

Master's Thesis

Exploring the Experiences of Non-Traditional Military Spouses Concerning the Impact the
Canadian Armed Forces has on their Careers and Lives

by

Sonja Maul-Wilson, CD
Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science,
Royal Military College of Canada, 2011

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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We acknowledge and respect the Ləkʷəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt) Peoples on whose territory the university stands, and the Ləkʷəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Supervisory Committee

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Honours Bachelor of Arts in Political Science,
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Supervisor: Dr. Richard Marcy, Associate Professor / Acting Director
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Second reader: Dr. Evert Lindquist, Professor
School of Public Administration, University of Victoria

Abstract

Policies concerning Canadian military families established by the Government of Canada (GoC) and Department of National Defence (DND) have been described as ingraining traditional family constructs. However, demographic transformations away from the traditional family among the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) highlight the importance of having an accurate view of the demographics and experiences of all manner of Canadian military families and spouses. This study explored the experiences of Canadian, male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their careers and lives. It shed light on an understudied sub-set of the military spouse community and their unique experiences. The findings include limited negative impacts on their careers as a result of being a military spouse, plus a shared ownership among domestic division of labour between them and their spouse in the military. In exploring this under-studied population, this study highlights the need to understand and account for the diverse spectrum of military families and spouses, and their realities and needs vis-à-vis the Canadian military.

Keywords: military spouse, Canadian, Armed Forces, non-traditional, male, interpretative phenomenological analysis

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Dedication

For my husband, Braden Greaves, who stepped into the role of a non-traditional military spouse without hesitation long before I embarked on this study of military spouses like him. I also wish to dedicate this research to all Canadian military spouses, past, present and future for their support to CAF members.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study explores the experiences of non-traditional military spouses, specifically Canadian, male¹ military spouses, concerning the Canadian Armed Forces' (CAF) impact on their careers and lives. Military spouses and families are integral to the functioning of the Canadian military as declared by the Government of Canada (GoC) policy, the *Canadian Forces Family Covenant*, which "...recognizes the important role families play in enabling the operational effectiveness of the [CAF]..." (GoC, March 2011). There is a significant body of research concerning Canadian military spouses of CAF members, and military spouses in general. However, it is mainly comprised of research on traditional military spouses, who are female civilians, with little research on non-traditional military spouses. With the goal to increase the number of women serving in the CAF as per Canada's 2017 defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (GoC, 2017), and a push for the Canadian military to be more inclusive of diversity (GoC, 2017 & 2022), including people who are among the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Two-Spirit (LGBTQ2) community (Trudeau, 2021, December 16), one can anticipate an increase in non-traditional military spouses among the Canadian military community. Therefore, a more nuanced understanding of military spouses to include the distinct experiences of non-traditional military spouses, like male military spouses, is needed.

The introduction will first begin with definitions key to this study as well as a list of acronyms. This will be followed by the problem statement, or the declaration of the larger issue that is emerging. From there it will consider the significance and scope of the study, the research question and the positionality of the researcher. It will close with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

Key Definitions and Acronyms

Below are definitions and acronyms that are key to understanding this research. Some of these terms lack established definitions in policy or previous research. For example, neither the GoC nor the Department of National Defence (DND) have defined military family. Consequently, this study derived a definition based on the GoC's definition of family. Similarly, terms such as traditional military spouse, non-traditional military family and non-traditional military spouse

¹ The terms "male" and "female" are used to ensure that the language used in the thesis is consistent with those used in the Department of National Defence Quality of Life Survey and the previous literature on military spouses.

are not defined in previous research. Therefore, this study derived these terms from the descriptions of a traditional military family offered by researchers.

Military family: This term is either not defined uniformly or not at all among DND or CAF documents. The 2013 ombudsperson report, Special Report to the Minister of National Defence titled *On the Homefront: Assessing the Well-being of Canada's Military Families in the New Millennium*, highlights this stating that among DND and the CAF, the definition of military family changes "...depending on the policy, program or office" (GoC, 2013, p. 15). The ombudsperson report recommended that DND and the CAF rectify this and "...establish a single definition of military family and apply it consistently through the DND/CF" (GoC, 2013, p. 9). Gribble et al. (2018) also identified the lack of uniform definition of military family by the GoC. As of this date there is not one uniform definition used across the literature either, so this study will rely on a definition of family from the aforementioned ombudsperson report to create a definition for military family. The report explains "...the Canadian government defines family as being composed of a married or common-law couple, with or without children, or a lone parent living with at least one child in the same dwelling. Couples may be of the opposite sex or the same sex" (GoC, 2013, p. 15). For the purposes of this research, in Canadian military families, one or both of the married or common-law couple serves in the CAF.

Military spouse: "Men or women married to or in a common-law relationship with a military member" (Wang & Pullman - I, 2019, p. 54).

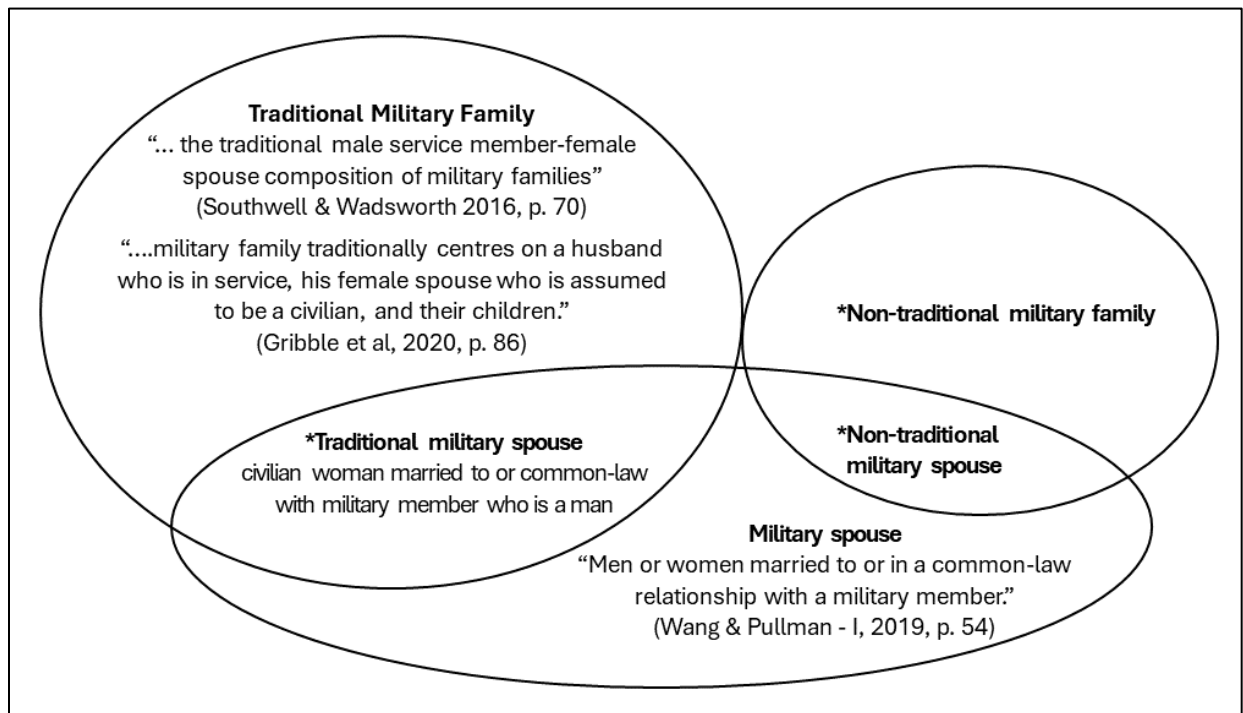
Traditional military family: Although few studies formally define the traditional military family, Southwell and Wadsworth describe this as "... the traditional male service member-female spouse composition of military families" (2016, p. 70). Additionally, Gribble et al. explains the "... military family traditionally centres on a husband who is in service, his female spouse who is assumed to be a civilian, and their children" (2020, p. 86).

Traditional military spouse: Based on the descriptions of traditional military families provided above (Southwell & Wadsworth, 2016 and Gribble et al., 2020), this study defines the traditional military spouse as a civilian who identifies as a woman married to or in a common-law relationship with a military member who identifies as a man.

Non-traditional military family: Some researchers, such as Kanzler et al. (2011), D. Smith (2015), Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) and Gribble et al. (2018), reference examples of non-traditional military families, such as those with a single parent, service couples, same-sex couples, and those with a male military spouse. However, they do not go as far as offering a concrete definition. For the purposes of this research, the definition of a non-traditional military family is any military family configuration outside that of the traditional military family as defined above.

Non-traditional military spouse: For the purposes of this study, the definition of a non-traditional military spouse is someone who is married to or common-law with a military member but does not conform to the traditional female civilian spouse and is married or common-law with a male military member.

Figure 1: *Definitions of Traditional and Non-Traditional Military Families and Spouses*



Service couples: “couples in which both spouses are military members” (Bullock & Williams, 2019, p. 64). In some of the literature, such as by Segal and Clever (2013), Brummond (2016) and Manser (2020), these couples are referred to as dual-service couples. D. Smith (2015) refers to them as dual-military couples.

Common-law partner: “[I]n relation to an officer or non-commissioned member, means a person who has been cohabiting with the member in a conjugal relationship, (a) for a period of at least one year; or (b) for a period of less than one year, the member and the person have jointly assumed the support of a child” (GoC, August 1, 2015).

Posting: “A posting is a reassignment to a new job, and sometimes requires a geographical relocation for the military member and their family. Posting duration varies greatly depending on the member’s occupation and rank” (Manser, 2020, p. 2).

Deployment: “A deployment is a temporary relocation of the military member (without their family) to an operational setting. The type and frequency of deployments depend on an individual’s skill set, rank and qualifications, as well as the needs of the specific mission. Deployments can last a few days or weeks when providing disaster relief, or last for 6–12 months as part of an international commitment like those in Latvia or Kuwait or in the past like Afghanistan or Bosnia” (Manser, 2020, p. 2).

By establishing definitions for these key terms, this study aims to fill gaps in existing policy and research. This foundational work not only enhances the understanding of military families and spouses, including their realities and experiences, but it could also provide an underpinning for future studies and policy development.

Table 1: *List of Acronyms*

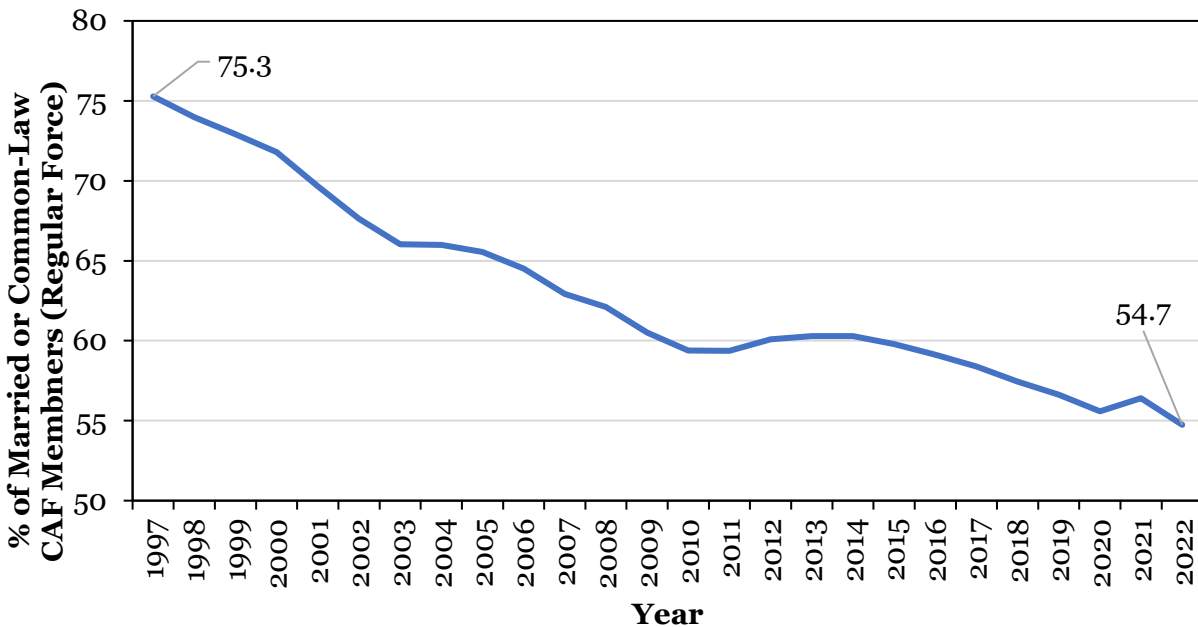
Acronyms	Full Term
CAF or CF	Canadian Armed Forces
CMP	Chief of Military Personnel
DAOD	Defence Administrative Orders and Directives
DGMPRA	Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis
DND	Department of National Defence
GoC	Government of Canada
HREB	Human Research Ethics Board
OSSOMM	The Organizational Society of Spouses of Military Members
SNAF	Standard North American Family
SSRRB	Social Science Research Review Board
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science

Problem Statement

This thesis aims to address the gap in research on male military spouses. Its goal is to foster a more accurate understanding of the diversity of military families and spouses. An emerging issue is that Canadian military families and spouses are generally assumed to fit a traditional family construct where traditional roles are assumed (Harrison & Laliberté, 1994 and Spanner, 2017). However, the demographics of military families and spouses in Canada do not support this assumption. In fact, they have been changing in Canada (GoC, 2002 & 2013, and Spanner, 2017 & 2020) as well as internationally (Clever & Segal, 2013, Moelker et al., 2015 and Ledberg & Ruffa, 2020). So, the traditional military family ought not to be thought of as the norm with all other military families as atypical. Moelker et al. explains of military communities, “[t]he traditional nuclear family ... is no longer the default ... Single-parent households, childless couples, gay couples (with or without children), dual-military couples, and other family structures are common nowadays” (2015, p. 5).

Research on the marital statuses of CAF members show Canadian military families are moving away from the traditional family form. Over a period of 25 years (1997-2022), the rates of married or common-law Regular Force CAF members dropped over 20% from 75.3% to 54.7% (see Figure 1: Rate of Married or Common-Law CAF Members (Regular Force), 1997-2022). This fact combined with other transformations away from elements characteristic of traditional military families – such as women serving in the Canadian military, service couples, and same-sex couples – paints a more complex and diverse picture of Canadian military families, which are not always best served by traditional military family models and approaches. Yet, there is little research that addresses this fuller spectrum of military families, and their unique experiences and challenges with military life.

Figure 1: *Rate of Married or Common-Law CAF Members (Regular Force), 1997-2022*



Note. This graph was generated using a data set from the GoC Open Government database (GoC - N, 2023 and GoC - O, 2023).

Assuming that Canadian military families adhere to traditional family constructs and roles is not without consequences. Non-traditional military families may not have the same expectations of military life as traditional military families and may not necessarily be accepting of the status quo. This matters for the retention of military members in that support from military spouses is a significant factor in whether a military member continues to serve. For example, De Angelis and Segal note the “...connection between family satisfaction and service

member commitment and retention...” (2015, p. 25). King et al.’s study of women serving in the U.S. Air Force found “[c]areer support from [their] spouse was the most important of all family and work factors, with greater support associated with greater intent to continue military careers...” (King et al., 2020, p. 687). The Canadian Government is also aware of the connection between members’ continued service and the support they receive from their spouses to do so. In the 2019 CAF Retention Strategy Survey, military members were asked whether they planned on leaving the military in the next three years and their main reason for doing so (GoC, 2022). The most commonly cited reason was the “impact of [the] military lifestyle on [their] spouse or partner” (GoC, 2022, p. 69). This response was selected at a rate of 25.4% and was among a total of twelve possible responses in which to choose from. Thus, military families and spouses play a massive role in the retention (or lack thereof) of military members. With the demographics of military families changing to include more non-traditional military families, it is important to understand how to garner and maintain support from these military spouses for their partners to continue to serve.

Significance of Study

The GoC aims to increase the diversity of its military (GoC, 2017) and its families (GoC, 2022). With military spouses recognized for enabling the work of members and the operations of the CAF (GoC, 2002, March, 2011 and 2017), there is much to learn given the diversity of military families, including non-traditional ones, such as those with male military spouses. DND and the academic community have not produced much research on non-traditional military spouses, including male military spouses, as a distinct group from traditional military spouses. Therefore, there is a need for research to provide insights on how best to support the diversity of military families and spouses that exist now and into the future. It could also support the growth in the number of women and LGBTQ2 members serving in the CAF if non-traditional military spouses are fully recognized and supported as enabling the careers of members and the operations of the CAF.

Scope

The purpose of this research is to bring about greater clarity concerning the experiences of male non-traditional military spouses, thereby expanding upon the understanding of the spectrum of diversity among military spouses and families. The goals are to:

1. explore the experiences of male non-traditional military spouses as a distinct entity from traditional military spouses; and,
2. invite the opportunity for a potential discovery of an issue or reality unique to male military spouses, not previously brought to light via research on traditional military spouses.

The scope of this study is limited to people who currently identify as Canadian, male military spouses. It only includes those who are currently military spouses and not those who once were and are now divorced or separated from a military member. It is inclusive of those with previous, current or no service in the CAF. It does not include other non-traditional military spouses, such as female non-traditional military spouses (female military spouses partnered with military members who are not male). Lastly, the gender of the study participants' partner (i.e. the common-law partners or spouses of the participants) was not a factor in the inclusion criteria of the participants.

Research Question

The central question therefore animating this study is:

What are the experiences of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their careers and personal lives?

It is broken up into two categories and answered as such:

- What are the experiences of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their *careers*?
- What are the experiences of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their *personal lives*?

It should be noted that the study does not delve into the finances or salaries of the participants, although those are certainly connected to their careers. Additionally, it does not investigate personal experiences involving health or mental health.

Positionality Statement

The researcher is a 15 year-veteran of the CAF, and currently a military spouse. She has encountered military life from various military family configurations, such as among a heterosexual service couple, as a CAF member with a non-traditional military spouse employed in the private sector, and now, as a military spouse. She has lived experience of the CAF's obligation that "its members ... place service to country and [the] needs of the CAF ahead of

personal considerations” (GoC, 2002, p. 1), and how this can “...create profound disruptions for the families of CAF members” (GoC, 2002, p. 1).

During her service in the CAF, she often spent time away from her family, being deployed twice with a young child at home. That meant her non-traditional military spouse, a civilian at the time, took up all childcare and household requirements in her absence, often at short notice. Her experience with military life, as a member and among a military family, is not all encompassing of the realities of Canadian military life. For instance, she and her spouse’s service has been as officers, which means that she does not have lived experience from the perspective of a non-commissioned member or the spouse of a non-commissioned member. This matters because non-commissioned members make up the majority of the CAF. Further, she does not have lived experience among the LGBTQ2 community.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 has been an introduction to the topic of the study as well as a summary of the researcher’s positionality as it relates to the study. To fully situate the reader, Chapter 2 will provide background information, including the progression of the relationship between the CAF and Canadian military families. Chapter 3 will cover the process the researcher followed to conduct the literature review and the literature review itself. In Chapter 4, the focus will shift to the methodology and methods of this study, including the data analysis process, and will seek to establish the reliability and validity of the research. Chapter 5 will explore the quantitative results of the study, where Chapter 6 will look at its qualitative and explanatory findings. Then in Chapter 7, a discussion of the results in the context of previous research on this topic will take place. Additionally, the strengths and limitations of the study will be discussed while highlighting opportunities for future research. Chapter 8 summarizes the study while recognizing its research implications and ends with some final reflections.

Chapter 2: Background

The federal government of Canada has legislative power of the country's defence and military as per the *Constitution* (GoC, 1982). The federal ministry responsible is DND, which includes Canada's military, the CAF (GoC, 2020). DND is directed and managed by the Minister of National Defence resulting from authority bestowed by the *National Defence Act* (GoC, 2018, September 24). The relationship between DND and the CAF is as "... two distinct but complementary entities working together to fulfill the Canadian government's mission to defend Canadian interests and values, and to contribute to international peace and security... [T]he CAF's mandate is to protect and serve Canadians, [and] DND's mandate is to enable the CAF's activities" (GoC, 2020).

The mandates of DND and the CAF are propelled by civil servants and military personnel. DND, the largest Canadian federal department, has approximately a total of 125,000 personnel, where 25,000 are DND civil servants, and approximately 100,000 are CAF members (GoC, 2018, September 24). In 2021, the CAF was comprised of approximately 71,500 regular force members and 30,000 reserve force members (GoC, 2018, September 24). CAF members serve among four elements, the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army, the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian Special Operations Forces Command (GoC, 2018, September 24).

Canada's previous defence policy, *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, which prominently featured the integral role of military families, guides the DND and the CAF. Adopted in 2017, *Strong, Secure, Engaged* lays out the country's long-term vision and approach to defence (GoC, 2017). Underscoring the importance of military families, its first chapter is dedicated to them, outlining their role and significance (GoC, 2017). It states military families "... make an incredible contribution to the operational effectiveness of the Forces – they are the strength behind the uniform (GoC, 2017, p. 12). The "incredible contribution" of military families is one side of an exchange between them and the GoC for which military families are entitled to assistance with military life (Spanner, 2017 and 2020). This exchange is codified in the 2008 federal government policy, the *Canadian Forces Family Covenant*, where the GoC declares, "we recognize the important roles families play in enabling the operational effectiveness of the Canadian Armed Forces ... and we pledge to work in partnership with the families and the communities in which they live. We commit to enhancing military life" (GoC, March, 2011).

Before the *Covenant*, the CAF assumed military families, namely spouses, would support its operations automatically and for free. Spanner explains prior to the *Covenant* "the contributions of military spouses [had] long been assumed to take place naturally and free of

cost because of the gendered ideas about what wives ought to do in support of militaries and their husbands” (2020, p. 59). This was modeled after traditional family roles, where women were responsible for the domestic duties and childcare and men were the breadwinners participating in the labour force (Spanner, 2020). The efforts of Canadian military wives, which allowed Canadian men to serve in the military, were assumed to take place for free, and with little regard for the impact on their wives (Spanner, 2020).

In the 1980s, Canadian military wives began to express dissatisfaction and demand resources in exchange for their work and support (Spanner, 2020). The Organizational Society of Spouses of Military Members (OSSOMM) formed in 1984 and demanded spouses’ perspectives be accounted for in DND policies, articulating that its policies had far reaching effects on their lives (Spanner, 2020). OSSOMM advocated for benefits and assistance in the care of children, and, if not received, threatened to cease their labour (Spanner, 2020). Effectively, “...military wives’ dissatisfaction, and the risk of losing their labour and support, became a threat to national security” (Spanner, 2020, p. 60). Consequently, the GoC sought to investigate the well-being of military families, which ultimately led to the formation of Military Family Services in 1991 (Spanner, 2020). The goal of Military Family Services is to “enhance family life for [CAF] members and their families” (GoC, 2018, June 4) with programs and services.

From there, a report by the House of Common’s Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs prompted DND to issue a family-oriented policy, deepening the acknowledgment of military families. After studying the well-being of military members, their families and veterans, the Committee published a report in 1998 called *Moving Forward: a strategic plan for quality of life improvement for the Canadian Forces* (GoC, 1998). Its findings triggered DND to issue *Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD), Families 5044-1* in 2002, which formally “...linked the contributions and sacrifices of military families to the operational effectiveness of the CAF” (Spanner, 2020, p. 61). It states “the CAF recognizes the contributions and sacrifices made by families ... The development and implementation of a family oriented policy and program initiatives will enable CAF members and their families to respond more effectively to the stresses associated with military life and better balance the often conflicting demands of work and family” (GoC, 2002, p. 1).

Despite this progress, the intensity the CAF and military families experienced from Canada’s participation in the war in Afghanistan galvanized a commitment to supporting these principles. The war effort in Afghanistan, which saw over 40,000 Canadian military personnel deployed, solidified the need to make military families “official partners” in Canada’s military

effort due to the high demands placed on members and their families (Spanner, 2020). The *Covenant* was established in 2008 to do so. Spanner (2020) argues that making military families official partners through the *Covenant* did two things. The first is that it reinforced the CAF's responsibility to reduce burdens on military families (Spanner, 2020). Secondly, it "...formalized [the CAF's] dependence on the feminized labour and loyalty of military spouses" (Spanner, 2020, p. 62).

Making military families official partners, however, emphasized traditional families. Establishing military families, and spouses, as partners through the *Covenant* "revitalizes the male breadwinner/female caregiver formation of the family, under the guise of institutional support" (Spanner, 2020, p. 64). Evidence of this is found in an ombudsperson report, which identifies a set of six factors that lead to greater success in Canadian military family life (GoC, 2013). One factor is the "[a]bility and willingness to adopt a more traditional family configuration – Military families generally experience less fluctuation to their family lives when the non-serving spouse is both able and willing to set aside personal and professional aspirations in order to assume disproportionately large parenting and household roles, offsetting the serving member's limited contribution" (GoC, 2013, p. 72).

However, reinforcement of traditional family constructs does not align with the GoC's goal in *Strong, Secure, Engaged* of "building a workforce that leverages the diversity of Canadian society" (GoC, 2017, p. 23). Moreover, the necessity to foster a diverse military has been a growing area of focus in Canadian governmental policy (GoC, 2013, 2017, 2020 and 2022), and was included in the Minister of National Defence's most recent mandate letter. The letter tasks the Minister to "undertake ambitious actions to improve the diversity of the CAF, including efforts to increase the recruitment and promotion of women and LGBTQ2 [people]..." (PM Trudeau, 2021, December 16).

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The search for literature and selection of materials took place through the University of Victoria (UVic) Libraries' database and via Google Scholar. The key words that were searched in various combinations were: armed forces, Australia*, Canad*, conflict, defence, defense, famil*, female, force*, greed*, greedy institution, husband, marri*, male, military, spous*, men, women, United Kingdom, U.K., United States, U.S., wife, wives, and work-family conflict. Journal articles were prioritized due to the fact that they are peer-reviewed material, followed by books and theses. Initially, more recently published materials were favoured, but through the UVic Libraries' database, which identifies similar and relevant materials alongside most of the individual articles, the search extended back in time. The references section of articles were also explored, identifying additional relevant materials to review. In exploring the database as well as the references noted in each article, several articles and books kept re-emerging, so those were selected for their relevance and nature of being foundational knowledge.

The literature review that proceeds will begin with the military and the family conceptualized as greedy institutions. These greedy institutions, in their demands placed on military families, create work-family conflict, acutely felt by military spouses. However, these experiences are documented largely among military spouses who are traditional. Because the demographics of military families are changing to include those that are non-traditional, it is clear research is needed to understand the impacts on non-traditional military spouses, such as male military spouses.

The Military and the Family as Greedy Institutions

The institutions of the military and the family are often described as greedy institutions as per Coser's (1974) concept, and/or Segal's (1986) interpretation of Coser's concept. According to Coser, greedy institutions are defined as those institutions that "make total claims on their members and ... attempt to encompass within their circle the whole personality" (1974, p. 4). Coser further explains that they "seek exclusive and undivided loyalty" (1974, p. 4). Regarding the military and the family specifically, Segal argues that "[b]oth make great demands on individuals in terms of commitments, loyalty, time, and energy; they therefore have some of the characteristics of what Coser calls 'greedy' institutions" (1986, p. 9). There are frequent references in the literature to both the military and the family as greedy institutions. Eran-Jona (2011), Clever and Segal (2013), Vuga and Juvan (2013), Brummond (2015), Moelker et al.

(2015), D. Smith (2015), Cramm et al. (2018), Ledberg and Ruffa (2020), Sullivan et al. (2020) and Strader and Smith (2022) all denote them as such.

Many contend that by its nature, the military is the greediest of all institutions. Strader and Smith describe the military's greediness as "unparalleled" (2022, p. 448). Segal (1986) attributes this to the fact that it possesses the legitimate requirement for its members to accept unlimited liability, the lawful requirement to work in dangerous conditions so much so that those conditions could lead to death. Vuga and Juvan (2013) concur with Segal. They also agree with Clever and Segal's assertion that there are other aspects of the military that characterize its great greediness, including "frequent moves and prolonged and repeated deployments" (2013, p. 15). Brummond (2015) also points to frequent separations from family as another aspect.

Although not characterized as being as greedy as the military, the family is its own expression of a greedy institution and is considered greedier for women. Segal argues families share many of the characteristics of greedy institutions in that "[a]ll members are expected to be emotionally committed to the family, to display affection toward other members, to identify with the family as a unit, and to fulfill role obligations... (Segal, 1986, p. 13). The inherent greediness of the family may be felt more acutely by some members. Segal (1986) makes the case the family may be greedier for women because societal expectations often see women as responsible for the family realm. Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) suggests this is so for female U.S. Armed Forces members as they may be more subject to the needs of family than required of men.

Researchers assert that the military and the family together as the military family produce a uniquely demanding institution, which often favours the military. Strader and Smith explain "these two greedy institutions together put an excessive care burden on military families" (2022, p. 448). In this combination, the military's needs often take priority over those of the family. Bauer and Giles' (2022) study of the perceptions of CAF military spouses, and Vuga and Juvan's (2013) study of Slovenian Armed Forces members both found the military's needs were often prioritized over that of the family's. This tendency is further affirmed in research of Canadian military families (Spanner, 2017, 2020 & 2022).

Work-Family Conflict Impacts Military Spouses

The competition between the military and the family creates work-family conflict for military spouses. Segal (1986) explains that the survival of greedy institutions depends on its members' commitment and loyalty, resulting in competition between the greedy institutions of which people are members. Vuga and Juvan (2013) agree and contend that this competition can result in work-family conflict. Work-family conflict is defined as "...a concept that describes the

competing demands of work and family...” (Sullivan et al., 2022, p. 373). The conflict experienced by military families has been called “extreme” by Strader and Smith (2022, p. 448). Sullivan et al. (2022) argue work-family conflict is particularly challenging for military spouses for the very fact that two greedy institutions are at play. Researchers point to the military’s reliance on military families and spouses as the cause of this heightened state of work-family conflict. For instance, Lundquist and Xu describe the U.S. military as having “...an intensive reliance on military spousal labor...” (2014, p. 1066). Researchers find the CAF, too, leans on its military families and spouses to operate (Spanner, 2017, 2020 & 2022 and Manser, 2020). Tellingly, the GoC’s dependency on military families and spouses is codified in the *Canadian Forces Family Covenant* (GoC, March, 2011).

The reliance of militaries on military families and spouses can largely be attributed to the demands imposed on military members. Segal describes these demands as the “risk of injury or death” (1986, p. 16), “geographic mobility” (1986, p.16) and “separations” (1986, p. 19). Militaries have the legitimate requirement that their members accept the possibility of being harmed or killed during the work of their duties (Segal, 1986). Geographic mobility is the transfer of military members [along with their families] to alternate locations for work and training requirements (Segal, 1986). Separations are the tendency for military members to be away from the home, and therefore their families, for a number of reasons such as assignments and training (Segal, 1986).

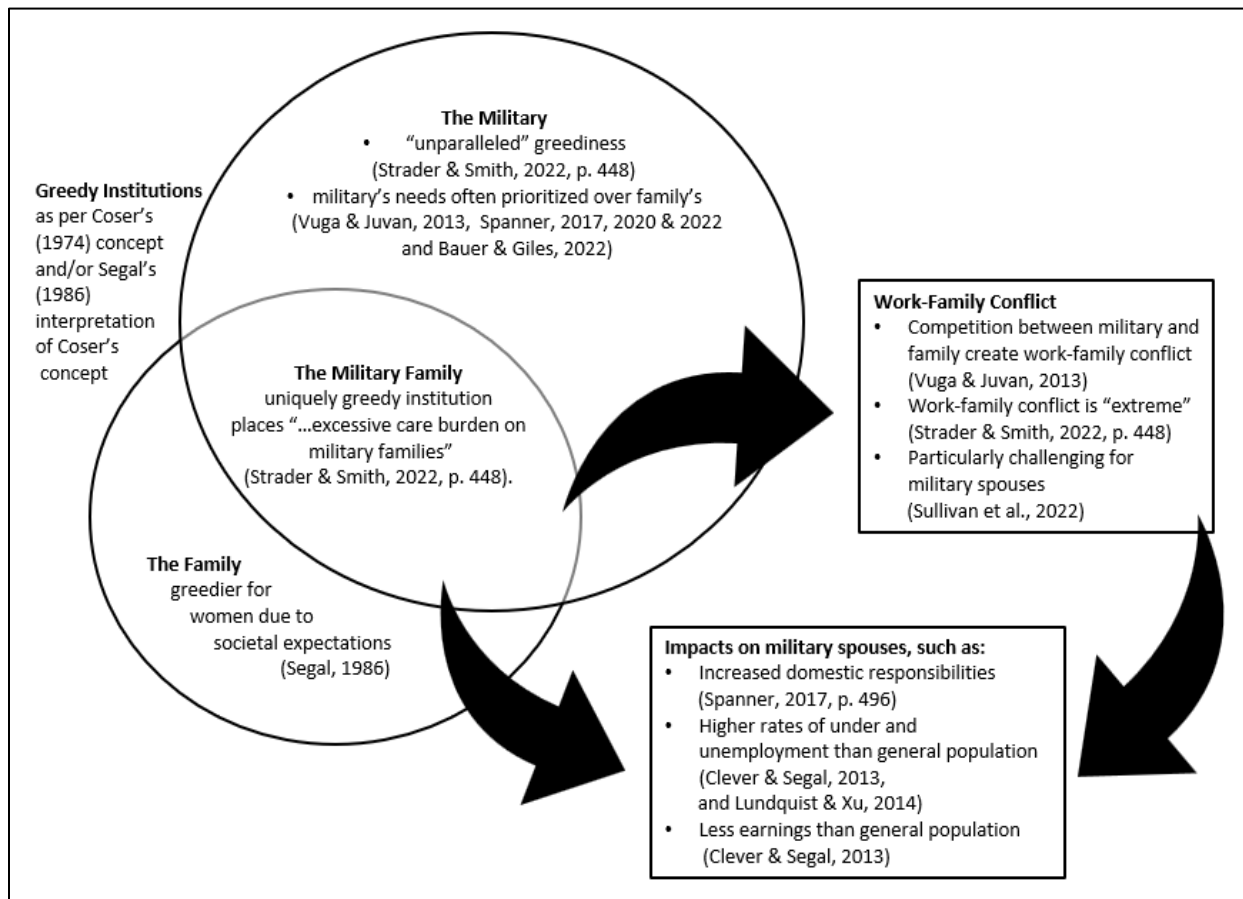
Military families and spouses therefore absorb the demands imposed by the military lifestyle. In other words, these demands require “certain adaptations from military families” (Segal, 1986, p. 23). Risk of injury or death means that military families and spouses contend with heightened stress (Segal, 1986). Spanner identifies that geographic mobility “...impact[s] the military family’s ability to participate in the housing market; find and maintain adequate and fulfilling employment; access adequate health care, education, and childcare; sustain stable social support networks; and preserve healthy relationships and mental health of the self” (2017, p. 491). When it comes to separations, the impact is that the “[n]on-serving spouses assume all the household, domestic, and parenting responsibilities” (Spanner, 2017, p. 496).

Because of the aforementioned demands, risk of injury or death, geographic mobility and separation, military spouses often experience higher rates of under and unemployment than the general population. Clever and Segal (2013) and Lundquist and Xu (2014) found this tendency among U.S. military spouses. Similarly, Trewick and Muller (2014) noted high unemployment rates among military spouses of Australian Defence Force members. Spanner highlights the tendency of CAF military spouses to face greater unemployment than the general population

(Spanner, 2017 & 2020). Furthermore, Wang and Pullman (2019 - I) and Manser (2020) agree there is a greater likelihood of unemployment when CAF military spouses experienced relocation. Clever and Segal found a similar occurrence among U.S. military spouses explaining, “frequent moves ... increase the likelihood of unemployment” (2013, p. 17).

Consequently, military spouses typically earn less than the general population, which too can be exasperated by relocation. Clever and Segal (2013) found U.S. military spouses earn less than spouses among the general population. According to Lufkin (2017), female U.S. military spouses on average earn 25% less than the general female population. The requirement to move can exasperate the problem. Wang and Pullman (2019 - I) found that CAF military spouses who experienced relocation typically earned less than those who did not. A study of the U.S. military spouses who had to relocate found female military spouses earned 50% of the average income levels of the general population (Little & Hisnanick, 2007).

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



The dynamics of these greedy institutions, the work-family conflict that they create - namely for military spouses - and the resultant impacts on military spouses are characterized in Figure 2: Conceptual Framework. The framework conceptualizes the research on military spouses, which has mainly covered traditional military spouses. However, it is also important to understand how the dynamics of these greedy institutions impact non-traditional military spouses, such as male military spouses. As will be covered below, this is especially necessary given the changing composition of Canadian military families.

Challenges imposed on military spouses, such as those described above can contribute to their stress levels, but military spouses demonstrate a resiliency in counteracting them. For instance, unemployed U.S. military spouses reported more stress than employed spouses (Corry et al., 2021). Deployments, and the risks associated for members, also contribute to the stress levels of spouses according to Bowen et al. (2013). Nonetheless, Cramm et al. (2018) notes U.S. military spouses are resilient to these stressors and tend to make strides to enhance their resiliency to counteract the stressors of military life. Lundquist and Xu (2014) note this tendency and call it the militarization of the family. Spanner (2022) observes the same focus on resiliency among Canadian military spouses.

Changing Military Family Demographics

The CAF operates under the assumption it can tap into traditional family constructs. The traditional family described by Dorothy E. Smith's concept of the Standard North American Family (SNAF) is "...a legally married couple sharing a household; the adult male is in paid employment; his earnings provide the economic basis of the family-household; and while the female may engage in paid work, her primary responsibility is to the care of husband, household and children" (D.E. Smith, 1993, p. 52). Spanner (2017) explains that in the context of the CAF, military families are generally assumed to operate like traditional families, where "[d]omestic work will be taken care of while the soldier is away; that the civilian spouse will not seek or award high priority to their own career, that the military spouse will relinquish their own paid employment every time a spouse is posted to a new location; [and] that they will do a majority of the unpaid work associated with new postings..." (Harrison & Laliberté, 1994, p. 37-38).

However, the demographics of military families, including Canada's, are shifting. Researchers, Clever and Segal (2013) and Ledberg and Ruffa (2020), identify that military family demographics are moving away from traditional families. Moelker et al. (2015) contend diverse family compositions already exists alongside traditional ones in military communities. In Canada, this trend is recognized in research; Spanner (2017 & 2020) points out that although

female military spouses make up the majority of the Canadian military spouse community at 98% that demographic has been changing. While Manser (2017) cites a lower figure - 84% female military spouses, they nonetheless make up the majority of the military spouse community in Canada.² The GoC, too, acknowledges the trend (2002 & 2013). A GoC ombudsperson report states “[t]oday’s CF family is patently different than that of previous generations...” (GoC, 2013, p. 14), elaborating that “...traditional family structures have given way to more complex and transitional arrangements” (GoC, 2013, p. 14).

Male Military Spouses: More Research is Needed

There is some research on the impacts of the military on male military spouses’ professional aspirations, but none specifically on their personal ones. The Government of Canada explains “[m]ilitary families generally experience less fluctuation to their family lives when the non-serving spouse is both able and willing to set aside personal and professional aspirations...” (GoC, 2013, p. 72). Although the research does not address the experiences of male military spouses regarding the military’s impact on their personal aspirations, there is some research on its impact on their careers. Researchers found U.S. male military spouses typically earned 70% of the general male population (Little & Hisnanick, 2007). Little & Hisnanick (2007) explain that U.S. male military spouses tend to work less and so earn less than the general population but are not as impacted as female military spouses by unemployment and lower income. Lufkin (2017) agrees that male military spouses are impacted by greater unemployment and less earnings than the general population, while not as severely burdened by unemployment and lower earnings as female military spouses seem to be.

When it comes to male military spouses’ domestic responsibilities in the household, the research is mixed. Strader and Smith (2022) found male U.S. military spouses take on lesser overall domestic responsibilities than their partner. This was not the case in the study of male military spouses of Israeli Defense Force members, however. They were found to have an equal

² It is clear regardless of which figure is chosen - be it Spanner’s (2017 & 2020) or Manser’s (2017) - that traditional military spouses are the largest sub-group among the Canadian military spouse community. The breakdown of respondents of the DND administered survey, *The Quality of Life Among Military Families: A Survey of Spouses and Partners of Canadian Armed Forces Members* (QOL Survey) as will be covered further in Chapter 5: Results - Quantitative Analysis, demonstrate that of the *non-traditional* military spouse respondents, male non-traditional military spouse respondents are the largest group. The total number of military spouse respondents is 1155 with 1092 categorized as traditional military spouses. 63 are categorized as non-traditional with 50 being male non-traditional military spouse respondents and 13 female non-traditional military spouse respondents. That breaks down to 94.5% traditional military spouse respondents, 4.3% male non-traditional military spouse respondents and 1.1% female non-traditional military spouse respondents.

share of domestic labour, which is a departure from the general male population in Israel (Eran-Jona, 2011). Ledberg and Ruffa's (2020) research also characterizes military spouses as more equal in the share of family responsibilities. Brummond (2016) speculates that male military spouses may take on more domestic duties than men generally do to account for their military members' inability to do so. Kanzler et al. (2011) offer another explanation, that female military members live a non-traditional lifestyle, and so may gravitate to spouses that are supportive of said lifestyle, and who are willing to contribute domestically.

Regarding male military spouses' connection and support among the military spouse community, the research is not consistent. Lufkin (2017) notes male military spouses feel invisible among the military community. Similarly, Keller et al. report "civilian male spouses often faced a lack of support from [U.S.] Air Force spouse groups..." (p. x, 2018). However, Corry et al.'s (2021) study did not find that male military spouses reported lower perceptions of support from the military community than that of the female military spouse participants. Rather, their assessment of support was similar to that of female military spouses (Corry et al., 2021). Karney and Crown assert male military spouses hold "...no well-defined social role" (2007, p. 174). That lack of defined role may contribute to the feeling of stigmatization. Lufkin (2017) found male military spouses describe feeling stigmatized for fulfilling a traditionally feminized role, which was also identified by Keller et al. (2018).

When it comes to military family programs, the research was more definitive; military family programs may not be designed for male military spouses. Lufkin (2017) reports male military spouses face many of the same challenges as female military spouses, but with the added burden of being underrepresented in the design of military family programs. Keller et al. explain "civilian male spouses often faced a lack of support from Air Force ... programs" (p. x, 2018). Southwell and Wadsworth agree expressing that "...there are some concerns about whether the support resources meet the needs of female service members' families, especially families with male spouses" (2016, p.71). Researchers, Kanzler et al. (2011) and Karney & Crown (2007), are clear that military family programs are simply designed for female military spouses, not male military spouses.

Regardless of the challenges imposed on male military spouses, there are positive aspects of military life from their perspective according to researchers, Southwell and Wadsworth (2016). For example, male military spouses express pride in their partners' military service. As military spouses, they characterize their support and work as a type of service to the military. They also report that the financial stability and health benefits afforded by their partner's

employment are an advantage. Lastly, stay-at-home dads identified strong father-child relationships (Southwell and Wadsworth, 2016).

All-in-all, researchers implore more research is needed to bring clarity and depth to understanding male military spouses. Clever and Segal (2013) and Ledberg and Ruffa (2020) argue more research is needed pointing to the changing demographics of military families. There is much consensus that male military spouses specifically are under-represented in studies (Karney & Crown, 2007, Southwell & Wadsworth, 2016, Lufkin, 2017, Wang & Pullman, 2019 – E, Wang & Pullman, 2019 - I, and Corry et al., 2021). Lufkin (2017) highlights that a barrier to research on male military spouses is the disparity in numbers between them and female military spouses; Since male military spouses make up a small portion of the overall community, Lufkin (2017) explains the data collected on male military spouses is often removed from studies. In fact, Skomorovsky and Leblanc (2017) and Wang and Pullman (2019 – I) identified they had removed the data on male military spouses in their studies citing that exact reason. Corry et al. (2021) implores the importance of understanding the differences between male and female military spouses, where Lufkin (2017) advocates for research on male spouses as a way to improve programs for military families overall. Karney and Crown (2007) advocate for more research on female members' families, which would likely lead to more research on male military spouses.

Conclusion

The military family is a combination of two greedy institutions, the military and the family, which are often themselves characterized as greedy institutions. Where the military is described as the greediest institution, the family, though not as greedy, is its own form of greedy institution. Together, the military family places heavy demands on members and their families, including military spouses. It is well-established that this can result in work-family conflict for traditional military spouses, contributing to greater under and unemployment, less income and greater stress levels. However, the demographics of military families are changing to include more non-traditional military families, such as those with male military spouses.

Despite this transformation, research on male military spouses is limited and mixed in its results. It is made clear by researchers that more research on male military spouses is required. There is therefore an opportunity to extend the research of military spouses to include a largely overlooked and misunderstood sub-set of the military spouse community, male military spouses, to explore their experiences.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

This chapter outlines the methodology chosen and specific methods taken to attain the goals of this research, and to ultimately answer the research question. It should be noted before delving into the specific steps taken to conduct this study, that it required ethical review and approval from both the UVic Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) and DND's Social Science Research Review Board (SSRRB). Ethical review via UVic's HREB was due to the fact that the study design involved data collection via interviews with human participants. The SSRRB's approval was required in that the study sought to investigate the experiences of Canadian military spouses, who are included under DAOD 5062-1, Conduct of Social Science Research as research participants. Both boards reviewed and approved of the study; the UVic Certificate of Approval Ethics Protocol Number is 22-0410 and the SSRRB Certificate of Ethics Clearance Number is 2100-23F.

Methodology

The methodological framework which guided the qualitative research is interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). IPA "...is a qualitative approach concerned with the detailed exploration of individual lived experience" (Spiers & Smith, 2019, p. 2). It requires researchers to consider "how the experience is meaningful in the context of one's life as it has been, is being and might be lived" (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 8). Keeling et al. provide a comprehensive description explaining that it "...aims to gain a detailed and deep understanding of a certain topic by exploring how participants make sense of their personal and social world with reference to their experiences of a given topic" (2016, p. 516).

IPA has its roots in phenomenology and hermeneutics, and is idiographic in nature (Smith et al., 2009). Phenomenology is an aspect of philosophy that studies the human experience. It is based on the combined theories of Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Husserl advocated for understanding the experiences themselves without applying filters of understanding. Heidegger positioned phenomenology as understanding the human experience within the world while inextricably connected to the world, where Merleau-Ponty emphasized the human body's role in understanding and connecting to the world in that without it, no connections exist. Sartre centers phenomenology as humans experiencing the otherness of that which is all around us, emphasizing the rational lens (Spiers & Smith, 2019). Hermeneutics "...is the theory of

interpretation” (Spiers & Smith, 2019, p. 3). Researchers utilizing IPA have not had the experiences of their participants, so they need to undertake the exercise of interpreting the experiences of the participants and make sense of them in context (Spiers & Smith, 2019). IPA is idiographic in that the detailed analysis of each interview is completed prior to searching for connections between the research participants’ experiences (Spiers & Smith, 2019, p. 4).

The main reason this methodological framework was chosen is because this study is concerned with understanding the experiences of an acutely homogenous group, current, Canadian, male non-traditional military spouses, which aligns well with IPA practices. The design of the study intentionally did not include all types of non-traditional military spouses to follow the best practices of IPA to narrow the focus to people with significant commonalities to facilitate a rich understanding of their unique experiences. Furthermore, being that male non-traditional military spouses are the second largest sub-group among the wider Canadian military spouse community and the largest sub-group of the non-traditional military spouse community, there was a practicality in studying this particular subset of the Canadian non-traditional military spouse community.

The objective of IPA is to “understand how participants are making sense of their experiences” (Spiers & Smith, 2019, p 4). It is a more involved analysis process, which is best suited to relatively small sample sizes to allow for capturing of rich and detailed understanding of participants’ experiences (Spiers & Smith, 2019). The research population of male non-traditional military spouses is unique and not widely understood, so this method is ideal in that it allows for a deep understanding of their unique realities. Spiers and Smith (2019) cite 5-16 participants of a purposive, homogeneous group to best facilitate such a detailed approach. Smith et al. (2009) and Spiers and Smith (2019) agree in their emphasis of the importance a purposive, homogeneous group of participants, which means that the participants are intentionally selected and have “...meaningful features in common, such as age, gender, [and] socioeconomic status.” (Spiers & Smith, 2019, p. 4).

Methods

The research was conducted using mixed methods, where an explanatory sequential mixed methods design was employed. “Mixed methods is defined as research in which the inquirer or investigator collects and analyzes data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or a program of study” (Creswell, 2008, p. 527). An explanatory sequential mixed methods design is “...when the researcher begins with quantitative data collection and analysis in a first phase and then follows

up with a second phase of qualitative data collection and analysis to help explain in more detail the results of the first quantitative phase” (Creswell, 2008, p. 528). In this particular study, the quantitative data was not collected by the researcher. Rather the researcher analyzed a dataset that was collected by a research unit of DND. Therefore, the first phase involved analysis of that secondary data.

There are three reasons for utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design in this study. The first is that using a mixed methods approach generally facilitates a more complete understanding of the topic of study (Creswell, 2008). Secondly, this approach facilitated a path to further examining the findings derived from the quantitative data through analysis of the qualitative responses (Creswell, 2008). Lastly, triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data allowed for both tentative support as well as questioning of the quantitative findings with real-world experiences, and further supplied context to the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2008).

Data Analysis

The research transpired over three phases using the explanatory sequential mixed methods designed as follows:

- Phase One: Quantitative Analysis;
- Phase Two: Qualitative Analysis; and,
- Phase Three: Explanatory Analysis.

The details of each of these phases will be covered below.

Phase One: Quantitative Analysis

This phase involved the statistical analysis of a survey administered by DND in 2018 called *The Quality of Life Among Military Families: A Survey of Spouses and Partners of Canadian Armed Forces Members* (QOL Survey). The QOL Survey was conducted by DND research unit the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA). DGMPRA explains that the aim of the QOL Survey was to collect “...information about the experiences, attitudes and well-being of Canadian Armed Forces families in relation to the demands of military service... [and to] ...understand the impact of military service on family members’ quality of life” (GoC, 2018, p. 1). The researcher was able to access the QOL Survey as a result of a Data Transfer Agreement between DND and UVic.

Table 2: *Applicable QOL Survey Questions*

Type	QOL Survey Questions	Responses	Notes
Screening	4. What is the current status of your relationship with your military spouse or partner?	1: Legally married, 2: Common-law, 3: Living together (not married/common-law), or 4: Separated.	Screened as per Wang & Pullman's (2019 – I) definition
	1: What is your gender?	1: Male, or 2: Female.	
	17. What is your spouse/partner's gender?	1: Male, or 2: Female	
Quantitative Analysis	10. Are you a former member of the CAF?	1: Yes, or 2: No.	
	2: How old are you?	_____	
	13.b. I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career.	Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Neither agree nor disagree, 4: Agree, 5: Strongly agree, and 6: N/A.	
	31.a. I successfully meet the challenges of military life.	Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements: 1: Strongly disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Slightly disagree, 4: Slightly agree, 5: Agree, and 6: Strongly agree.	

The QOL Survey was administered using a combination of the Likert Scale and open-ended responses. This study investigated QOL Survey questions which were assessed as applicable to the answering of the research question. The selected questions can be found in

Table 2: Applicable QOL Survey Questions.

Phase Two: Qualitative Analysis

This phase included the finalization of the interview guide, recruitment of interview participants, disclosure and signing of the consent forms by potential participants, scheduling of interviews, and then conducting, transcribing, and interpreting the interviews. The interview guide (Appendix A: Interview Guide) was first formulated based on the literature review, which primarily consists of research on traditional military spouses. It was then finalized based on findings from the conduct of Phase One: Quantitative Analysis.

The recruitment of interview participants was initiated by the sponsor of this study, Chief of Military Personnel (CMP) of DND. CMP distributed letters of invitation to the defence community and released social media posts advertising the study. Potential participants were directed to contact the researcher and/or her thesis advisor if interested in participating in the study.

Finalization of the interview guide was focused on ensuring it could facilitate an exploration of a wider range of experiences among these non-traditional military spouses, both beyond what was captured in the secondary data and perhaps even what is present in previous research. Therefore, the interview guide was not restricted by the questions in the QOL Survey. Furthermore, the interview guide was designed with a consciousness of the fact that little research has been completed on male military spouses. As such, it was important to provide room for the study to capture experiences unique to this group as previous research on military spouses was not necessarily designed to understand non-traditional military spouses like them.

In total, there were nine people who participated in the interview. The inclusion criteria was current Canadian male military spouses. Potential participants were asked a screening question: “In the past, have you been a subordinate of the researcher?” If a potential participant identified as a former subordinate of the researcher, they were to be screened out. That was to ensure that no potential participant felt pressure to participate in the study as a result of formerly being under the authority of the researcher in her past career as a military officer. No participants identified as former subordinates of the researcher and so none were screened out as a result of this question. All potential participants received information outlining the study and a consent form (See Appendix B: Consent Form) in advance of the interview. Each participant reviewed, signed and returned their consent forms ahead of their interview. As an additional final check, the researcher reviewed the consent form with each participant prior to

proceeding with the conduct of the interview. For details on the participants, see Table 3: Interview Participants.

Table 3: *Interview Participants*

#	Pseudonym	Years as a military spouse	Civilian or military member	Gender of their spouse	Children	Age Range
1	Ahmed	16	Military member	Woman	3	40s
2	Jorgen	2	Civilian	Woman	0	30s
3	Juan	14	Military member	Woman	3	30s
4	Mateo	20	Civilian	Woman	2	40s
5	Morgan	13	Military member	Woman	2	30s
6	Padraig	11	Military member	Woman	0	30s
7	Pedro	5	Military member	Woman	3	40s
8	Pierce	15	Military member	Woman	2	40s
9	Raphael	1	Civilian	Woman	0	20s

The interviews were semi-structured interviews steered via an interview guide (See Appendix A: Interview Guide). Interviewees had the option to have their interview in person or virtually. When interviews were conducted in-person, they were scheduled to take place in a location that was convenient for the interviewee. Those interviews were recorded via an external hand-held audio recording device. Virtual interviews were scheduled if the interviewee deemed that to be a more convenient option and when interviewees were located elsewhere geographically from that of the researcher. The virtual interviews transpired over the

researcher's UVic student Zoom account. Interviews were not recorded via Zoom's recording function to avoid the recordings being stored on an international server. This was to maintain adherence to DND's requirement that data on CAF family members be stored on servers located in Canada (GoC, 2014, June 18 - 0). Rather, they were recorded by an external hand-held audio recording device.

To undergo transcription, the audio files of the recordings were first saved to the researcher's UVic student Microsoft 365 cloud account (OneDrive). The servers which store UVic's Microsoft cloud data are located in Canada as verified by UVic's IT Department. As a back-up, the audio recordings were saved on a USB locked in the researcher's office. The saved audio files were uploaded to NVivo12. NVivo12, a qualitative data analysis computer software program, was used to transcribe the audio files. The transcriptions were then verified by the researcher for accuracy. Additionally, the researcher assigned the dialog in transcriptions accordingly to the researcher and the participant. The finalized transcriptions were exported from NVivo12 and uploaded to Microsoft Word.

Interpreting adhered to the idiographic nature of IPA. Each interview was followed up by analysis. That analysis took place prior to moving to the next interview, and before analysis of all interviews took place as noted by Smith et al. (2009) concerning standard IPA practice. The content of each interview was read and re-read to ensure immersion as per IPA requirements (Smith et al., 2009 and Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). At that point, the researcher noted exploratory comments (Smith et al., 2009 and Eatough & Smith, 2017). From there, emergent themes of the individual interview were derived (Smith et al., 2009 and Eatough & Smith, 2017). Then, an analysis of the transcript and its emergent themes took place to determine connections between them to find super-ordinate themes per interview (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, super-ordinate themes are the emergent themes which are integrated under an overarching subject (Smith & Osborne, 2007).

Once all the interviews and their individual analyses were complete, interpreting the interviews as a whole transpired. This entailed searching for connections between the interviews to find super-ordinate themes that transcended individual interviews and appeared in the interviews as a whole (Smith et al., 2009 and Eatough & Smith, 2017). In essence, the qualitative phase of this research followed Smith et al.'s (2009) six step process:

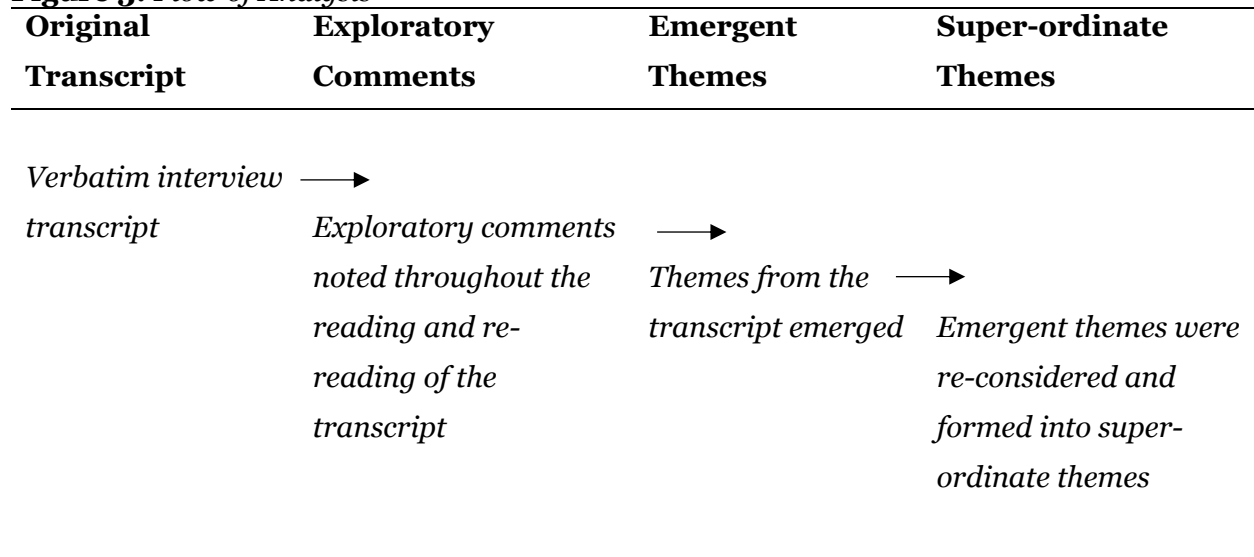
1. Reading and re-reading,
2. Initial noting,
3. Developing emergent themes,
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes,

5. Moving to the next case, and
6. Looking for patterns across cases (Smith et al.'s (2009)).

What follows provides more detail on each of the above steps.

Step 1. Reading and re-reading. This step is self-explanatory in that the researcher read the transcript multiple times as per Smith et al.'s guidance (2009). Smith et al. (2009) point out that re-listening to each interview is also helpful, so the researcher listened to each interview at least three times. According to Smith et al. (2009), Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) and Spiers and Smith (2019), these first steps facilitate immersion into the data. Smith et al. explain that it also ensures that "...the participant becomes the focus of the analysis" (2009, p. 82). The researcher made note of initial reactions and observations to "bracket" them in order to avoid becoming overwhelmed by the content of the interview as per Smith et al.'s (2009) recommendations. Bracketing is to "...put to one side, the taken-for-granted world in order to concentrate on our perception of that world" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 13). "That world" refers to the experiences and life of the participant.

Figure 3: *Flow of Analysis*



Step 2. Initial noting. This was characterized by capturing observations to begin to make sense of the content (Smith et al., 2009 and Spiers & Smith, 2019). Smith et al. (2009) and Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) describe these as exploratory comments. Researchers are to capture "anything of interest within the transcript" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83), and warn this is the most time-consuming step. The goal was to "produce a comprehensive and detailed set of notes and comments on the data" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 83). The mechanics of the analytical

process followed Smith et al.'s (2009) recommendation to "...set up a series of columns indicating the flow of analysis, in one direction, from the original transcript to the final super-ordinate themes, either for sections of text or for the whole transcript" (2009, p. 100). The exploratory comments themselves are to be noted in chronological order beside the section of the transcript being commented upon (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, a table of four columns in a Microsoft Word document was developed (as per Figure 3: Flow of Analysis) and exemplifies the format in which the interview transcripts were placed to capture the analysis.

Step 3. Developing emergent themes. This required "produc[ing] a concise and pithy statement of what was important in the various comments attached to a piece of the transcript" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 92). Emergent themes are short phrases that encapsulate the essence of segments of the interview (Smith et al., 2009). Like the exploratory comment's column, they are to remain in the chronological order of the original transcript (Smith et al., 2009). They were located in the column to the right of the exploratory comments as per the example in Figure 3: Flow of Analysis.

Step 4. Searching for connections across emergent themes. This involved "looking for a means of drawing together the emergent themes and producing a structure which allows you to point to all of the most interesting and important aspects of your participant's account" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 96). It required the researcher to discover the similarities in emergent themes and determine if they were connected (Smith et al., 2009). Some emergent themes tend to be connected to many others, and some tend not to be (Smith et al., 2009 and Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The ones that are not connected to any other emergent themes or are not related to the research question are typically discarded, unless there is a compelling reason as to why the researcher ought to keep them (Smith et al., 2009 and Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Smith et al. (2009) describe strategies to find connections between themes but caution that these are simply potential tools and are not prescriptive, which were defined as follows:

- *Abstraction* "...involves putting like with like and developing a new name for the cluster" (p. 96). This is taking similar emergent themes and grouping them together under a title that can speak for them all.
- *Subsumption* "is similar to abstraction but it operates where an emergent theme itself acquires a super-ordinate status as it helps bring together a series of related themes" (p. 97).
- *Polarization* requires "examining transcripts for the oppositional relationships between emergent themes by focusing on difference instead of similarity" (p. 97).

- *Contextualization* requires “...identifying the contextual or narrative elements within an analysis” (p. 98). This is situating it within the relevant and/significant life event with which it took place.
- *Numeration* is accounting for the frequency at which an emergent theme is brought forward (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009) advise researchers not to overemphasize this strategy explaining that an emergent theme that comes up only once may be quite significant but note that identifying the frequency is one way to determine importance of subjects.
- *Function* is exploring themes for “...their specific function within the transcript” (p. 98). This strategy seeks to determine the participant’s intent. It seeks to reflect the specific intent of their communication.

The researcher returned to these strategies often in the course of analysis. The purpose of deploying these strategies was to find the super-ordinate themes of the transcript (Smith et al., 2009), which were captured in the column to the right of emergent themes (see Figure 3: Flow of Analysis). Although it is recognized as a departure from the organization of the rest of the columns, super-ordinate themes are not confined to being displayed chronologically according to Smith et al. (2009), and rather ought to be organized in a way that best captures them. In this study, the super-ordinate themes were organized, not necessarily according to chronological order, but in a way that the researcher deemed to best represent them.

Step 5. Moving to the next case. This step involved “...moving to the next participant’s transcript or account, and repeating the process” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 100). After completion of each interview’s analysis following Smith et al.’s (2009) steps 1-4, the analysis of the next interview took place repeating the same steps. Smith et al.’s (2009) recommendation to bracket what is learned from each transcript to approach new transcripts with fresh eyes was heeded.

Step 6. Looking for patterns across cases. This required looking for super-ordinate themes among all of the participants’ transcripts (Smith et al., 2009). To do so, the researcher asked questions recommended by Smith et al. (2009, p. 101), such as “What connections are there across the cases? How does a theme in one case help illuminate a different case? Which themes are most potent?” To facilitate the searching for patterns among all of the participants’ transcripts and to keep the large amount of data organized, each interview was analyzed via the table displayed under Figure 3: Flow of Analysis. That document was then uploaded to NVivo12. Themes were coded in NVivo12 and, from there, a master list of super-ordinate themes was created. The questions suggested by Smith et al. (2009), and outlined above, were employed to search for patterns among the master list to derive super-ordinate themes among the entire group of participants.

Interviews were completed until saturation was reached. The decision to choose saturation to determine sample size was made to strengthen the results of the thesis by ensuring that the potentially unique experiences of male military spouses were captured, especially given the possibility of new findings not previously documented by research pre-dominantly focused on traditional military spouses. This study modelled saturation used by IPA practitioners, Smith et al. (2022) and Hernandez et al. (2022). Smith et al.'s (2022) IPA study used saturation, described as "the point at which no new data emerge from further sampling" (2022, p. 799), to assess when to cease conducting interviews. Hernandez et al. similarly defining the point as "...when the interviewer no longer obtains new information from the participants and sees a redundancy in the data (2022, p. 4). This study followed Smith et al. (2022) and Hernandez et al.'s (2022) use of saturation in the decision to cease further interviews.

Phase Three: Explanatory Analysis

This phase represented the final element of the data analysis. It involved returning to the quantitative findings in Phase One: Quantitative Analysis, and further exploring those findings, where relevant, with the super-ordinate themes derived from Phase Two: Qualitative Analysis. In doing so, quantitative findings faced the possibility of explanation, conformation, refutation and/or clarification.

Reliability and Validity: Establishing Credibility

Reliability and validity were carefully considered in the development and execution of this study. Reliability was the measure of credibility used for Phase One: Quantitative Analysis, where both reliability and validity were used to assess Phase Two: Qualitative Analysis as per the best practices of IPA.

In determining, the reliability of the QOL Survey dataset, Cronbach's Alpha was used "...as an indicator of instrument or scale of reliability or internal consistency" (Taber, 2017, p. 1284). Reliability was tested via QOL Survey questions that were analyzed (see Table 2: Applicable QOL Survey Questions). Concerning the Career Impact questions, Cronbach's (6), $\alpha = .841$, where the Military Life questions were calculated at (2), $\alpha = .797$. In that Taber identifies "Cronbach α scores greater than .70 were considered ... indicative of acceptable reliability..." (Taber, 2017, 1286), the dataset was deemed acceptable, and therefore reliable.

With respect to the use of IPA in the qualitative phase of this study, Osborn and Smith offer criteria to assess its reliability and validity. Osborn and Smith (1998) explain that IPA

researchers can assess reliability and validity by internal coherence and the presentation of evidence. Internal coherence is “the need to concentrate on whether the argument presented in the study is internally consistent and justified by the data (Osborn & Smith, 1998, p. 68). To achieve this aim, it is suggested “...sufficient verbatim evidence from the participants should be presented in the paper to allow the reader to interrogate the interpretation” (Osborn & Smith, 1996, p. 68). In other words, the argument is that any interpretation of the data needs to be backed up by direct quotes from the interviews. In this study, evidence among the interviews is used to demonstrate the reliability and validity of the super-ordinate themes derived from the analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the methodology and specific methods employed to achieve the goals of the study and ultimately to address the research question. The approach required ethical approvals from both the UVic’s HREB and DND’s SSRRB given the sensitive nature of interviewing human participant, and in this particular case, Canadian military family members. The explanatory sequential mixed methods design facilitated a more in-depth understanding of the experiences of Canadian male military spouses. That is because integrating the quantitative analysis from the QOL Survey with the qualitative analysis involving IPA interviews offered a nuanced examination of the participants’ experiences through rigorous analysis and triangulation.

Chapter 5: Results - Quantitative Analysis

This chapter reports the results of the first phase of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design of the study, Phase One: Quantitative Analysis. It begins with the process taken to clean and prepare the QOL Survey dataset and is followed by the results of the statistical analysis of each relevant QOL Survey question.

Preparing the Dataset

Prior to the statistical analysis of the applicable QOL Survey questions, the researcher cleaned and prepared the QOL Survey dataset in IBM's Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). To clean the dataset, the following was conducted: a determination of monotone responses, a check of the existence of outliers, and a missing data analysis.

Monotone responses are defined as "...responses that have no variance" (Mat Roni and Djajadikerta, 2021, p. 20). It is when respondents select the same response for each of the questions, therefore skewing the results. For example, in this survey, if a respondent had only selected right-hand justified response options, that would have been an indication that they likely did not answer the questions accurately. A review was conducted to see if any cases fell in that category, and it was determined that none did.

Then, a check of the existence of outliers was conducted. To do so, the mean and 5% trimmed mean per variable was reviewed. Mat Roni and Djajadikerta explain that "[t]he mean is the average of the variable while the 5% trimmed mean is a recalculated mean after shaving off 2.5% of the upper end and 2.5% of the lower end of the data distribution. We compare the values of these two means for each variable. If the difference is not large, we can assume the outliers are not influential" (2021, p. 43). There were no extreme differences, so the data set was not treated for outliers.

Lastly, a missing data analysis was conducted. It was found that cells without data had been encoded as "999". There were 241 cells that were encoded as "999" out of approximately 17,250 cells in the dataset. The percentage of missing cells was therefore 1.37%. To treat the missing data the Expected Maximization (EM) Technique was used. It is "...an interactive procedure producing variances, covariances and means in an initial step and repeating the whole process until changes in the parameters are so small that the final solution is said to have converged" (Mat Roni & Djajadikerta, 2021, p. 36). This method was chosen as per Mat Roni and Djajadikerta's recommendation concerning the treatment of missing data. Additionally,

Little's Missing Completely at Random (MCAR) test was conducted. It was calculated at $p = .362$, which is higher than 0.05 . According to Mat Roni and Djajadikerta's, this is "...indicating that the missing values in [the] dataset exhibit pattern similar to MCAR" (2021, p.36).

To then prepare the dataset for analysis, 26 respondents were removed from the total number of 1182 in that they did not meet the research criteria. They had selected their marital status as "separated" or "living together" when answering the question, *What is the current status of your relationship with your military spouse or partner?* (QOL Survey Question 4.). Given those marital statuses are outside the definition of military spouses used in this study, "men or women married to or in a common-law relationship with a military member" (Wang & Pullman, 2019 - I, p. 54), they were removed.

As a result, the remaining number of respondents was 1155. The 1155 respondents were categorized as such to facilitate the comparative analysis:

- *Traditional military spouse respondents:* 1092 out of the 1155 respondents were categorized as traditional military spouse respondents as they identified in the survey as female military spouses partnered with male military members;
- *Non-traditional military spouse respondents:* 63 out of the 1155 respondents were categorized as non-traditional military spouse respondents, further broken down below:
 - *Male non-traditional military spouse respondents:* 50 out of the 63 non-traditional military spouse respondents identified as male military spouses partnered with military members (regardless of the gender of the military member that they identified as being partnered with), so they were categorized as male non-traditional military spouse respondents; and,
 - *Female non-traditional military spouse respondents:* 13 out of the 63 non-traditional military spouse respondents identified as female military spouses partnered with female military members, so they were categorized as female non-traditional military spouse respondents.

The 13 female non-traditional military spouse respondents were removed from the dataset. This was in order to facilitate the analysis of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents as compared to the traditional military spouse respondents. The resulting total number of respondents was 1142, with 1092 traditional military spouse respondents and 50 male non-traditional military spouse respondents (see Table 4: QOL Survey Respondents on following page).

Table 4: QOL Survey Respondents

Respondents	Number
Traditional Military Spouse Respondents	1092
Male Non-Traditional Military Spouse Respondents	50
Total	1142

Phase One: Quantitative Analysis

Below are the results from the analysis of the following QOL Survey questions:

- *Are you a former member of the CAF?* (QOL Survey Question 10.);
- *How old are you?* (QOL Survey Question 2.);
- *I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career* (QOL Survey Question 13.b.); and,
- *I successfully meet the challenges of military life* (QOL Survey Question 31.a.).

Each will include the results of the statistical analysis, including graphs and/or tables, and the statistical tests and associated tables that revealed the results as statistically significant.

Are you a former member of the CAF?

Respondents were asked, *Are you a former member of the CAF?* Of the male non-traditional military spouses, 50% indicated that they were former members of the CAF, where 8.2% of the traditional military spouse respondents indicated as such (See Figure 4: Response Rates of Male Non-Traditional Military Spouse Respondents and Traditional Military Spouse Respondents Concerning the Question, *Are you a former CAF member?* (QOL Survey Question 10.)) The male non-traditional military spouse respondents indicated 'Yes' at a rate of approximately six times more than the traditional military spouse respondents.

A Pearson Chi-Square Test was performed to examine the relationship between gender and veteran status from the results of the question (see Table 5: Chi-Square Test of *Are you are former member of the CAF?* (QOL Survey Question 10.) on next page). The relationship between these variables was found to be statistically significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 1142) = 92.061, p < .001$. To determine statistical significance, the probability values (p-values) were compared to an alpha value (α), set at $\alpha = 0.05$. If a p-value was less than α , the less likely the result happened by random chance. The probability that chance is responsible for this finding is less than one in a thousand.

Figure 4: Response Rates of Male Non-Traditional Military Spouse Respondents and Traditional Military Spouse Respondents Concerning the Question, Are you a former CAF member? (QOL Survey Question 10.)

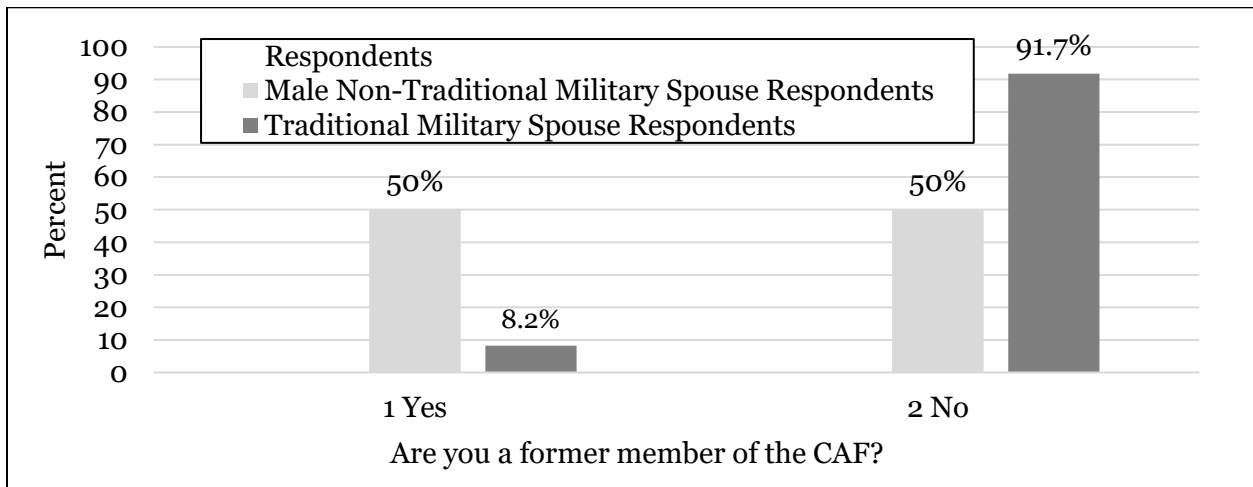


Table 5: Chi-Square Test of Are you a former member of the CAF? (QOL Survey Question 10.)

Chi-Square Tests					
	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	92.061a	1	<.001		
Continuity Correction	87.507	1	<.001		
Likelihood Ratio	55.042	1	<.001		
Fisher's Exact Test				<.001	<.001
Linear-by-Linear Association	91.98	1	<.001		
N of Valid Cases	1142				

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.04.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

This suggests a strong association between the gender of the military spouse respondents and former service in the CAF. It also suggests the possibility that more male military spouses have previously served than that of traditional military spouses in Canada.

How old are you?

Respondents were asked to indicate their age through the question, *How old are you?*. In all of the following measures - mean, median, mode, minimum and maximum - the male non-

traditional military spouse respondents were older than the traditional military spouse respondents:

- Mean: 45.10 versus 38.55;
- Median: 47 versus 37;
- Mode: 53 versus 33;
- Minimum: 27 versus 21; and,
- Maximum: 71 versus 63.

The male non-traditional military spouse respondents were between six and 20 years older than the traditional military spouses in all of the measures.

An Independent-Samples T-test was conducted to compare the mean ages of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents with the traditional military spouse respondents (see Table 6: Independent Samples T-test: Mean Age). There was a statistically significant difference in the mean ages of the male military spouse respondents ($M = 45.10, SD = 9.717$) and the traditional military spouse respondents ($M = 38.55, SD = 8.685$), $t(1140) = 5.194, p < .001$. To determine statistical significance, the probability values (*p-value*) were compared to an alpha value (α), set at $\alpha = 0.05$. If the *p-value* was less than α , the less likely the result happened by random chance, and so the null result was rejected. The probability that chance is responsible for this difference in mean age is less than one in a thousand in this case.

Table 6: *Independent Samples T-test: Mean Age*

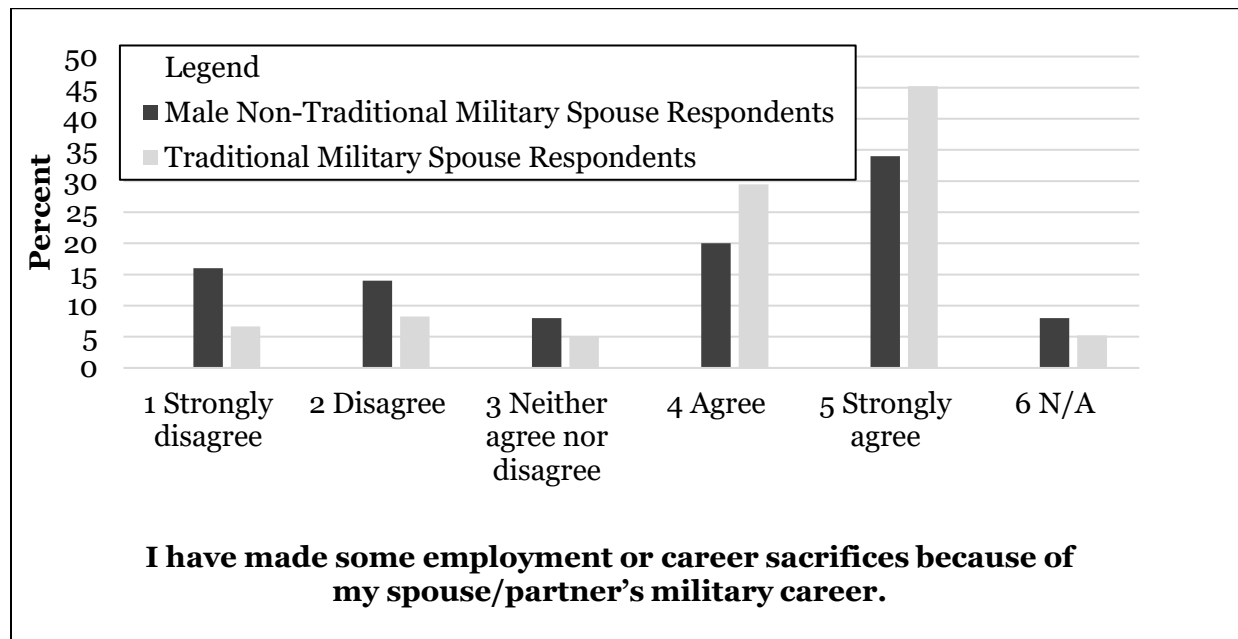
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
Age	Equal variances assumed	1.677	0.196	5.184	1140	< .001	< .001
	Equal variances not assumed			4.679	52.647	< .001	< .001

This indicates that the male non-traditional military spouse respondents constitute an older group than the traditional military spouse respondents. This is evidence to suggest that there is a strong association between the gender of Canadian military spouses and their age.

I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career

The responses of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents is more varied in this question in comparison to the traditional military spouse respondents. 34% of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents strongly agree, 20% agree, 16% strongly disagree and 14% disagree with the statement. Whereas for the traditional military spouse respondents, 45% strongly agree, 30% agree, 8% disagree and 7% strongly disagree with the statement. The male non-traditional military spouse respondents indicate a mixed reaction to this statement, where over half agree to some degree (34% strongly agree + 20% agree = 54%), but approximately one third disagree to varying degrees (16% strongly disagree + 14% disagree = 30%). The traditional military spouse respondents, in contrast, are largely on the same page in that they overwhelmingly agree to varying degrees (45.2% strongly agree + 29.5% agree = 74.7%) (see Figure 5: Response Rates of Male Non-Traditional Military Spouse Respondents vs Traditional Military Spouse Respondents Concerning the Question, I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career (QOL Survey Question 13.b.)).

Figure 5: Response Rates of Male Non-Traditional Military Spouse Respondents vs Traditional Military Spouse Respondents Concerning the Question, I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career (QOL Survey Question 13.b.)



An Independent-Samples T-test was conducted to compare the responses of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents with the traditional military spouse respondents concerning their agreement or lack thereof of the statement (see Table 7: Independent Samples T-Test of I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career (QOL Survey Question 13.b.)). There was a statistically significant difference in the responses of the male military spouse respondents ($M = 3.66, SD = 1.636$) and the traditional military spouse respondents ($M = 4.14, SD = 1.275$), $t(1140) = -2.046, p = .046$. The probability that chance is responsible for this finding is 4.6%.

Table 7: *Independent Samples T-Test of I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career (QOL Survey Question 13.b.)*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Significance	
						One- Sided p	Two- Sided p
I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career.	Equal variances assumed	14.267	0.000	-	1140	0.005	0.010
	Equal variances not assumed			2.568			
				-	51.760	0.023	0.046
				2.046			

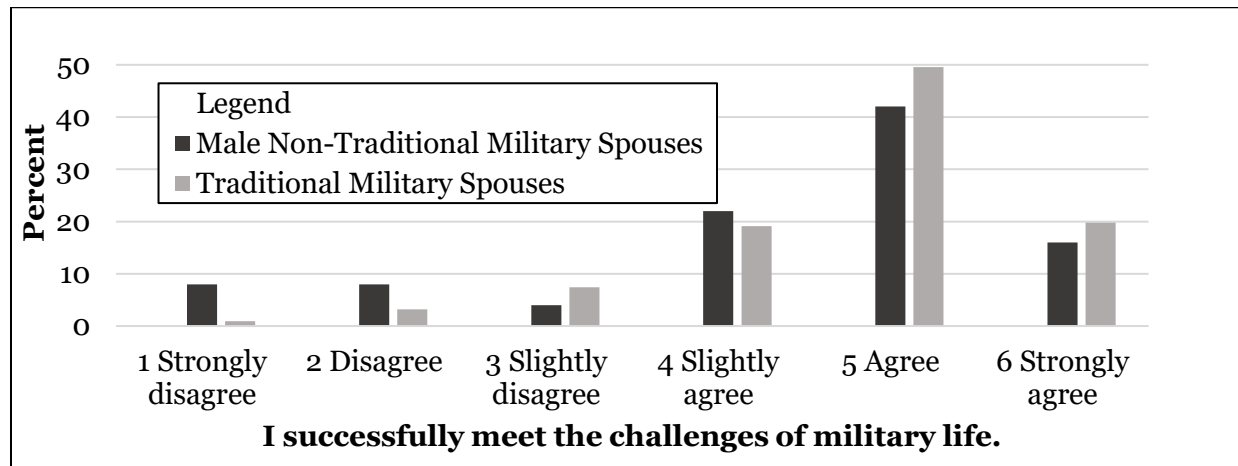
This suggests that the responses of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents are not as straightforward as that of the traditional military spouse respondents. The traditional military spouse respondents are clear in that their mean response ($M = 4.14$), aligns more closely to agreement with the statement. That is not the case for the male military spouse respondents. Rather their mean response ($M = 3.66$) is closer to the middle of the spectrum of answers. This finding paints a more complex picture for male non-traditional military spouses, demonstrating that their experiences are not uniform concerning the CAF's impact on their careers as a group.

I successfully meet the challenges of military life

The responses of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents mainly indicate an agreement with the statement, *I successfully meet the challenges of military life*, which is similar to the responses provided by the traditional military spouse respondents. 42% of the

male non-traditional military spouse respondents and 50% of the traditional military spouse respondents agree. There is some divergence between the male non-traditional military spouse respondents and the traditional military spouse respondents in that a larger portion of male non-traditional military spouse respondents disagree to some degree (8% strongly disagree + 8% disagree + 4% slightly disagree = 20%), where fewer traditional military spouse respondents disagree to varying degrees (0.9% strongly disagree + 3.2% disagree + 7.4% slightly disagree = 11.5%), (see Figure 6: Response Rates of Male Non-traditional Military Spouse Respondents vs Traditional Military Spouse Respondents Concerning the Question, I successfully meet the challenges of military life (QOL Survey Question 31.a.)).

Figure 6: Response Rates of Male Non-traditional Military Spouse Respondents vs Traditional Military Spouse Respondents Concerning the Question, I successfully meet the challenges of military life (QOL Survey Question 31.a.)



An Independent-Samples T-test was conducted to compare the responses of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents with the traditional military spouse respondents concerning their agreement or lack thereof of the statement (see Table 8: Independent Samples T-Test of I successfully meet the challenges of military life (QOL Survey Question 31.a.) on next page). There was a statistically significant difference in the responses of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.446$) and the traditional military spouse respondents ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.023$), $t(1140) = -2.056, p = .045$. The probability that chance is responsible for this finding is 4.5%.

This suggests that male non-traditional military spouse respondents are less in agreement as a group with the statement than traditional military spouse respondents. While the vast majority of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents agree they are successfully meeting the

challenges of military life (with 80% agreeing with the statement to some degree), 20% disagreed with the statement to varying degrees. The traditional military spouse respondents, too, overwhelmingly agreed with the statement (88.4% agreed to some degree) with 11.5% disagreeing with the statement to varying degrees. So, in comparison to the traditional military spouse respondents, the male non-traditional military spouse respondents disagreed with this statement at higher rate than the traditional military spouse respondents.

Table 8: *Independent Samples T-Test of I successfully meet the challenges of military life (QOL Survey Question 31.a.)*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Significance	
		F	Sig.			One-Sided p	Two-Sided p
I successfully meet the challenges of military life.	Equal variances assumed	13.206	0.000	- 2.815	1140	0.002	0.005
	Equal variances not assumed			- 2.056	51.269	0.022	0.045

Conclusion

The results of this phase of the study, quantitative analysis, demonstrate that the male non-traditional military spouse respondents have experiences with military life that are unique from traditional military spouses. For instance, the male non-traditional military spouse respondents have more experience serving in the CAF and are older than traditional military spouse respondents. Additionally, the male non-traditional military spouse respondents' answers are more varied concerning whether or not they have made employment or career sacrifices because of their partner's military career, where the traditional military spouse respondents are more widely in agreement that they have. Lastly, both respondent groups mostly agree with the statement that they successfully meet the challenges of military life. However, the male non-traditional military spouse respondents do so at a lesser degree.

Chapter 6: Results - Qualitative and Explanatory Analyses

This chapter covers the results of the qualitative analysis (Phase Two) and those of the explanatory analysis (Phase Three). The results of the qualitative analysis encompass the super-ordinated themes derived from the interviews with nine Canadian male non-traditional military spouses. In the explanatory analysis, the qualitative findings are combined with the quantitative results in order to develop a greater understanding of the realities experienced by these research subjects.

Phase Two: Qualitative Analysis

In the qualitative phase of the research using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), eight super-ordinate themes emerged with respect to the experiences of the participants concerning the CAF's impacts on them. The reporting of these results will start with the three super-ordinate themes that emerged concerning impacts on their careers, followed by the five super-ordinate themes that emerged regarding the impacts on the participants' personal lives.

Regarding their *careers*, the following super-ordinate themes emerged in the course of the research process using IPA:

1. Negative career impacts are limited;
2. Being a military spouse generates career advantages; and,
3. Being “the Robin to her Batman”: willingness to sacrifice own career for spouse's.

The following super-ordinate themes emerged concerning the participants' personal lives:

4. Having familiarity with the CAF provides insights into military life;
5. Accelerating relationship commitment due to realities imposed by the military;
6. Sharing ownership of domestic duties, unless its childcare;
7. Non-existent connection with military spouse community, except service couples; and,
8. Conveying pride in spouse who serves.

Each of the super-ordinate themes will be detailed below, including salient quotes from the participants that serve to provide evidence of the findings.

Negative career impacts are limited

Participants were asked to discuss the impacts of being a military spouse on their careers. It was clear that in their experiences, they had not resulted in professional negative consequences.

Some participants expressed awareness that being a military spouse had the potential to harm their careers, but they had not experienced this:

But so far, I don't, I can't, I struggle to think of an event where I felt like I've had to put my work goals on hold for hers and ... we always are aware of that being a possibility, but I haven't really come up against it yet. (Padraig)

So, yeah, there definitely could be an effect on my professional life. But there hasn't been so far. (Jorgen)

Plus, for example, Ahmed highlights that he has managed to attain a high ranking in the CAF, a senior non-commissioned officer, despite being a military spouse, and so does not see being a military spouse as having a negative impact on his career:

Well, as you can see, I'm a senior [non-commissioned officer] getting up there. So, in fact, not a lot in a negative context. (Ahmed)

Several participants clarified that their status as a military spouse had not only resulted in a lack of negative impacts on their careers, but rather they would characterize its impact as more positive than anything else:

I think the impact[s] in my [professional] life, I would say, are probably more positive and unknown than negative. (Pierce)

But I mean overall I would say being in [posting location] has definitely helped. I'm at a university that I enjoy being at... I like the faculty there. I like the classes. So, it hasn't been like a negative experience. It's been a positive experience. (Raphael)

That's, you know, it hasn't negatively impacted my career. I would say positively impacted my career... (Ahmed)

Each participant pointed to a lack of negative impacts on their career as a result of being a military spouse. Several saw their status as a military spouse to be positive for their careers overall, and – as is explored in the next super-ordinate theme – participants found that being a military spouse generated a number of specific benefits to their careers.

Being a military spouse generates career advantages

Participants distinguished that being a military spouse often generated unique advantages to their careers, many of which were shared among several members of the group. The advantages emphasized by the participants were: benefiting from another perspective, tapping into an additional professional network, having access to relevant corporate knowledge, and capitalizing on career opportunities afforded by postings imposed by their spouse's career. Participants, Pierce and Juan, emphasized the advantage they had experienced by gaining a different perspective on the CAF, which they used to make more informed decisions at work:

And so as, as we then move into having more...female partner[s] in the military ... you can understand ... any type of issue vis-a-vis sex integrating in the Armed Forces because you're at home, you can talk about some of the issues and the perspective and the social cultural context of that other side. (Pierce)

So, when things, especially the culture change issues that have rocked the Armed Forces - I have had the advantage or misfortune of living a career vicariously through the eyes of my wife. And so, that has been extremely advantageous, I think, because you're able to kind of live two careers concurrently. So, then when I make decisions as a commander now ... I [am] able to draw from nearly 20 years of my own experience, plus another 15 years of my wife's experience, which I think helped me quite a bit in dealing with certain issues and creating a certain culture, hopefully in my sub-unit. (Juan)

Three participants highlighted the benefit of access to an additional network of professional contacts to facilitate their work and career objectives, but Pedro articulates it succinctly:

...[A] big part of our career is networking... So, opening up a second person's Rolodex that you basically have access to can be helpful. (Pedro)

Ready access to another body of corporate CAF knowledge was also identified as an advantage. It resulted in a greater understanding of the organization and its operations as it pertains to their own work objectives:

I could go home and talk to my wife about, like, [military] operations. Then she would fill me in on a side of the operation I didn't know and make me smarter. (Pierce)

I constantly am on like meetings here at home and, and, I can just lean across and, you know, ask, ask my partner a question that is, you know, specific to her realm of job knowledge that I wouldn't have had. Maybe specific stuff or, you

know, things about the experiences that she's gathered that have been very helpful to me in my own career. (Pedro)

For some participants, they either have capitalized on, or seek to in the future, career opportunities afforded by postings that otherwise would not have been possible:

I understand that my decision to support her and then to also go to [overseas posting] very much favours her career. And in a lot of ways favouring her career will benefit me. I, I understand that. (Raphael)

...it has allowed me to take risks that I probably wouldn't have otherwise if we were both [serving]... So, like I left my government job to join a start-up with three people... And so that was an opportunity that the posting afforded us. But it wasn't something that was planned, right? Because I would have just stayed in my government job and kept doing the [same] thing. (Mateo)

The participants' collective experience with being a military spouse is characterized by a number of benefits to their careers. Their experiences demonstrate a number of unique professional advantages, like expanding their professional network and knowledge, and seizing opportunities as a result of postings. Although not all of the participants had necessarily experienced the same specific advantages, many were shared by several participants.

Being “the Robin to her Batman”: willing to sacrifice own career for spouse’s

Participants disclosed a willingness to slow their own careers to enable the career progress of their spouse. Ahmed summoned the famous dynamic of Batman and Robin to explain this sentiment. Batman is the main character and hero, where Robin supports the objectives of Batman as his sidekick. The metaphor is demonstrative of many of the participants' view that their spouse could be the superhero, where their career is the main objective, and the participants take up the role of supporting the superhero. Ahmed explains:

So, you know, I'll be the Robin to her Batman if it comes to it. That's the decision I've made. I have. I'm closer to my retirement than she is. So, if I have to ease off the career throttle and then plateau, then I'm fully ready to do that if that means she would make it higher in her career. (Ahmed)

Pierce provides an example of when he made the decision to take a back seat to his spouse's career. He explained that he agreed to a remote position to ensure his spouse could embark on a key career milestone and they could remain co-located to continue to raise their family together.

He seemed to trivialize the likelihood that his own career would be negatively affected by the decision:

But there is a consequence to that, maybe slower progression and blah blah blah, and you need to be aware of that. And we were happy with that. Not an issue. I am already two ranks higher than I wanted to be. (Pierce)

Similarly, Padraig outlined an agreement between him and his spouse which entailed taking turns concerning whose career is the main focus. At the time of the interview, he was in a role that represented a less demanding pace, enabling him to maintain the household while his spouse who serves was deployed, and ultimately support her career:

And so, for example, she's deployed right now and I'm [work position], which is very much not [a] travelling role. It's in-office and answering phones and emails and stuff. And so, it keeps me very stationary. And so that trade-off sort of nature in our careers has meant that sometimes we take opportunities that are less, I wouldn't say less desirable, but like less high tempo, less high stress, perhaps not in the spotlight as much in order to facilitate the other spouse getting their shot, you know, getting their time in the sun, doing the real work of a [military officer]. (Padraig)

From this super-ordinate theme it's apparent that participants demonstrated a willingness to make their spouse's career a priority at the potential detriment to their own careers. The analogy of Batman and Robin called upon by Ahmed serves as a clear illustration of their commitment to enabling the career success of their spouse, even if it means theirs takes a subordinate position of priority.

Among super-ordinate themes that addressed career impacts, *Negative career impacts are limited*, *Being a military spouse generates career advantages* and *Being "the Robin to her Batman": willingness to sacrifice own career for spouse's*, the participants reported a lack of negative consequences on their careers as a result of being military spouses. Many participants, rather, viewed their status as a military spouse as having a more positive, rather than negative one, on their professional lives, citing various advantages to their careers. These advantages included gaining a different perspective on the military, tapping into an additional professional network, accessing relevant corporate knowledge, and capitalizing on career opportunities afforded by postings related to their spouse's career. Regardless of potential advantages, participants discussed a willingness to slow down or sacrifice their careers in order to facilitate career opportunities for their spouse. What follows is a shift from the super-ordinate themes focuses on career impacts to those that impact the personal lives of the participants.

Having familiarity with the CAF provides insights into military life

Participants in the study were questioned about their understanding and expectations of military life as they entered into the role of a military spouse. They were asked, “Going into life as a military spouse, did you know what military life would be like for you?” This question was designed to gauge their level of understanding of what impacts the CAF may have on them as military spouses. The vast majority indicated a strong familiarity with the CAF due to a variety of reasons, such as previous service, active service or growing up in a military community. For example, Raphael, a former military member, shared that he was well-acquainted with the challenges faced by his friends in the military:

... I had seen before in the military where it's like, oh, you know, if you want to go on this task and you have like two hours to decide or something like that, and then you're off to like Petawawa for three months or something like that. So, it's, it's something that I had seen before and that's something that like, as you know, as a military member, it would have come up sooner or later, like if it came up for, for my friends and stuff like that, like before and after I left [the Forces].
(Raphael)

However, most identified that they had been serving in the CAF for a number of years when they made the decision to commit to the relationship:

We were already both in the Forces. This wasn't a situation where I was in or she was in, and then the other one decided to join up. (Ahmed)

One participant (Jorgen), however, lacked direct experience with the CAF, acquired from previous or active service. Although he had applied to serve in the CAF, he was not accepted due to health reasons. Despite this, he had grown up in a military community and was witness to the impacts of the CAF on military families:

In kids of military families [that] you're friends with and stuff... they come and go. I grew up playing soccer, rugby, baseball, basketball... So, we're playing against kids who, you know, you see them for a few years... [Y]ou become friends with them for a bit and they then move on because their parents got posted somewhere else. (Jorgen)

Morgan, who also grew up among a military community, was serving in the CAF when he became a military spouse. So, due to his combination of growing up in a military community and having been serving, he described the following regarding entering into life as a military spouse:

But I think I had a, pretty, about as good of an understanding of the military lifestyle as you could have going into that. (Morgan)

As a collective, the participants drew from a variety of direct and in-direct experiences with military life in their understanding of the CAF when they became military spouses. All-in-all, as a group they were generally informed concerning what life may be like for them as military spouses. Although Jorgen was the only participant who lacked direct experience via service, he had a number of insights of military life and its challenges for military families due to growing up among a military community.

Accelerating relationship commitment due to realities imposed by the military

Each interview began with the participants introducing themselves. The interview continued with questions more specific to their status as a military spouse, such as: “How long have you been a military spouse?” and “Are you common-law with your partner or did you get married?” While acquiring similarly basic facts about the participants as military spouses, several noted dating a military member had accelerated their commitment to the relationship. Three participants, Jorgen, Mateo and Pierce, revealed that circumstances produced by the CAF influenced them to choose to get married earlier than they otherwise would have.

For each of these participants, postings were threatening to geographically separate them from the person they were dating. In order to enable their relationship and be co-located, they chose to get married to ensure both members of the partnership could be posted. That is because when military members are married (or common-law for that matter), their spouse is defined as a dependent. As a dependent, military spouses have access to a number of benefits, such as financial support to move with their spouse. It should be noted that common-law would not have been a viable option for Jorgen, Mateo and Pierce in that it takes proof that a couple has co-habited for 12 months and approval of an application to have common-law status according to the CAF. Because postings are not generally known to military members with that much time in advance (which was the case for the three participants) marriage may have felt like the only viable way to continue the relationship. In essence, Jorgen, Mateo and Pierce faced becoming geographically separated from the military member they were dating, which posed risks for their relationship they were not ready to accept. The best option for them was to commit to marriage, accelerating their commitment to the relationship faster than they may have otherwise:

And so for us, but then it was sort of like accelerating the decision to get married to make that long-term commitment... So, in our, in our scenario, it was actually [wife's name] who proposed [and] said, "Okay, we're getting married"... And, and so the posting actually sort of pushed that decision probably further ahead than we would have naturally. And everything's worked out. But that's, that was a result of the military. (Mateo)

...then we got married after two years just because of situation surrounding my job and her job. And it made it a bit easier to make sure that we got posted where we wanted to go, where both of us could work, properly work. (Jorgen)

And, and so I sat down with my boss, and I was like, "Well, we, you know, can we do something?" He's like, "You, you need to get married". And so, on a Friday night in Borden we got married in the shack, like with two witnesses. (Pierce)

These three participants disclosed that the CAF's requirement to post military members had a profoundly personal effect on their lives, accelerating their decision to commit to marriage earlier than they may have otherwise. The combination of urgency of military postings with the imminent geographical separation hastened the development of their relationship with a military member, resulting in the choosing to make a serious commitment via marriage. The decision ensured the couple could remain co-located, more easily enabling their relationship. Pierce's telling demonstrates how marriage became a logistical solution to a challenging personal problem imposed on him by the CAF.

Sharing ownership of domestic duties, unless its childcare

Participants were asked about how domestic responsibilities were divided among the partnership with their spouse via this question: "How do you and your spouse share household responsibilities?" Generally, there seemed to be a sense that the responsibility of the domestic tasks were shared among the partnership and a characterization that both members are equally responsible to complete them:

Yeah, it is a very clear and well-defined division of responsibilities that I think works out to be just about a 50/50 split. (Pierce)

I think we've pretty much split it down the middle. (Morgan)

Furthermore, they explained the decisions behind an even division of labour regarding domestic tasks was a rejection of traditional gender norms. Ahmed explains:

I'd say we're pretty gender neutral. Like I said earlier, no blue or pink chores. It's pretty shared. (Ahmed)

Instead, responsibility was more commonly assigned based on factors outside of gender, such as interest or availability:

You know, we never really had like a conversation where we like give you the tasks. Usually when like whenever we come across something like that, and in the early days of our relationships, it would be as simple as like, "Oh, I don't like doing that", and the other person will do it. And then that's how it's just stayed forever and ever. (Padraig)

So, it's sort of just who's working and who's off. What they can and what needs to be done. So, but yeah, we share the duties pretty well. (Jorgen)

Among the participants who identified as fathers, there was an exception to the general trend of an even division of labour in the domestic realm. When it came to children, most of the participants identifying as fathers explained that their spouse would more often be the one taking up childcare duties:

So, while I would like to answer that we split everything right down the middle; We're totally equal and like gender roles don't play a, you know, play a part in that decision... They certainly do. And that the kind of default answer always tends to be like, she'll [take care of the children] and then we're going to have to like divide and conquer from there. (Morgan)

So, in terms of chores, like if there is an issue with a kid at school... she will be the one biting the bullet. (Pierce)

For participants, Morgan, Juan and Pedro, this tendency was attributed to the fact that their spouse was more physically present as a result of parental leave away from military duties.

Pedro explains:

My partner is responsible for ... an outsized share of baby responsibility, an outsized share of pick-up and drop-off at daycare. Currently, because she's on maternity [leave]. (Pedro)

Many participants, including those identifying as fathers, referenced having taken on and/or a willingness to take on, all of the shared domestic tasks in their spouse's absence due to military requirements:

So, like right now ... I'm doing it all obviously because she's off in [her training location] doing pre-deployment training. (Jorgen)

...She came back at 9 in the morning, in the morning, and grabbed her go-bag and said, "I've got to go to grab a helicopter to British Columbia, I'll see you next week." And then, she was gone. ... But then [you] no longer have that other person doing half of the work. So, if that means, you know, two hours more stuff that you have to do on the home front or whatever, because maybe they drive the kids or get groceries or whatever. And you do all of that. (Juan)

But I know that the day is coming when, you know, she's back at work and she's going to have to [be away for military requirements]. And I'm going to be kind of like, you know, commander home plate for a bit and have to do all that stuff for me and the kids. (Morgan)

They recognized that their absorbing of all of the domestic responsibilities enabled their spouse's ability to complete their work obligations and progress their careers. Pedro explained that his spouse may soon be deployed and understood there were very likely some positive impacts to her career if she proceeded on the deployment. He illustrated his willingness to support her by way of taking on all of the domestic tasks, including sole care of their three children, to do so:

And you know, if that means I'm going to take care of these three monsters for nine months by myself, then, okay, I'll do it. (Pedro)

Others also recognized that their spouse depended on them to be responsible for all domestic requirements in their absence:

Because I can't just abandon the house and the dogs and she's depending on me... (Padraig)

Overall, participants presented a general sense of shared ownership and responsibility for domestic tasks with their spouse among the household. They noted alternative methods outside of traditional gender norms to determine responsibility over domestic tasks within the partnership. However, those identifying themselves as fathers explained their spouses took on a larger share of childcare responsibilities, often due to the fact that their partner had greater availability to do so being on parental leave. Nonetheless, the participants expressed a willingness to take on all domestic tasks in their spouse's absence, thereby providing support to their spouse's career.

Non-existent connection with military spouse community, except service couples

Participants were asked about their connection and involvement with the military spouse community, “How would you describe your involvement or connection with the military spouse community?”. Traditional military spouses make up the majority of the community, and the participants responded to the question with traditional military spouses in mind. The common response described a lack of connection with the military spouse community, specifically the traditional military spouses:

So, if in the cases of the traditional military spouse role, where it's male, military, female, not military, I'm friendly with those people, but I wouldn't say I'm like, you know, I'm not part of the spouse gang... (Pedro)

Non-existent. (Raphael)

Very limited, and I would say, non-existent. (Ahmed)

Some participants sought to make sense of their limited connection with the military spouse community, attributing it to the absence of a military spouse community altogether:

But in (last posting location), like I said, [the military spouse community] was pretty much non-existent. (Mateo)

...Nil because the military spouse community is very nascent to non-existent. (Juan)

It is possible at some postings the military spouse community is non-existent or very small. However, it is also possible that military spouse communities at some postings operate outside of the participants' awareness. For example, Mateo struggled as the sole caretaker of his children during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic as his spouse was deployed, and many grocery stores in his area were closed. When he reached out to his spouse's unit for support, he was informed of a social media group made up of local military spouses. He found out they had been assisting each other resolve similar pandemic-related challenges:

So, I was like, have these two kids and I can't feed them. We're running out of food. What's going on? ... And I called [the unit]. Just. “Okay, what are you guys doing for all these families that are left behind?” And. And they're like, “Oh, just, you know, join the wives' group on Facebook. And they're just sort of supporting each other.” (Mateo)

Mateo's story is evidence of a lack of connection that non-traditional military spouses have with the traditional military spouse community. It also speaks to a potential lack of awareness of, and a connection with, non-traditional military spouses on the part of the traditional military spouse community. Some participants explored the reason for the lack of connection to the traditional military spouses, describing feelings of lack of similarity and/or relatability with them:

I'm not going to go and start rubbing elbows with the spouses and create this little inner circle and bond on similarities because I have no similarities. (Ahmed)

I guess I don't really feel as if I have a connection to those people too, too much. (Padraig)

I don't have any similarities to these spouses. I don't know what it's like to do a civilian 9 to 5 while my spouse packs their bags and deploys. We've taken our turns. We've high-fived in the airport almost literally on our own deployments. So, these aren't concerns of ours. I don't relate. (Ahmed)

While participants were clear about their lack of strong connections with the traditional military spouses, many identified an affinity with other non-traditional military spouses, particularly service couples:

So, I would say that the community that I have is small because it's very unique. It's very like niche. It's like small and almost exclusively other service couples. (Morgan)

I'm not really involved because we have, we have, a group of friends that a lot of them are military as well. (Mateo)

We've made quite a bit of friends where both are in the Forces, so social gatherings tend to turn more into shop talk than they are about anything else. (Ahmed)

But like all the couples that we know are military, both, both, are in the military. (Raphael)

The prevailing tendency among the participants was disconnection from the military spouse community, and in particular, traditional military spouses. With many describing their connection as non-existent, some speculated it was a result of an absence of the community altogether or challenges concerning relating with traditional military spouses. Mateo's story of finding out other military spouses were supporting one-another over social media could be demonstrative of a mutual lack of connection between the non-traditional military spouses and

the traditional military spouse community. Participants were clear that their lack of strong connection with traditional military spouses was not indicative of an absence of connection with the military spouse community; Many expressed strong involvement with non-traditional military spouses, specifically service couples.

Conveying pride in spouse who serves

Participants often expressed pride in their spouses, conveying a deep sense of admiration and respect for their spouse and their service in the military. They did so at various points during the course of interviews, and that pride was underscored by several participants who chose to remark upon their pride and admiration on multiple occasions. It should be emphasized that among the interview guide, there was no specific question which sought to delve into this topic. So, it seems particularly notable that all of the participants expressed this pride, among various junctures in the interviews:

I'm incredibly proud of her and very happy for her for what she does. (Jorgen)

I didn't, I didn't plan on having a [spouse in the military]. That sort of happened by accident. And so, happy accident, obviously. (Padraig)

I mean, obviously, [myself and our children are] very proud of [wife's name] service. (Mateo)

But, you know, like in a sense I am, again, super lucky. My wife is a [high] performer. (Pierce)

Many cited reasons for their pride, often focusing on their spouse's ability to excel in the CAF, despite challenges imposed by the military:

It's going to work because she's working on it, and she like, she rocks. (Pierce)

She's a trooper. (Raphael)

I'm proud of the fact that we've been able to manage these two really hard, demanding [military careers], you know, [while] raising a young family.

(Morgan)

Padraig's also expressed pride in his role as a military spouse:

But [being a military spouse is] a cool thing, cool thing to be a part of. (Padraig)

Although other participants may not have expressed this explicitly with words like Padraig, all of the participants showed up to their interviews enthusiastic to speak about their experiences as military spouses and how it has affected their careers and lives. They demonstrated their pride with their actions.

Participants as a whole communicated a deep sense of pride in their spouses and their military service. From Jorgen's expression of pride to Mateo's acknowledgment of collective pride shared with their children, participants consistently emphasized their spouses' contributions and accomplishments within the military. Moreover, Padraig's pride in his role as a military spouse serves as a reminder of the significance of supporting and celebrating the contributions of military spouses. While pride in being a military spouse was not as explicitly expressed by all participants, their enthusiastic approach to discussing their experiences as military spouses is representative of their pride as well as their value to the defence community.

Conclusion

Overall, the results from the analysis of phase two's qualitative research reveals that these Canadian male non-traditional military spouses navigate an interplay of career and personal life impacts stemming from their unique roles. Eight super-ordinate themes capture experiences in their professional lives, such as suffering limited negative career impacts and capitalizing on career advantages and a willingness to prioritize their spouse's career over their own. Their familiarity with military life, acceleration of relationship commitment, sharing of domestic duties were also highlighted. Further, it revealed they have challenges connecting with the traditional military spouse community, and yet find commonality and connection among fellow non-traditional military spouses, specifically service couples. Finally, pride in being a military spouse and/or their spouse's ability to navigate a military career were uncovered.

Phase Three: Explanatory Analysis

The final stage of the results are an integrated look at the associated quantitative and qualitative results from phases one (quantitative analysis) and two (qualitative analysis) to explore a more complete understanding of the impacts the CAF has on the participants' careers and personal lives. The QOL Survey questions and super-ordinate themes that are connected are explored together under these explanatory results. They begin with explanatory results related to the participants' careers, *Career sacrifices are not a given* (Explanatory Result 1.), followed by

those related to the personal lives of the participants, *Experience with military life informs lives as a military spouse* (Explanatory Result 2.).

Career sacrifices are not a given

The following QOL Survey Question, *I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career*, and super-ordinate themes, *Negative career impacts are limited* and *Being a military spouse generates career advantages*, are explored together due to their relatedness.

The responses to *I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career* showed a mixed reaction among its male non-traditional military spouse respondents. Specifically, 30% expressed disagreement in doing so to varying degrees, while 54% agreed to varying degrees that they had made career sacrifices. On the face of it, it may seem that these qualitative results confirm the experiences of 30% of the survey respondents who disagreed with making career sacrifices. In fact, the interviews demonstrate that many of the male military spouses had not experienced significant disruptions to their careers as a result of being military spouses (*Negative career impacts are limited*). What is more, many described ways in which being a military spouse had propelled their careers (*Being a military spouse generates career advantages*).

However, these results may point to another explanation. 54% agreed to the statement, *I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career*. Despite the fact that these respondents have made some employment or career sacrifices because of their partner's military career, they may also share the experiences captured in the aforementioned super-ordinate themes. It is possible that they may have found career sacrifices necessary and yet those sacrifices did not produce harm to their professional lives. While a significant portion of male military spouse respondents acknowledge making career sacrifices, a nuanced look could be revealing a complicated interplay between career sacrifices and career advantages. This may suggest that sacrificing for their spouse's military career may or may not necessarily harm their own career progression.

Experience with military life informs lives as military spouses

The following QOL Survey Question, *Are you a former member of the CAF?* and super-ordinate theme, *Having familiarity with the CAF provides insights into military life*, are explored together due their relatedness.

In response to *Are you a former member of the CAF?*, a significantly higher proportion of male non-traditional military spouses answered 'Yes' (50%) compared to traditional military spouses (8.2%). With more prior service as a collective in comparison to the traditional military spouse respondents, it could be that these respondents have a greater base of knowledge on the CAF and so perhaps the realities of military life.

The interviews support this observation. Participants exhibited strong connections and awareness of the CAF at the time of becoming military spouses, as seen in super-ordinate theme, *Having familiarity with the CAF provides insights into military life*. Many of the participants had prior service or were actively serving in the CAF when they committed to becoming military spouses. Even the sole participant without direct CAF service had exposure to the CAF in that his upbringing took place in a military community. Therefore, despite lacking service, this participant likely possessed a deeper understanding of the CAF than the average Canadian. Altogether, these results seem to show that Canadian male military spouses may have a deep level of familiarity of the CAF and potential challenges it poses upon military families and spouses.

Conclusion

Integrating the quantitative and qualitative analyses' results that are related reveals a more detailed understanding of how the CAF impacts the careers and personal lives of the participants. The results demonstrate that while career sacrifices are acknowledged by many male military spouses, these sacrifices may or may not result in negative career impacts and, in some cases, may even provide career advantages. Furthermore, they reveal that these spouses exhibit a high level of familiarity with the CAF, whether through service in the CAF and/or among military communities.

Chapter 7: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the results of this study as they compare to previous research on military spouses in general, and male military spouses, where possible. Some of the discussion will take place comparing the research noted in the literature review with the results of this study, where other portions of the discussion will draw on other research as a point of comparison with the study's results. The purpose is to place the results in context and figure out what they could mean in the broader world of the military spouse community. Specifically, it will situate the experiences of the study's participants as they relate to the CAF's impact on their careers and personal lives, and how these experiences might compare with the experiences of military spouses among other armed forces.

The findings from Chapters 5: Results - Quantitative Analysis and 6: Results - Qualitative and Explanatory Analyses will be discussed in two categories to better facilitate answering of the research question, starting first with impacts on careers and then on personal lives. The explanatory results captured a number of related quantitative and qualitative results and will be discussed just the same. The remaining quantitative and qualitative results will be discussed one-by-one, while maintaining their categorization under impacts on careers or personal lives.

Impacts on Careers

The results concerning impacts on the participants' careers will be discussed beginning with *Career sacrifices are not a given*, followed by the super-ordinate theme, *The Robin to her Batman*": *willingness to sacrifice own career for spouse's*.

Career sacrifices are not a given

The results suggesting male military spouses may not experience significant harm to their careers, and may at times experience career benefits, do not fully align with previous literature. It certainly does not align with the research on traditional military spouses' experience regarding their careers. For instance, *I have made some employment or career sacrifices because of my spouse/partner's military career* received mixed responses from the male non-traditional military spouse respondents. Additionally, Super-ordinate Themes 1 and 2, *Negative career impacts are limited*, and *Being a military spouse generates career advantages*, imply the participants were not experiencing significant harm to their careers, and at times, benefitted

from a number of career advantages as a result of being a military spouse. These results do not fully align with previous literature, which indicated that male military spouses face challenges in their careers.

First of all, previous research articulates that male military spouses confront challenges in their careers. Those challenges are noted as less significant than women (traditional military spouses), but they exist, nonetheless. For instance, Eran-Jona (2011) reports male military spouses of Israeli Defense Force members make sacrifices in their career advancement due to their increased childcare responsibilities because of their spouse's absence due to military duties. As well, Little and Hisnanick (2007) and Lufkin's (2017) research has further noted that male military spouses experience challenges in their careers. For example, as compared to the general male population, they tend to work less and earn less (Little & Hisnanick, 2007). Lufkin (2017) too found higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings than the general male population among male military spouses. Little and Hisnanick (2007) and Lufkin (2017) agree that their challenges are less acute than those of female military spouses, but they are present, nonetheless. This contrasts with this study in that the participants expressed being able to pursue their careers and even found advantages to their professional lives from being a military spouse (as per *Negative career impacts are limited*, and *Being a military spouse generates career advantages*).

Secondly, the results of this study also represent a significant departure from those experiences of Canadian military spouses reported by the GoC. An ombudsperson report states military spouses oftentimes need to sacrifice their own professional aspirations "...to assume disproportionately large parenting and household roles, offsetting the serving member's limited contribution" (GoC, 2013, p. 72). However, this report ought to be considered with a somewhat critical eye. Predominantly, it was unlikely that it was cognizant of the unique experiences of male military spouses. After all, this study is a result of the lack of research on male military spouses in Canada, and elsewhere, and the GoC report was released a decade prior. Plus, even if it were released recently with the same results, because of the overwhelming majority of military spouses who are women - 98% according to Spanner (2017 & 2020) and 84% as per Manser (2017) - the experiences of male military spouses may have been diluted and not fully captured. Nonetheless, the participants' experiences are quite different than those characterized by the ombudsperson's report. It would seem that these military spouses are not necessarily sacrificing their own professional aspirations in favour of their partner's military career.

It is also a gulf from the well documented struggles of many traditional military spouses who report significant challenges to their careers. Clever and Segal (2013) and Lundquist and

Xu (2014) state that U.S. military spouses experience higher rates of under and unemployment. Military spouses of Australian Defence Force members too experience high unemployment rates (Trewick & Muller, 2014). Spanner (2017 & 2020) notes that this too is generally the case for Canadian military spouses. As well in the Canadian context, Wang and Pullman (2019 - I) and Manser (2020) explain military spouses face an increased likelihood of unemployment when posted.

These well researched experiences among military spouses, who are majority women (traditional military spouses), are not those of this study's participants. There may be gendered reasons for the disparity in the impacts on male military spouses versus those on traditional military spouses. Spanner (2020) argues the CAF ingrains gendered ideals about what women must do to support men serving in militaries, including sacrificing their careers. So, it could be that the participants' gender identity upsets the norm and therefore alters the expectations of them as military spouses. These greedy institutions could therefore be less greedy to male military spouses precisely because they are not women. Since they are not women, perhaps there is not an established idea that their career is disposable in pursuit of the institutions' goals. As men, it could be that they are less beholden to the expectations of traditional military spouses as outlined by Harrison and Laliberté (1994).

Being “the Robin to her Batman”: willingness to sacrifice own career for spouse’s

Despite the above discussion on *Career sacrifices are not a given*, there is some research to support male military spouses sacrificing their careers for their partners in the military. It emerged in this super-ordinate theme that participants shared a willingness to provide significant support to their spouses' careers, even if doing so could pose challenges to their own. The literature that supports this point-of-view suggests this may be particularly prevalent among men with non-traditional views of women and gender roles. Kaufman and White (2016) conducted a study of married men's attitudes towards their wives' careers, delineating two attitudes among the participants: traditional and egalitarian. Kaufman and White explain “...traditional men tend to follow the breadwinning path and prefer that their wives stay home and care for their children. They tend to believe that separate roles are natural or appropriate and that women themselves prefer child care to employment. On the other hand, egalitarian men often follow the family involvement path and prefer that their wives work. They tend to believe that household and child care responsibilities should be shared” (2016, p. 1587). It appears that the participants' attitudes align more closely with what Kaufman and White (2016) describe as an egalitarian attitude.

Further to that, Kanzler et al. (2011) note that women who serve in the military are living out non-traditional lives, and so may gravitate to spouses who are supportive of that lifestyle. All of the qualitative participants were partnered with women in the military. The participants' non-traditional attitudes towards gender roles, and support to their spouses non-traditional choice to serve in the military, could therefore be driving their willingness to prioritize their spouses' careers over their own.

However, these results may also be a matter of the design of the study, and in particular, its title, *Exploring the Experiences of Non-Traditional Military Spouses Concerning the Impact the Canadian Armed Forces has on their Careers and Lives*, which may have influenced potential participants. The onus to express interest in the study was on potential participants, and participants were self-selected. It could be those that were interested and ultimately participated in the qualitative portion of the study also espouse non-traditional views. In evaluating their decision to participate in the study, it could be that those who chose to participate also share egalitarian views as defined above (Kaufman & White, 2016). Other male military spouses, also fitting the definition of non-traditional military spouse in this study, may lean toward what Kaufman and White (2016) describe as traditional attitudes. So, in holding traditional views, they may not have felt the study was for them and/or reflected their viewpoints, and so self-selected out of seeking to participate. Therefore, the resultant participants may have held egalitarian attitudes and so the results are reflective of their collective views, which may or may not reflect those of all Canadian male military spouses.

Impacts on Personal Lives

The results specific to the impacts on the participants' personal lives will be discussed in the following order: *Experience with military life informs lives as military spouses, I successfully meet the challenges of military life, Accelerating relationship commitment due to realities imposed by the military, Sharing ownership of domestic duties, unless its childcare, Non-existent connection with military spouse community, except service couples, and Conveying pride in spouse who serves.*

Experience with military life informs lives as military spouses

The results, indicating that male military spouses may be quite familiar with the realities of military life, are in line with existing literature. The super-ordinate theme, *Having familiarity with the CAF provides insights into military life*, encapsulates the deep understanding and

awareness of the CAF among the participants, stemming from their service in the CAF (either past or active) and/or close ties with military communities and families. This familiarity is also evident in responses to *Are you a former member of the CAF?* with half of the participants responding 'Yes'. These results are similar to those in Southwell et al. (2016) and Lufkin's (2017) research of U.S. male military spouses. In Southwell et al.'s (2016) study, half of its participants of male military spouses had previously served, while Lufkin's (2017) study found that 32% of its 34 participants were veterans.

This is notably unique from traditional military spouses. Fewer women have served in the military, resulting in fewer opportunities to acquire such a close familiarity with the institution. In Spanner's (2020) study, one of the interviews with a traditional military spouse is demonstrative of what they can experience when encountering the realities of military life. Spanner quotes the participant as saying: "People make comments like, 'you knew what you were getting yourself into.' Actually, no I didn't. I truly didn't." (2020, p. 63). Certainly, all traditional military spouses may not share this sentiment of surprise. Additionally, male military spouses are not entirely immune to the shockwaves and challenges that can come with military life. They cannot expect and anticipate all of the possible impacts on their lives imposed by the institution and its aims. Rather, it would appear from this and previous studies (Southwell et al., 2016 and Lufkin, 2017), more male military spouses may be quite familiar with the military, and so as a collective they may experience military life differently than would traditional military spouses. Perhaps then as a collective, they are better versed in the mechanics of the institution and so can account for them in relation to their lives more fully. The follow-on effect could be that their lives (and careers) are less impacted in that they are aware of the demands on military families, and are therefore, more well-positioned to accept them, and/or react to those demands.

This finding presents an intriguing contrast. It is clear that the CAF is not fully aware of the experiences of male military spouses. The evidence is among the researchers, including Canadian ones, calling for more research on male military spouses (Karney & Crown, 2007, Southwell & Wadworth, 2016, Lufkin, 2017, Wang & Pullman, 2019 – E & 2019 - I, and Corry et al., 2021). The institution's absence of understanding stands in stark contrast with what appears as a significant amount of knowledge about the CAF among the male military spouses. While the CAF does not know them well, Canadian male military spouses know the CAF.

I successfully meet the challenges of military life

The male non-traditional military spouse respondents demonstrated less overall agreement with this statement than did the traditional military spouse respondents even though both groups overwhelmingly agreed with the statement. 80% of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents agreed to varying degrees, but the traditional military spouse respondents did so at a greater rate (88.4%). Southwell et al.'s (2016) study of U.S. military couples found some expressed pride in their ability to navigate challenges with military life and Canadian military families shared the same sentiment concerning raising families despite how difficult life for military families can be (GoC, 2013). That may speak to the overall trend among both military spouse respondent groups – that they agree that they are meeting the challenges of military life.

Regarding the fact that the male non-traditional military spouse respondents expressed less agreement compared to the traditional military spouse respondents, this initially seems to contradict some of the other findings in the study. For example, among *Career sacrifices are not a given*, participants did not lament negative career impacts as a result of being a military spouse. Rather, it seems being a military spouse can have positive impacts on their careers. This is not usually the case for traditional military spouses according to previous research.

It could be that this finding is influenced by the Dunning-Kruger Effect, which is a “...phenomena thought to occur because individuals vary in their awareness of “known unknowns” (concepts, skills, or experiences that one is aware of, but which have not yet been mastered) relative to “unknown unknowns” (which fall outside of an individual’s cognizance)” (Anson, 2018, p. 1173). The male non-traditional military spouse respondents, due to their greater awareness of the CAF as a group (as per the findings among *Experience with military life informs lives as military spouses*) might be more aware of all that military life entails. Therefore, in their self-assessment vis-à-vis “successfully meeting the challenges,” they may not rate themselves as highly as the traditional military spouse respondents, who may not have the same familiarity with the military.

Accelerating relationship commitment due to realities imposed by the military

The results that some of the qualitative participants married earlier is a well-documented phenomena among military communities. Although not articulated by all of the qualitative participants, three explained that factors associated with the military caused them to get married earlier than they would have if they had been in a relationship with someone outside of the military. This reflects a broader trend within military communities noted by researchers

Hogan and Seifert (2010), Clever and Segal (2013) and Lundquist and Xu (2014). Similarly, a report from the Executive Office of the President of the United States³ noted American military spouses were significantly younger than their American counterparts (2018). So, the tendency for military members to marry earlier than the general civilian population may influence the average age of military spouses.

The participants' reasoning for marrying early aligns with reasoning identified by researchers. Each of the participants that recounted this phenomenon attributed the decision to a possible separation imposed by a CAF posting. The benefit of being married would therefore be the financial support to move together as well as the ability to be co-located. Researchers, Lundquist and Xu (2014) and Karney and Crown (2007), identified these are such factors in choosing to get married early. For example, Karney and Crown explain that "...compensation and benefits packages within the military may encourage early marriage..." (2007, p. 43). Accordingly, in all of the participants' cases, they would have been supported by the institution to proceed with their partner to the new posting, and receive the financial benefits associated with postings to off-set the costs of moving. Benefits for military families, such as support for relocation expenses, are in place to alleviate the burdens of military life (Lundquist & Xu, 2014, Keeling et al., 2017 and Strader & Smith, 2022). So, these participants may have felt it necessary to make this commitment to gain access to these supports in order to enable the progression of their relationship.

This impact, that the CAF and other militaries, can clearly have on some military spouses is intense; The decision to get married is profoundly life changing and comes with a multitude of repercussions. To name a few, it has legal, tax, financial and professional implications. It also results in changes to who constitutes next of kin and emergency contacts. Additionally, a person may change their last name resulting from marriage, a choice not easily reversed. It also has wider reaching social impacts, such as to the military spouse's family and friends. Further, this decision is often made, and was in the case of the three participants noted in this study, to ensure that the couple stays co-located. So, the choice to get married enables a move from the military spouse's original location to their partner in the military's posting location. That could mean a reduction or complete loss of the social support afforded by their family, friends and local community. Therefore, the impact the CAF can have on military spouses to get married early is massively consequential for their lives.

³ This report and the ages of military spouses will be discussed in greater depth under Unexpected Finding (p. 81).

Sharing ownership of domestic duties, unless its childcare

This result aligns with some of the literature on male military spouses, while contrasting with the research on traditional military spouses. It confirmed Brummond's (2016) assumption that male military spouses will take on more domestic duties as a result of their partner being unable to do so. In fact, Eran-Jona's (2011) noted this very dynamic; Israeli Defense Force members' husbands were found to take on an equal share of domestic labour, which is different than the norm among Israeli society. However, this result diverges from Strader and Smith's (2022) finding that U.S. male military spouses take on lesser domestic tasks than their partner in the military. Perhaps that is attributable, at least in part to, differences in cultural norms and expectations in Canadian military communities versus that of American military communities, and/or more broadly speaking, between Canadian and American society.

Specifically, regarding Canadian society, Frank and Frenette (2021) reported findings that may align more closely to those in this study. In their research on heterosexual Canadian couples' perceptions of the division of household tasks, "...about half of the couples reported sharing certain household tasks equally" (Frank & Frenette, 2021, p. 13). Concerning childcare responsibilities, this study's finding that many of the participants who were fathers felt that their partner in the military would more often be the one taking up childcare duties also aligns with Frank and Frenette's (2021) study. Frank and Frenette report the majority of the participants identified most of the childcare requirements were shared equally among the couple, but where there existed an uneven division of labour, the women were more likely to be the one caring for children (2021). This could be influenced by societal expectations of what women and men ought to do as parents. Overall, perhaps these male military spouses are aligning more closely with Canadian societal expectations.

These results do, however, stand in contrast with the research on traditional military spouses. Many researchers argue that militaries rely heavily on military spousal labour, including in the domestic realm, to facilitate military operations (Clever & Segal, 2013, Lundquist & Xu, 2014, Spanner, 2017, 2020 & 2022, and Manser, 2020). Researchers depict this phenomena as a result of the interplay of greedy institutions (Eran-Jona, 2011, Clever & Segal, 2013, Vuga & Juvan, 2013, Brummond, 2015, Moelker et al., 2015, D. Smith, 2015, Cramm et al., 2018, Ledberg & Ruffa, 2020, Sullivan et al., 2020 and Strader & Smith 2022). This reliance is no secret in Canada; Its codified in the *Covenant* which "...recognize[s] the important role families play in enabling operational effectiveness of the [CAF] ... (GoC, March, 2011) and DAOD 5044-1, Families, which "... recognizes the contributions and sacrifices made by [military] families ..." (GoC, 2002). Spanner argues these formalize the CAF's "...dependence

on feminized labour...” (2020, p. 62). These findings, a shared ownership of domestic tasks among military spouse and military member, are a departure from the experiences of many traditional military spouses who often carry the burden of the domestic requirements. It appears the participants may be less afflicted by the demands of domestic labour and therefore greedy institutions. Additionally, perhaps being less seized by the work-family conflict imposed by greedy institutions means that male military spouses are freer to pursue professional aspirations. That may contribute to the experience documented in *Career sacrifices are not a given*.

Non-existent connection with military spouse community, except service couples

This study’s finding that the participants experienced little connection to the military spouse community supports previous research of male military spouses. According to researchers, the experience of male military spouses could be characterized as that of outsiders. Keller et al. (2018) report U.S. male military spouses expressed a lack of support from the military community, although Corry et al.’s (2021) study of military spouses’ perceptions of support from the military community found no difference between women and men.

Accordingly, Karney and Crown (2007) note that support for military families is more directed to female military spouses than male military spouses. Southwell et al. echo this concern stating, “[a]lthough the military provides a variety of support resources intended to help military families cope with military life, there are some concerns about whether the support resources meet the needs of female service members’ families, especially families with civilian male spouses.” (2016, p. 71). Some of this study’s qualitative participants surmised that the military spouse community was small or non-existent. That could be indicative of their lack of awareness of those connections inside the military spouse community, in that they are decidedly outsiders of it. Tellingly, Lufkin’s (2017) study of male military spouses highlights an interviewee’s sentiment of feeling invisible among the military spouse community.

One example from this study is one of the qualitative participants finding out that the local military spouse community, comprised of all women, had been supporting each other through the COVID-19 pandemic while he struggled alone. Kanzler et al. (2011), agreeing with Karney and Crown (2007), found that the design of military family programs are with women in mind. Although in this case, the social media group was an informal one, it is demonstrative of an ecosystem built for the concerns of traditional military spouses and not necessarily male non-traditional military spouses.

Generally, it appears that the participants lack a connection with the wider military spouse community as seen in previous research on male military spouses. However, in the case of the participants, they are connected to a specific sub-set of the military spouse community, who are also non-traditional military spouses. They seem to connect with and relate to service couples. Participants expressed an absence of relatability with traditional military spouses as well as the challenges they face. They seem to instead find more relatability to other non-traditional military spouses. The participants themselves are living an extremely uncommon life, and so the innate feeling to find connection among others in their situation may be driving them to connect with other non-traditional military spouses, like service couples. These participants are after all a minority group among the military spouse community, and so may not feel a shared sense of experience and understanding with the large cohort of traditional military spouses for that reason.

Conveying pride in spouse who serves

This super-ordinate theme is evident in the literature on male military spouses. Among Eran-Jones' study of military spouses of the Israeli Defense Force members, 82% of the participants identifying as husbands explained they were "...very proud of their partner's military service (2011, p. 31). In Southwell et al.'s (2016) study of husbands of military members in the U.S. Armed Forces, they "...perceived wives' service as honorable and impressive" (2016, p. 74). Southwell and Wadsworth (2016) accordingly note male military spouses express pride in their partner's service. Additionally, similar to one of this study's participants, Morgan's expression of pride in his shared ability with his spouse to handle the inherent difficulties with both of them pursuing demanding military careers and raising a young family together, Southwell et al.'s (2016) study found participants were proud of their ability to manage the challenges imposed by military life. This aligns with a statement from the 2013 GoC ombudsperson report on military families. It states: "Many military families are ... proud of successfully raising families in spite of the challenges of military life" (GoC, 2013, p. 24). Lastly, the participant, Padraig's, expression of pride in being a military spouse was demonstrative of the participants' approach to this study and their enthusiasm to share their experiences. Overall, the finding supports the aforementioned GoC ombudsperson report, which describes "... that military families of all stripes, from coast to coast, are proud to contribute to the [CAF] mission" (GoC, 2013, p. 40).

Answering the Research Question

The research question that propelled this study is: *What are the experiences of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their careers and personal lives?* To answer this, the study breaks the question into its two sub-questions:

- What are the experiences of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their *careers*?
- What are the experiences of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their *personal lives*?

The study revealed a complex interplay of the impacts the CAF has on these male non-traditional military spouses, which are delineated into two categories: impacts on careers and personal lives.

Impacts on Careers

Regarding the question, *What are the experiences of non-traditional Canadian military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their careers?*, it appears that the well-documented experience of traditional military spouses concerning challenges in their careers may not be universally shared by Canadian male non-traditional military spouses. The study participants demonstrated that the impact from the CAF concerning their careers may be limited. Further, in some cases, they may have found opportunities by virtue of being military spouses that reap benefits for their careers. Additionally, although some report making sacrifices in their careers as a result of being a military spouse, it is not entirely clear if those choices necessarily result in harm to their careers. This could mean that the military, the family and the military family are less greedy when it comes to male military spouses than that of traditional military spouses.

Despite finding that male military spouses may be generally able to pursue their career goals, many expressed a willingness to slow down their own careers to support the career progress of their spouse. It could be that Canadian male military spouses hold more egalitarian views, which contribute to their decision to partner with someone who is living a non-traditional lifestyle, such as in the case of the participants, partnering with a woman serving in the military. However, it could also be that Canadian male military spouses hold a variety of views concerning gender roles, ranging from traditional through to egalitarian, and the participants captured in this study specifically represent those with egalitarian views. These participants' views may or may not however be reflective of all Canadian male military spouses and could be a better reflection of who chose to participate in this study.

Impacts on Personal Lives

Turning to the sub-question, *What are the experiences of non-traditional Canadian military spouses concerning the CAF's impact on their personal lives?*, it seems that these male military spouses are not living out parallel experiences to that of traditional military spouses. For example, they appear to have a significant understanding of the CAF and military life, possibly more so than traditional military spouses. Interestingly, the CAF does not reciprocate with a strong understanding of male military spouses.

Despite what appears to be an advantage among these military spouses, greater awareness of the military institution as a collective, male non-traditional military spouse respondents agreed to a lesser extent than did their traditional counterparts to the statement, *I successfully meet the challenges of military life*. To be clear, both respondent groups overwhelmingly agreed to the statement, but the male non-traditional military spouse respondents did so to a lesser extent than that of the traditional military spouse respondents. This could be attributed to the Dunning-Kruger Effect in that according to *Experience with military life informs lives as military spouses* the male non-traditional military spouses knowing more about the military, may therefore be less able to assess themselves as meeting the challenges it imposes successfully.

These spouses have some similarities with the broader military spouse community, such as susceptibility to accelerate their relationship commitment, but they do not seem overly connected to the experiences of the traditional military spouse community. There appears to be a significant disconnect between these non-traditional military spouses and traditional ones, marked by a lack of relatability. There does seem to be a greater ease of connection and relatability for these male military spouses with service couples. Service couples are also non-traditional military spouses, so perhaps the equally unique position of service couples, and shared challenges feels more relatable to male military spouses.

There is another difference from the experiences of traditional military spouses in that the participants are not experiencing feeling overburdened with domestic tasks. All of the qualitative participants shared that domestic tasks are completed equally between them and their partner in the military. This does not mirror the experiences of traditional military spouses who are often overwhelmingly responsible for the domestic realm so much that other areas of their lives can suffer, such as their careers. This may indicate that the greedy institutions at play are fundamentally less greedy to male non-traditional military spouses in comparison to traditional military spouses. For instance, the experiences of the study participants do not seem to align with the feeling that the CAF has an “... intensive reliance on military spousal labor...”

as described by Lundquist and Xu (2014, p. 1066). Instead, it seems as if there is greater balance between these military spouses and their partners in the military concerning domestic requirements.

Unexpected Finding

One unexpected finding was that Canadian male military spouses may be older on average than traditional military spouses (as per *How old are you?*). However, what makes this so unexpected is the finding that these military spouses too can be susceptible to accelerating their relationship commitment as a result of the military's influence. There is limited research on the age of military spouses, and at the time of the study, no specific research was found on the ages of Canadian male military spouses compared to those of traditional military spouses. Further, there does not appear to be research to confirm or question the results of this study which point to the possibility that male military spouses are older than their traditional military spouse counterparts. However, an American report of U.S. military spouses explains they are younger than the general population. It asserts "[a]lthough the average American adult of working age is 41 years old, working age military spouses are 33 years old, on average" (Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2018, p. 1-2). The younger age of U.S. military spouses is supported by research showing a tendency for military members to marry earlier in life (Hogan & Seifert, 2010, Clever & Segal, 2013, and Lundquist & Xu, 2014). Accordingly, the tendency for military members to get married earlier in life likely impacts the age at which military spouses are married as well.

How this finding of age, combined with the finding that some male military spouses are susceptible to accelerate a commitment to their relationship influenced by the military's impact (*Accelerating relationship commitment due to realities imposed by the military*) is unclear. These findings together present a perplexing combination that is not well understood. It would appear to be counterintuitive, and so the intersection of gender and age of military spouses could be an area that warrants more research.

Limitations and Strengths

While this study has a number of strengths, it is not without limitations. It is highly focused on a segment of the non-traditional military spouse community, the qualitative phase is not generalizable to all Canadian male military spouses and there is a potential for social desirability bias to have affected the study. Primarily, it narrowed its focus to a specific sub-set of the

Canadian military spouse community, male non-traditional military spouses. This deliberate choice aligns with the best practices of IPA, ensuring in the qualitative phase that the study participants were purposive and homogeneous. However, that specificity comes at the cost of not encompassing the full spectrum of non-traditional military spouses. The vast diversity within this demographic – domestically and among other militaries - remains unexplored, leaving gaps in understanding the experiences of various gender identities combined with sexual orientations among military families.

Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that the qualitative aspect of the study's findings cannot be generalized to all Canadian male military spouses. IPA studies are inherently focused on providing an in-depth examination of participants' experiences rather than aiming for broad generalizations. While the insights gained may highly resonate with others sharing similar identities, they should not be extrapolated at this stage to the entire population.

Additionally, it should be noted that the study may be susceptible to social desirability bias, which "... refers to the tendency to present oneself and one's social context in a way that is perceived to be socially acceptable, but not wholly reflective of one's reality" (Bergen & Labonté, 2020). Understanding that according to Bergen and Labonté (2020), there is limited research on detecting social desirability bias and developing practical strategies to mitigate it, the design of the study nonetheless included strategies to avoid and mitigate it. For example, Bergen and Labonté (2020) highlight among the use of interviews, the importance of building rapport and providing transparent information about the purpose of the study, use of the data and confidential and anonymity protocols, practices incorporated by the study. Moreover, the development of the interview guide placed a heavy focus on crafting questions to ensure they would not be leading. The interview questions were designed to be open-ended as well as neutral to allow for the participants to describe their experiences without the perception of an agenda on the part of the researcher.

Another way that social desirability bias may have affected the study is in who chose to participate in its qualitative phase. It is possible that male military spouses with more negative experiences chose not to partake. For instance, researchers, Little and Hisnanick (2007) and Lufkin (2017), identified that their male military spouse participants experienced difficulties in their careers. So too did some of the male non-traditional military spouse respondents of the QOL Survey. Yet, the qualitative respondents who participated in this study were clear that being a military spouse generally had not been harmful to their careers, and many of them noted examples where their status as a military spouse had been beneficial to their careers (see Chapter 6: Results - Qualitative and Explanatory Analyses). It could be that some of the male

military spouses exposed to the recruiting for this study opted out of participation because of social desirability bias. Perhaps they were not compelled to disclose challenges faced and impacts on their careers as a result of being a military spouse because of traditional societal expectations concerning what men ought to do for their families, such as being breadwinners. That could mean that the wholistic experiences surrounding the careers of Canadian male non-traditional military spouses were not well-represented in the results and thus paint a rosier picture than what is reality.

The study, nonetheless, exhibits strengths, particularly in addressing a population which is underserved by research and the potential applicability of the results in relation to male non-traditional spouses among other professional settings. By delving into the experiences of male non-traditional military spouses, it fills a critical gap in academic research and could provide valuable insights to the Canadian defence community and other militaries who have growing cohorts of male military spouses. Unlike some previous research on the military spouses, their data was not combined in a vast pool of military spouses, diluting their data. Rather they were explored deeply on their own. Also, their data was not removed altogether from a larger dataset of military spouses because of their small sample size. Instead, they were studied as a distinct group among the military spouse community.

Moreover, the findings could hold relevance beyond the realm of military families and the defence community. While the study specifically focuses on Canadian male non-traditional military spouses, its insights may offer parallels for other non-traditional spouses in different professional contexts. For instance, individuals who are partnered with those pursuing a career that is non-traditional for their gender may resonate with some of these findings. Male non-traditional spouses that are partnered with foreign service officers, police officers or doctors are a few examples. By shedding light on the unique experiences of non-traditional spouses, the study opens avenues for broader discussions on support to partners' and career impacts across various professions.

While the study's limitations necessitate caution in generalizing its findings, its strengths lie in its detailed exploration of a small sub-set of the Canadian military spouse community and its potential to inform research beyond the defence community. By recognizing these strengths and limitations, future research can build upon this foundation to foster a more comprehensive understanding of non-traditional military families and spouses, which could lead to enriching support systems and policies within the defence community for military families.

Areas for Further Research

Future studies should consider investigating male military spouses in greater detail, the diversity among non-traditional military families and spouses as well as service couples. Researchers should explore in greater depth the experiences of male non-traditional military spouses. One delineation would be to establish studies of male military spouses, exploring deeply those who are civilians, in active service and with past service. That would facilitate a more nuanced understanding of the impacts of the CAF on their lives depending on how they are relating to the CAF and their understanding and experience of it. Additionally, future research should investigate other aspects of their lives as military spouses, such as health and finances.

Because this study addressed the research gap among male non-traditional military spouses, it could not explore the vast array of non-traditional military spouses. This study therefore cannot speak for all non-traditional military spouses, and there remains much to learn about the spectrum of other non-traditional military spouses and families. For example, research ought to include non-traditional military spouses identifying among various genders partnered with military members who identify among various genders, as well as including diversity among sexual orientation. In that this study's qualitative participants identified as all partnered with women in heterosexual relationships, it would be crucial for future research to specifically look at those military spouses who are part of the LGBTQ2 community.

Lastly, future researchers ought to consider studies where both the military member and the military spouse take part in the study. Studying service couples would allow a richer picture of the experiences of military life from both perspectives in the partnership. It could also reduce the prevalence of the potential impacts of social desirability bias, by including another perspective with an in-depth knowledge of the space, in addition to the checks and balances it would provide.

Research efforts hold significant potential to deepen our understanding of the unique experiences within non-traditional military families and spouses. By exploring the identities and experiences within the community of male military spouses, the spectrum of identities and relationships among the non-traditional military spouse community, including those within the LGBTQ2 community, and considering the perspectives of both military members and spouses, researchers can paint a more comprehensive picture of the challenges and opportunities inherent in military life.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Summary

The goals of this study were to explore the experiences of male non-traditional military spouses as a distinct group from traditional military spouses and invite the possibility of uncovering a reality unique to their experiences. It used a mixed methods approach, starting with quantitative analysis of secondary data from a survey administered by DND, then qualitative analysis of nine interviews adhering to IPA practices. From there an explanatory analysis followed combining the results of the quantitative and qualitative phases to gain a richer understanding of this understudied sub-population of the military spouse community.

From this research, it is clear male non-traditional military spouses are not having parallel experiences to those of traditional military spouses. One of the key findings concerning their careers is that these military spouses are not necessarily experiencing harm to their careers. The phenomenon experienced by many traditional military spouses of negative impacts to their careers, often in unemployment and underemployment, does not characterize the experiences of these male military spouses. Notably, it is rather the opposite, where being a military spouse is a net positive to their professional lives. Another key finding concerning their personal lives is that these male military spouses are not fully burdened by domestic duties, whereas traditional military spouses can often be. That intense requirement for traditional military spouses to undertake all, or the majority of, the household and care requirements can negatively affect other aspects of their lives, such as their careers. The lesser domestic burden than that of traditional military spouses may in turn influence the participants' careers positively, allowing them greater latitude to pursue professional aspirations.

Why do these distinct experiences matter in the larger context? Understanding the diverse spectrum of military families and their experiences with the CAF is foundational to ensuring it can be an institution that is welcoming to all types of families from Canadian society. The CAF after all does not have the luxury of relying on one family type, especially one whose prevalence may be waning. With an estimated 10% shortfall in personnel strength and struggles with achieving personnel recruitment numbers (Common, September 2023), an institution which clearly states its reliance on military families, and spouses, has a responsibility to understand them *as they are*. Understanding the spectrum of military family constructs and their realities could be a piece of the puzzle in the challenges around recruiting and retention of CAF members. The recently appointed Minister of National Defence, the Honourable Bill Blair,

emphasizes his prioritization of recruitment and retention of CAF members in his first message as Minister, stating, “...we must and will take new, innovative measures to recruit and retain even more talented Canadians in this institution.” (Blair, 2023). The GoC’s latest defence policy update, *Our North: Strong and Free: A Renewed Vision for Canada’s Defence*, too makes promises to ensure recruitment includes all types of Canadians, explaining “[the CAF] will ensure that our recruitment efforts are tailored towards recruiting talented people from all parts of our society. In this, we will also remove barriers to the recruitment of diverse Canadians” (GoC, 2024, p. 18). In that CAF members could and should hail from traditional and non-traditional families, accounting for the non-traditional military families, just as much as the traditional ones ought to be included in the institutional renewal so promised by the policy update. Further, traditional and non-traditional military families alike must be able to see themselves in the policies and programs of the institution in order to continue supporting CAF members’ careers and CAF operations.

Policy Implications

The implications of this research on policy are two-fold. Firstly, awareness of the diverse spectrum of military families, both traditional and non-traditional, needs to be internalized and accounted for by the CAF. Secondly, the assumptions around what military families and spouses do, and ought to do, for the institution needs to be interrogated and adapted to the changing demographics and realities of military families. Together this points to an opportunity to draw from an alternative model - perhaps even the one that was observed via this study of male non-traditional military spouses in their relationship with the military - concerning the dynamic between military spouse and the CAF, but one that needs to be considered carefully.

First of all, noting that this research was focused on male military spouses, it nonetheless provides greater awareness of non-traditional military families and spouses, who will in all likelihood become more common place. As was identified, the demographics of military families has already changed to include more non-traditional military families, while it appears that the policies of the CAF and the GoC have not entirely transformed along with them to account for those changes. There is a diverse cadre of non-traditional military families and spouses, who remain understudied and who are not well understood by the CAF. Having an accurate understanding of these military spouses, their experiences, challenges, opportunities, and needs could help better support them as a key enabler to CAF members and operations.

From there, the long-held assumption about what Canadian military families, namely spouses, do and ought to do for military members’ careers and the institution’s operations at

large needs to be interrogated. The study participants are clearly not operating like traditional military families. So, the CAF's assumption as identified by Harrison and Laliberté (1994) and Spanner (2017) that military spouses will relinquish their careers and tend to all the domestic requirements to enable military careers and operations is uncertain. The participants demonstrated they are not sacrificing all of their "personal and professional aspirations" for the needs of the CAF. Rather it seems they are striking a balance. They are certainly contributing to the domestic requirements of the household, but their spouse in the military too is sharing in this workload. Additionally, they are fully pursuing their careers, while also supporting their spouse in the military and their career aspirations.

All-in-all, it seems this may be a potential alternative model of the dynamic between military spouse and the CAF. In spite of the military institution, whose greediness is described as "unparalleled" (Strader & Smith, 2022, p. 448), which in combination with the family is the *military family* that tends to "...put an excessive care burden on military families" (Strader & Smith 2022, p. 448), it has been possible for these male military spouses to have fulfilling careers and yet not be overburdened by domestic requirements.

However, one needs to ask, seeing that the impact of the CAF on careers and personal lives could be markedly different on male military spouses than that of traditional military spouses, is it possible that the demands and expectations of male military spouses are lesser than those who are women? Is that because of the societal expectations concerning what women do for men's careers and/or for militaries? Or is it the military's tendency to lean on the traditional military family constructs, and so by virtue of being non-traditional military spouses, these spouses skirt those long-held requirements? Or is it more a matter of the dynamic between the partners which is characterized by greater balance? Whatever the reason may be, it is worth investigating further to better understand how this example of greater balance might be replicated elsewhere among military families and spouses.

This study underscores the imperative for the CAF to re-examine its understanding of and assumptions about military families and spouses. It is evident that the assumptions about military families being traditional, or at least operating like traditional military families, may not align with the realities of some military families and spouses. As the CAF seeks to enhance its appeal to potential recruits and support its members effectively, it must adapt its policies and programs to reflect the evolving realities and dynamics of military families.

Final Reflections

My positionality statement identified the various roles I have occupied among the Canadian military family community, including as a serving member married to a male non-traditional military spouse. During that time, I was spending long periods away from my family while my spouse was building his career as a lawyer. I accepted the dynamic between he and I imposed by military life, which required that he frequently hold the majority of the domestic responsibilities, caring for our home and young child. And although he was very much affected by my absence, he had no say in the matter. It was I that had the career with the CAF, and yet he was providing an intense level of support to me, and by extension, the functioning of the CAF with a limited voice in shaping it. I saw this as a necessary function of military service and felt military families and spouses needed to accept this reality that prioritizes CAF careers and operations. Admittedly, I saw the impacts of the CAF on military spouses and families as inevitable and, perhaps even, natural. I was in essence re-producing the traditional military family construct, even though I did not fit within the traditional military family identity as a woman serving in the CAF.

I knew at the time that my experiences among military life were based on a traditional family model. However, what I realized in preparing for this research, namely in reading the work of Dr. Leigh Spanner, is that this is a social construct. It is built this way, but that does not necessarily mean it needs to be that way. Now I realize that assumptions inherent in CAF policies and the way it depends on military families and spouses are not inevitable and are not necessarily natural. Previous research and literature makes clear that the impacts of the military institution on traditional military spouses have been challenging to say the least. Canadian traditional military spouses fought for greater recognition as well as compensation of sorts, in the form of benefits (such as health, dental and financial assistance to relocate), because they understood their work to support their spouse in the military allowed the CAF to operate. They also understood that they could experience consequences in their ability to pursue their own goals, be them personal and/or professional, by the function of being the person in the partnership who takes on the bulk of the domestic requirements.

This study demonstrated that there may be alternatives concerning the dynamic between the military spouse and the CAF that is characterized by greater balance. The study participants did not lament sacrificing their professional aspirations. Rather they expressed pursuing their goals in tandem with supporting the careers of their spouses in the military and tackling the domestic work load together. They seemed to be in a position to provide support to CAF

members, which I am not questioning as a necessity, but their support was not at the expense of their professional and personal aspirations.

So, it is my hope that there can be transformations among the relationship between military families and spouses and the CAF that is characterized by greater balance. For example, I would wish to see the observation from the GoC ombudsperson report that “[m]ilitary families generally experience less fluctuation to their family lives when the non-serving spouse is both able and willing to set aside personal and professional aspirations in order to assume disproportionately large parenting and household roles, offsetting the serving member’s limited contribution” (GoC, 2013, p. 72) be something of the past. To be clear the report does not say whether the phenomenon is right or wrong, it is simply identifying it. Nonetheless, the requirement for a person to relinquish both *personal and professional aspirations* for an organization is extreme in and of itself. It is more so when one remembers that military members are the ones signing on the dotted line to serve in the CAF, not their families, nor their spouses.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide



University
of Victoria

Research Services

**Exploring the Experiences of Non-Traditional Military Spouses
concerning the Canadian Armed Forces' Impact on their Careers and Lives**
Researcher: Sonja Maul-Wilson, CD | Advisor: Dr. Richard Marcy

Interview Guide

Introduction

- Welcome the participant and introduce myself
- Explain the purpose of the study and why the participant was chosen
- Explain the presence and purpose of the audio recording equipment

Informed Consent

- Review the consent form with participant
- If not previously completed, invite the participant to sign the consent form

Interview Questions

This interview will consist of eight questions. During the interview I may ask you additional questions to further clarify or elaborate your answer. You may choose not to answer any question; In that event, please feel free to inform me. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. Going into life as a military spouse, did you know what military life would be like for you?
3. What impact, if any, has being a military spouse had on your *professional* life?
4. Can you share any experiences with military life that have impacted your *personal* life?
5. How do you and your spouse share household responsibilities?
6. How would you describe your involvement or connection with the military spouse community?
7. In your experience, would you say that military family programming is designed for male military spouses or not?
8. Before we finish, is there anything about your experience as a male military spouse that you would like to share now or emphasize?

Closing / Debrief

- Thank the participant for their time and participation
- Briefly summarize the discussion
- Ask participant if they have any questions
- Ensure the participant has a copy of their consent form

Appendix B: Consent Form

SSRRB Clearance #: 2100/23F / UVic Ethics Protocol #22-0410



Exploring the Experiences of Non-Traditional Military Spouses concerning the Canadian Armed Forces' Impact on their Careers and Lives

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *Exploring the Experiences of Non-Traditional Military Spouses concerning the Canadian Armed Forces' Impact on their Careers and Lives* that is being conducted by Sonja Maul-Wilson, CD. Sonja is a graduate student at the School of Public Administration at the University of Victoria (UVic). You may contact her if you have further questions at sonjamaulwilson@uvic.ca. As a graduate student, she is required to conduct research as part of the requirements for the degree, Master of Public Administration. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Richard Marcy, who may be contacted at rtmarcy@uvic.ca.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the impacts the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has on the lives and careers of male military spouses, who are an example of non-traditional military spouses. Traditional military spouses are female civilians married to or common-law with a male military member, and non-traditional military spouses are people that are married to or common-law with a military member, but do not conform to the traditional female civilian partnered with a male military member configuration.

Importance of this Research

As a subset of the broader Canadian military spouse community, male military spouses are not well researched, so this research will enable a greater understanding of their lived experiences. Further, as the CAF strives to be a more diverse and inclusive military community, this study could inform policy decisions to facilitate those aims.

Participants Selection

You are being asked to participate in this study because you identify as a male military spouse and expressed interest in this study through information provided by the sponsor of this research, Lynda Manser (Associate Director, Research and Strategic Program Development, Military Family Services, Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Services), or a Department of National Defence newsletter or social media post.

What is involved

If you consent to voluntarily participate in this research, you are being asked to participate in an interview with an anticipated duration of 60 minutes. It can take place either in-person at a location that is convenient to you (if you are located in the Greater Victoria Area) or virtually over the researcher's UVic Zoom account. If you agree to participate, the session will be audio recorded by an external hand-held device in both cases. Recordings will not be taken through Zoom's recording function. The audio recording will be made into a transcription, which will be securely stored on UVic's servers (which are located on Canadian soil) and a back-up that will be stored on a USB locked in the researcher's office.

Inconvenience

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including a time commitment of approximately 60 minutes.

Risks

The risks associated with participating in this study are assessed as minimal. Some people may experience discomfort when answering questions, however, the potential risk and level of distress is estimated to be no greater than what one would experience in everyday life. Should you experience discomfort, you may choose not to answer a [question](#) or you may discontinue participation in the research.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you as a participant. This research will benefit the male military spouse community in that their experiences could be better understood by the defence community. This research will also benefit the academic community more broadly as research of male military spouses is highly limited.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw before or during the interview, all of your information will be removed. However, if you decide you no longer wish to participate after data analysis is complete, we will not be able to remove the information you have provided as your data will have aggregated into the rest of the data collected. If you are unsure if the data analysis phase is complete, please contact the researcher, Sonja Maul-Wilson (sonjamaulwilson@uvic.ca) or her Thesis Advisor, Dr. Richard Marcy (rtmarcy@uvic.ca) to determine if your data can be removed.

Please note that the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces and the Military Family Resource Centres will NOT be made aware of if you participate or not.

Potential Conflicts of Interest

The researcher may have a relationship to potential participants as she is a veteran of the CAF. To help prevent any relationship from influencing your decision to participate, a screening question will be used to vet potential participants.

Anonymity

In terms of protecting your identity, your real name will not be used in this study. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity, and identifying information will not be included when the findings are presented. Direct quotes may be used in the findings. Any identifying information (e.g. name, email, base, or partner's rank or trade) that could link you to the data you have provided will be redacted. Participants are asked to avoid disclosing information that would identify them or third parties in the interview.

Confidentiality

Access to the data during the study is limited to those researchers on the study team and your confidentiality will be protected to the extent permitted by applicable laws. The researcher will keep your responses confidential and will protect your identity in any reports or presentations. The anonymized data will be stored on a secure server controlled by UVic and removed when the research process is complete. Through snowball sampling, participants will be asked if they are able to refer other potential participants to the researcher; In those cases, participants and potential participants are asked to not share information concerning any other participants' involvement or lack thereof in the study with anyone else.

Dissemination of Results

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in that it will form the basis of a master's thesis, and could be used for a scientific journal article, and/or a presentation in a conference.

