The Invisible Strength and Heart Behind the Uniform:

An Exploration of Canadian Navy Officer's Wives Experiences Since World War II Through Oral Histories

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Table of Contents:

Introduction……..2

Literature
Review…….7

Oral History
Themes……...14

Discussion……..27

Conclusion…….30

Bibliography……..33

Appendix I…….37

Appendix II……40

Introduction

Military spouses are broadly defined as civilian and military personnel who are, or were, married, engaged, or common-law with any active-duty or retired member of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Canada officially recognized this designation in the post-World War II period as the family aspect of military members was increasingly considered.[1] For the spouses of Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) members, this definition does not change; yet it is not accurate. These words alone do not capture the emotional, physical, generational, and lived experiences behind the label 'Navy spouse.' Naval careers, like many CAF careers, are a two-sided coin comprised of service and restricted freedoms; meaning military personnel are expected to put certain liberties – like physical health, emotional health, and geographical location – aside for service. Consequently, the RCN's operational effectiveness and military goals subordinate the democratic rights of the individual beyond traditional work.[2] These qualities make naval careers and subsequent family life distinct because the family unit is directly affected by members' positions in the RCN. Therefore, understanding the experience of these spouses is integral to gaining further insight into the RCN, its overall impact on members personal lives, and reclaiming an incomplete history. The best way to understand these experiences is through oral histories.

Oral history is a method of collecting qualitative data from individuals who have experienced historical events first-hand. Oral histories are traditionally informed and utilized alongside textual primary and secondary source material to determine accuracy and reinforce historical narratives, but they can also take center stage in historical study. Principally, oral

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[1] Deborah Harrison and Lucie Laliberté, *No Life Like It: Military Wives in Canada* (Toronto: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1994), 1-3, 243.
[2] Deborah Harrison and Lucie Laliberté, "The Competing Claims of Operational Effectiveness and Human Rights in the Canadian Context," *Armed Forces & Society* 34, no. 2 (2008), 209, DOI: 10.1177/0095327X06298734.

histories allow researchers to interact and understand the past from a living person and create history through a dialogical process. As Lynn Abrams states in *Oral History and Theory*, oral history is "a creative, interactive methodology that forces us to get to grips with many layers of meaning and interpretation contained within people's memories."[3] It is this ask and answer technique that is a unique and beneficial practice for the historian. Abrams argues oral histories reveal participants' true selves – their true thoughts, feelings, and memories – when questioned about a particular historical experience. Abrams perceives this life course experience as the ultimate goal and advantage of oral history.[4] They do not view time as the enemy, but a value affording clarity and introspection. Moreover, Abrams argues oral histories are best used to fill historical gaps for subjects ignored by traditional historiography; literally giving marginalized people their voice on a historical subject and experience.[5] Although oral history is often criticized for its subjectivity, reliance on memory, and narrative character, Abrams argues these are mere considerations for the historian and should not take away from the overall process and results. Ultimately each problem can be mitigated by the historian's understanding of memory creation, intersubjectivity, and narrative analysis.[6]

It is Abrams' conceptualization of oral history as an emancipatory practice to reclaim the untold stories of those forgotten in historical accounts that incited the use of oral histories in the following to capture the experience of RCN wives. The author personally conducted ten semi-structured oral histories with wives of Navy officers between February 2020 and January 2021; three were collected in person, six were collected through Zoom, and one was collected over the

[3] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History and Theory* (New York: Routledge & Francis Group, 2010), 18, ProQuest Ebook Central.
[4] Abrams, *Oral History and Theory*, 33-53.
[5] Ibid., 154-75.
[6] Ibid., 54-129.

phone. Each oral history was recorded, noted, and coded using grounded theory to find overarching themes within the accounts. The semi-structured interview guide included 84 standard questions for civilian wives and 117 standard questions for military wives.[7] Based on the proceeding literature review, questions were sorted into the following subject categories: background, naval career, relationship with spouse, child-rearing, employment, support systems, deployment, relocation, and retirement. This break-down was chosen to best reflect the longitudinal life course experience of Navy wives and thus differs from traditional life course analyses. Each category additionally included blended questions to capture the complex and interconnected nature of Navy wives' lived experience. Interviews averaged two and a half hours but ranged from an hour and a half to four hours in total.

All participants identified as cisgender women, currently married and in a heterosexual relationship with a retired Canadian Navy officer. All ten ranged between the ages of 40 and 78, have children, live a middle-class lifestyle, and have worked within and outside the domestic sphere throughout their lives. Additionally, seven participants attended post-secondary education, six completed their bachelor's degree, and four had Naval careers themselves. The participants were located throughout Canada, with eight living in Victoria British Columbia and one living in Halifax Nova Scotia. The final participant was located in Melbourne Australia, having retired there with her family in 2013. The decision to focus on Canadian Navy wives was made because there is limited Canadian based literature and historiography on the subject. Additionally, the existing scholarship does not differentiate between the RCN, Army, or Airforce; instead shaping research until the umbrella of the CAF. Ultimately, there are four limitations to the following analysis: class, sexuality, gender, and race.

[7] Please refer to Appendix I and Appendix II after the Bibliography for interview guides.

Firstly, because most Canadian scholarship does not distinguish officers from non-commissioned members (NCM), the following will focus on RCN officers' wives. The majority of proceeding secondary source literature focuses on the experiences of military spouses in the NCM context. In the Canadian context, NCMs and officers are differentiated by responsibility, income, and education often resulting in different classed experiences within their life courses. As the Defence and Research Department (D R&D) found in a 2013 study, NCMs are marked by lower education, income, and social class when compared to officers.[8] By focusing on officers' wives, this paper demonstrates a marked difference between NCM and officer's wives lived experiences as a possible direct reflection of class differences.

On top of this classed limitation, the following exclusively considered the experiences of RCN officers' white cisgendered wives. When the CAF amalgamated in 1967, the Canadian Forces Administrative Order 19-20 (CFAO 19-20) was established stating any homosexual service member whose "sexual abnormality" was discovered would be released from service with a dishonorable discharge.[9] The policy reigned for nearly three decades until its repeal in 1992. However, as Carmen Poulin and Lynne Gouliquer found in a series of qualitative interviews with LGB Canadian service members in 1997 and 2006, the repeal did little to change homophobic attitudes at the institutional and individual level. The authors concluded that this persistent discriminatory environment was responsible for the slowly increasing visible minority of LBGTQ+ service members over a decade after CFAO 19-20's reversal.[10] As the scope of this

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[8] Abderrahmane Sokri, "A Socio-Economic Analysis of Military Attrition: The Case of Non-Commissioned Members of the Canadian Armed Forces," Defence R&D Canada: Centre for Operational Research and Analysis, Accessed February 8, 2021, 26-9, https://cradpdf.drdc-rddc.gc.ca/PDFS/unc263/p537714_A1b.pdf.

[9] Lynne Gouliquer, "Negotiating Sexuality: Lesbians in the Canadian Military," in *Women's Bodies, Women's Lives: Health Well-Being and Body Image*, eds. Baukje Miedema, Janet M. Stoppard, and Vivienne Anderson (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2000), 257, Déslibres.

[10] Carmen Poulin, and Lynne Gouliquer, "Clandestine Existences and Secret Research: Eliminating Official Discrimination in the Canadian Military and Going Public in Academia," *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 16, (2012): 54-64, https://doi.org/10.1080/10894160.2011.557643.

project focusses on the experiences of spouses between 1960 and 2000, LGBTQ+ relationships are notably absent from this paper.

An additional hole is the lack of experiences regarding civilian and active force husbands' whose wives serve. During World War II, the RCN employed over 7,000 women to the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS), also known as Wrens. Although the group was disbanded in 1946, the precedence for women serving had been created. By 1951, a women's reserve force had been established and by 1955 women were allowed to serve as regular force members in the RCN.[11] Unfortunately, in 1963 "a fixed ceiling of 1500 women across the three services" was established "primarily in administrative and support rolls."[12] While this fixed ceiling was later revised in the 1970s, enrollment of women in the RCN remained low, a product of limited positions, harassment, and inadequate family policies. For example, the CAF offered no care or compensation to military couples who were separated by postings until the 1980s.[13]

As of February 2020, the RCN had the highest overall percent of women serving as an officer or NCM in the regular or reserve force; however, that percentage is only 20.6%.[14] Moreover, according to 2016 Department of National Defence (DND) data, 9% of married couples are both active duty CAF members. Breaking this percentage down, it is comprised of the 6,967 regular force CAF members who are legally married – 3,565 women and 3,402 men. Yet these figures represent 65% of all married female active regular force CAF members and

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[11] Karen D Davis, "Once a Wren, Always a Wren: The Experience and Contribution of Canada's Wrens, 1942-2010," In *Transforming Traditions: Women, Leadership and the Canadian Navy, 1942-2010*, eds by Karen D. Davis and Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger (Winnipeg: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2010), 1-3 5-10, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/dn-nd/D2-258-2010-eng.pdf.
[12] Davis, "Once a Wren, Always a Wren," 9.
[13] Mady Wechsler Segal, "The Military and the Family as Greedy Institutions," *Armed Forced & Society* 13, no. 1 (1986): 31-4, https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10/1177/0095327X8601300101.
[14] "Statistics of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces," Government of Canada, last Modified September 23, 2020, https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/women-in-the-forces/statistics.html.

only 10% of all married male active regular force CAF members. Additionally, 38,872 active duty regular force CAF members were legally married in 2016, 5,518 of which were women. Although this data does not include reservists, common law relationships, or same-sex marriage the number of married women in the CAF is still low.[15] Consequently, the limited enrollment of women in the RCN between 1960 and 2000 and the limited number of married CAF members overall result in the husband-serving focus of this paper. Furthermore, the racial makeup of the CAF is majority white. According to a 2008 Statistics Canada profile on the CAF, only 6.4% of the total military are visible minorities.[16] While no intersecting statistics could be found listing the race and gender composition of the CAF, it is safe to assume the intersection probability of married women of color serving in the RCN is low. With these limitations in mind, the following seeks to answer the questions: what are the experiences of Canadian Navy officer's wives since 1960; and, how is their life course impacted by their husbands' positions in the RCN?

Literature Review

Only a few histories have examined the topic of military wives in Canada; thus, a patch-work analysis of various interdisciplinary scholars is required to understand Navy officers wives' experiences since World War II. Notably, there are two foundational pieces of scholarship influential to the following analysis: Dianne Taylor's *There's No Wife Like It* and Deborah Harrison and Lucie Laliberté's *No Life Like It: Military Wives in Canada*. The former provides a collection of oral history interviews focusing on World War II and the post-war period. Most of these interviews were undertaken by the author over the course of thirteen-months from the

[15] Maj L.H. Gagné, "Separation of Married Service Couples: Problem or Part of Military Life," Canadian Forces College, Accessed February 20, 2020, 2, https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/402/305/gagne.pdf. This 2016 is the most recent data from the Department of Nation Defence and is based only on heterosexual regular force members. Additionally, this information is not available for the Royal Canadian Navy.
[16] Jungwee Park, "A Profile of the Canadian Forces," *Perspectives on Labour and Income* 20, no. 3 (2008): 18, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/pub/75-001-x/2008107/pdf/10657-eng.pdf?st=E-aOK1xr. This is the most recent data that could be found.

civilian wives of Canadian Navy members, regardless of husband's rank or trade. These overwhelmingly positive narratives are presented thematically recounting, without analysis, experiences of dating, marriage, deployment, separations and homecomings. Taylor's collection is integral to the following investigation for two primary reasons: firstly, she provides a collection of RCN wives' experiences between the 1940s and 1980s essential to this paper's historical timeline; secondly, the anthology includes positive spousal experiences like reunions, women's social circles, and wives' pride.[17] By providing an historical timeline for wives' experiences and thematic categories for positive analysis, Taylor's collection is influential.

The second piece of foundational scholarship is Harrison and Laliberté's *No Life Like It*. As the foremost study on CAF wives, Harrison and Laliberté sought to uncover the cost of militarism on civilian wives through a series of 112 oral histories conducted across Canada in the early 1990s. They argue that since military wives became popular vernacular in the 1950s, a plethora of changes occurred within the CAF that directly impacted wives – like its amalgamation, the entrance of women and LGBT people into the forces and changing gender roles. Ultimately, by analyzing their interviews through Marxist-feminists and dual-systems theory, they concluded that the experience of CAF wives is highly emotional and negative for both the individual, spousal relationship, and family. Furthermore, their analysis can be segmented into eleven thematic sections: gender roles, general marriage, absences or separations, relocation, postings, employment losses, child rearing, divorce, physical and substance abuse, mental illness and spousal resistance.[18] Utilizing Harrison and Laliberté's thematic framework, several important insights into military wives' experiences can be determined and expanded upon by the following scholars.

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[17] Dianne J. Taylor, *There's No Wife Like It* (Victoria: Braemar Books LTD., 1985), 1-193.
[18] Harrison and Laliberté, *No Life Like It*, 1-15, 49-85, 119-243.

The first insight is the continued reliance on traditional domestic gender roles for civilian military spouses. Liegh Spanner's "Governing "Dependents": The Canadian Military Family and Gender, A Policy Analysis" argues the CAF relies on civilian spouses maintaining traditional gender roles within a domestic sphere to support regular force spouses. Spanner concludes that despite historical changes within the family and women's roles since the 1960s, the CAF continues to reinforce traditional gender roles through official policies in fear of de-stabilizing the established military family structure. This inability to adapt to social change ultimately forces predominantly female civilian spouses into free domestic labor to conform to a patriarchal institution and family model.[19]

Harrison and Laliberté further explain this continued reliance and subsequent re-enforcement of patriarchy and gender roles in the context of human rights. In "Competing Claims of Operational Effectiveness and Human Rights in the Canadian Context," they argue the historical tension between CAF objectives and Canadian democratic values have negatively impacted civilian wives who, despite most not being active members, are subjected to similar constrains on their freedom as their spouses; meaning they lose the ability to make fully autonomous decisions. For example, civilian wives are given the option to stay or relocate when their CAF spouse is posted, but the choice to stay may cause long-term relationship stress or separation, relocation can cause job displacement, employment stress, educational sacrifices, loss of support networks and perhaps uprooting children. Resultingly, Harrison and Laliberté suggest spouses take on traditional gender roles to accommodate their partner's relocations and deployments simply because it is easier. Consequently, their sacrifice can trap them in traditional

[19] Liegh Spanner, "Governing "Dependents": The Canadian Military Family and Gender, A Policy Analysis," *International Journal* 72, no. 4 (2017): 484-501, DOI: 10.1177/0020702017740606.

gender roles at odds with current political, social and economic climates that are continually reinforced within CAF policy objectives.[20]

However, while traditional gender roles and personal sacrifice occur within the context of the military family's lifestyle, there occurrence is not as negative nor as specific to military settings as Spanner, Harrison and Laliberté perceive. In his 2013 special report for the Minister of National Defence, Pierre Daigle confirms their arguments that CAF policies towards families have not properly adapted to changing social, political and economic climates. Daigle concedes that the key difference between civilian and military families are military families face geographic mobility, separation, and risk concurrently, while civilian families may only face one. Consequently, he suggests military policy acknowledge historical changes to the family institution and implement altered policies immediately to remove strain from the family members as a result of these coinciding factors.[21]

Additionally, Rachel Tupper and Jean-François Bureau's "Deployment Status" found that having one deployed parent can create insecure parental attachments in children age eleven or younger and increased parenting stress in the remaining parent. They suggest deployment of one spouse places additional stress and responsibility on the remaining parent, who is typically a wife, leaving them less responsive to maternal care, which can result in long-term health effects on the child's well-being. Though Tupper and Bureau concede that military families are more resilient then other family formations the emotional effects on children can still be long lasting.[22]

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[20] Harrison and Laliberté, "The Competing Claims of Operational Effectiveness and Human Rights in the Canadian Context," 210-220.
[21] Pierre Daigle, "On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-Being of Canada's Military Families in the New Millennium," Office of the Ombudsman, National Defense and Canadian Forces, Accessed February 8, 2020, http://www.ombudsman.forces.gc.ca/assets/OMBUDSMAN_Internet/docs/en/mf-fm-eng.pdf.
[22] Rachel Tupper and Jean-François Bureau, ""Deployment Status: A Direct or Indirect Effect on Mother-Child Attachment within a Canadian Military Context?," *Infant Mental Health Journal* 39, no. 4 (2018): 466-75, DOI: 10.1002/imhj.21720.

This is not to say military civilian wives do not partake in the public sphere; however, those that do face a unique set of challenges not experienced by non-military spouses. As found in a comparative study of United States civilian military spouses and non-military spouses, there are statistically significant differences in pay and job availability between the two groups. They suggest these differences relate to assumptions and realties regarding experience, relocation and inabilities to work full-time hours when spouses are deployed.[23] These difficulties are further supported in the Canadian context by Daigle's special report.[24] Furthermore, as found by Harrison and Laliberté, when CAF wives venture outside the domestic sphere as children age or spouses retire, job opportunities can be limited by lack of education or practical experience impacting earnings and job possibilities.[25]

Moreover, *Wives and Warriors* argue that Canadian Navy careers rely on a two-person career: the total naval career of the husband at the expense of the civilian spouse's career. The authors argue the wives of submarine officers rationalize putting their husband's careers before their own citing income, job stress, and wanting to keep the family together. While these wives may self-rationalize their decisions believing they have a choice in the matter or increased independence, *Wives and Warriors* argue they do not. They claim the military institution does not consider the life of the spouse, making assumptions that anything will be done for the benefit of the RCN at all costs. What wives perceive is in fact a demand: support your husband's career or lose your family. Ultimately, the career of the Navy officer in the authors' eyes relies on sacrifice and high personal cost for the career of the spouse.[26]

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[23] Sarah O. Meadows, Beth Ann Griffin, Benjamin R. Karney, and Julia Pollak, "Employment Gaps Between Military Spouses and Matched Civilians," *Armed Forces and Society* 42, no.3 (2016): 542-58, DOI: 10.1177/0095327X15607810.
[24] Daigle, "On the Homefront."
[25] Harrison and Laliberté, *No Life Like It*, 152-86.
[26] Laurie Weinstein, and Christine C. Whites, eds, *Wives and Warriors: Women and the Military in the United States and Canada* (London: Bergin & Garvey, 1997), 7-15, Google Books.

In an analysis of RCN wives, it is additionally important to note the workforce experience of military spouses who are also members of the CAF. As previously discussed, 9% of married heterosexual couples are both regular force members.[27] Furthermore, the CAF has a total of 16% women serving in their regular and reserve forces, which increases slightly to 20.6% for the RCN as previously discussed.[28] In "The Military and the Family as Greedy Institutions," Mady Segal argues the military and family are conflicting institutions at odds with the other with a negative impact on female members. Though Segal's findings are dated and from the United States, she notes three interesting trends relevant to this paper. First, the Navy branch has the highest rate of heterosexual regular force member marriages. Second, the majority of women in the Navy are married to fellow regular force members, a trend not reciprocated by male members. And finally, Segal found 79% of dual Navy couples do not have children.[29]

Though there is limited overlapping findings in the categories of regular force members and military wives, some similarities can be drawn between the experiences of civilian CAF wives and spouses in the regular force. The first is that both groups experience gender discrimination. While civilian wives face gendered policies and domestic realities, regular force wives face barriers to recruitment, promotion, personal lives, personal representation and earnings.[30] The second that civilian and serving spouses experience is sexual abuse and violence. As determined by the Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, sexual misconduct,

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[27] Gagné, "Separation of Married Service Couples: Problem or Part of Military Life." This comes from 2016 DND data based only on regular force members. It is the most recent data.
[28] Government of Canada, "Statistics of Women in the Canadian Armed Forces."
[29] Mady Wechsler Segal, "The Military and the Family as Greedy Institutions," *Armed Forces & Society* 13, no. 1 (1986): 9-34, https://doi-org.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/10/1177/0095327X8601300101.
[30] Jacqueline Chartier, "From D-Day to Afghanistan: The Evolution of Women in the Canadian Navy," *Esprit de Corps*, March 2011, Gale OneFile. Stéphanie Bélanger, "Exploring Gender Identity Through the Experience of Women in the Canadian Navy at the Dawn of the 21st Century: A Study of Ten Testimonies," In *Transforming Traditions: Women, Leadership and the Canadian Navy, 1942-2010*, ed. Karen D. Davis and A.H. Bélanger (Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2016), 155-66, http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/dn-nd/D2-258-2010-eng.pdf.

harassment and violence is a continual problem within the CAF that has not been adequately dealt with since women entered the force.[31] These findings are also established within the experiences of civilian CAF spouses suggesting intimate partner violence increases within CAF members as a result of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and military culture.[32] Though the true prevalence of the problem of sexual abuse, harassment, misconduct, violence and substance abuse cannot be fully known within the CAF and family unit, it is an experience shared by some military spouses.

Other additional negative health impacts that could be experienced by civilian and regular force CAF wives include the decline of intimate relationships and marital quality and direct negative effects like elevated stress, anxiety and depression among military wives.[33] Furthermore, "Health-Related Quality of Life of Canadian Forces Veterans After Transition to Civilian Life" found that upon retiring from the CAF the above negative health effects were mitigated and individual health and relationships improved, but never fully diminished.[34] Ultimately, the above literature was used to determine what the life course of RCN wives could

[31] Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence, "Sexual Harassment and Violence in the Canadian Armed Forces," Senate Canada, Accessed February 20, 2020, https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/SECD/Reports/SECD_Report_harassment_May_19_e.pdf.
[32] Harrison and Laliberté, *No Life Like It*, 187-230.; Zamorski, Mark A, and Miriam E. Wiens-Kinkaid, "Cross-Sectional Prevalence Survey of Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration and Victimization in Canadian Military Personnel," *BMC Public Health* 13, no. 1 (2013): 3-15, http://www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2458/13/1019.
[33] Regarding the decline in intimate relationships and marital quality: Birditt, Kira S., and Toni C. Antonucci, "Relationship Quality Profiles and Well-Being Among Married Adults," *Journal of Family Psychology* 21, no. 4 (2007): 595-604, DOI: 10.1037/0893-3200.21.4.595.; Pflieger, Jacqueline C., Cynthia A. Leardmann, Hope S. McMaster, Carrie J. Donoho, and Lyndon A. Riviere, "The Impact of Military and Nonmilitary Experiences on Marriage: Examining the Military Spouse's Perspective," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 31, no. 1 (2018): 719-729, DOI: 10.1002/jts.22321. Regarding the direct negative effects: Harrison and Laliberté, *No Life Like It*, 187-230.; Harrison and Laliberté, "The Competing Claims of Operational Effectiveness and Human Rights in the Canadian Context," 208-229.
[34] Dimiceli, Erin E., Mary A. Steinhardt, and Shanna E. Smith, "Stressful Experiences, Coping Strategies, and Predictors of Health-Related Outcomes among Wives of Deployed Military Servicemen," *Armed Forces & Society* 36, no. 2 (2010): 351-73, DOI: 10.1177/0095327X08324765.

be, aiding the formulation of oral history questions and offering sources of comparison for the following discussion.[35]

Oral History Themes

As previously discussed, the following ten oral histories were collected between February 2020 and January 2021.[36] The first was collected from Mrs. Jaqueline (Jackie) Carlé, executive director of the Esquimalt Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC) located in Victoria, BC. Jackie married her husband, a Navy Captain, in 1980. The second narrative comes from retired Navy Lieutenant Gina Donaldson. Gina began her service in 1975 as a non-commissioned administration clerk in the Air Force before transferring to the Navy as a regular force member in 1982. She retired in 1991. Gina and her husband, a retired Vice-Admiral, married in 1985 making the pair a Navy service couple until Gina's retirement. Mrs. Gillian (Jill) Garnett became a Navy spouse in 1966 after marrying her husband, a Vice-Admiral. Jill is also the sponsor for HMCS VICTORIA, the lead boat in the Victoria class submarines, and has been since 1999.[37] Fourth to be interviewed was Mrs. Louise Lloyd, a stay-at-home mother who married her husband in 1986. Louise's husband is a retired Vice-Admiral. Retired Navy Lieutenant Claire Gardam was the fifth participant interviewed. Claire predominantly served in Halifax Nova Scotia with the military police until 1996 when she accepted a force reduction program package and retired. Claire married her husband, a Naval Warfare Officer (NWO), in 1993 but the pair were a Navy service couple for a decade.

[35] Semi-structured oral history guides can be found in Appendix I and Appendix II below.
[36] All oral histories can be found in the University of Victoria's Special Collections.
[37] Ship sponsoring is a tradition by which typically a female civilian is invited to sponsor a vessel, in Jill's case the submarine HCS VICTORIA. Sponsoring duties include ship christening, launching, and occasionally meals and other small events in the sponsor's honor or by the sponsor themselves.

Mrs. Fay Maddison, the only participant located outside Canada, married her husband, retired Commander of the Royal Canadian Navy and Chief of the Naval Staff (CRCN) in 1985. Fay founded and incorporated the Natasha's Wood Foundation in 2014 to support the mental and physical health of CAF families. Before she founded the Natasha's Wood Foundation she worked as an actor, writer, and model. The sixth participant is retired Lieutenant Colonel Diana Hope. Diana is the only participant interviewed who experienced divorce and separation during her time in the forces. Diana has been married to her fourth husband, another Lieutenant Colonel, since 1996. Mrs. Geraldine (Gerry) Melville married her husband, a retired Commander, in 1971. Gerry worked as a meteorologist before becoming a stay-at-home mother to their three children. The penultimate – and eldest – participant Mrs. Marjorie Neveu married her husband in 1967. The two met at an RCN training base in 1966 when Marjorie held a three-year reserve contract. Her husband retired in 1997, holding the rank of Captain. Finally, Mrs. Tanya Kuhn, the youngest participant, married her husband in 2002. He retired in 2018 as a Naval Warfare Officer (NOW).

All participants have one or more child, lived in Canada most if not all of their lives, are still married to their retired Naval officer husband, worked either inside or outside the home, and experienced geographical separation and relocation throughout their lives. Six of the ten participants competed a bachelor's degree with a seventh attending but not completing post-secondary education. Additionally, Gina, Claire, Diana, and Marjorie offer a unique and distinct perspective regarding the experience of being a Canadian Navy wife because of their service background. Despite the findings in the literature review, the participants did not have overwhelmingly negative findings, though they can be thematically sorted into some of the categories discussed above. These categories include general marriage, absences or separations

caused by postings, relocation, gender roles, employment and child rearing, with the notable exceptions of divorce, physical and substance abuse, mental illness and spousal resistance. Additionally, the formation of social networks emerged as a key theme within the narratives.

General Marriage

Contrary to the preceding literature, the decline of intimate relationships and marital quality was not discussed by eight of the ten participants.[38] Although this may be the result of participants' reluctance to discuss difficult topics with the interviewer, it is most likely what Lynn Abrams called self-reflection, or the impact of time to clarify memories within the life course experience. Notably, Jackie, Gina, Jill, Louise, Fay, Gerry, Marjorie, and Tanya expressed positive relationships with their husbands' over their lives. Only Diana, the only divorced participant, and Claire discussed negative impacts on marriage which led to breakdown.

Married since 1980, Jackie admits that while she had trouble adapting to the military structure, jargon, relocations and separations, her and her husband always placed communication, collaborative decision making, and partnership first as a strong and consistent value in their relationship. Additionally, Jackie describes always admiring her husband's sense of duty and service which may have further improved the quality of their marriage.[39] Gina similarly describes difficulties adapting to the lifestyle, but only during her transition from being a uniformed spouse to civilian spouse in 1991. She suggests that maintaining a positive military lifestyle was easier for her as a civilian because she was familiar with the Navy system and understood her husband's patriotism, pride, passion and calling. Gina additionally states that the

[38] Birditt and Antonucci, "Relationship Quality Profiles and Well-Being Among Married Adults," 595-604.; Harrison and Laliberté, *No Life Like It*, 187-230.; Pflieger, Leardmann, McMaster, Donoho, and Riviere, "The Impact of Military and Nonmilitary Experiences on Marriage," 719-729.
[39] Jaqueline Carlé, "Carlé, Jacqueline Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, February 27, 2020, audio, Part 1, University of Victoria Special Collections.

Navy offered a sense of hopeless romanticism that aided her and her husband's partnership, mutual support and communication.[40] Like Gina, Marjorie states her transition from reserve force to civilian spouse was easier because she had been in the Navy herself too. Furthermore, Marjorie's father had been in the Canadian Navy during World War II before his transitioned into the Airforce after Marjorie's birth, so she has personal experiences with the stress, expectations, and distance caused by a life of service.[41]

Jill also describes her relationship with her husband positively, explaining that his career in the Navy afforded her increased independence, individuality, adventure and experiences. She further suggests that because she had no expectations heading into the lifestyle, she felt no disappointments and quickly adapted.[42] Like Jill, Tanya happily entered her marriage with no expectations after dating her husband for fourteen months, eleven of which were long distance. At the time, both Tanya and her husband held jobs that required travel and appreciated the two-sidedness of the situation. It was not until Tanya left her job that the distance became more difficult and the communication more important while she adjusted to a sedimentary lifestyle. While Tanya characterized her overall relationship with her husband as great, she did acknowledge that his decision to leave the Navy in 2018 was best for their relationship.[43] Similarly, Louise had no expectations heading into the lifestyle of a Navy wife, although the transition into married life was not as freeing as Jill describes, but more in line with Tanya's experience. Louise initially had difficulties because mere weeks after she and her husband married, they moved across the country from Victoria to Halifax. Without a group of friends,

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[40] Donaldson, interview.
[41] Marjorie Neveu, "Neveu, Marjorie Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, December 17, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.
[42] Gillian Garnett, "Garnett, Gillian Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, March 9, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.
[43] Tanya Kuhn, "Kuhn, Tanya Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, January 9, 2021, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.

family, or her sea-bound husband, Louise felt isolated; these feelings soon changed to align with Jill's experiences though when she became more comfortable with her surroundings.[44]

Like Louise, Fay moved to be with her husband; however, Fay moved to Ottawa from a different continent. After meeting her husband on a blind date in Hong Kong in 1983, Fay moved to Canada to marry her husband in 1985. Fay similarly felt isolated without friends or family nearby and experienced a slight strain on her relationship with her husband. Once she was settled and able to do something that was hers, their relationship improved. She grew to love the travel and experiences he brought into their life and relationship.[45] Moreover, like Fay and Louise, Gerry moved from Winnipeg to Halifax after her and her husband married in 1971. Gerry remembers her move differently than the isolation expressed by Fay and Louise; instead, Gerry remembers warmth and happiness from fellow Navy wives as she moved alone into their Halifax home. Gerry reinforced this memory throughout her oral history as the moment she truly embraced the Navy wife lifestyle and the accepted it as a part of her relationship.[46]

The only two spouses that directly discussed general marital dissatisfaction were Claire and Diana – coincidently both were Navy members themselves. Claire candidly discussed the slow dissolution of her marriage between 2008 and 2012 owing to several factors including a forced relocation to Ottawa, the loss of her job, and her husband's promotion. For Claire, the largest problem was her husband's assumption she would keep house and be at his every beck and call. Ultimately it was Claire's cancer diagnosis in 2012 that brought the couple back

[44] Louise Lloyd, "Lloyd, Louise Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, November 19, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.
[45] Fay Maddison, "Maddison, Fay Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, December 5, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.
[46] Geraldine Melville, "Melville, Geraldine Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, December 11, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.

together – and they have been stronger ever since.[47] Diana faced the most marital strife out of all the participants throughout her experience as a Navy spouse. She attributed this strife to placing her career before her first and second husbands' and their jealousy at a successful military woman. For example, Diana's relationship with her first husband lasted from 1970 to 1980, ending after years of alcohol abuse, distance, and allegations of cheating. Though Diana describes her married life as taking "a while to get right," she has had nothing but a great relationship with her fourth husband.[48] Consequently, contrary to the aforementioned scholars, the overall marital quality of Canadian Navy officers' wives since World War II is an overwhelmingly positive aspect to their experiences despite occasional challenges as illustrated by Claire and Diana.

Absences, Separations and Relocations

When all participants were explicitly asked what the biggest challenges in their experiences as Canadian Navy wives were, they all responded postings and relocations; however, the overall impact of these separations and moves was not as negative as suggested in the above literature review. In her narrative, Jackie states separations and relocations have advantages and disadvantages; with the disadvantages including the disruption of family.[49] All participants similarly concurred with this sentiment in their interviews, though some notably had more overtly positive experiences with separation and relocation, stressing independence and adventure than others. For example, Marjorie emphasized relocating as one of the best features of her Navy wife experience because the East coast was cheaper than the West coast, she always

[47] Claire Gardam, "Gardam, Claire Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, November 25, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.
[48] Diana Hope, "Hope, Diana Navy Spouse Experience," interviewed by Jordan Kerr, December 8, 2020, audio, University of Victoria Special Collections.
[49] Carlé, interview, Part 1.

made new friends, and she got to see the world.[50] Tanya however had an opposite experience. She and her husband were only relocated twice in her twenty years as a Navy spouse: once to Winnipeg in 2008 and once to Victoria in 2010. While Tanya remembers the Victoria move more positively, the Winnipeg move was especially difficult for the then-new mom because she lost her network of support. Additionally, although they made the move with the hopes that her husband would be around more often, Tanya described his shore postings as more draining than previous six-month deployments.[51] Ultimately, the remaining civilian wives – Fay, Louise, Jill, and Gerry – experiences all fell in between Marjorie and Tanya's sentiments; often stating the first and last months of relocations were the hardest, but once an adjustment period had subsided they were happy. Additionally, all participants stated absences, separations, and relocations were more difficult once they had children.

As retired Navy, Gina, Claire, and Diana offer another insight into separations and relocations beyond the civilian spouses. For example, Gina stated it was harder on her as a spouse when her husband faced shore deployments as opposed to sea deployments. She explains the shore deployments felt hard because she knew her husband was most likely lonely and working long hours as opposed to the rhythm, routine and company on board ship.[52] While this worry was not shared by Claire or Diana, it is interesting that shore deployments were more difficult for Gina. Claire found it harder to relocate than separate from her husband because she cherished her alone time and feared if they were always together, they would not adjust after more than a decade of a primarily long-distance marriage. Notably, it was the couple's move in 2008 to Ottawa away from Claire's home base of Halifax that Claire cited as the start of her

[50] Neveu, interview.
[51] Kuhn, interview.
[52] Donaldson, interview.

marriage's slow decline. Interestingly, Claire, like Gina, had more difficulties with relocations as a civilian.[53] Additionally, like Claire, Diana attributes her 1978 deployment to Germany as the downfall of her first marriage, stating the separation just brought jealousy and cheating allegations. Beyond this sentiment though, Diana did not touch on her experience with relocations, postings, and separations stating she always had a job and she always had her daughter.[54]

Specific to relocations, civilian wives discussed the difficulties of leaving jobs and their occasional struggles with unemployment, stating it was financially taxing and stressful. For example, Jackie, Fay, Gerry, Jill, and Tanya state the occasional unemployment was a choice made to place the family and their comfort post-relocation first. All five experiences unemployment and juggled part-time jobs and family while they raised young children and supported their husbands' careers until their children left the house or their husbands retired. Finding jobs were also difficult for Gina and Claire once they entered civilian life. Both had difficulties finding jobs and more problems holding on to them when relocation was necessary. Ultimately, while all participants noted absences, separations and relocations were challenging aspects to their experience as Navy wives they were not overwhelmingly negative and had positive aspects like bringing both spouses together providing unique travel and adventure for the family. Surprisingly, not all the wives pointed to their husbands' absences as difficulties within their relationships or negative experiences. While participants did express missing their husbands, their absences were framed as either chances for independence or being difficult for children. Resultingly the experiences of Canadian Navy wives since World War II regarding absences, separations and relocations is predominantly positive, despite challenges.

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[53] Gardam, interview.
[54] Hope, interview.

Child Rearing

The second challenge often cited by all the participants was raising their children while their husbands were away. As discussed by Dimiceli et al. and Harrison and Laliberté, negative health effects, such as elevated stress and anxiety, can be attributed to an increase in childrearing duties. Tanya best described this experience during her interview as "solo-parenting" arguing Navy wives are unique because they experience single parenting within a marital formation.[55] As Tanya states: "it's not so easy when you become the solo parent and it is not so easy to reunite and have a say in what was going on" when your spouse returns.[56]

This experience, and the stress and anxiety that accompanied it, were present in all ten oral histories; however, the type of stress and anxiety changed over their children's life course and mostly dissipated by the time their children reached high school. For example, Gerry had three daughters between 1973 and 1980 and stated her biggest challenge as a Navy wife was taking care of all three children while her husband was deployed; however, Gerry only discusses this as a challenge until the girls entered primary school. Moreover, as her daughters became pre-teens and teens she relied on their independence.[57] This theme of it being more difficult to raise infants and toddlers when husbands were absent is shared by Tanya, Louise, Marjorie, Jackie, and Fay. It is additionally important to note that these six women all chose to work from the home to care for their children. This phenomenon is not discussed in the preceding literature review.[58]

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[55] Kuhn, interview.
[56] Kuhn, interview, 15:20-15:35.
[57] Melville, interview.
[58] Dimiceli, Steinhardt, and Smith, "Stressful Experiences, Coping Strategies, and Predictors of Health-Related Outcomes among Wives of Deployed Military Servicemen," 351-73.; Harrison and Laliberté, *No Life Like It*.

Another sub-theme within these interviews is how participants' children struggled to adapt to new social groups and educational standards. Of the ten participants, only Jackie, Gina, Marjorie, and Jill discussed this stating it was an additional childrearing stress on them because they could not help their children acclimate.[59] Gina and Marjorie, for example, continuously stressed how difficult the transition between the provincial education system was. Gina emphasized it was deeply impactful on her son who was constantly shifted between grades and skill levels, directly impacting his ability to make friends and fit in.[60] Similarly, Marjorie stated their hardest move was to California because their youngest son no longer had his friend group and struggled in school. To help settle him, Marjorie emphasized the importance of "scouts and sports," activities he had had in Canada.[61]

Jackie and Jill also suggested their children had difficulties acclimatizing to new locations because they either missed their fathers or their friends. This is a consistent theme within Jackie's narrative – relocations for their family usually did not equate to their father being present and her children really struggled with his absence.[62] Jill's children similarly struggled with relocations, but because of absent friends. In the early 1980s, Jill and her family moved to Ghana for two years for her husband's ambassador position. The combination of culture shock and no friends was very difficult on her daughter who faced months of anxiety and stress before participating in the experience.[63] Although the long-term effects on their children's emotional health and attachments cannot be determined by this analysis, Tupper and Bureau's findings that children with a deployed parent under the age of eleven have trouble making attachments could

[59] Carlé, interview, Part 1.; Donaldson, interview.; Garnett, interview.; Neveu, interview.
[60] Donaldson, interview.
[61] Neveu, interview.
[62] Carlé, interview, Part 1.
[63] Garnett, interview.

be support by these findings as Jackie, Gina, Marjorie, and Jill described one child that struggled to adapt to absences and relocations.[64] As a result, challenges when solo-parenting and children struggling to acclimate to relocation is an experience of Canadian Navy wives since World War II.

Gender Roles

A number of the secondary sources suggest, the CAF has a continued reliance on traditional domestic and gender roles by civilian spouses.[65] While the collected oral histories do suggest this tradition is true, they also point to important developments that these gendered division are occurring for both civilian and RCN spouses. Significantly, Jackie suggests that while the gendered aspect of civilian CAF spouses' experiences have changed over time, if the MFRC's offered childcare service more spouses would be free to enter the workforce. She further stated that if the CAF wants to reach its 25% goal of female representation and solve its recruitment crisis it must offer services that allow all members to have a personal life.[66] This is supported by Gina's narrative as she states the reason she left the Navy in 1991 was because of her inability to have a secure family life and career under then policies.[67] This is additionally supported by Marjorie, who chose not to re-enter the Navy reserves in 1969 because she wanted to start a family – a life not supported by the Navy.[68] Diana recounts a particularly difficult story in her oral history about the pregnancy and birth of her daughter in 1976. At the time, the CAF did not offer maternity leave and did not have maternity uniforms. Diana was forced to wear civilian attire when she could no longer wear her uniform and was required to fit back in her

[64] Tupper and Bureau, "Deployment Status," 466-75.
[65] Daigle, "On the Homefront."; Harrison and Laliberté, "The Competing Claims of Operational Effectiveness and Human Rights in the Canadian Context," 208-229.; Spanner, "Governing "Dependents"," 484-50.
[66] Carlé, interview, Part 2.
[67] Donaldson, interview.
[68] Neveu, interview.

uniform a mere eight weeks after giving birth to her daughter. Her eight-week leave was all the unpaid vacation time she could muster up.[69]

In addition, while all ten participants took some form of traditional gender role over their life course, only Louise remained a stay at home mother for her entire life. Jill, Gerry, Jackie, Fay, and Tanya all performed childcare duties until their children were stable pre-teens. For example, Tanya was slowly easing back into full-time work during our January 2021 interview after nearly a decade of part-time work and childcare. Her twins are now age fourteen.[70] This is around the age Jill, Gerry, Jackie, and Fay remember returning to work. When you are the only parent home, you are forced to take traditional gender roles to compensate. As Gina stated, she was expected to be mom, dad, cook, maid, and chauffeur.[71] On the flip side, the gendered experiences of being a Navy spouse were not highlighted within Claire's oral history. This may be because Claire has partial custody of two stepdaughters from her husband's first marriage. While Claire describes the children coming over for weekends and her experience having them while her husband was deployed, the girls did not live with her full time. Because Claire did not have constant parenting duties, she was able to do as she pleased a majority of the time. Additionally, her stepdaughters were adolescents when she first met them, negating the most stressful period of childrearing according to the other nine participants.[72] This experience of freedom, working, and doing as you please is prevalent within all the oral histories – but only before the wives had children. Thus, the RCN's reliance on traditional gender roles may be a product of childrearing. This theory should be explored further. Consequently, while the CAF is still relying on spouses to do traditional gender roles and domestic work, changes are slowly

[69] Hope, interview.
[70] Kuhn, interview.
[71] Donaldson, interview.
[72] Gardam, interview.

occurring to this system, albeit not as fast as they should be. Furthermore, traditional gender roles are not an experience unique to civilian CAF wives or the military family lifestyle.

Social Networks

The final theme that emerged from the collected oral histories was the importance of social networks and hobbies in the experience of Canadian Navy wives. As suggested by Taylor in *There's No Wife Like It*, the community aspect to Navy wives is incredibly important to adjusting to relocations and absences of spouses and was described by all participants as a beneficial coping mechanism. Here, there are two important insights from the collected oral histories, the most important of which can be attributed to Jill. As Jackie, Gina, and Gerry state in their narratives, Jill created the baseline for military spouse social support networks by dismantling the Navy hierarchy for civilian wives and opening a community of support, inclusivity and friendship. Although Jill does not recollect this, she does recall disliking the exclusionary aspect to the Navy's organization hierarchies during the 1960s and actively working to include all spouses and families in Navy events as her husband was promoted into the 1980s.

It is this inclusion, and her belief that social groups created through mutual hobbies and experiences were integral to mediating the challenges of relocation and separation by providing a network of support to military spouses, that all the wives cite as an integral pillar to their experiences as Navy wives.[73] It is within this context that Gina identified four key social groups in the lives of military spouses: family, military, civilian and work relationships. While she states all are important social networks for spouses, she suggests maintaining civilian and work relationships to be the hardest when compared to military relationships because they understand

[73] Garnett, interview.

the experiences, relocations, challenges and sparse contact.[74] Additionally, like Gina, Marjorie and Claire noted having support networks and hobbies outside the Navy were integral to their transition from military personal to civilian. The only participant who did not speak openly about the importance of beyond work social networks was Diana, who instead insisted the various Navy jobs she held – and the networks that accompanied them – were enough for her during relocations.[75] Ultimately, the experiences of Canadian Navy wives since World War II has been influentially shaped by this dismantling of civilian Navy social hierarchy and key relationships.

Discussion

Beyond the aforementioned narrative themes, a consistent thread between the interviews is how the life course of each participant was directly or indirectly affected by their husbands' position in the RCN. This impact manifested most significantly as participant career path and geographical location. Additionally, there was a different impact on the wives' life course between civilian spouses and regular force spouses. As previously discussed, Weinstein and Mederer suggested Canadian Navy careers were two-person careers relying on the subordination of the wife's career for her husband's Naval career. Although the spouse may try and rationalize the decisions made for her husband, independent big picture choices do not exist; consequently, the RCN directly impacts the life experiences of Navy wives.[76]

The theme of a differential career path for the wives was touched on indirectly throughout the above thematic sections, predominantly appearing in the childrearing and relocation sections. Differential career paths refer to the wives putting their career goals on hold or forgetting them all together because of their husband's career. The most significant example

[74] Donaldson, interview.
[75] Hope, interview.
[76] Weinstein and Whites, eds, *Wives and Warriors*, 7-15.

of this comes from Louise's oral history. At the age of eighteen, Louise enrolled in the nursing program at Camosun College in Victoria BC. Louise had goals of being a registered nurse before she married her husband in 1986. Although her change of career path was not directly asked for by her husband, but instead a financial choice her parents forced her to make as they would either pay for her wedding or pay for her university, her career path nonetheless changed because of her husband. Even more representative of giving up a career path for a husband, Louise never returned to finish her registered nursing degree.[77] Louise was not the only wife to give up education for her husband's job. Both Tanya and Gina were forced to abort master's programs because their relocations were not conducive to graduate work. Tanya describes wanting to complete further early childhood education work, but her and her husband's move to Victoria from Winnipeg in 2010 slashed that dream. After spending nearly two years trying to sort out transfer credits between Mount St. Vincent in Halifax and the University of Winnipeg, the family moved to Victoria were the credits were non-transferable.[78] Similarly, Gina spent two years getting all the credits necessary for a masters in psychology at the University of Victoria until her husband was transferred to Ottawa. When the couple returned, her husband was promoted to Flag Officer and she decided it would be inappropriate if she continued her education.[79]

In addition to Gina changing her career for her husband as a civilian, she also changed her career while in the Navy. Gina left the Navy in 1991 because a relocation with her husband could not be guaranteed and thus neither could the safety of her two children. As Gina states about her decision to leave the Navy:

> I think that they [the Navy] are not trying to force you out because the number of times I had a career manager say to me "move you? We - you just got here; it's been two years." I go "everybody else moves us every two years, why is this a problem?" "Women they

[77] Lloyd, interview.
[78] Kuhn, interview.
[79] Donaldson, interview.

> are so challenging," or "look at your file its so thick because you had to move," and "you had nannies" and like (laughs) you can't handle the paperwork sergeant? You think it's a woman's problem that we have restricted postings, and we move differently? And also, the thing that made it interesting at the time, was as a married service couple, only one of you could declare the dependence. So, which one of you is single and which one of you is with the dependents because you couldn't claim them at both ends and you're like ok that sounds really so dumb to me…[80]

Additionally, Gina knew her naval career would never go as far as her husband's because she was a woman.[81] While Gina describes her decision to leave the Navy as a practical one, it is still a decision forced by her husband's career. This is an experience additionally shared by Marjorie who did not return to the RCN reserves after 1969 because she was expected to be a stay at home mother and wife.[82] The only participant who did not change their career path for their husband was Diana. Diana refused to leave the military regardless of how her first, second, and third husband's felt. Although this was not the only factor in each divorce, it nonetheless played a role.[83] Ultimately, Weinstein and Mederer findings that Navy wives do not really having a choice – other than marriage or divorce – in a two-person career like the RCN appears to be support by the completed oral histories; however, it must be said the decision is not as black and white nor as structured as the authors state. The decisions of these women cannot be boiled down to just their husbands' careers but must include their agency. Regardless, all participants, with the exception of Diana, made career sacrifices for their husbands and in part changed their life course.

The second significant way the wives' life course was directly impacted by their husbands' careers is geographical location. As discussed above, relocation was the hardest event within the lives of all Navy wives. The best example from the oral histories of how a husband

[80] Donaldson, interview, 1:20:50 – 1:21:51.
[81] Ibid.
[82] Neveu, interview.
[83] Hope, interview.

directly affects his wife's life course experience through relocation is found in Fay's narrative. As previously discussed, Fay moved to Canada from Australia to marry her husband in 1985. She spent the next twenty-seven years in Canada without the support of her family. In addition, the family's constant relocations throughout Canada meant she could not build a significant network or friends nor a group of work connections. As an actor and writer, it was very difficult for Fay to establish herself whenever the family relocated. Consequently, she sacrificed her job, family, and mental health for her husband's career – a decision that directly affected her life course.[84] This sentiment is additionally shared by Louise, Claire, and Tanya who all experienced geographical locations for their husband's careers that negatively impacted their life course. For Louise it was her friends, family, and possible career, for Claire it was her independence, home, and nearly her marriage, and for Tanya it was her family and education.[85]

Like the wives' career path, the decision of where the family would live is also not so black and white. Again, while the choice appears to be to keep the family together or tear the family apart, the decision to relocate alongside husbands was made with children, jobs, and social networks in consideration. Moreover, many participants describe relocation as beneficial, allowing them to see Canada, travel, and have new experiences. To summarize, while the Naval careers of the husbands directly affected the life course experience of their wives, the decision is not one made with two decisions, nor can it be truly understood by academics without providing these participants agency and understanding in their experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the experience of the interviewed Canadian Navy wives was overwhelmingly thematically positive in the categories of general marriage, absences or

[84] Maddison, interview.
[85] Gardam, interview.; Kuhn, interview; Lloyd, interview.

separations caused by postings, relocation, gender roles, employment losses, child rearing and social networks. Though all participants discussed notable difficulties relating to husband absences, relocations and raising children, they described these difficulties as a facet of the Navy wife and family lifestyle. As best summarized by Jackie, the co-occurrence of geographic relocations, partner absences and risk management make being a military wife unique, but once this lifestyle is understood these challenges can be mitigated.[86] Overall the participants summarized their experiences as Canadian Navy wives as positive lifestyles they were proud to have led filled with adventure, travel and close knit relationships despite the occasional challenges and stress.[87]

Ultimately these findings are contrary to a majority of the preceding scholarship on the topic of military wives' experiences. These disparities could be explained by this paper's use of only ten oral history accounts from the wives of retired Canadian Navy officers who held significant positions in the Navy. Moreover, the accounts could be skewed positively as participants nostalgically reflect on their lives from their present positions. Additionally, most participants still have strong connections to the RCN and CAF through social networks and civilian work which could negate speaking openly about negative attitudes; however, this scenario is unlikely because Jackie, Gina, Fay, Tanya, Claire, and Diana all voiced concern about either support provided to CAF families, sexual harassment, sexism, or lacking mental health support within the RCN and CAF. Finally, the disparities could be caused by taking an explorational historiographical approach to Canadian Navy wives' experiences over a hypothesis-based approach. In sum, this analysis suggests the experience of Canadian Navy

[86] Carlé, interview, Part 1 019:21 – 21:57.
[87] Carlé, interview, Part 2 17:41 – 20:36.; Donaldson, interview, 1:33:11 – 1:37:30; 1:40:38 – 1:49:32.; Garnett, interview, 2:20:31 – 2:21:33.

wives since World War II is more positive than previously found, but more research must be done to fully determine these findings. In addition, a majority of Navy wives make significant sacrifices in their lives for their husbands' careers. Essentially, the experience of RCN wives is best summarized by Gina Donaldson: "[a] military wife is like a tea bag, you never know how strong she is until she's in hot water."[88]

Word Count: 8,395

[88] Donaldson, interview.

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Appendix I: Civilian RCN Wives' Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about your childhood.
2. Did you have family connections to the Canadian Armed Forces outside your husband?
3. Did you attend university?
    a. Where?
4. What did you study at university?
5. In your own words, how would you define 'military wife'?
6. Does this definition change for Navy wives?
7. Does this definition change for Navy Officer's wives?
8. How would you describe the role differences between a Navy officer and a non-commissioned member (NCM)?
9. How did you meet your husband?
10. Was your husband in the Navy when you met him?
11. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) What was your husband doing when you first met him?
12. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) When did you husband chose to join the Navy?
13. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) How did you feel about his decision to join the Navy?
14. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) Were you consulted in his decision-making process?
15. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) Did his decision to go into the Navy affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
16. How did you feel about your husband being in the Navy at this time?
17. Did these feelings change throughout your relationship?
18. What position did he hold when you first met?
19. What position did he hold when he retired?
20. When did you start dating?
21. When did you get married?
22. Do you have any children?
23. Reflecting on when you started dating, did you know what your relationship would entail with your husband being in the Navy?
24. Did your husband's various promotions affect you?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)? Did this experience change over time?
25. Was your husband ever deployed away from you?
26. (**If yes**) Could you please list his deployment's length, year, and location.
27. What was your experience of your husband being posted/deployed away from you?
28. What was your experience with long-distance relationships?
29. Did this long-distance experience change over your relationship?
30. Did long-distance affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why)?
31. (**If they have kids**) Was your husband ever deployed away from your children?
    a. For how long?

32. (**If they have kids**) What was your experience of raising your children while your husband was deployed?
33. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change as your children grew up?
34. Did you work outside the home?
    a. Did you work outside the home when your husband was deployed?
    b. Did you work outside the home when you relocated?
35. (**If yes to above**) What was your experience of parenting your children as a working mother?
36. (**If yes to above**) What was your experience of parenting your children as a working mother while your husband was deployed?
37. (**If yes to above**) What was your experience of parenting your children as a working mother during relocation?
38. What was your experience with work-life balance?
39. Did this balance change over your life?
40. Did you experience any changes to your work-life balance while your husband was deployed?
41. Did you experience any changes to your work-life balance when you relocated?
42. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change before and after you had children?
    a. Deployment and relocation.
43. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change as your children grew up?
    a. Deployment and relocation.
44. Was your family relocated throughout your life?
45. (**If yes**) Could you please list your relocation's by length, year, and location.
46. What was your experience of being relocation within Canada?
    a. How did it affect you? (If they have kids) How did it affect your children?
47. (**If relocated outside of Canada**) What was your experience of being relocated outside of Canada?
    a. How did it affect you? (If they have kids) How did it affect your children?
48. Did relocation affect your relationship with your husband?
49. (**If they have kids**) Did relocation affect your children?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
50. (**If they have kids**) Did this change as your children grow up?
51. (**If they have kids**) Did relocation affect how you raised your children?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
52. Did deployment or relocation affect you more?
53. Did you have any support structures you turned when your husband was deployed?
54. (**If yes**) What were these support structures?
55. (**If they have kids**) Did you have any support structures for you kids when you husband was deployed?
56. (**If they have kids and yes**) What were these support structures?
57. Did you have any support structures you turned to when you were relocated?
58. (**If yes**) What were these support structures?
59. (**If they have kids**) Did you have any support structures for you kids when you were relocated?
60. (**If they have kids and yes**) What were these support structures?
61. Did friends aid deployments and/or relocation?

62. Did you experience a Naval wife hierarchy or social structure?
63. Did you have more civilian friends or military friends?
64. Did you have any hobbies that aided deployments and/or relocations?
65. Did you ever use the Military Family Resource Center?
66. (**If yes**) What resources were most helpful for you?
67. What was your experience with the MFRC?
68. In your opinion, do spouses of Navy members have enough support?
69. In your opinion, are the supports in place effective?
70. What network of support was most important to you as a Navy Officer's wife?
71. (**If they have kids**) what network of support was most important to your children?
72. (**If worked outside the home**) What was your experience of finding jobs throughout your life as a Navy wife?
    a. Ask about the effect of relocation and deployment.
73. In your own words, how would you define feminism?
74. In your own words, how would you define gender roles?
75. As the wife of a Navy officer did you experience feminism.
76. Did this experience change over time?
77. As the wife of a Navy officer did you experience gender roles.
78. Did this experience change over time?
79. Have you ever struggled with your physical health?
80. Have you ever struggled with your mental health?
81. Did your husband's retirement affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
82. Overall, how would you characterize your experience as a Navy wife?
83. What advice would you give to someone entering the Navy wife lifestyle?
84. Before we wrap up, are there any experiences you would like to share about your life that have stuck with you?

Appendix II: Military RCN Wives' Interview Guide

1. Please tell me about your childhood.
2. Did you have family connections to the Canadian Armed Forces outside your husband?
3. Did you attend university?
    a. Where?
4. What did you study at university?
5. When did you join the Canadian Armed Forces?
6. Why did you choose to join the Canadian Armed Forces?
7. Why did you choose the Navy/Army/Air Force?
8. What was your starting rank?
9. What was your finishing rank?
10. Could you please explain what (job) is? – **Ask question for all jobs held**.
11. When did you leave?
12. Why did you leave?
13. What was your experience working in the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force as a woman?
14. (**If applicable**) Did your experience change between your reserve and regular force positions?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
15. Did your experience change from the time you entered the Canadian Armed Forced to your retirement?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
16. In your own words, how would you define 'military wife'?
17. Does this definition change for Navy wives?
18. Does this definition change for Navy Officer's wives?
19. How would you describe the role differences between a Navy officer and a non-commissioned member (NCM)?
20. What has been your experience as a Navy wife and active force member?
21. What has been your experience as a parent and active force member?
22. How did you meet your husband?
23. Was your husband in the Navy when you met him?
24. Were you in the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force when you met your husband?
25. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) What was your husband doing when you first met him?
26. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) When did you husband chose to join the Navy?
27. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) How did you feel about his decision to join the Navy?
28. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) Were you consulted in his decision-making process?
29. (**If not in the Navy at time of meeting**) Did his decision to go into the Navy affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
30. How did you feel about your husband being in the Navy at this time?
31. Did these feelings change throughout your relationship?

32. What position did he hold when you first met?
33. What position did he hold when he retired?
34. (**If in Navy when they met**) What position did you hold when you first met?
35. When did you start dating?
36. When did you get married?
37. Do you have any children?
38. Reflecting on when you started dating, did you know what your relationship would entail with your husband being in the Navy?
39. (**If also in Navy**) Reflecting on when you started dating, did you know what your relationship would entail with you and your husband in the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force?
40. Did both you and your husband being Canadian Armed Forces members affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
41. Did your position affect his work life while you were in the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force?
42. Did his position affect your work life while you were in the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force?
43. Did your husband's various promotions affect you?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)? Did this experience change over time?
44. Was your husband ever deployed away from you?
45. (**If yes**) Could you please list his deployment's length, year, and location.
46. Were you ever deployed away from your husband?
47. (**If yes**) Could you please list the deployment's length, year, and location.
48. What was your experience of your husband being posted away from you?
49. What was your experience with long-distance relationships?
50. Did this experience change over your relationship?
51. Did long-distance affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why)?
52. What was your experience of being posted away from your husband?
53. (**If they have kids**) Was your husband ever deployed away from your children?
    a. For how long?
54. (**If they have kids**) What was your experience of raising your children while your husband was deployed?
55. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change as your children grew up?
56. (**If they have kids**) Were you ever deployed away from your children?
    a. For how long?
57. (**If they have kids**) What was your experience of this separation?
58. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change as your children grew up?
59. (**If they have kids**) Did you have your children while being in the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force?
60. (**If they have kids**) What was your experience of being pregnant while working the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force?
61. (**If they have kids**) What was your experience parenting as an active service member?

62. (**If they have kids**) Did the experience of raising your children change as your children grew up?
63. (**If they have kids**) What was your experience parenting after you left the Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force?
64. Did you work outside the home?
65. (**If yes to above**) What was your experience of parenting your children as a working mother?
66. (**If yes to above**) What was your experience of parenting your children as a working mother while your husband was deployed?
67. What was your experience with work-life balance?
68. Did this balance change over your life?
69. Did you experience any changes to your work-life balance while your husband was deployed?
70. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change before and after you had children?
71. (**If they have kids**) Did this experience change as your children grew up?
72. Was your family relocated throughout your life?
73. (**If yes**) Could you please list your relocation's by length, year, and location.
74. What was your experience of being relocation within Canada?
    a. How did it affect you? (If they have kids) How did it affect your children?
75. (**If relocated outside of Canada**) What was your experience of being relocated outside of Canada?
    a. How did it affect you? (If they have kids) How did it affect your children?
76. Did relocation affect your relationship with your husband?
77. (**If they have kids**) Did relocation affect your children?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
78. (**If they have kids**) Did this change as your children grow up?
79. (**If they have kids**) Did relocation affect how you raised your children?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
80. Did deployment or relocation affect you more?
81. Did you have any support structures you turned when your husband was deployed?
82. (**If yes**) What were these support structures?
83. (**If they have kids**) Did you have any support structures for you kids when you husband was deployed?
84. (**If they have kids and yes**) What were these support structures?
85. Did you have any support structures you turned to when you were relocated?
86. (**If yes**) What were these support structures?
87. (**If they have kids**) Did you have any support structures for you kids when you were relocated?
88. (**If they have kids and yes**) What were these support structures?
89. Did friends aid deployments and/or relocations?
90. Did you experience a Naval wife hierarchy or social structure?
91. Did you have more civilian friends or military friends?
92. Did you have any hobbies that aided deployments and/or relocations?
93. Did you ever use the Military Family Resource Center?
94. (**If yes**) What resources were most helpful for you?
95. What was your experience with the MFRC?

96. In your opinion, do spouses of Navy members have enough support?
97. In your opinion, are the supports in place effective?
98. What network of support was most important to you as a Navy Officer's wife?
99. (**If they have kids**) what network of support was most important to your children?
100. Did being a Canadian Armed Forces/Navy/Army/Air Force member affect the support you needed?
101. (**If worked outside the home**) What was your experience of finding jobs throughout your life as a Navy wife?
    a. Ask about the effect of relocation and deployment.
102. In your own words, how would you define feminism?
103. In your own words, how would you define gender roles?
104. As the wife of a Navy officer did you experience feminism.
105. Did this experience change over time?
106. As the wife of a Navy officer did you experience gender roles.
107. Did this experience change over time?
108. As a regular force member did you experience feminism.
109. Did this experience change over time?
110. As a regular force member did you experience feminism.
111. Did this experience change over time?
112. Have you ever struggled with your physical health?
113. Have you ever struggled with your mental health?
114. Did your husband's retirement affect your relationship?
    a. How? Or how not (could you explain why not)?
115. Overall, how would you characterize your experience as a Navy wife?
116. What advice would you give to someone entering the Navy wife lifestyle?
117. Before we wrap up, are there any experiences you would like to share about your life that have stuck with you?