I do have a
> big mouth. Because I care about other people.

An officer's wife talked about feeling torn between the expectations of her husband's employer and what her neighbours thought of her.

> Sometimes I think wives are expected to be
> everything to everybody. I know when we were in
> (Base) there was a lot of demand, at that time, from
> the Base Commander to go to functions on the Base.
> And our children were quite small at the time, and,
> personally, I had the feeling that we were there
> almost every weekend, and I was getting some
> backlash from a neighbour's daughter, who was
> babysitting. Her mom was putting pressure on her
> saying, "Well, you shouldn't be babysitting every
> weekend", and I was feeling badly because the kids
> were little and my husband was getting pressure
> because we had to go to these functions. So, yeah,
> that's stressful…I think there are a lot of demands
> made like that; that you have to be presentable to
> the public or presentable to the other wives, and
> that's kind of frustrating for me sometimes.
> I think that everybody, no matter what rank, is
> expected to be presentable to the public and they
> have obligations too, so, I don't think it is just
> Officer's wives, I think is applies to everybody who
> is in the Forces.

These expectations were a source of frustration for another wife who felt she had to overcome the attitudes

of the military in order to start support services in her community.

> It (a longer-term deployment) happened so fast, there was no real rear party set up. There was no one to help us. It was us wives who got together, we said, okay, we want a wives' group...That was still in the old days, you know, where they said if we wanted you to have a wife we would have issued you one, so shut your wife the hell up.

Community Expectations and Independence

Even the larger community had expectations of military wives that limited their sense of independence. In some cases, during highly publicised missions, wives of deployed soldiers felt singled out at work by colleagues who treated them with pity. Women reported finding media attention particularly disconcerting. They were under the scrutiny of reporters and news cameras when they met their husbands upon return from deployment, and one described literally hiding in her home with the curtains drawn in the days around her husband's return.

Demands of the Military Environment Can Increase Independence

As frustrating as these struggles might be, in some ways, the demands the CF made on these women appeared to increase their sense of independence. Several women described having feelings of independence, self-reliance

and competence as they rose to meet the challenges of military life. One woman explained that if she had not married into the CF she would likely have stayed in one town all her life with "no need to expand, or grow". Another saw being independent as strengthening her marriage.

> We are very comfortable being apart…we love but are separate, then together as a team…it makes you more self-aware, lets you be yourself.

A newly-wed woman spoke about how she considered herself "fiercely independent". She too saw her independence as enhancing her relationship with her husband. She described the basis of their relationship as not one of dependency, but a desire to be with one another as equals.

> My husband comes home and says what do you need me for? He has always known he can't marry anybody who is needy…my husband has learned that we want him to be a part of our lives, but we don't need him…I wanted someone to share my life with, to watch the boys grow, to grow old with…but I also know if something were to happen to him, you never know when you walk out the door, that I could get on with my life…

Several women commented that being new in a community and being on their own not only increased their sense of independence, it led to an active pursuit of resources.

> Being a military spouse made me more independent.
> Not having family, friends around makes you more
> independent and helps you seek resources.

Being a part of a community of other women was
valued by most of these women. Being apart from husbands
presented opportunities to reach out to other women. Said
one wife, "when your husband is gone it is a chance to be
with the community. If he wasn't gone I would have missed
out on being in the community".

Another woman remarked that she had always sought
out resources when she arrived in a new community,
stating that "I believe that every community you go to,
the resources are there if you really want to access
them". If she found that the support she needed was not
available, she took steps to put resources in place.

> A group of us got together in (Base) and it was of
> our own initiative…we approached the Padre on the
> Base and he had a church in town that we could use
> for a playgroup. So, we got together there and that
> was a really good group too. It seemed that we were
> very resourceful when we had to be.

External Resources: Informal and Formal Supports

The women interviewed for this study frequently
spoke about their relationship with the community, with
other wives, and about their experiences with support
services. If family characteristics are a potential
source of internal support, these resources exist in the

external world of military wives. These women found they could at times modify these resources and supports to suit their needs. They also recognised that such resources could have both a positive and negative impact on the abilities of these women to manage the stressors in their lives.

Informal Support From Other Women

The most frequently cited source of external support for the women in this part of the study was having relationships with other women in similar situations. The women in this study repeatedly spoke about how such relationships were the most important source of support they had in coping with the demands of the military environment. A few women described their experiences this way:

> I need the links with military families, I have friendships with other mums and kids who are in the same place, they are alone, with the husbands gone.

> When we moved here, we lived in a house for a while. Then he came home and said 'I have good and bad news'. The bad news was he was deploying for six months. The good news was that we had a PMQ. We would be able to move right away. I was so happy-I felt safe…I felt safe being with other women who I knew what I was going through. I could go knock on someone's door and ask them for help and they would be there for me.

Another woman made sure her community supports understood what she would need from them.

> I had my friends and family all prepared, I knew to count on them; my priority was the people about me, friends, family, the Church.

A woman who had spent considerable time overseas spoke about how happy she was to return to Canada, and how friends made it easier for her to manage deployment.

> I had a job established. And it was easier to let him go, because I had more friends. And I was in Canada, so I didn't have that added stress.

Another woman who had experienced many deployments agreed that the company of other military wives could ease the stress. "Sometimes it's really nice. They've been there too, and know where you're at, and there's the support through that."

Concerns about Informal Supports

Women indicated that there could be occasional problems using other military wives as a way to cope with stressors. These problems could involve lack of privacy, a concern that they would wear out other wives with their needs, and worries about being judged by other wives if they did want maintain some distance. When asked what helped her manage the demands of military life, this

woman pointed out that although other wives could be a good support, it meant a certain lack of privacy.

> It's helpful because the neighbours are there, they know what you are going through, and there is the support factor, because they have gone through it before, or are in the same situation. But there is also the factor that they have been there before, and they know, and everybody's life-everybody knows where you're at.

If a woman was inclined to shyness, or valued her privacy, she might feel uncomfortable if it seemed that the other wives expected her to be open about their problems.

> With some of the wives, if you are not open and forthcoming, you are a bit of a snob. And sometimes you have to say, how much am I going to tell them, and deal with that.

Positive Qualities of Formal Supports

More formal resources appeared to initially provide some solutions to these problems. Family support centre staff were there to help military wives, and this could alleviate any concerns that neighbours with their own problems might be overtaxed if they were called upon too often.

> I remember when he was gone in the Gulf. I really had felt alone then, so I was glad to be in PMQs. But there is a limit. You can only knock, once, twice, but not three times. People have their own

lives. You might not get told no but they are being worn out by you. They have to do their own stuff. So when I went to the place (the MFRC)-hardly any staff, just a coffee pot-but I felt they were there for me. Not just because it was their job, but because they were in the spirit of helping you. That meant a lot to me. Yes, it meant I wouldn't burn my neighbours out.

Wives who remembered a time before more formal resources were available seemed to welcome supports like the MFRC. One remembered what it was like after she had had her first baby and her husband was gone.

The majority of us, the wives, were between 18 and 22. Very young, very inexperienced, little babies. That was the majority. So we needed to have the MFRC very established there.

Another described her first experiences with military family supports.

When we were in (Base), they had a family service provided on the south side of the base, they had a trailer where you could go and have a coffee morning with the other mums, and I did use that service a lot, and I found it very helpful. Meet the other mums, and have the kids in while you are having coffee.

In the Army, the military members who stay behind when the majority of the unit deploys are called the rear party. One of their functions is to provide practical support to families of deployed members. Women who experience revolving door deployments, or whose partners are absent on training courses generally do not have access to rear party supports. However, for those women

who do, the rear party can be very helpful. This was the case with a woman whose husband was overseas while she faced a move two weeks before her first baby was due.

> **My husband had introduced me to one of the men in rear party before he left. So I felt a little more comfortable calling them, and asking them, and I did that a couple of more times.**

Concerns about Disorganised Formal Resources

Although the women in this part of the study said they enjoyed the camaraderie they found at the MFRCs, they frequently viewed formal supports as being less than helpful to their abilities to cope with the military environment. Indeed, much of the time these types of supports appeared to increase the level of stress these women experienced. A significant source of stress for wives was what appeared to be disorganisation on the part of resources that were in theory intended to help them cope with the demands of military life.

In some cases, such disorganisation meant women were not clear what resources they were entitled to or should be using. One said: "There was MFRC, there was rear party, and who do I contact?" Another added that she was not sure she was allowed to use the MFRC when her husband was deployed overseas as he was in the Reserves. For one woman being posted to a new town for only a year made it

hard to understand where and how she should get resources: "I did not know anyone. I didn't know about the MFRC…I don't think they had one". Another woman stated she was confused about the relationships between support services.

> And MFRC, they did the drop-in centre, and I could talk to them too, but it was kind of where does rear party start, and MFRC end.

Concerns about Unreliable Formal Supports

Almost all these women had experiences with support services that were more than disorganised: they were frustrating or even threatening. Women who had recently experienced deployment said they felt they did not get information about what to expect. Said one: "I didn't get much support from the unit, they gave me no information as to how I was to deal with my separation". Another woman described the difficulties she had experienced when her husband was deployed as part of a mission operating from a different base than where she lived.

> Because the way the base is set up, whoever you are augmented to, that's where your paperwork goes. It makes no difference where you live. So maybe Newfoundland is going to be augmented to Edmonton, then it's Edmonton who is going to be doing their

paperwork. Which is not practical. You need a social worker, or respite support, you are going to go to your nearest MFRC.

When women pointed out that there could be problems with support systems, their concerns could be dismissed. A woman going through her first deployment had been able to attend only a few pre-deployment briefings because of her work schedule. She had looked forward to the newsletters she had been told the MFRC would send out to the partners of deployed military members. She had also planned to use the DND Mission Information line she had been told about. When she could not access these services, she felt stymied when she tried to find out the problem.

> I didn't get information from MFRC or from rear party for a long time. And eventually I had to call them. And MFRC, they had their bulletins that they would send out, and they told me I was getting this information, and I had to tell them I wasn't... eventually they had to get back, and they realised that while my name was on their list, I wasn't getting a mailing label made up...So they had to go back to the mailing labels, I wasn't getting the mailings. I wasn't getting information for about three months.

In another instance, this same woman found that the Mission Information line was also unreliable.

> With the 1-800, the Mission Information Line, there was one time, I guess the wrong button had been pressed, and I told them, there is no information

for Winnipeg, and they said no, there is, there is an option for Winnipeg, but you would dial 3, and they would say, that option is not current. So I told them that, and they would say, well, it is…I had to say to them, listen, I wouldn't tell you this, unless it is true.

Concerns that Formal Supports May Pose a Risk

Some of the most significant concerns women had were about potential breeches of confidentiality and the impact using more formal services would have on the careers of husbands. Some women discussed this issue in the context of what had happened historically with military-supported family resources.

> I guess I had a perception, too, when the MFRC first started, that there was a lot of internal kind of goings on - that people were a little afraid to access the services for fear of what might backlash…I guess we were never that close to the service itself.

> The Base has that kind of stigma, you know, that if you did say something it's going to-that if it came up, that your husband would get a black mark beside his name if you went spilled the beans about something that was happening in your relationship or something that you didn't like about the service.

One woman explained that in the past, she felt it had seemed safe for women she knew to use the MFRC for activities like craft classes and playgroups. It was not as safe if a wife needed more extensive supports with more serious issues.

> I would agree with the old stigma that it would get back to your husband's unit if you used the MFRC. Especially in the old (Regiment) days. If you were seen going into the MFRC-it did go back to the unit. If you were going to partake of the stuff, you made sure it was on the level expected of you, because it was going back to the unit.

MFRCs support community development through the substantial use of military spouses as volunteers. Unfortunately this can lead to times when less trained individuals breech confidentiality standards.

> Just a particular person that was volunteering at the MFRC at that time, and I knew she wasn't always as good about keeping information to herself as she should have been. And maybe that made me a little leery about future participation.

These worries about using resources continue to exist with younger women who have less experience with the military. In part, this is due to a reluctance to use formal social services. Most of the women interviewed had no experience with social workers before they married, and found the role of social workers and chaplains in military life hard to understand. This wife described how she had been preparing for a first deployment, and how she had felt when she realised she had to attend a pre-screening with her husband.

> I came home one day, and he said, we have to talk to a social worker. And this was a whole new thing for me once again. Cause for me, social workers are when you get to a bad place.

The sense of mistrust in resources may have its roots in practices from ten or twenty years ago, but fears of using supports that are more formal apparently are still current. One new wife had been warned by other women to be wary using military-based family support services when she faced her first deployment. "I had heard if I talk to the social worker, if I talk to the padre-I would have gone to the padre-but I heard it was recorded in (the husband's) file." Even the semi-automated Mission Information Line was viewed with mistrust.

> I didn't want to call mission information line because I had heard stories about women who had called, and the number of times you called was recorded. And these calls would be put on the men's personnel files. I heard a story about a woman in Edmonton who called and he was brought home, because she called so many times. That is what I was told. So I would call the recorded message but I wouldn't talk to the operators.

One wife said she felt inhibited telling the social worker that she did not want her husband to deploy because she knew how much his job meant to him. She described feeling afraid of what would happen to her husband's career if she spoke to the social worker.

> I thought he would have been DAGed red, and wouldn't go. And it would have been sitting on me. It would have been my fault. And once again, he told me of one of the guys, who, his wife didn't want him to

go…they went to the Padre, and they sat there and she said, no, I don't want him to go. He got DAGed red, and he didn't go. He then got out of the military, and I don't know what happened to them since.

A wife who had more experience with the military environment said she now had more confidence in the family supports available. Her concern was for younger women who hesitate to use such resources when they continue to hear negative stories about the risks of using such supports. "The women who have the confidence to go to things, they are coping. The ones who aren't managing aren't coming out"

Summary of Chapter Four

FES and Survey Findings

Findings from the FES and the demographic survey were analysed for internal reliability. Acceptable, if moderate, internal reliability was found for seven of the 10 FES scales. Comparisons between these scales and the FES normative scales showed the families in this study scored in the normal FES range in the subscales for cohesion, expressiveness, active-recreational orientation, moral-religious orientation, intellectual-cultural orientation, control and conflict. T-test analyses of the data indicated that there were no

significant differences found in variables in this population.

Family Characteristics

The subjects in this part of the study were military wives. Each of these wives had had to manage the demands made upon them from the military environment. The family characteristics of expressiveness, cohesion, organisation and independence served as internal resources to these women in their efforts to cope with stressors. The utility of these characteristics could change under the influence of the demands of the military environment. These changes affected both positively and negatively the efforts of these women to cope with stressors.

Deployment, or a husband's absence on CF related duties, was one stressors frequently cited by these wives. All the women had experienced both frequent, short-term deployment and longer-term deployment. Deployment affected family expressiveness. Women found themselves deliberately changing how expressive they were with their husbands during the various stages of deployment. Some women chose to restrict the amount of communication they had with their husbands so they would not distress these men and distract them from their CF

duties.   Other women made an effort to increase the amount of expressiveness between themselves and their husbands during deployment.   Although it was acknowledged that CF authorities encouraged women not to burden their husbands with news about family problems, these wives generally rejected CF advice in favour of communicating with their husbands in the ways that seemed to best suit their marriages.   These women also had to deal with the challenges operational requirements and communication technology had on being able to express themselves to their husbands.

These women also found they had to restrain themselves in discussing their problems so not to worry extended family members. No such constraints appeared necessary when discussing the demands of the military environment with other wives.   Being able to talk to other military wives was seen as a very valuable way to cope with stress.

Posting, or moving due to a husband's military transfer, was another significant stressor for all these wives. Posting appeared to affect expressiveness negatively when it meant women moved into communities where they did not speak the language very well.

As with expressiveness, demands from the military environment affected family cohesion, and how cohesive a family was helped moderate these demands. These wives had developed expertise in judging how the amount of cohesiveness and intimacy was required in their marriages at various stages of deployment. Some wives were concerned that longer deployments made it harder for their children to feel closer to their fathers. For other women, demanding stressors, for example, a serious, life-threatening incident in the field, or a deployment to a dangerous mission, increased the amount of closeness they felt for their husbands, and led to a greater degree of commitment than might have otherwise occurred. Women also felt more cohesion with their husbands when they trusted their husbands' abilities to perform their military duties safely. Cohesion was affected by posting. Women said they felt closer to their husbands and children because they were posted away from their hometowns and extended family.

These women found being highly organised very helpful in coping with military demands. It was sometimes hard to adjust family organisation and control when husbands returned from longer absences, or when they were absent on a frequent, "revolving door" basis. These women

found that the CF made many demands on their abilities to be organised. Sometimes they felt overburdened with household and child care tasks when husbands were absent. Posting was seen as particularly disruptive, and a significant stressor in the ways it negatively affected family organisation. Posting was detrimental to family finances, to wives' careers and education, and to children's emotional well-being.

Independence was a characteristic very valued by the wives in this study. Most of the women commented that they had seen themselves as particularly independent from an early age. They had demonstrated this independence in part by going ahead and marrying someone from the CF in spite of family wishes to not do so. Some wives felt that military expectations of their behaviour could affect their independence. Some women rejected these expectations and found greater autonomy in doing so. Overall, the demands of the military environment were seen as increasing the abilities of women to be independent. Women needed to be self-sufficient and confident in managing when husbands were absent and extended family was far away.

External Resources

External resources could be informal and formal. Informal resources were usually the other military wives these women turned to for advice, support and guidance. Other wives were seen as a welcome resource, although there were some concerns on the part of the women in this study that other wives might become overburdened helping fellow military wives. Sometimes the women in this study hesitated to connect with other wives because of shyness, or concerns about privacy. For these reasons, most of the women in this study welcomed the existence of more formal resources like MFRCs and rear parties. Such resources provided supportive staff and an opportunity to meet other wives. Other formal resources cited included social workers and padres, and the Mission Information Line. There were serious concerns on the part of the wives in this study about using these resources. Some women referred to problems that had occurred in the past, but several women who had recently used these resources had experienced difficulties, or had been warned off using these resources by other wives. These problems included worries about confidentiality, discomfort in using a social worker, confusion about the various types

of support services, disorganisation on the part of resources. The most serious concern raised by several wives was a fear that if a spouse used support services, a husband's military record and career would be negatively affected.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the implications of the findings in this study. It examines these findings as they relate to the ABC-X theoretical model of family stress management theory. It would appear that there is a heuristic value in using this model to help illustrate how the internal and external resources of military wives, and the demands of the military environment, interact and modify each other.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to increase the available knowledge about how Canadian military spouses cope with and manage the demands the military environment makes upon them. It examined how these wives view characteristics found in themselves and in their families that affected how well they cope, as well as how these characteristics could be changed by the stressors found in the military environment. This research also explored what military spouses think of the informal and informal resources that purport to help them.

This chapter discusses both the quantitative and qualitative findings from the study. These findings provide descriptive information about a population, Canadian military families, that has not been well researched to date. It describes the significant findings from this research, and explores what these findings may indicate about military families and stress management.

Quantitative Findings

Demographics

Although this was exploratory research, the investigator had made certain assumptions when planning this study. Much of the available literature on military families appears to operate from an assumption that one of the most significant stressors for military families is deployment (Hiew, 1992, Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino, 2000 Mombourquette, 1995). The investigator had assumed that a significant number of survey participants would have described the type of deployment they experienced as longer-term. However, most respondents described themselves as experiencing frequent, shorter-term "revolving door" deployments. A possible explanation for this result might have been the timing of the research, as the Army Battalion based in Winnipeg was preparing

during the winter months for a spring deployment to Bosnia, which meant they were absent on periodic, frequent training exercises in Western Manitoba and Alberta. Mombourquette (1995), in research comparing CF peacekeeper and non-peacekeeper families, discusses the methodological issues of data gathering during deployment. He suggests that data gathering should be carefully timed if the research goal is to examine differences between experiences of deployment. The result in this research meant it was not possible to compare the two types of deployment in this sample.

Another significant finding from the survey was the relative length of both relationships and military members' careers. As most of the data gathering occurred at activities sponsored by the MFRCs, this may suggest that the women using this resource are those with experience of the CF environment. Women newer to the CF, and possibly with fewer experiences with the demands in this environment, were not as likely to be participating in MFRC activities when this data was collected.

FES Internal Reliability

The internal reliability of the FES has been subject to criticism. Eastman, Archer and Ball (1990)

found that internal reliability coefficients derived from data in their study of Navy families were about .10 to .20 lower than reported by the authors of the FES. Chipeur (2001) writes that a number of researchers have found the internal reliability of the FES lower than is usually acceptable in research. She discusses how the work of Moos places less emphasis on internal reliability and more on conceptual measures of family functioning which may have more stability over time, and thus greater reliability. Moos (1994) has written that in using the FES with select or restricted populations, researchers may find internal consistencies that are somewhat lower.

The findings in this study suggest that there may be a need for caution in using this instrument with this population, as the internal reliability of three of the 10 FES scales were not psychometrically acceptable. The data gathering methods in this study were possibly affected by distractions and second language concerns. These issues may have led to lower internal reliability scores for the FES scales.

Subscale Means

Subscale means for the spouses in this sample show that they scored similarly to families in the FES normative sample. These FES characteristics suggest that

the spouses in this study perceive their families as members of a cohesive, flexible, expressive and low-conflict population that values involvement with community activities and interests. These data suggest this sample is made up of well-functioning and healthy family types that reflect the earlier research done into military family functioning by Eastman, Archer, and Ball (1990) and Jensen, Xenakis, Wolf and Bain, (1991). The data do not appear to support the identification of these military families as a clinical or distressed population. It is important to note that these data were gathered from spouses who were primarily users of military family support services, who were in relatively mature relationships, and had considerable experience of the CF environment and its demands. Different results might well be obtained in measuring family functioning with women who were not as connected with family support services, or who were much newer to CF stressors.

Overall, the quantitative research in this study indicates that the spouses in this sample group see their families as functioning well. These spouses were generally drawn from a sample that used military family supports. The data suggests that cohesion and expressiveness were valued amongst these families, and

that these families tended to be involved in community activities. These findings provided the investigator with a framework for the qualitative research done in this study. Specifically, it allowed the investigator to further explore in more depth the significance of characteristics such as cohesion and expressiveness. The data indicated that there was some value in asking military spouses to discuss the impact these characteristics and use of community resources had on their ability to manage the demands of the military environment.

Qualitative Findings

ABC-X Model

The qualitative data indicate that in order to understand how spouses manage the demands of the military lifestyle, it is important to examine the stressors experienced by military wives, and how these demands interact with their personal and family characteristics, and their internal and external resources. It appears that that much of the literature on military families uses a linear and deterministic approach in examining issues of military family stress. The ABC-X model is cited in much of the literature on military families and

on family stress in general. This model has also been frequently critiqued for being causal and sequential in such applications. However, this model may have heuristic value when reconstructed from a more contextual and systemic framework. Such an elaboration of this model would allow the variables in the lives of military spouses to be viewed as mutually influencing one another.

When the data from the interviews with military wives is examined, it becomes apparent that such a systemic, contextual elaboration on the original ABC-X model, as discussed by Boss (2002), has conceptual value in guiding an understanding of how these women manage the stressors they experience in the military environment. It is this conceptual model that guides this discussion of the findings from the qualitative research in this study. Using the ABC-X model as a framework for discussion of these findings can help answer the original questions posed by this research.

The questions posed by this research were:

- What are the demands made upon the female partners of military members by the military environment?

- What are the personal or family characteristics that these female partners think have helped them cope with and adjust these demands?

- What impact has the military environment had on the coping characteristics of these female partners?

- How do these female partners assess the resources available to military spouses? How have these resources affected their abilities to cope with and adjust to the demands of the military environment?

Stressor Events

The first question asked in this research concerned the demands made upon spouses from the military environment. The first variable (A) of the ABC-X model is the stressor event, or demand made upon the family. Much of the literature found by this investigator on military family life presents stressors as negative, disturbing experiences that cause spouses discomfort (Harrison, 2002, Martin, Rosen, and Sparacino, 2000). However, when discussing stressors, wives did not invariably present these experiences as unduly difficult. At times, these experiences were presented as almost matter of fact demands that had to be adapted to in order for the spouse and her family to function. Other demands were seen as causing more hardship to families. It would appear that stressors causing more hardships were those that taxed the abilities of families to adapt.

When the wives in this part of the study were asked what experiences they had as military spouses that they had felt were stressful, they agreed that military life makes a number of demands upon wives. They appeared to feel responsible for the evaluation of how and when information about domestic life should be shared with their husbands. They also appeared to feel responsible for regulating the amount of cohesion and intimacy between themselves and their husbands as their partners moved in and out of their families. They found themselves having to manage household tasks and child rearing duties in their husbands' absences, and having to then renegotiate household control and organisation when their husbands' returned.

Military wives must integrate themselves and their families into new communities when they move. They find themselves starting over in new places, managing disruptions to their children's education and friendships, and to their own careers and education.

Resources

The next questions posed by this research involved the coping characteristics of spouses, and the impact the military environment had had on these characteristics.

The second variable (B) in the ABC-X model is the family's resources or strengths that may buffer the family against stressors. In this study, military wives described personal traits of cohesion, expressiveness, independence and organisation. These characteristics appeared to serve as internal resources that helped these wives manage stressors. However, these characteristics were not static, and the variables of stressors and internal resources appeared to mutually influence one another repeatedly in these women's lives. These women found the demands of the military environment could at times be a positive force in increasing family cohesion, in helping them decide on the appropriate degree of expressiveness, and in increasing their sense of competence and independence. In turn, these characteristics could buffer these women from the demands of the military environment, and help offset the disruption the CF imposed upon themselves and their families. These women also made use of external resources to cope with the stressors of the military environment. In particular, the support and companionship of other women who had had similar experiences was seen as very helpful in managing CF demands. As a response to the demands of the military environment, these women actively

sought out and developed external resources, thereby increasing the amount of support available to them.

Appraisal

The questions in this research also examined the perceptions these spouses had of the demands and the resources in their environments. The third variable (C) the ABC-X model is appraisal. Appraisal is the meaning a family gives both to a stressful event, and to the potential for helpfulness of available resources (Boss, 2002; Burr and Klein, 1994). Boss (2002) has called appraisal the most important variable in this model, and has suggested the best opportunities for positive family stress management lie in how families perceive stressors. The findings in this part of the study do not appear to suggest that a positive assessment of the demands from the military environment is the most important factor in helping these women cope with the military environment. In contrast, some women found that dissatisfaction with aspects of the military environment led them to make positive and proactive changes in this environment, for example, in approaching military authorities in asking for family support services. Positive appraisal of characteristics like independence appeared to be helpful

in helping these women manage stressors. Overall, external resources that were viewed as supportive and helpful appeared to increase these women's sense of being able to cope with military demands; when external resources were perceived as disorganised, frustrating or threatening, they seemed to increase the amount of stress these women had to manage.

Stress and Adjustment

The final variable (X) in this model is the amount of stress and family adjustment that results from the interplay of the previous variables. In the original ABC-X model, the ABC variables were causal and deterministic of the X variable. A crisis in a family occurred when the stressor event overwhelmed a family's resources and ability to appraise the situation positively (Burr, 1994). More systemic approaches to this model (McCubbin and Patterson, 1982; McCubbin and Thompson, 1987) have focused on the interdependent and mutually influential nature of the variables of stress, resources, and appraisal. Such a systemic approach can help illustrate what happens when stressors do overwhelm military wives. This appears to happen at times when these wives internal and external resources are not equal to the demands of

the military environment. For the women in this study, such times were not just the result of an inability to adapt to stressors. These times were when a lack of adequate information, or disorganisation on the part of resources overwhelmed these women's abilities to adjust to such demands. These wives also found it hard when they felt they had to make their husbands choose between family life and career, a situation they found themselves in when they were screened by official military systems trying to assess how competent these women were to meet the demands of the CF. These high demand situations appeared to overwhelm these wives, and these situations themselves became stressors for these wives.

Family Stress Theory

Models of family stress theory make several assumptions about what increases a family's ability to manage stress. These include a view on the part of family members that change is a natural, beneficial and predictable part of family life, that families can develop strengths to protect themselves from non-normative stressors, and that external relationships and resources can be helpful when a family is in crisis. Other assumptions include that families who manage stress

effectively take an active approach when confronted with stressors; that time spent together as a family is valuable; and that families best manage stress when its members can be both cohesive and autonomous, and have flexibility around family roles (McCubbin and Thompson, 1987; McCubbin, 1995, Olson, 1983).

The spouses in this study appear to reflect these conceptual assumptions. Overall they seemed to welcome the challenges provided in their environment, and at times credited the demands of their environment for increasing their well-being. These spouses made efforts to meet the challenges of the military environment by taking an active role in seeking out and even increasing the amount of external resources that they thought would be helpful to them. This proactive approach appeared to be necessary when formal resources that were perceived as imposed upon these women were non-existent, or were seen as being unhelpful or even threatening.

The findings from the wives in this part of the study suggest that family cohesiveness was important in helping families to manage the demands in the military environment. However, autonomy and independence appeared to be equally important characteristics that increased successful coping. The ability to be flexible around how

cohesive or independent family members were in response to military demands seemed to be critical in enabling families to function well.

<div align="center">Limitations of this research</div>

There were a number of significant limitations in this research. Although quantitative methods were used in part of the research, this research was primarily qualitative. The sample size (40) in the quantitative part of the research was quite small and not intended to be a random sample of military spouses. This sample was drawn primarily from users of the MFRC. It may only reflect characteristics and information about those individuals who are connected with military family support services. The individuals participating in this part of the study do not reflect spouses who have been in shorter-term relationships, and who have partners that are less experienced with the CF. As this study was conducted in English, it could not measure the experiences of Francophone spouses who did not have adequate English skills to complete the quantitative instruments.

The FES, used in the quantitative part of the research, had internal reliability that was overall somewhat low. There are suggestions in the literature

(Boyd, Gullone, Needleman, & Burt, 1997) that this may be a concern inherent in this measure. Internal reliability of the FES may have also been affected by difficulties in data collection during this study and by the restricted nature of the sample group.

There were limitations to the qualitative research done in this study. The sample of seven military spouses was purposively selected and relatively small. This study was intended to be exploratory, and the results from the interviews cannot be generalised to the larger population of military spouses.

Overall, the spouses in this study were non-distressed, and appeared to be coping well with the demands made upon them by the CF environment. This research did not explore the concerns of women who were reluctant to use any military family support services, or who were experiencing significant difficulties managing the demands of military life.

Summary of Chapter Five

Quantitative findings in this research indicate that the spouses in this sample saw their families as scoring similarly on FES scales in cohesion, expressiveness, conflict, control and community involvement than did the

normative sample cited in by the authors of the FES (1994). The findings from interviews from seven military spouses indicate that overall, military wives found themselves searching out people and resources that could help them accomplish the tasks necessary to maintain family well-being. They found solace in the company of other women who had similar experiences in meeting the demands of the military environment. When they saw gaps in services, they made an effort to use their skills and resourcefulness to create services.

In turn, the demands of the military environment could be transformed by the characteristics of these wives. Wives rejected official advice about when and how to communicate with their husbands, and instead chose how expressive they wanted to be in their relationships. The flexibility these wives exhibited around marital and family cohesion allowed their husbands to respond to the operational demands of the CF as well as be part of a family. These wives exerted their organisational skills to cope with the frequent changes to their circumstances caused by military demands.

These findings seem to suggest that the ABC-X model of family stress management can help illustrate how military

families cope with the stressors of the military environment.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the implications for policy and practice suggested by this research. These implications may be considerations for those working with the military family population. It examines possible directions for future research with this population.

Implication for Policy and Practice

The findings from this study suggest that military families in this sample overall function quite well in the face of demands from the CF. This ability to function well is at times a result of the demands of the military environment, and not in spite of the stressors experienced by these families. Given the lack of research into Canadian military families, in appears that assumptions may have been made about what would be helpful to these families in coping with stressors that do not take into account the strengths and resourcefulness of the spouses of military members. This potentially has led to some military spouses feeling frustration and discouragement about using formal military family resources, particularly when they feel

they are being told how they should relate to their husbands.

In both policy development and in practice, these findings suggest that those offering formal resources to CF families might consider taking a more consultative, client-driven approach to service delivery with these families. Family support models that recognise that the demands of the military environment will be experienced differently by families depending on their characteristics and needs may prove to be more helpful and relevant to these families.

Policy makers and practitioners could also recognise that military spouses appear to have the potential ability to meet many of their needs for support through connections with other military spouses. An emphasis on providing settings where the spouses of military members can develop such relationships may be helpful. A balance needs to be struck between the development of such networks, and the underpinnings of more formal resources, as it is possible spouses may at times feel burdened by the amount of support required by fellow families who are under stress from military demands.

The women in this study appeared to be quite satisfied with the supports offered by resources such as

the MFRC and rear parties. One recommendation for practitioners might be to consider clarifying and making more explicit the roles of various support services so women would be clearer about what they could expect from various resources, including clarity around how the confidentiality of such services. It would also appear to be important that such services delivered the resources that they had indicated would be available.

More formal military family resources, including padres, CF social workers and the Mission Information line may still be viewed with uncertainty and mistrust amongst the women interviewed in this study who had little significant experience with the CF. There appears to be concerns about the impact that using these resources may have on a partner's career and by extension the family's psychological and economic well-being. These concerns are exacerbated by a sense that these resources are not always optional, particularly if the member is being deployed on a longer-term absence. It may be a consideration for these formal resources to focus on informing the community about their function in military family life, and the degree they can or cannot offer confidentiality to spouses who approach them for supports.

Future Research

This study was explorative, and the findings from this research suggest some potential areas that could be addressed in further investigation with this population.

Further research could be undertaken that examines more thoroughly the needs and concerns of spouses experiencing various kinds of stressors. Most of the subjects in this study indicated they were experiencing "revolving door" deployment. This was likely due to the nature of operational demands during the time data were being gathered. There remains a need to explore how well spouses in the midst of undergoing longer-term deployments manage this type of demand. This would require careful timing of research to ensure any data were collected during a specific point in the deployment cycle.

This study was not able to gather significant quantitative data from women who were fairly new to their relationships with CF members. Almost all respondents in this study were in relationships with CF members who generally had long term careers in the military. There may be a need to do research with women who are new to the CF environment, with partners who are not as familiar

with this career, to how well they manage the demands of the military.

Almost all the respondents in this study were at least somewhat familiar with the MFRC. There is likely a need to study those families who are less connected with family support services to assess how they cope with the demands of the military environment. The interview subjects placed a great deal of value on the supports they felt they had from other military spouses. It would be important to examine if spouses who did not use family support services were more isolated, or if they had found other resources that met their needs. Such research may provide insight into ways families can be supported in optimising their strengths and resources to cope with challenges. Findings from this type of research may be helpful for practitioners and for community members who are interested in maintaining and generating positive change in the military family community.

There is a perception on the part of some military spouses in this study that the CF discourages certain types of expressiveness and intimacy between spouses because of the impact that such communications might have on operational effectiveness. It would be most interesting if there was empirical evidence, for example,

research done on the military members, that suggests that such restrictions on communication are indeed supported by evidence.

There is very little research that has been done on Canadian military families. There is a need for additional research into this population, not only so that appropriate services and policies for military families can be generated. There is also a need for research into this population because it can reveal a great deal about how Canadian families in general can demonstrate resourcefulness, flexibility and community cohesion to deal with the sometimes extraordinary demands our society makes upon families.

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Appendix A

Survey Consent Form
Survey Questions
Family Environment Scale Questions
Interview Consent Form
Interview Schedule

Survey Consent Form

Research Project Title: Stress Management and Military Families

Researcher: Laurie Anne Johnson

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I. Purpose of the research;

This research is being done by Laurie Anne Johnson, as part of the requirements for completion of my Master of Social Work degree at the University of Manitoba. I am doing this research to further the awareness and understanding of the role stress plays in the well-being of military families. It is hoped that this research will provide guidance to people working with military families about these families' strengths and what potential services would be of most use to enhance the quality of life for military families.

II. Research Procedures

You have been given a short survey to complete that describes some of your experiences as a military spouse/partner. You have also been given a copy of the Family Environment Scale to complete. These surveys and scales will be collected from you when you have completed them and placed in an envelope to be opened by myself at a later date. No identifying information will appear on any of the surveys and scales you give to me.

III. Risks to you

It is not anticipated that there would be any risk to you by completing this survey or Family Environment Scale. If you have any questions or concerns following completion of the survey or scale, I would be most happy to assist you.

IV. Confidentiality

Every effort possible will be made to keep the information I collect from you confidential. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will appear with the survey or scale you complete. If you do not wish to finish completing either the scal or survey, you may do so at any time, and you will not be penalized in any way if you do not participate in this research.

VI Feedback

I will be very happy to discuss aspects of this research or any questions you may have about this topic. I will be presenting the results of my overall findings to the community when I am done my research, and I would very much welcome your presence at this presentation.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Laurie Anne Johnson
Dr Harvy Frankel   204-474-8378

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature   Date

Survey Questions

This survey is intended to be completed by individuals identifying themselves as spouses or partners of CF members. Please do not write your name on this survey.

1.   **To what element (whether Regular or Reserve) does your partner belong?**

   Army ☐
   Air Force ☐
   Navy ☐

2.   **Generally speaking, are your spouse/partner's duty-related absences:**

   Longer term (three or more months at a time) ☐

   Revolving door-frequent absences and returns ☐

   My spouse does not leave on duty-related absences at this time ☐

3.   **How long have you been with your spouse/partner?**

   Three years or less ☐
   Four to seven years ☐
   Eight or more years ☐

4.   **How long has your spouse/partner been in the CF?**

   Less than two years☐
   Two to five years ☐
   Six to ten years ☐
   Eleven to twenty years ☐
   More than twenty years ☐

5.   **Do you have any children?**

   If yes, please indicate:
   Number of children   _____
   Age of oldest child   _____

6. **Are you employed outside the home?**
   If yes, please indicate:
   Full-time ☐
   Part-time ☐

7. **Are you a student?**
   If yes, please indicate:
   Full-time ☐
   Part-time ☐

8. **Where do you live?**
   In a PMQ ☐
   Off-base ☐

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Family Environment Scale

There are 90 statements in this questionnaire. They are statements about families. You are to decide which of these statements are true of your family and which are false. If you think the statement is *True* or *Mostly True* of you family, make an X in the box labeled *True*. If think the statement is *False* or *Mostly False* of your family, make an X in the box labeled *False*.

You may feel that some of the statements are true for some family members and false for others. Mark *True* is the statement is *true* for most members. Mark *False* if the statement is *false* for most members. If the members are evenly divided, decide what is the stronger overall impression and answer accordingly.

Remember, we would like to know what your family seems like to you, so do not try to figure out how other members see your family, but do give us your general impression of your family for each statement.

	True	*False*
1. Family members really help and support one another		
2. Family members often keep their feeling to themselves.		
3. We fight a lot in our family.		
4. We don't do things on our own very often in our family		
5. We feel it is important to be the best at whatever you do.		
6. We often talk about political and social problems.		
7. We spend most weekends and evenings at home.		
8. Family members attend church, synagogue, or Sunday School fairly often.		
9. Activities in our family are pretty carefully planned.		
10. Family members are rarely ordered around.		
11. We often seem to be killing time at home.		
12. We say anything we want to around home.		
13. Family members rarely become openly angry.		
14. In our family, we are strongly encouraged to be independent.		
15. Getting ahead in life is very important in our family.		
16. We rarely go to lectures, plays or concerts.		

	True	False
17. Friends often come over for dinner or to visit.		
18. We don't say prayers in our family.		
19. We are generally very neat and orderly.		
20. There are very few rules to follow in our family.		
21. We put a lot of energy into what we do at home.		
22. It's hard to "blow off steam" at home without upsetting somebody.		
23. Family members sometimes get so angry they throw things.		
24. We think things out for ourselves in our family.		
25. How much money a person makes is not very important to us.		
26. Learning about new and different things is very important in our family.		
27. Nobody in our family is active in sports, Little League, bowling, etc.		
28. We often talk about the religious meaning of Christmas, Passover, or other holidays.		
29. It's often hard to find things when you need them in our household.		
30. There is one family member who makes most of the decisions.		
31. There is a feeling of togetherness in our family.		
32. We tell each other about our personal problems.		
33. Family members hardly ever lose their tempers.		
34. We come and go as we want to in our family.		
35. We believe in competition and "may the best man win".		
36. We are not that interested in cultural activities.		
37. We often go to movies, sports events, camping, etc.		
38. We don't believe in heaven or hell.		
39. Being on time is very important in our family.		
40. There are set ways of doing things at home.		
41. We rarely volunteer when something has to be done at home.		
42. If we feel like doing something on the spur of the moment, we often just pick up and go.		
43. Family members often criticize each other.		
44. There is very little privacy in our family.		

	True	False
45. We always strive to do things just a little better the next time.		
46. We rarely have intellectual discussions.		
47. Everyone in our family has a hobby or two.		
48. Family members have strict ideas about what is right and wrong.		
49. People change their minds often in our family.		
50. There is a strong emphasis on following rules in our family.		
51. Family members really back each other up.		
52. Someone usually gets upset if you complain in our family.		
53. Family members sometimes hit each other.		
54. Family members almost always rely on themselves when a problem comes up.		
55. Family members rarely worry about job promotions, school grades, etc.		
56. Someone in our family plays a musical instrument.		
57. Family members are not very involved in recreational activities.		
58. We believe there are some things you just have to take on faith.		
59. Family members make sure their rooms are neat.		
60. Everyone has an equal say in family decisions.		
61. There is very little group spirit in our family.		
62. Money and paying bills is openly talked about in our family.		
63. If there's a disagreement in our family, we try hard to smooth things over and keep the peace.		
64. Family members strongly encourage each other to stand up for their rights.		
65. In our family, we don't try that hard to succeed.		
66. Family members often go to the library.		
67. Family members sometimes attend courses or take lessons for some hobby or interest (outside of school).		
68. In our family each person has different ideas about what is right and wrong.		
69. Each person's duties are clearly defined in our family.		
70. We can do whatever we want to in our family.		
71. We really get along well with each other.		

	True	*False*
72. We are usually careful about what we say to each other.		
73. Family members often try to one-up or out-do each other.		
74. It's hard to be by yourself without hurting someone's feelings in our household.		
75. "Work before play" is the rule in our family.		
76. Watching T.V. is more important than reading in our family.		
77. Family members go out a lot.		
78. The Bible is a very important book in our home.		
79. Money is not handled very carefully in our family.		
80. Rules are pretty inflexible in our household.		
81. There is plenty of time and attention for everyone in our family.		
82. There are a lot of spontaneous discussions in our family.		
83. In our family, we believe you don't ever get anywhere by raising your voice.		
84. We are not really encouraged to speak up for ourselves in our family.		
85. Family members are often compared with others as to how well they are doing at work or school.		
86. Family members really like music, art and literature.		
87. Our main form of entertainment is watching T.V. or listening to the radio.		
88. Family members believe that if you sin you will be punished.		
89. Dishes are usually done immediately after eating.		
90. You can't get away with much in our family.		

Interview Consent Form

Research Project Title: Military Families and Stress Management
Researcher: Laurie Anne Johnson

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I. Purpose of the research;

This research is being done by Laurie Anne Johnson, as part of the requirements for completion of my Master of Social Work degree at the University of Manitoba. I am doing this research to further the awareness and understanding of the role stress plays in the well-being of military families. It is hoped that this research will provide guidance to people working with military families about these families' strengths and what potential services would be of most use to enhance the quality of life for military families.

II. Research Procedures

You have agreed to be contacted for research purposes. If you agree to participate in this research, you will take part in a semi-structured interview conducted by myself at a mutually agreed-upon location. This interview will take approximately one to one-and-a-half hours. You have the right to refuse to answer any of the questions I may ask in this interview. It is possible that I may contact you after you have completed this interview to clarify certain points raised in the interview. You may withdraw from the research at any point and will not be penalized in any way if you do choose to withdraw.

III. Risks to you

In order to ensure that this interview does not become a stressful experience for a participant, I will discuss with you before we begin if any very serious life events have occurred to you or your family in the last year. Interviews will not be conducted with individuals who have experienced very serious or disturbing life events in the last year.

Because this study deals with some of the aspects of military family life that may be considered stressful, there is a risk that you might find parts of the interview upsetting. You may find yourself feeling upset about some of the topics you and I

discussed after a period of time has passed following the interview. Before we begin the interview, I will discuss with you some resources that you may find helpful if you feel upset and need to talk to someone. I will also make sure you have means to contact me if you want to discuss any aspect of this research.

IV. Recording devices

This interview will be audiotaped. These tapes will be transcribed by myself and/or a professional transciber who has no connection to the military family community. No one else will hear these tapes. The professional transcriber has signed a confidentiality agreement regarding this research. Audiotapes, computer files and hard copies of interview transcripts will remain secured under lock and key. Your name will not appear anywhere in any information I gather. The audiotapes, computer files and transcripts of interviews will be erased when the research is completed.

V. Confidentiality.

Every effort possible will be made to keep the information I collect from you confidential. All names of people, locations, events, and organizations will be concealed or disguised as much as possible. Your name will not appear anywhere in the research study, and

As stated above, the professional transcriber has signed a confidentiality agreement prior to beginning transcriptions of interviews. All information I collect will be kept securely, and destroyed when my research is complete. My University of Manitoba advisor, Dr Harvy Frankel, will be the only other individual who may have an opportunity to view transcriptions as he monitors the quality of my work.

There is a very slight chance that someone who knows you extremely well, and who was also very familiar with issues affecting families in the Canadian Forces, might be able to identify you from some of the situations or topics you discuss in the interview. Finally, one limit to confidentiality is, as is the case with all research of this type, would be in a circumstance where I, as the researcher, would have an obligation to contact the mandated Child and Family Service Agency if I was concerned about abuse or neglect of a child.

VI Feedback

I will be very happy to discuss aspects of this research or any questions you may have about this topic. I will be presenting the results of my overall findings to the community when I am done my research, and I would very much welcome your presence at this presentation. If you would prefer to discuss this research with me privately, I would also welcome this opportunity.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Laurie Anne Johnson
Dr Harvy Frankel   204-474-8378

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

_____   _____

Participant's Signature   Date

_____   _____

Researcher and/or Delegate's Signature   Date

Interview Schedule

A. Demographic Information
1. How long have you and your partner been together?
2. Was s/he is the C.F. before you got together or did s/he join after your relationship began?
3. What was your experience of the C.F. before this relationship or before your partner joined?
4. Do you have any children? What are their ages? Do all of your children live with you and your partner?
5. Can you tell me something about your type of housing-do you live on or off base?
6. Does your partner deploy or is he absent from home as part of his C.F. duties? What type of deployment do you usually experience?

B. Coping with the Demands of the C.F.

1. What, if anything, was different than you expected about having a partner in the C.F?
2. What, if any, was the most difficult demand you encountered?
3. Can you expand on why this was so stressful?
4. Were there any other demands you think I should know about?
5. What, if anything, did you think was most helpful support or resource to you in managing demands?
6. What personal characteristics do you think you have that help you manage the demands?
7. What qualities in your relationships may affect how you manage demands?
8. What supports or resources did you not have that you think might have helped you manage demands?
9. Looking back, how, if at all, did stressors in your life change as your relationship got longer, and/or as your children grew?
10. Looking back, how, if at all, did stressors in your life change when there were changes in your partner's military career?
11. Are there any other demands you think I should know about? Is there a significant stressor that you think your family likely faces in the future due to the C.F?
12. What do you think is likely to be the most helpful to you in managing these future stressors?

13. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about stress, your family and the C.F. that we have not yet had a chance to discuss?

Appendix B

Permission from Dr R Moos Regarding use of the FES

Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board Approval Certificate

Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre Letter of Support

From:	Rudolf Moos bmoos@stanford.edu
To:	"Laurie Johnson" ljohnson@newdirections.mb.ca
Date:	Thu, Nov 14, 2002 5:34 PM
Subject:	Re: use of the FES with Canadian military families

Yes, I think that the Family Environment Scale (FES) might provide some informative data that would help you characterize your Canadian military families and that would add to your qualitative data. I am happy to give you permission to you use the FES in your project.

For your information, the Family Environment Scale (FES) and Manual are published by: Mind Garden, 1690 Woodside Road, Suite #202, Redwood City, CA 94061; (Phone 650-261-3500; FAX 650-261-3505; email is info@mindgarden.com.)

The Mind Garden website address is www.mindgarden.com. You can find information about the Family Environment Scale either by clicking on "assessments by title" or "assessments by author". Mind Garden has a Sampler Set for the FES, which includes the Manual, the three forms (real, ideal, and expected) of the Scale, an answer sheet, and a scoring key and profile.

I hope this information is helpful; let me know if you have further questions.

Rudolf Moos

At 02:05 PM 11/14/02 -0600, you wrote:
Dear Dr Moos:

I am writing to you upon the suggestion of Dr Harvy Frankel, my advisor at the School of Social Work at the University of Manitoba, Canada.

I am a graduate student in social work who is doing my thesis on the topic of family stress management in Canadian military families. I am a military spouse myself and am particularly interested in how military families manage the "normal" stressors of military life, including deployment and postings.

My research is primarily qualitative, but as I have explored this area it has become clear to me that there is a significant lack of research available on Canadian military families. Dr Frankel and I have both realized that using the Family Environment Scale to obtain more information about the characteristics of Canadian military families would be most enlightening. I therefore plan to administer the FES with a sample of about 60 or so female partners of military members.

I am asking if you would grant me permission to use the FES (Real Form) for this academic purpose. As I am a student, I would most appreciate this consideration. I would be happy, if you wish it, to send you the results of my completed research.

Again, I thank you for your consideration of my request.

Yours truly,

Laurie Anne Johnson
University of Manitoba
Bernice/Rudolf Moos Center for Health Care Evaluation (152-MPD) 795 Willow Road Menlo Park, CA 94025
Phone - Bernice: 650-493-5000 X23367 Phone - Rudolf: 650-614-9892 FAX: 650-617-2690

Approval Certificate

28 August 2002

TO: **Laurie Anne Johnson**   (Advisor H. Frankel)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Wayne Taylor, Chair**
Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board (JFREB)

RE: **Protocol #J2002:076**
"Military Families and Stress Management"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Joint-Faculty Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

WINNIPEG MILITARY FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE
CENTRE DE RESSOURCE DES FAMILLES MILITAIRES - WINNIPEG
350 Doncaster Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba   R3N 1W8
Ph (204) 489-7003   Fax (204) 489-8587
Email : wpgmfrc@autobahn.mb.ca

June 6, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that the Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Military Family
Resource Centre is very pleased to offer our support to the research on military families
and stress management being conducted by Ms. Laurie Anne Johnson. We understand
that the research being planned will involve the voluntary participation of members of the
Winnipeg military family community who may be users of the Winnipeg Military Family
Resource Centre. We also understand that this research is being done in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ms. Johnson to obtain her Master of Social Work degree from the
University of Manitoba.

There is, in our opinion, a scarcity of research about Canadian military families. The
Board of Directors of the Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre thinks that such
research will provide very useful information to those who work with and plan for
military families, and we look forward to examining the results of this research when it
becomes available.

If you have any further questions about the support of the Winnipeg Military Family
Resource Centre of this research, you are welcome to contact the Executive Director, Mr.
Don Brennan, at (204) 489-7003.

Thank you for your consideration of this project.

Yours truly,

Kim D. O'Connor
Vice Chairperson
Chairperson, Evaluation Committee
Winnipeg Military Family Resource Centre