

MA PROJECT PAPER

CANADIAN FORCES DEPLOYMENTS: A FAMILY EXPERIENCE

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The Project Paper is submitted  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Master of Arts

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September 12, 2008

## Abstract

Physical absences and deployments are a vivid reality for Canadian Forces (CF) members and their families. Whether for training, course work or overseas deployment, CF members can be absent from their families for weeks, or several months at a time as required for military service. My thesis documentary video, *Canadian Forces Deployments: A Family Experience* provides a glimpse of military families' experiences of deployment of a CF member to Afghanistan. The objective of this video is to provide a representation of the subgroup of military families that differs from the common mainstream media representations of soldiers fighting in Afghanistan who have been or are absent. The basis of this project is ethnographic research, conducted through interviews with spouses of Canadian Forces' members who are either currently deployed in the overseas mission in Afghanistan; who have recently returned; or who are awaiting deployment. This project provides an overview of the military lifestyle of members and their families and the general context for deployments. In comparison to past CF missions, greater concern and risk accompanies current deployments of Canadian Forces members as Canada is engaged in a combat role in the politically unstable country of Afghanistan. Through on-camera interviews with spouses of CF members, this documentary provides a representation that is different than commonly found in mainstream media where military families are often depicted solely in grief and mourning. This project stems from my personal acquaintance with the Canadian Forces and military lifestyle, growing up with my father who was an officer in the regular force. The film is supplemented by this paper, which will develop the theoretical framework and provide a synthesis of the responses of the interviewees.

### **Acknowledgement**

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable assistance and guidance of Professors Brenda Longfellow and Patricia Mazepa in the completion of this support paper and my thesis video. I would also like to thank the families and CF members who were willing to share their experiences of deployment and military life, without which this project would not be possible.

### **List of Abbreviations**

CANEX:	Canadian Forces Exchange System
CF:	Canadian Forces
CFB:	Canadian Forces Base
CFPSA:	Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency
CSIS:	Canadian Security Intelligence Service
DGPS:	Director General Personnel Services
DMC:	Defence Management Committee
DND:	Department of National Defence
DV:	Digital Video
HLTA:	Home Leave Travel Assistance
KMFRC:	Kingston Military Family Resource Centre
MFSP:	Military Family Services Program
MFRC:	Military Family Resource Centre
MW:	Morale and Welfare
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDHQ:	National Defence Head Quarters
NFB:	National Film Board (Canada)
NPF:	Non-Public Funds
NPP:	Non-Public Property
PMQ:	Private Military Quarters
PSP:	Personal Support Programs
R&R:	Rest and Recreation
SISIP FS:	SISIP Financial Services
SISIP:	Service Income Security Insurance Plan

Absences and deployments are a vivid reality for Canadian Forces (CF) members and their families. Whether for training, course work or overseas deployment, CF members can be absent from their families for weeks, or several months at a time as required for military service. My thesis documentary video, *Canadian Forces Deployments: A Family Experience* provides a glimpse of military families' experiences of deployment of a CF member to Afghanistan. Through interviews with military spouses and CF members, this film provides a fuller portrait of the experiences of military families than is typically offered in mainstream media as victims, grieving a loss. Presently, Canadian Forces (CF) has committed troops to the NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, which began in February 2002 and has been extended with a commitment until 2011. Canadian Forces are engaged in peace-making, which involves a greater combat role in contrast to previous peacekeeping deployments. In response to the U.S. led "War on Terror", reports by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) indicated "that the primary threat to the physical security and safety of Canadian citizens, as well as to the country's critical infrastructures, is international terrorism."<sup>1</sup> This rationale in part informs Canada's commitment of troops to Afghanistan. In the current global context, Canadian security cannot be evaluated in a vacuum, as it is closely intertwined with North American and international security.<sup>2</sup> The deployment of Canadian Forces' members is not new, but not since the Second World War have Canadian soldiers been faced with a similar combat mission or security risks. The deployment of Canadian Forces members serves the needs of the military unit, supports the goals of the Canadian government in the region, and has a profound effect on the spouse and family members of the CF member deployed. The deployment of Canadian Forces in Afghanistan remains a point of debate and controversy, which has yet to garner full support by the Canadian public and has

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<sup>1</sup> Sloan, Elinor C. Security and Defence in the Terrorist Era. Montréal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, 18.

<sup>2</sup> Sloan, 4.

received intermittent opposition by leaders in the House of Commons. This lack of support for the mission can be frustrating for military families of a CF member deployed in Afghanistan. Embedded reporting, increased media coverage and military deaths weigh heavily on the hearts and minds of family members with loved ones serving overseas in Afghanistan. For the family of a Canadian Forces member deployed overseas, deployment is a family experience.

This project stems from my personal acquaintance with the Canadian Forces and military lifestyle, growing up with my father who was an officer in the regular force. The military lifestyle is unique and offers many opportunities for its members and their families such as job security, social benefits and opportunities for relocation across Canada. Drawbacks accompanying these opportunities include frequent moves, distance from extended family, and time apart from the immediate family member enlisted. Because frequent moves characterize military employment, the families of the enlisted members are more or less dependent on the organizational support structures of the CF. The military often offers the primary income, and determines the time spent in one location or on a mission, thus placing the interests of the family secondary to those of the military.

### **Objectives**

The objective of this video is to provide a representation of the subgroup of military families that differs from the common mainstream media representations of soldiers fighting in Afghanistan, by highlighting the personal experiences of the families of deployed CF members. The basis of this project is ethnographic research, conducted through interviews with spouses of Canadian Forces' members who are either currently deployed in overseas mission in Afghanistan; who have recently returned; or who are awaiting deployment. This project provides an overview of the military lifestyle of members and their families and the context for

deployments. In comparison to past CF missions, greater concern and risk accompanies current deployments of Canadian Forces members as Canada is engaged in a combat role in the politically unstable country of Afghanistan. Through on-camera interviews with spouses of CF members, this documentary provides a representation that is different than commonly found in mainstream media where military families are often depicted solely in grief and mourning. The film is supplemented by this paper, which will develop the theoretical framework and provide a synthesis of the responses of the interviewees.

### **Project Description**

The documentary video that accompanies this paper focuses on the experiences of families of CF members serving overseas in Afghanistan. The Canadian Forces forms the basis of Canada's defence system with the goal to ensure continued safety and protection of Canadian citizens. As an institution, the Canadian Forces is configured to serve the country's national interests and international endeavors. On the international scene, CF members in combat serve within coalition forces. The Canadian Forces are an extension of the federal government's foreign policy and its role and mandate are determined by government policy. In response to current security concerns, Sloan theorizes that Canada's security and defence requirements "can be roughly divided into four categories: military responses at home (homeland defence); civilian response at home (homeland security); military responses abroad (war fighting and stabilization operations); and civilian response abroad (for example, development aid and diplomacy)."<sup>3</sup> The current CF mission can be situated within the third category of overseas missions. As cited on their web site, "Canadian Forces members are proud to serve Canada by defending its values, interests and sovereignty at home and abroad. The Canadian Forces are a modern and effective

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<sup>3</sup> Sloan, 5.

military capable of playing a number of important roles at home and abroad.”

([www.forces.gc.ca/site/about/index\\_e.asp](http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/about/index_e.asp))

### **Military Families & Lifestyle**

Although the peace dividend has been pursued, the irony is that, “troops have faced an increased pace of deployment and found themselves in far greater conflict ridden situations than ever before.”<sup>4</sup> Minimal Canadian research has been conducted on military families. A 1994 book entitled *No Life Like it: Military Wives in Canada* (1994) examines wives of Canadian Forces members and their experiences with the CF. Military policy suggests that it is in the best interest of the military to ensure spouses are ready for the departure of a CF member, and are prepared to endure absences. This includes being able to take care of household tasks, coping with children’s emotions, and their own grief at the absence of their spouse.<sup>5</sup> These absences can also be exasperated by frequent moves, training or course-work where the CF member is away from home, as well as elevated risk of injury or death related to the mission. Families may face these difficulties while also adapting to new physical surrounding and at times a new language environment.<sup>6</sup>

A 2003 American study *Greedy Media: Army Families, Embedded Reporting, and War in Iraq* examined U.S. military wives’ experience of their spouse’s deployment in Iraq. In the study, surveys were completed and 23 military wives were interviewed at a large military Army Post in the southeastern U.S. in March/April 2003 with the purpose to “explore military family experiences when a spouse or family member is engaged in military service in a combat

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<sup>4</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs. *Moving Forward: A Strategic Plan for Quality of Life Improvements in the Canadian Armed Forces*. 1998, 1.

<sup>5</sup> Harrison, Deborah and Laliberté, Lucie. *No Life Like it: Military Wives in Canada*. Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company, 1994, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 57.



environment.”<sup>7</sup> The study outlined the institutional framework where the needs of the family and the military intersect and “both make significant demands on the service member.”<sup>8</sup> Members of the military “are normatively restricted with significant social controls on their lives especially during wartime deployments. Family devotion and loyalty are normative as well. In many cases conflict arises as the soldier tries to maintain fidelity and allegiance to both”<sup>9</sup> the military and the family. At the time of the interviews, the Army Post had 16,317 service members officially stationed, with a majority deployed.<sup>10</sup> Consistent with the results of this survey, the roles of wives changed while their husbands were deployed to include, “increased responsibilities in the Family Readiness Group [similar to Canadian Military Family Resource Centres in Canada] as well as assuming the roles their husbands held in the family prior to deployment.”<sup>11</sup> The roles of wives were expanded to include additional tasks and required the development of new skills, including the role of offering support and information to extended family members. Spouses were expected to take care of all household tasks, including the tasks usually completed by their husbands in addition to bearing sole parenting responsibilities. These tasks were often traditional gender tasks where the husband would bear responsibility for car repairs or household maintenance. In addition to a changed role within the family structure, the study found that the spouse is faced with coping with the natural affects of separation. Furthermore, with increased coverage of the combat mission, spouses might now, “expand and contract in this new media-rich environment of combat coverage. Spouses may take on additional caretaking and information processing roles for extended family, friends, and those significant in the lives of

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<sup>7</sup> Ender, Morten G.; Campbell, Kathleen M.; Davis, Toya J. and Michaelis, Patrick R. “Greedy Media: Army Families, Embedded Reporting, and War in Iraq,” *Sociological Focus* (February, 2007) 56.

<sup>8</sup> Ender & al., 49.

<sup>9</sup> Ender & al., 49.

<sup>10</sup> Ender & al., 53.

<sup>11</sup> Ender & al., 60.

single soldiers.”<sup>12</sup> The findings of this study point to the additional household and family demands placed on wives, in addition to the demand media places on military families to disclose information, as the media seeks to gain access to information in order to fulfill its role to inform the public. Given this context, military families require support to cope with the absence of a loved one deployed in any period and especially as a result of the increased security risks associated with the current mission.

In recent years, military spending has increased with additional funds allocated to the Canadian Forces that were crippled by the dramatic downsizing of the military following the end of the Cold War and restrained recession spending. The Military Family Support Program was established in the 1980’s and later developed the Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) in 1991 to provide information and services to CF families, including childcare, emergency assistance and volunteer programs.<sup>13</sup> These programs were established on military bases with public funding, and operated as non-profit organizations incorporated under provincial laws and managed by an elected board of directors, using local base infrastructure and utilities.<sup>14</sup> However, between 1994 to 1999, the Canadian Defence budget saw a twenty three percent reduction from \$12 billion to \$9 billion, with the operating budget forecast for 2000, fifty to fifty-five percent lower than forecast in 1987.<sup>15</sup> Budget cuts were coupled with personnel reductions of about thirty percent, or approximately 60,000 members and a forty-five percent reduction of the civilian workforce, of approximately 36,000 reduced to 20,000.<sup>16</sup> The 1998 report *Moving Forward: A Strategic Plan for Quality of Life Improvements in the Canadian Armed Forces* was commissioned to examine military support structures and put forth the

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<sup>12</sup> Ender & al., 65.

<sup>13</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 61.

<sup>14</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 1.

<sup>16</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 1.

recommendation that family support resources be expanded to provide a more adequate network for CF families. The report, produced by the Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, sighted a concern that “the lack of coordination between the various elements of the family network can result in significant differences in the level of assistance provided to families from one base to another.”<sup>17</sup> The report also raised concerns about the effectiveness of the MFRC, concerning their ability to cater to the needs of CF members living off base, including the difficulty in identifying and contacting new arrivals. These concerns were echoed by the deployment coordinators of the Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC), when interviewed for the film, who have tried to address this concern by developing additional programs to serve the needs of military families living off base.

The Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA) is the umbrella agency for the CF that offers support services through a variety of means. The mission of the CFPSA is, “to enhance the morale and welfare of the military community, thus contributing to the operational readiness and effectiveness of the Canadian Forces” (CFPSA mission poster, CFPSA.com). The Canadian Forces Support Agency (CFPSA) was established in 1996 by the Defence Management Committee (DMC),<sup>18</sup> and its programs are “delivered and/or managed by NPF employees and administered within the NPP financial framework.”<sup>19</sup> In addition to their role in program management and delivery of services, the CFSPA’s mandate includes policy development to fulfill its five strategic objectives to “deliver quality morale and welfare programs, products and services; satisfy the morale and welfare programs, products and services; foster a professional, dedicated team; oversee all NPP; and administer NPP efficiently and ensure its viability.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 63.

<sup>18</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, CFPSA Strategic Plan 2006-2009, pdf, 2004, 5.

<sup>19</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, CFPSA Strategic Plan, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, CFPSA Strategic Plan, 7.

According to its mandate the CFPSA, “delivers morale and welfare programs, services and activities” (CFPSA.com/en) through its operational divisions which includes the Canadian Forces Exchange System (CANEX), SISIP Financial Services (SISIP FS) and Personal Support Programs (PSP).

The Military Family Services Program (MFSP) falls under the umbrella of the Personnel Support Programs, and is delivered by Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) overseen by the CFPSA. According to the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, the MFSP, “promotes and facilitates community-based family services that strengthen CF families and communities.”<sup>21</sup> They offer child and youth development and parenting programs, provide support for family separation and reunion for deployment, crisis intervention, and personal development and community integration support for military families. The tag line for the agency is ‘Serving Those Who Serve’. A toll free Mission Information Line (1-800-866-4546) is operated for families with CF members working in operational roles outside of the country. According to the MFSP these programs recognize, “the importance of maintaining the physical, emotional and spiritual well-being of our sailors, soldiers and air personnel and their families [that] has long been recognized as essential to the success of the military mission.”<sup>22</sup> The rationale for providing morale and welfare (MW) programs for the Canadian Forces (CF) stems from the operational focus to, “contribute directly and indirectly to military operational readiness and effectiveness,” in addition to providing, “an adequate range of support programs and services [to CF members]”.<sup>23</sup> MW programs receive funding from public funds accumulated through the Defence Services Program by Parliament and non-public funds (NPF) raised for the overall benefit of CF members. The Treasury Board provides additional public funds for life and

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<sup>21</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, CFPSA at a glance, pdf. <[www.cfpsa.com](http://www.cfpsa.com)>, 6.

<sup>22</sup> Chief of Defence Staff. CDS Guidance: Canadian Forces Morale and Welfare Programs, pdf, Jan. 5, 2004, 1.

<sup>23</sup> Chief of Defence Staff, 1.

disability insurance programs sponsored by the government.<sup>24</sup> The goal is to provide access to a reasonable level of goods, services and facilities to CF members and families that contribute to their well-being financially, physically, emotionally and spiritually.<sup>25</sup> Morale and welfare (MW) programs are adapted for the specific needs of the CF community they serve and therefore programs may vary in different military communities. The primary intended recipients of morale and welfare programs are military members, and where appropriate family members. Availability of access to programs varies between Regular Force, Reserve Forces members, and the Reserve Force, subdivided into Primary Reserve, Canadian Rangers and the Cadet Instructor Cadre.<sup>26</sup>

Military Family Resource Centers (MFRC) are situated in various cities across Canada, mostly in areas where there is a military base. The Standing Committee on National Defence and Veteran affairs maintains that support for families is, “not only an important element of efforts to maintain the morale and overall quality of life of military personnel, but also a vital measure to ensure the operational effective of the Canadian military.”<sup>27</sup> Additionally, there are several online initiatives including a youth website [www.connectingcfyouth.ca](http://www.connectingcfyouth.ca) maintained by the CFPSA that encourages discussion among youth of Canadian Forces members and provides a forum and information on categories such as therapy, deployment and how to connect with others. Moreover, information for family members can be found on the National Defence Department web site and the recruiting web site. ([www.forces.ca](http://www.forces.ca)) Messes, which are situated on every base also form, “an integral part of the military community and serve a key role in fostering morale and unit cohesion” but are restricted to CF members.<sup>28</sup> Other support programs

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<sup>24</sup> Chief of Defence Staff, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Chief of Defence Staff, 3.

<sup>26</sup> Chief of Defence Staff, 3.

<sup>27</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 57.

<sup>28</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, CFPSA at a glance, 7.

are also offered including a number of services to CF family members including funds for Rest and Recreation (R&R), daycare and other programs operated through base Military Family Resource Centres. Additional programs are administered during deployed operations, providing deployed personnel with “retail operations, Home Leave Travel Assistance (HLTA), sports, fitness, recreational activities”<sup>29</sup> and other services in association with the military National Support Element. Families interviewed for the film noted different levels of use of services offered by the MFRC. According to these families, the centre’s programs cater mostly towards younger children. The couples who were awaiting deployment or had experienced one deployment used the services to a greater degree than the couples who had undergone several deployments who did not make use of their services.

Among its recommendations, the study *Moving Forward: A Strategic Plan for Quality Life Improvements in the Canadian Forces* found that, “in order to maintain operational effectiveness, it is also necessary to have an effective family support system in place. Troops in the field do not need the added burden of worrying about the well-being of family members at home.”<sup>30</sup> Measures to support CF member families are promoted, with the purpose “to contribute to combat readiness by filling some of the void for families that is created by member’s absences.”<sup>31</sup> The primary role of the MFRCs is to support families in the Canadian Forces community in order to support the “military’s growing belief that strengthened family support enhances member retention and readiness [for combat],”<sup>32</sup> thus supporting the mission and military goals but not necessarily putting the family first. This point is well addressed in the recent National Film Board (NFB) documentary *Nomad’s Land* (2007) by filmmaker and

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<sup>29</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency, CFPSA at a glance, 8.

<sup>30</sup> Canada. Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs, 4.

<sup>31</sup> Harrison & Laliberté, 69.

<sup>32</sup> Harrison & Laliberté, 77.

journalist Claire Corriveau, herself a military spouse. The film features interviews with wives of Canadian Forces members, and depicts how as civilians, the military has a great degree of influence and control in their lives. The film focuses on the isolation experienced by military wives and the lack of control over certain aspects of their lives which remain “subordinate to the need of the CF, to the detriment of family life.”<sup>33</sup> The film emphasizes the high personal price paid by the spouses of military members and the vulnerability of those who are “married to the military.”

*Nomad's Land* is narrated by the filmmaker, who, in the opening sequences, reveals that she married a young pilot prior to him joining the military, and therefore she was unfamiliar with military life and did not choose this lifestyle. The film highlights the contribution of spouses of CF members to military logistics, by providing support to the CF members, while noting the accompanying solitude experienced while their spouse is absent, and their responsibility to oversee house-hold maintenance and child care while the member is away. The film highlights the activist work of military wife Lucie LaLiberté and her efforts to bring military wives together to voice their concerns living on base. LaLiberté's husband, who was caught in the middle of her efforts to organize women on base and his obligation to the Base Commander explains in the film that “it became clear to me that you can't be loyal to the service at the expense of your family without a price.”<sup>34</sup> The women interviewed for the film acknowledge the positive skills such as independence and resilience that they have developed in response to the military lifestyle, but the film suggests that the focus on these positive traits adhere to the mythology perpetrated of the supportive and content military wife who follows her husband around the country, prioritizing his career ambitions.

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<sup>33</sup> *Nomad's Land / Les épouses de l'armée*. Dir. Claire Corriveau. Prod. Claudette Jaiko. National Film Board of Canada, 2007. <<http://www.nfb.ca/collection/films/fiche/?id=55312>>

<sup>34</sup> *Nomad's Land / Les épouses de l'armée*.

The film acknowledges that civilian society largely encourages the family to be of primary importance, whereas in the military, the family is factored as second to the bonding of soldiers and military duty. In this sense, the spouses of military members build their lives around the job requirements of the CF member, and subsequently put aspects of their lives on hold. Military spouses are considered only in respect to “spousal combat readiness” based on physical and mental health, integration of children on base, and participation in the Military Family Resource Centres. Retired University of Toronto Professor and scholar Deborah Harrison perceives this as the military exerting control on families, by explaining that “when you are actually seeing a family member as relevant only in terms of the function of the organization, there is no way you could exert more control on families than that.” The female military spouses featured in Corriveau’s documentary are proud of their husband’s work, and understand the sacrifices that employment in the CF demands for their husbands, but they did not anticipate the sacrifices they would be asked to make, particularly in respect to lack of friends, lack of roots or stability, and lack of permanent long-term employment opportunities. Similarly women interviewed in my film are supportive of their husband’s work and career and did not want to be perceived as victims. They acknowledge the difficulties, but accept them as part of military lifestyle. This outlook was echoed by a Sandra Bilodeau, who in my interview with her expressly mentioned she did not want to elicit pity and felt fortunate to have enjoyed the opportunities that accompany a military lifestyle.

*Nomad’s Land* is critical of military family support systems because they do not advocate for the spouse, but instead focus on support for the CF member. The film points out that Military Family Resource Centres (MFRC) are largely dependent on volunteers, a lot of whom are unemployed spouses of military members. The film is also critical of the minimal hours for reprieve allocated for spouses, which are provided only when a doctor’s or psychologist’s note is



presented. The film's narration states "there's a conflict of interest between the army's mandate and the wellbeing of its own troops and their families." The family support provided by spouses of military members is not recorded or acknowledged. The film encourages spouses to speak out about their experiences and not to "put on a mask" and pretend that "everything is okay" for the sake of the mission. The film focuses on the grief and hardship of CF member's spouses, and therefore does at times seem overly negative. However, the film does succeed by offering a critique of the "sense of adventure" that is often cited as the main advantage of the military lifestyle. At the NFB screening of the film I attended at the Toronto Mediathèque, I witnessed several members from the audience could relate to the experiences of the women interviewed in the film, while other military couples in the audience thought the film misrepresented spouses of military members in an overly negative light and depicted "what used to be the case".

### **Media Representations of Military Families**

In recent years, CF deployments have involved an increased risk to personal security and greater casualties as the missions undertaken by the Canadian Forces have involved greater combat roles. The recent mission in Afghanistan has been accompanied by increased media coverage of mounting casualties and security threats from reporters embedded within military units. From the arrival of the first major wave of Canadian Forces soldiers in Afghanistan on February 2, 2002 to the present, the number of articles in the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail* that mention military families have more than tripled, in comparison with results from the six years prior to this CF mission.<sup>35</sup> In a similar search, there were 93 articles found using the search terms 'military' and 'family' and 'dead' within the six years since the deployment of troops in Afghanistan in comparison with only 20 documents found in the six years prior to the CF

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<sup>35</sup> Obtained using the search criteria of 'military' and 'family' and 'death' in the *National Post* and *Globe and Mail*, Proquest yielded 47 articles published from 1996 to 2002, and 171 articles from 2002 and 2008.

mission in Afghanistan. The anxieties and stress that accompany deployment are intensified for family members due to mounting security risks amplified by the proliferation of media coverage. The media coverage of the mission is not always favourable, as it highlights the controversial nature of the mission and questions if Canada's involvement in the mission is required, particularly with the rising number of Canadian casualties. In comparison, the American study *Greedy Media: Army Families, Embedded Reporting, and War in Iraq* that questioned wives of army officers during their spouse's deployment about their consumption of mass media during the deployment acknowledged an overwhelming negative impact of mass media on military families. The 2003 study found that, "the military family and its significant others – ha[d] an intense and calculated relationship with such media because they increase[d] the social presence of the absent soldier."<sup>36</sup> The absence of a deployed CF member is reinforced by media coverage of the mission and the fear and anxiety of their combat role. Global coverage of the war on television enables viewers to "watch bombs falling and soldiers dying, bringing home the reality of warfare in ways never experienced before."<sup>37</sup> In media, representations of military families are positioned within this context.

In contrast my film offers a representation of military families in the context of their day-to-day activities, with a focus instead on the context of on-going troop rotation and deployment. In developing the film I focused on the family members of military members deployed in Afghanistan or who have recently returned. This includes predominantly spouses and other immediate family members. These subjects were chosen for their personal understanding and experiences of deployment.

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<sup>36</sup> Ender & al., 64.

<sup>37</sup> Zuckerman, Mortimer B, "The Tyranny of Imagery" *U.S. News & World*, Vol. 141, Issue 16, 2006.

The lack of visual representation of the family members and military personnel contribute to the otherwise under-representation of this sub-group within mainstream Canadian media. I have chosen to use a video format based on Nichol's appreciation of documentary film in that it "contributes to the formation of popular memory. It proposes perspectives on and interpretations of historic issues, processes, and events."<sup>38</sup> My film's representation of military families will depart from the pre-framed construction of news reporting and provide a narrative other than that mediated by the mainstream media in which military families often fulfill the role of grieving spouse or family member. This documentary is able to transcend the limitations of representation in mainstream media to represent military families outside the context of military deaths. Initial coverage of the mission in Afghanistan is necessary to inform Canadians about the mission and acknowledge the deaths of CF members fighting in Afghanistan. As shown in the US study, increasing coverage of military deaths, the mounting death toll and primary focus on the security risks involved in the mission by the media can result in increased public pressure to end the mission, fueling the view that the sacrifice is too great and Canada's involvement is not warranted. The primary focus on the security risks of the mission in the media can be demoralizing for families with a CF member deployed, who interpret this criticism as a lack of support for their family members serving in Afghanistan.

Military families are often represented in the media only when there is a loss of life, or a traumatic event is reported; and therefore depicted at a time of great loss and mourning. A search of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation web site ([www.cbc.ca](http://www.cbc.ca)) using the terms 'military and family' returned three thousand and seven hundred titles. Within these results nineteen hundred and seventy articles included the term death, when searched using the terms 'military and family and death'. Less is reported in mainstream media about the feelings, processes and the

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<sup>38</sup> Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): ix.

experience of deployment or the processes families experience to cope with the deployment of a spouse. The experience of deployment is unique to the Canadian Forces, and has an impact on the spouse and children of members deployed in operations overseas. It requires a process of pre-deployment preparation, coping during deployment and the re-integration of the CF member into the daily routine of the family. Upon return, this reintegration termed 're-entry' can take anywhere between six weeks to six months. This portrait of military families' experiences of deployments adds to the general knowledge of military families and the impact of Canada's commitments overseas on the immediate family members and people in their communities who await their return to Canada. An additional aspect of the project addresses, generally, the developing situation of greater risk and loss of life in current overseas' mission. Missions range from an average duration of six to nine months; (within a six-month rotation, officers are granted three weeks leave) generally, whereas other regiments, such as the Joint Signal Regiment (a specialized communications regiment) is more frequently deployed but for shorter durations of on average three months.<sup>39</sup> Canadian Forces' members may return to a previously deployed location, based on rotation of personnel. With the current NATO-led mission in Afghanistan, the Canadian Forces are engaged in a combat situation unlike any other since World War II, resulting in mounting casualty rates, to date eighty-eight Canadian soldiers have died in Afghanistan (July 19, 2008). This threat to the lives of military members deployed weighs heavily on family members. Of the four couples interviewed for the film, two CF members had completed numerous deployments in their military careers, and between two to three deployments in Afghanistan to date.

My thesis film is intended to contribute, first, to the representation of military families in a way that challenges the typical role in which they are cast by mainstream media as victims;

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<sup>39</sup> Forbes, Brenda, Public Relations, Kingston MFRC, personal communication.

second, the first person experiences of a member's spouses during deployment in the form of a video could provide support and recognition to other families who will themselves be confronted with the deployment of a spouse in a military mission overseas; and third to explore additional coping mechanisms that could be incorporated to address the needs of families living through deployment, and measures to cope with depictions of Canadian soldiers deployed in Afghanistan in the media. My goal is to foster an awareness among the general public of the experiences of military families, which are often forgotten or overshadowed in media coverage of the current CF mission.

### **Theoretical and Professional/Artistic Literature and Practice**

My research is grounded primarily within a Constructivist paradigm whose origins date back to the work of Jean Piaget in the nineteen forties. The Constructivist approach stands in contrast to the Objectivist approach which is more closely aligned with positivistic methods. A Constructivist paradigm does not seek a universal truth, but espouses that, "what we call knowledge does not and cannot have the purpose of producing representations of an independent reality, but instead has an adaptive function."<sup>40</sup> When Piaget theorizes about interaction, he "does not imply an organism that interacts with objects as they really are, but rather a cognitive subject that is dealing with previously constructed perceptual and conceptual structures."<sup>41</sup> The Constructivist approach, as cited in Schwandt, assumes that, "what we take as real, as objective knowledge and truth, is based upon our perspective,"<sup>42</sup> and therefore acknowledges multiple

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<sup>40</sup> Glasersfeld, Ernst von, "Introduction: Aspects of Constructivism," in Constructivism: Theory, Perspectives, and Practice, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Ed. Fosnet, Catherine Tworney, Teachers College Press: New York, 2005, 3.

<sup>41</sup> Glasersfeld, 5.

<sup>42</sup> Charmaz, Kathy. "Grounded Theory: Objectivist and Constructive Methods," pp.249-291, in Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, eds. Denzin, Norman K. & Lincoln, Yvonna S., Sage Publications: London, 2003, 272.

realities and multiple viewpoints and does not seek “to capture a single reality.”<sup>43</sup> A Constructivist approach to ethnographic interviews requires a relationship between the interviewer and respondents, in which the respondents are given the opportunity to narrate experiences in their terms.<sup>44</sup>

Journalism and war reporting, are conducted within the structure of the communications industry, a complex web of interdependencies and relations of power grounded in societal norms and gender roles. There are structural limitations in the form of resources and equipment, time and production deadlines, coupled with limitations to reporting of journalistic freedom to direct a story, and a structure of ownership that determine the extent to which the news can be reported ‘objectively’. Frames of reference are also present in media coverage, in which new narratives are contextualized,<sup>45</sup> providing the audience a means through which to interpret information. The frames of reference employed in news media constitute, “highly orchestrated ways of understanding social (including gendered) relations that encourage a commitment to share a particular interpretation,” of the world and which seek to, “preserve the status quo.”<sup>46</sup> Repeated narratives in news reporting often depict women as victims using the trope of fear, portraying women as fragile and vulnerable. It is within this framework of victim that female spouses of CF members are often cast as women, “appear to be at their most interesting when they are in [the] most pain, when they experience [the] most suffering.”<sup>47</sup> This could account for the media’s initial sympathy for women as mothers who have lost their children in combat. In media coverage related to conflict women are commonly depicted in the re-occurring roles of the

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<sup>43</sup> Charmaz, 272.

<sup>44</sup> Charmaz, 275.

<sup>45</sup> Byerly, C. & Ross, Karen. Women & Media: A Critical Introduction. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006, 39.

<sup>46</sup> Byerly, 39-40.

<sup>47</sup> Byerly, 43.

mother who has lost her son, the wife who has lost her husband, or the daughter who has lost her father.

Media coverage operates on the basis of societal ideas of what constitutes proper behaviour for women and men, and reinforces the construction of masculinity and femininity in the reporting of events. Masculinity and femininity, “are negotiated interpretations of what it means to be a man or a woman,”<sup>48</sup> and determine the behaviour attributed to each gender. Gender, as defined by Joan Wallah Scott, “constitutes a complex web of social relationships based on perceived difference between the sexes and is a primary way of establishing relationships of power.”<sup>49</sup> These relationships of power are replicated within media coverage as internalized societal norms reinforcing stereotypical gender categories. Dating back to the inter-war years in 1920’s and 30’s Britain, Deirdre Beddoe states that, “only one desirable image was held up to women by all the mainstream media agencies – that of housewife and mother. This single role model was presented to women to follow and all other alternatives were presented as wholly undesirable.”<sup>50</sup> In this context it was clear that, “there were, undoubtedly, persistent, gendered inequalities in the press.”<sup>51</sup> Remnants of these inequalities and notions of femininity persist today, particularly advocated by right-wing conservatism, who equates femininity with the private sphere.

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<sup>48</sup> Skjelsbaek, I. “Is Femininity Inherently Peaceful?: The Construction of Femininity in the War” in Skjelsbaek, I & Smith, D. eds. *Gender, Peace & Conflict*. London: Sage Publications, 2001, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Kuhlman, Erika A. *Petticoats and White Feathers: Gender Conformity, Race, the Progressive Peace Movement, and the Debate Over War, 1895-1919*. London: Greenwood Press, 1997, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Bingham, Adrian. *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Bingham, Adrian. *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004, 245.

The construction of gender includes the use of cultural symbols to delineate the roles for men in women in society, and comprise the normative concepts through which to determine the meaning of the symbols and dictate acceptable behaviour.<sup>52</sup> Gender is not often at the forefront of war discourse, yet its presence is all but indistinguishable in the framing and conceptualization of war. In the case of the media representations of the military, cultural and gender stereotypes are reinforced in the construction of women as the grieving wife or mother, and the soldier as the valiant husband or father working in the service of their country. Foucault, in his text *Discipline and Punish* outlines the characteristics of the ideal figure of the soldier who could be recognized from a distance. The ideal soldier, “bore certain signs: the natural signs of his strength and valour ... movements like marching and attitudes like the bearing of the head belonged for the most part to a bodily rhetoric of honour.”<sup>53</sup> Foucault explains that the body was used as object and target of power and from this emerges the docile body, “that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved.”<sup>54</sup> The body, in every society has been subjected to strict powers and constraints, however the ‘new project of docility’ which Foucault identifies to have emerged in the eighteenth century had three unprecedented characteristics, first the scale of control on an individual basis, the ‘object of control’ which targeted the internal organization and economy of movement. Thirdly, the modality which “implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result.”<sup>55</sup> These methods, Foucault insists, enabled “the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility – utility, might be called ‘disciplines’.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Kuhlman, 5.

<sup>53</sup> Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York, Vintage Books, 1979, 135.

<sup>54</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

<sup>55</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 137.

<sup>56</sup> Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 137.



In contrast to the depiction of the valiant soldier, the CF members in my film are for the majority depicted in every day settings of the home, wearing civilian clothing. My film strives to differ from this constructed framework of viewing the family through defined gender roles, and focuses instead on the relationships within the family and between family members, and the difficulties and anxiety when faced with the absence of the CF member deployed to a politically unstable region. The film acknowledges a fuller spectrum, by showing the wives of military members not as victims, but as survivors of the experience.

The constructivist approach is associated with the work of Jean Piaget and his model of exchange values that acknowledges the use of particular knowledge contingent on a specific situation. According to Campos, biological structures form the basis of Piaget's notion of constructivism, in which, "meanings emerging from experience are moulded in the dynamics of interaction, and from which individuals develop an understanding of reality based on their experiences."<sup>57</sup> In keeping with this notion of the value of personal experience, an ethnographic approach offers a different way of understanding military service as encompassing the family, which is often lacking in media coverage of CF members, whose families are often represented or interviewed in response to injury or death of a CF family member. My research is aligned with the constructivist notion that multiple "knowledges" of equal validity can co-exist, when factors are present that differentiate the person who is engaged in interpretation. In regards to the role of the researcher as participant, I agree with the Critical Theorist perspective that the researcher should be acknowledged, along with his or her point of origin, aims, values, or any other element that may influence the research results obtained from critical scrutiny. My childhood upbringing in a military household has undoubtedly influenced my research on this topic, and informed my interest in the experiences of military family members, particularly in light of the current combat

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<sup>57</sup> Campos, Milton N. "Ecology of Meanings: A Critical Constructivist Communication Model" *Communication Theory*, Vol. 17, 2007, 387.

roll of the CF in Afghanistan. I can relate to the interviewee's experiences of military life and I am familiar with the demands military service places on family members.

### **Ethnographic Interviews and Participant Observation**

The primary method I have used is ethnographic interviews while incorporating participant observation as a secondary method, which encompasses direct observation and personal histories of interviewed participants. Ethnographic interviews and participant observation provide an alternative to quantitative methods, as both provide a context through which to better understand the research gathered using more positivist methods. Interviews can be used to illustrate a wider scope by enabling details and personal anecdotes to be taken into consideration. This provides a context for behaviour and activity in the greater scheme of a person's life, informed by cultural conditions or value choices. Interviews provide a more thorough scope and context of a larger topic through in-depth questioning and time spent with interviewees in their surroundings. The interview questions for my film were formulated based on initial contact with participants and interviews with participants were videotaped. Additional filming was based on participant observation and involved filming interviewees engaged in daily activities. The interviewees were involved in the selection of family photos for the film and the choice of daily activities to be filmed. In the context of documentary films, interviews are a part of the process of making a film, and usually take place following rigorous research and/or observation. For the purpose of this project, I rely heavily on the interviews to construct the narrative arc of the film and to elicit comments from which I have constructed a line of reasoning.

As a methodology, interviews used as a tool for ethnographic research provide a glimpse at a broader understanding of reality, or context for a set of circumstances that could not be

elaborated through traditional positivist methods of quantifying data. The term ethnography encompasses a variety of meanings. For the purpose of this project, I would agree with Nichol's assertion that ethnography promotes the possibility of observation without limits and "invokes an ever-renewed and never exhausted curiosity; it strives for the perpetuation of curiosity. Difference is continually discovered and placed in the service of scientific comprehension."<sup>58</sup> Interviews can elicit nuanced subject responses and as a method, provide the latitude to incorporate additional data that might not have been initially factored into the research, and provide an opportunity for it to be incorporated. In research involving interviews and observation of participants it is important that the self-reflexive nature and motivation of the researcher be noted to contextualize the final product of the research. For this reason, in this paper accompanying my film I have acknowledged my connection to the subject matter and the personal interest that has motivated my research. Interviews are best suited to depict the experience of deployment and its impact on spouses and family members because it enables subjects to narrate their own experiences. Interviewees can be questioned in person, and questions can be adapted to the particularities of their situation of deployment, whether it is a current experience or one recalled from a past experience.

### *Ethnography and Documentary*

Ethnographic discourse and documentary filmmaking both involve discussions centered around power and representation. Film theorist Bill Nichols contends that in ethnographic film "the criteria of scientific investigation butt up against the narrative, poetic, expressive and subjective dimensions of documentary."<sup>59</sup> Ethnographic filmmaking has typically been

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<sup>58</sup> Nichols, Bill, "Pornography, Ethnography and the discourses of Power," in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991): 218.

<sup>59</sup> Nichols, "Pornography, Ethnography and the discourses of Power," 201.

associated with anthropological filmmaking, which centers on the exploration of another culture as distinguished from the self, or the person(s) undertaking the investigation. Within any form of documentation, issues of power and representation are present. Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1* describes power as a fluid entity that permeates institutions, and in the case of sexuality, is controlled by a discursive framework that shapes our understanding of the issue. In this context, power is defined as a “multiple and mobile field of force relations where far-reaching, but never completely stable effect of domination are produced.”<sup>60</sup> Technology is in a sense a vehicle for the spread of frameworks of knowledge, discourse and social practices and ideology yet it also helps to shape the production of meaning and shapes the knowledge disseminated. The medium through which the message is disseminated has an impact on the message circulated. In the same respect, the method of representation of other distinct cultures will influence the depiction of that culture. Therefore, this filmic depiction of military families differs from that of TV news journalism that must adhere to time constraints and programming format guidelines that result in ‘sound bytes’.

### **The Choice of Documentary**

In my research I acknowledge the degree to which the involvement of the filmmaker in the process of recording the external world may influence the degree of fiction or factuality of the final product. This debate is most prominent in the reflexive mode of filmmaking; which addresses issues of realism and encourages a more self-conscious consumption of documentary images. David MacDougall states that “no ethnographic film is merely a record of another society: it is always a record of the meeting between a filmmaker and that society.”<sup>61</sup> Therefore, despite my conscious decision not to appear in the film frame of the interviews shot for this

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<sup>60</sup> Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction Vol. 1*. New York, Random House, 1978, 106.

<sup>61</sup> Renov, “Technology and Ethnographic dialogue.”, 152.

project, the interview footage remains the outcome of my encounter as filmmaker with the interviewees filmed. Nichols describes reflexive documentary as a practice that, “sets out to readjust the assumptions and expectations of its audience,” and to challenge the representations offered in conventional documentaries.<sup>62</sup> The distance between the filmmaker and subject “is both requirement for observation and guarantee of difference,”<sup>63</sup> and is a reality of the filming process and also a requirement for constructing a line of argument in a film. By interviewing the participants in the film, I was able to capture an intimate portrait of their thoughts and feelings regarding deployment. However, the presence of the camera does erect a physical barrier between myself, as the filmmaker, and the participant in the position of interviewee.

Documentary filmmaking shares a close relationship with storytelling and first person narratives, employing similar narrative techniques. Narrative techniques have been employed in, “even the most analytical, essay-like film [that] sets up expectations and enigmas, the core of narrative, to make its case. ... in modern documentary, both convention and iconoclast, narrative devices usually work alongside the exposition.”<sup>64</sup> Earlier documentaries were centered on the development of an argument or line of reasoning and were deeply entrenched in the rhetoric of exposition, while later documentaries rely more heavily on narrative elements and poetics.<sup>65</sup> It can be said that “every film and tape may be a narrative in the sense that all treatments of the outside world are organized by point of view and by the results of a hundred different choices.”<sup>66</sup> Classical narrative forms are familiar and therefore more recognizable to an audience and seek “to organize the shots composing it with more or less explicit, often conventionalized principles

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<sup>62</sup> Nichols, Bill, *Introduction to Documentary*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001, 128.

<sup>63</sup> Nichols, Pornography, ethnography and the discourses of power, 222.

<sup>64</sup> Steven, Peter. *Brink of Reality: New Canadian Documentary Film and Video*. Toronto, ON: Between the Lines, 1993, 16.

<sup>65</sup> Steven, 14-15

<sup>66</sup> Steven, 15

of sequence that delimit a range of intended meanings, *determinable by the filmmakers within a film text itself*.”<sup>67</sup> In my film, I follow a more traditional narrative, where the interviewees’ responses are edited to create the narrative arc of the film. The film’s different sections are distinguished by inter-titles, telling the audience of the subject matter that lies ahead. This is a format an audience should feel comfortable with as this narrative form rests within the traditional boundaries of documentary.

### **What is documentary/non-fiction?**

The term ‘documentary’ in the context of filmmaking conjures several definitions and interpretations including John Grierson’s ‘a creative treatment of actuality’, Pare Lorentz, “a factual film which is dramatic’ and Basil Wright, “documentary is not this or that type of film, but simply a method of approach to public information.”<sup>68</sup> The term was first used by Grierson to described Robert Flaherty’s 1926 film *Moana*.<sup>69</sup> In 1948, the World Union of Documentary defined documentary film as:

“all methods of recording on celluloid any aspect of reality interpreted either by factual shooting or by sincere and justifiable reconstruction, so as to appeal either to reason or emotion, for the purpose of stimulating the desire for, and the widening of human knowledge and understanding, and of truthfully posing problems and their solutions in the spheres of economics, culture and human relations.”<sup>70</sup>

Aspects of this definition remain true in current documentary film production, yet it would have to be expanded to include digital forms of filmmaking that no longer use celluloid but instead

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<sup>67</sup> Rosen, *Documentary and Documentary: On the persistence of historical concepts*, 75.

<sup>68</sup> Barsam, Richard Meran. *Nonfiction Film: A Critical History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, 2.

<sup>69</sup> Barsam, 1.

<sup>70</sup> BarSam, 1.

digital video tape and digital hard drives.

The attraction of documentary film, according to film theorist Bill Nichols, “lies in its ability to make us see timely issues in need of attention literally.”<sup>71</sup> Rosen draws a link between documentary and modern historiography insofar as film comprises “representations produced with some degree or participation of the referential object or events themselves,” however cinema necessitates a “temporal disjunction between the referential events producing them and audience appreciation of them,”<sup>72</sup> and therefore these representations become preservations of a past reality. In this account, film produces, “indexical traces of a real past”<sup>73</sup> Since its inception, the “essential task of the documentary has remained unchanged. It is, as Vertov defined it, to capture ‘fragments of actuality’ and combine them meaningfully. Such formations stress two functions: (1) recording of images and sounds – and 2) interpretation,”<sup>74</sup> of what is recorded. Although documentary material finds its origins in the reality of the world, the documentary film that is produced is a result of a variety of choices from the initial planning stages, to the mode of filming, and the editing choices made in post-production. Nichols outlines the four prevalent modes of production, which serve as “dominant organizational patterns around which most [documentary] texts are structured”<sup>75</sup> which comprise the expository, observational, interactive and reflexive modes. These categories are partly a result of film theory and partly a response to the work that has been produced in cinema, and can be characterized as a historical progression of the production of documentaries.

### Modes of Documentary

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<sup>71</sup> Nichols, *Representing Reality*, ix.

<sup>72</sup> Rosen, *Document and Documentary: On the Persistence of Historical Concepts*, 60.

<sup>73</sup> Rosen, *Document and Documentary: On the Persistence of Historical Concepts* 63.

<sup>74</sup> Barnouw, Eric. Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film. (revised edition) Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983, 313.

<sup>75</sup> Nichols, Bill, “Documentary Modes of Representation,” in *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 32.

Documentary modes distinguish the different kinds of representations of the actual world provided through various approaches to documentary production. The boundaries between modes are not rigid, and documentaries can exhibit elements that transcend a single mode.<sup>76</sup> The ‘Voice of God’ narration is a common element in expository documentaries typical of the work of filmmakers John Grierson and Robert Flaherty, which developed from a general, “dissatisfaction with the distracting, entertainment qualities of the fiction film.”<sup>77</sup> In contrast, observational documentaries, typical of Fredrick Wiseman, sought to record the truth of an interaction, akin to a ‘fly on the wall’. Observational documentaries developed from, “the availability of more mobile, synchronous recording equipment and a dissatisfaction with the moralizing quality of expository documentary.”<sup>78</sup> Neither of these modes enabled much interaction between the filmmaker and subject, nor did they allow narration from the subject’s point of view. The interactive mode, however, redefined the role of the filmmaker and enabled greater interaction between filmmaker and subject to allow the filmmaker to engage more directly with the subjects of their films. Filmmakers such as Jean Rouch and de Antonio took advantage of greater mobility of equipment and used interventionist tactics, the use of experts, or witnesses, archival footage and interviews seeking to “engage with individuals more directly,”<sup>79</sup> in the filmmaking process. This mode most closely resembles the approach I have used in my film, to engage with the participants through interviews and prompting them to engage in activities that are representative of daily life. By employing techniques from the interactive mode, the narration of my film is formed by a compilation of the interviewees’ responses, and not from a constructed narration on the part of the filmmaker, as is common in the expository mode. By engaging with the subjects through interviews, I do not merely observe them as a fly

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<sup>76</sup> Kilborn, R. & Izod, J. “Shaping the Real: Modes of Documentary,” pp. 57-87, from An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality, Manchester University Press, 1997, 57.

<sup>77</sup> Nichols, “Documentary Modes of Representation”, 33.

<sup>78</sup> Nichols, “Documentary Modes of Representation”, 33.

<sup>79</sup> Nichols, “Documentary Modes of Representation”, 33.



on the wall, as would be done using the observational mode. However, my film rests primarily within the interactive mode and does not meet the criteria of the reflexive mode, where films such as Dziga Vertov's *Man With A Movie Camera* acknowledge the apparatus of cinema and reflects a self-awareness on the part of the filmmaker. As the filmmaker, I remain off-camera, and do not actively participate in the film on-screen and do not otherwise acknowledge the constructed nature of the film or the apparatus of cinema.

In conjunction with classification of documentary modes, film theorist Michel Renov identifies four fundamental tendencies in documentary: 1) to record, reveal, or preserve; 2) to persuade or promote; 3) to analyze or interrogate, and 4) to express which "operate as modalities of desire, impulses which fuel documentary discourse."<sup>80</sup> The first modality, to record, reveal or preserve, accounts for documentary's main thrust to replicate the historical real. This is seen in ethnographic work and home videos that seek to chronicle daily life and by some gesture to recover the past. In my thesis film, I sought to provide a context for the interviewee's responses by documenting subjects in and around their homes, recording their responses in the intimate setting of their home. A prominent motivating factor in documentary is the "wish to exploit the camera's revelatory powers, an impulse only rarely coupled with an acknowledgement of the processes through which the real is transfigured."<sup>81</sup> Photographs and film (still and moving images) are considered evidence of the historical world not by any value they hold in and of themselves, but from the social semiotic process, and the power we attribute to these images. This informed my decision to complete a video, rather than a short story or an audio interview with subjects, based on the power we attribute to images. The attempt to record reality is synonymous with "attempts to 'fix' on celluloid" what is before the camera. Despite this goal to

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<sup>80</sup> Renov, Michael "Towards a Poetics of Documentary" in ed. *Theorizing Documentary*. New York: Routledge, 1993, 21,22.

<sup>81</sup> Renov, "Towards a Poetics of Documentary", 25.

simply record the external world, “issues of selection intrude; the results are indeed *mediated*, the result of multiple interventions that necessarily *come between* the cinematic sign (what we see on the screen) and its referent (what existed in the world).”<sup>82</sup> Issues of selection, subjectivity and framing are prevalent in documentary filmmaking, and were present in the making of my thesis film. Similarly, the interview footage for my thesis film was cut down to employ less than twenty percent of the footage captured, and therefore selection interferes to help construct the representation of the individuals in the film.

The documentary tradition continues to have great implications for social justice, and can be used as a powerful tool to inform and prompt action. A contemporary example is the National Film Board (NFB) web site initiative ‘CitizenShift’ “Online media for social change” (<http://citizen.nfb.ca>) that accommodates user-generated content. This is one potential outlet for the circulation of my thesis video. Similar online web sites based on user-generated content enable low-cost distribution of videos to an international audience, providing an outlet for the distribution of documentaries. This, in addition to high profile celebrity figures such as Michael Moore, receiving large-scale distribution, screening in theatres alongside Hollywood fiction films, have enabled documentaries to garner a much larger audience world-wide. With the growing distribution of documentaries, it is more widely acknowledged that documentaries do not embody ‘objectivity’ but are instead a construction of reality, where filmmakers strive not for objectivity but for accuracy in representation.

### **Ethnography and Documentary Filmmaking**

Ethnography and documentary filmmaking share a rich history with ethnographic practices building on the *cinéma vérité* work of French filmmaker Jean Rouch in the 1960’s

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<sup>82</sup> Renov, “Towards a Poetics of Documentary”, 26.

coupled with the work of American anthropologist Margaret Mead and British anthropologist Gregory Bateson. Ethnographic filmmaking explores the notion of otherness and takes for its subject members of a particular group of people where “the subjects are more often than not members of cultural groups with less power in society and media than the filmmaker.”<sup>83</sup> Filmed ethnographic research that was once thought “to ‘replicate natural perception’, has now renounced its authority to replicate only to purport to provide adequate ‘data’ for the ‘sampling’ of culture.”<sup>84</sup> In response to a 1969 interview question, Jean Rouch answered “Yes, the camera deforms, but not from the moment that it becomes an accomplice. At that point it has the possibility of doing something I couldn’t do if the camera wasn’t there.”<sup>85</sup> This is in part due to the power of moving images that is imbued in cinema, attributed to the camera’s role as provocateur. Film images appeal to the audience’s intellect through a formal line of reasoning, but also to the viewer’s subconscious through the formal aspects of visual relationships in image-making.

In cinema vérité, the filmmaker played the role of provocateur and often participated in the unfolding of events to be captured on film.<sup>86</sup> This involved the filmmaker as catalyst, “[a]nthropologists found special reasons to be interested in film as catalyst,” shooting and editing decisions were the work of filmmakers. The NFB “Challenge for Change” program that started in 1967 embodied this idea of filmmaker as catalyst with its cited aim to “promote citizen participation in the solution of social problems” with the focus on dissatisfied minorities.<sup>87</sup> Among the program’s documentaries were films *All My Babies* (1953) a film on Georgian

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<sup>83</sup> Auderheide, Patricia. Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction. London: Oxford University Press, 2007, 106.

<sup>84</sup> Mihn-ha, Trinh, “The Totalizing Quest of Meaning,” pp.29-50, 240-241, When the Moon Waxes Red, Routledge, 1971, 103.

<sup>85</sup> Renov, “New Subjectivities”, 178.

<sup>86</sup> Barnouw, Eric. Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film. (revised edition) Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983, 254-255.

<sup>87</sup> Barnouw, 258.

midwives, *You Are on Indian Land* (1969) chronicling a Mohawk demonstration outside Cornwall, ON. and *VTR St. Jacques* (1969) that focused on poor working class residents of Montreal's St. Jacques neighbourhood. In my film, I, the filmmaker served as the catalyst to elicit the subjects to speak about their experiences of deployment.

### **Truth and Objectivity**

As cited by Trinh Minh-ha, quoting filmmaker Lindsay Anderson, it was once thought that, "if the material is actual, then it is documentary. If the material is invented, then it is not documentary."<sup>88</sup> However, the distinction between what is documented reality and what is altered reality has become increasingly blurred, contributing to the discourse surrounding fact and fiction in documentary. Considering the relationship between document and documentary, it is necessary to acknowledge that what is represented in documentary does bear relation to reality. The documentary from its first inception as a photograph and then in the form of moving images has been attributed with the power to document; to represent reality in a specific space and time, and provide an objective portrait of reality. However, a documentary differs from a document. A documentary is not simply recorded reality, but it must be packaged in a way that the viewer can derive meaning and make sense of the events chronicled; it is not simply an act of chronicling, but an act of transformation.<sup>89</sup> By collecting, framing and editing the recorded material, a documentary filmmaker alters the material, "from a mere record of actuality into a form which we can refer to as 'documentary discourse'".<sup>90</sup> It is necessary that the material be structured in a way that is coherent, using familiar narrative techniques so that an audience can relate to the material presented and be able to contextualize the knowledge they are presented

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<sup>88</sup> Minh-ha, 31

<sup>89</sup> Kilborn, R. & Izod, J. "Mapping the Terrain: What is Documentary," from An Introduction to Television Documentary: Confronting Reality, Manchester University Press, 1997, 4.

<sup>90</sup> Kilborn, R. & Izod, J. "Mapping the Terrain: What is Documentary", 4.

with. As Nichol's defines, knowledge is:

hyper-situated, placed not only in relation to the filmmaker's physical presence, but also in relation to fundamental issues about the nature of the world, the structure and function of language, the authenticity of documentary sound and image, the difference of verification, and the status of empirical evidence in Western culture.<sup>91</sup>

In order to construct a narrative that would logically make sense and be engaging for an audience, the film footage taken for this project was captured and then put through a series of self-imposed filters. The material was structured, re-arranged, inter-cut with additional footage, overlaid with visual sequences, and in many ways re-worked to form a line of reasoning. The original image captured remains unchanged, but the sequential context in which it was captured is no longer the same context in which it is presented in the final edit of the film.

Rosen makes a distinction between document and documentary characterizing documentary as actuality and documentary as meaning.<sup>92</sup> The presence of the camera and the notion of shaping consciousness have implications for the degree of accurate representation of reality that continues to be debated within documentary discourse. Rosen concludes that "the status of the shot as document of a real that preexists the spectator's viewing remains in force, for otherwise, the film could be received as a conventional fiction and there would have been nothing to debate."<sup>93</sup> T. Minh-ha argues that truth and meaning are two terms that are, "likely to be equated with one another. Yet, what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than a meaning."<sup>94</sup> Documentary has its own *raison d'être*, established in opposition to the monopoly

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<sup>91</sup> Nichols, "Documentary Modes of Representation", 61.

<sup>92</sup> Nichols, "Documentary Modes of Representation", 65.

<sup>93</sup> Nichols, "Documentary Modes of Representation", 86.

<sup>94</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha, 92.

of film as entertainment and has historically been associated with a discourse of sobriety, information and pedagogy. I would agree with T. Minh-ha, in so far as I believe my film represents a particular way in which to understand military lifestyle and deployment based on the experiences of the families I interviewed. However, different families will have varied experiences of deployment due to independent factors, such as age, emotional maturity, age of children, and role of CF member enlisted and income. Therefore, my film represents a truth, but not the authoritative truth regarding all deployments and military families. My film presents a vision, among a multitude of possible representations of military families.

The truth of the eternal world is not simply captured, but is manipulated in the hands of the filmmaker, based on his or her own subjectivities and choices in all stages of production. Minh-ha concludes, “a documentary aware of its own artifice is one that remains sensitive to the flow between fact and fiction. It does not work to conceal or exclude what is normalized as “nonfactual,” for it understands the mutual dependence of realism and “artificiality””, in filmmaking.<sup>95</sup> Although every film is in itself a form of ordering and closing, “each closure can defy its only closure, opening onto other closures, thereby emphasizing the interval between apertures and creating a space in which meaning remains fascinated by what escapes and exceeds it.”<sup>96</sup> Accessibility to funds, equipment and the means of production can limit the production, making financial constraints not merely an issue of funds, “but also one of control and standardization of images and sounds. Which truth? Whose truth? How true?”<sup>97</sup> Therefore my social position, subjectivity and identity as a filmmaker undoubtedly had an affect on my thesis film. As a ‘military brat’, I could relate to and sympathize with some of the responses of the interviewees when they spoke of frequent moves, distance from family members and the

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<sup>95</sup> Minh-ha, 99.

<sup>96</sup> Minh-ha, 105.

<sup>97</sup> Minh-ha, 93.

difficulties of their children with the absence of their father. Having lived similar experiences, I am no doubt partial to these common shared experiences. Therefore, the truths represented in my film are truths that confirm my perspective growing up in a military household where I understood the need for CF deployments on one level, yet personally understood the sacrifices made by military families.

### **Subjectivity of the Filmmaker**

Grierson described documentary by coining the famous phrase ‘creative treatment of actuality’ whose, primary function “was to allow the citizen to become meaningfully involved in the general social process.”<sup>98</sup> Any involvement in social processes will undoubtedly engender the subjectivity of the filmmaker as participant. Within documentaries there is a tension between the actuality component; the ability to represent the external word and the creative component of the structural and narrative methods employed to shape the material.<sup>99</sup> For my thesis film, the focus remains on the deployment of CF members in Afghanistan. My interest in the film, however, stems from my personal experiences of military life.

My subjectivity as a filmmaker, cannot be disentangled from the representation of the interviewees, as I have constructed in my thesis film. The concept of objectivity transformed after the emergence of positivism in the late nineteenth century, to be understood as “factual, fair-minded (neutral) and hence reliable,” distinguished from subjective as, “based on impressions rather than facts, and hence as influenced by personal feelings and relatively unreliable.”<sup>100</sup> From this emerged the filmmaker as provocateur, whose “personality was rather

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<sup>98</sup> Kilborn, R. & Izod, J., “Mapping the Terrain: What is Documentary?”, 6.

<sup>99</sup> Kilborn, R. & Izod, J., “Mapping the Terrain: What is Documentary?”, 13.

<sup>100</sup> Renov, Michael, “New Subjectivities: Documentary and Self-Representation in the Post-verité Age” in Renov, ed, *The Subject of Documentary*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 173.

intimately involved in the creation of the final product,”<sup>101</sup> which is arguably the case with my project. My subjectivity as a filmmaker is, “the filter through which the real enters discourse, as well as a kind of experiential compass guiding [my] work”<sup>102</sup> and the representation of the historical world offered in my documentary “is inextricably bound up with self-inscription.”<sup>103</sup> Despite a fastidious attempt to capture reality and document the world, “every filmmaker knows: that every representation, however fully imbued with documentary significance remains a fabrication,”<sup>104</sup> as if the case for my thesis video.

Based on this family connection, my thesis film could thus be considered domestic ethnography, which is classified as a “supplementary autobiographical practice; [that] functions as a vehicle of self-examination, a means through which to construct self-knowledge through recourse to the familial other.”<sup>105</sup> In the context of my film, my interest in CF deployments and its effect on immediate family members is informed by my experiences growing up in a military family. In this sense, my efforts are in line with Renov’s conception of domestic ethnography as the “desire for the other [that] is, at every moment, embroiled with the question of self-knowledge.”<sup>106</sup> The subjectivity and authority of the author filmmaker is explicitly acknowledged and forms the basis of the line of inquiry. Without my acquaintance with military lifestyle and personal connection with military families, this project would have taken a different form, and been more difficult to accomplish, as military families would be less likely to divulge personal details to an individual they are not acquainted with through some degree of familiarity. In domestic ethnographic filmmaking as Renov explains, “there exists a reciprocity between subject and object, a play of mutual determination, a condition of consubstantiality. The desire

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<sup>101</sup> Renov, “New Subjectivities”, 175.

<sup>102</sup> Renov, “New Subjectivities”, 176.

<sup>103</sup> Renov, *New Subjectivities*, 176.

<sup>104</sup> Nichols, “Documentary Modes of Representation”, 57.

<sup>105</sup> Renov, “New Subjectivities”, 218.

<sup>106</sup> Renov, “New Subjectivities”, 218.



(figurable as dread or longing) of domestic ethnographer is for the Other self.”<sup>107</sup> In the film, my goal was to enable the interviewees to speak openly about their experiences, providing a context in which they could be disseminated to others. My intent was not to distort their responses or provide a strong bias. In formulating the questions for the interviews for this project, I drew upon my own experience, and that of other military family members to compose questions that would be relevant to the elicit the experiences of the interviewees. I used the questions as a guideline for the interviews (see Appendix, Annex II), but encouraged the interviewees to describe their experiences through personal narratives and anecdotes. I encouraged additional responses that extended beyond the pre-determined questions, by asking if the interviewees had anything to add, or anything they thought was missing from the questions asked. As an interviewer, I perceived the interviewees as experts on the subject matter since it pertained to their own experiences of deployment. In this sense, I strove to invoke a shared textual authority, where the interviewees were able to diverge from the interview questions, and narrate their own experiences in whatever chronological order, at their discretion.

### **Project Specifics**

The basis of my film is primarily on-camera interviews conducted with the spouses of CF members, and the CF member when available, who are awaiting deployment, currently deployed, or recently returned from deployment in Afghanistan. The following participants were interviewed for the film; Dana Pardy & Miriam Saumer, Family Support, Kingston Military Family Resource Centre. Sandra Bilodeau and husband Alain who is currently serving in Afghanistan on his third tour to the region. Troy and Colleen Jagoe, Troy is awaiting deployment to Afghanistan, the initial date for deployment was March 2008, and the date has been changed

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<sup>107</sup> Renov, “New Subjectivities”, 219.

several times. Robert and Sharon Lundy, Robert has recently returned from his second deployment to Afghanistan. And Donna Bell and her husband Ron who has returned from deployment in Afghanistan, as a reservist. The interviews provide an opportunity for a subjective account of military lifestyle and first person narratives related to the experience of living through a deployment. The interview footage is accompanied with visual sequences of the subjects involved in daily activities and family photos provided by and selected with the interviewees. An additional interview with the deployment coordinators of the Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC) provides a lens to understand military culture, lifestyle, and support programs available to military member's families. CF members and their families who were willing to talk about their experience(s) of deployment were found through the military contacts of family members and individuals they could recommend. Interviews with individuals were held predominantly in their homes off base in Kingston, ON where they are currently stationed. Interviewees were contacted by e-mail and initial interviews were conducted over the phone, or in person (see Appendix, Annex III for a Shooting Schedule). Final interviews were shot on mini DV tape format. The project was edited using Final Cut Pro, and distributed in DVD format.

The participants are reflective of a typical military family, a traditional nuclear family with two parents and several children. The families selected have between two and three children between the ages of five years and twenty years. All four families selected live off-base, while one is within close proximity of the base, and the other three live among primarily civilian families in the West end of Kingston (CFB Kingston is on the East end) and are therefore roughly a twenty to twenty-five minute drive from the base. The families were posted to CFB Kingston and are not from the region, and do not have extended family in the city. Living off base, family members are more likely to live among the civilian population that may not have a

great understanding of military life or deployment. In most cases, the children are enrolled in public schools where the majority of the children are not from military families and who might not be familiar with military lifestyle, or be misinformed of the security risks of an overseas deployment.

CFB Kingston is a unique case, unlike other CF bases such as Shilo, Manitoba or Pettawawa, Ontario or Calgary Alberta where there would be a large contingent of Army personnel who would receive a large-scale deployment. CFB Kingston has over thirty units, ranging from smaller to larger units such as the Joint Signal Regiment. Therefore, when military members are deployed, it is often small-scale deployments a few members per unit, and might also piggyback on other deploying units from other bases. Furthermore, members are deployed on missions of various lengths, from a few weeks to full-scale six and eight month deployments. Therefore, these deployments are not as visible on base the same way they would be from a primarily Army base where a large contingent of soldiers would be deployed. This poses a unique set of issues for military spouses who won't necessarily have the same support networks they would if they were stationed at a primary Army base, where a large percentage of base members would be deployed for a set duration of time at once. Three of the four military wives work outside the home on a part-time basis, at low paying or self-employed positions. Of the three working outside the home, two are midwives and the third is a part-time employee at the McDonalds on base, where a large percentage of employees are spouses of military members. In all four families, the military member is the husband and primary wage earner. All four men are in the Army, three out of four are employed in the regular forces, while the fourth is a reservist,

previously employed in the regular force. Families where both parents are military members are becoming more typical, but none were interviewed for this documentary.

Spouses of the CF member, alongside the CF member where possible, were asked the same set of twenty-five standard questions loosely grouped into four categories: Background/Introduction, Deployment, Support and Assistance, and Methods of Communication and Media Consumption During Deployment (see Appendix, Annex II). The Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC) representatives were asked a separate set of fifteen questions that asked about the work of the KMFRC in general and in respect to deployments, and their stance on the consumption of media by military spouses during deployments (see Appendix, Annex III). In all five interviews, I inquired about the personal history of the individuals being interviewed, asking about their family members, the places they have lived, number of years married, and/or number of years their spouse had been in the Canadian Forces (CF). The initial on-camera interviews were approximately one hour in length. In that time, the individual(s) was given the opportunity to recount personal anecdotes, or stories that came to mind that were reflective of their experience of military life to date. Additional shooting was completed on a second trip, a month later, to film visual sequences of the individual(s) in their homes or participating in daily activities, and provided me with the chance to meet with them again, and acquire digital or print photos they had gathered for the project. I provided a general guideline of the kinds of images I would be interested in, and families were granted the discretion in selecting the photos they were willing to contribute. The filming of visual sequences involved cinema vérité type shooting, observing the individuals completing daily activities such as laundry, reading a child a bedtime story, etc. Similar day-to-day sequences are often seen in National

Film Board documentaries to provide a visual portrait of the individual interviewed, and provide footage to cover cuts in interview footage. The visual sequences in the film were shot from the perspective of a silent observer, where I documented the activity without interference of my physical body in the film frame, but where the individuals often acknowledged my presence by talking with me or directly looking into the camera.

Participants were interviewed in their homes, to provide a context in which to situate their responses. Exterior front shots of their homes provide additional footage to establish the physical context of the interview. In the case of the interviews held at the Kingston Military Family Resource Centre (KMFRC), a similar approach was employed, filming an establishing shot of the exterior of the building on base that houses the KMFRC, and signage that indicated their offices' location in the building. All bases have a Military Family Resource Centre that follow a similar programming model, and therefore offer similar programs to those offered by the KMFRC. For bases with frequent large-scale deployments, units have developed support mechanisms to assist the families of that military community as a whole, during the deployment. In Kingston, because deployments are small and sporadic, military families of deployed members do not have the same communal support. With many families living off base then on base in Private Military Quarters (PMQ)s, and with smaller deployments, the KMFRC has had to adapt the programs they offer to support the diverse deployments of families living off-base, often on the other side of town.

Interviews were videotaped on mini dv, using a lapel microphone and the on-board microphone on the camera. Interviewees were made aware of the filmmaking process and signed a release form upon completion of the interview. Interviewees were provided the option to be interviewed alone, or with their spouse where possible. Two couples, Major Warrant Officer Robert and Sharon Lundy and Corporal Troy and Colleen Jagoe were interviewed together,

while Donna Bell's husband Lieutenant-Colonel Ron was away in Ottawa for the CF at the time of the interview and Sandra Bilodeau's husband Master Warrant Officer Alain is currently deployed in Afghanistan with the CF on an eight month tour. Robert Lundy has completed four deployments in his military career including a tour to Kabul Afghanistan, and a tour to Kandahar Afghanistan in 2006/07. Ron Bell completed one tour in Kabul with serving with the reserves. Corporal Troy Jagoe is awaiting deployment to Kandahar, his original departure date was scheduled for March, 2008. Alain Bilodeau has completed four tours of duty, including two previous tours in Afghanistan in Kabul and Kandahar, and is currently completing his fifth tour in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

### **Interviewee Responses**

A family's experience of deployment differs based on many varying characteristics including the member's rank and position in the CF, the duration the family has resided in their current place of residence, use of support networks, and personal characteristics of family members. In the cases of the four families interviewed, families had between two and three children ranging from age 6 to age 20. I was surprised to learn that each family had a child that had either exhibited behavioral issues, a learning disability or suffered from anxiety or depression. These issues were either exasperated while the CF member was deployed, or more difficult to address with only one parent present. Interviewees address many topics ranging from characteristics of military lifestyle, absences, personal development and growth, and consumption of media. All interviewees mentioned positive and negative aspects of military lifestyle and had an overall positive outlook, but acknowledged the difficulties of separation and the threat of harm that had a toll on them during their spouse's deployment with the CF in Afghanistan.

The film organizes the interviewee's responses in the sequential framework of a deployment, separated into the sections: "Pre-Deployment", "Absence", "Fear & Anxiety", "Post-Deployment and Military Life". The film is organized in this way for two reasons, the first to emphasize that a deployment is a process that affects family members prior to the physical separation of a deployment and continues after the member's return, and secondly because the majority of interviewee's responses followed this chronological narrative order. The military wives agreed that regardless of the preparation done prior to departure, there was always something that went wrong after the member left, relating to the house, the car, or family health. The spouses of CF members spoke at length about how the children coped with their father's departure, explaining that when they were younger the children did not fathom the concept of time and it was therefore necessary to keep the memory of their father alive with letters, video or audio tapes of their father's voice, or for example reading stories to them. When the children were older, they better understood the politics and security risks of the mission and dealing with the deployment was more complex and involved greater emotions to sort through which resulted in the child harboring anger.

One spouse, Donna Bell mentioned that there can be resentment when the spouse returns, because although they are the individual deployed, they enjoy a sense of excitement and adventure, while for the spouse and family members left behind it is hard work. The spouse left behind attends to all the household duties, the children, and is the sole parent and authority figure while the CF member is deployed. The three women who had the experience of their husbands' deployment(s) mentioned that the re-entry process post-deployment is longer than they expected, and that the process can last several months before things return to normal within the family. They also emphasized the fact that their relationship with their spouse, the CF member, was never exactly the same upon return of the CF member, because both the member and the spouse

had different experiences during the deployment, and therefore they were not at exactly the same place in their relationship, and a new comfort level would have to be achieved. These statements lead me to conclude that deployments do not simply affect the family for the length of the six to eight month tour, but prior to the deployment and long after the CF member has returned. As inscribed on the main page of the Canadian Forces Personnel and Family Support Services web site, quoted by Rick Hillier, former Chief of the Defence Staff, “Our families have been here for us through our enrolment, our training, our deployments, and out homecomings. The military life places significant demands on our loved ones. They did not volunteer for service – but serve they do, and with great distinction.”<sup>108</sup>

Despite minor incidents of recognition, military families are often the widely unacknowledged backbone of CF members, although integral to the support of CF members and their endeavors in the military. Their sacrifice is not nearly as visible, because they do not wear uniforms, but their lives are not untouched by the service of their spouse, or parent who is a CF member. From the interviewee responses in the film, military spouses are supportive and proud of their CF spouse’s accomplishments. They acknowledge the difficulties of military life, but remain optimistic and celebrate the opportunities they perceive from affiliation with the military, despite the lack of public support for the current mission and mounting security risks that translate into Canadian casualties. My thesis film serves to highlight military families’ experiences of deployment, enabling a wider discussion of the issues faced by families that stretch beyond the traditional depiction in the mass media of their grief or mourning of a loved one. Prior to these depictions of military families in news media are a series of undocumented personal struggles and victories that military families who cope with deployment(s) endure –

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<sup>108</sup> Canadian Forces Personnel and Family Support Services,  
<http://www.cfpsa.com/en/corporate/mFamily/index.asp>



anxiety prior to departure – cherished family time – the anticipation of return for the majority of members who do return safely. My thesis film serves to represent and acknowledge the struggles and sacrifices of military families with CF members deployed in the service of Canada’s interests abroad.

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## **Appendix**

### **Annex I: Shooting and Editing Schedule**

#### **April:**

- Contacted interviewees to solidify their willingness to participate in the project
- Gathered additional found footage

#### **May:**

- First set of filming in Kingston: primary interviews conducted with interviewees Troy & Colleen Jagoe, Donna Bell, Sharon and Bob Lundy, Sandra Bilodeau and KMRC deployment coordinators
- Additional footage of Kingston and some signage at CFB Kingston were taken
- Captured and logged initial footage

#### **June:**

- Edited down of interview footage
- Grouped together footage along similar themes
- Began different opening sequences
- Edited the footage down to a 1 hour rough cut
- Submitted first draft of project paper for feedback

#### **July:**

- Received feedback on the initial rough cut
- Cut the 1 hour rough cut down to forty-five minutes
- Second set of filming in Kingston: gathered additional footage of interviewees in their homes completing daily tasks to provide visual sequences of the individuals
- Re-shot establishing shots of interviewees' houses, this time using a tripod
- Gathered family photos from interviewees and scanned photos
- Shot additional footage on base to provide cut-aways during interviews and a sense of the physical space of CFB Kingston
- Captured additional footage and re-edited the piece

#### **August:**

- Submitted final version to advisors for approval

## **Annex II: Interview Questions for Families with a CF member**

### **Background/Introduction:**

1. What is your name?
2. What is your spouse's name, occupation and rank in the Canadian Forces?
3. How long have you been married?
4. Do you have children? If so, what are their ages?
5. How long have you lived in your current location?
6. Where are you originally from in Canada? What was the trajectory of your moves to date?
7. How would you characterize military life?

### **Deployment:**

8. Is your spouse, or has your spouse been deployed in Afghanistan with the Canadian Forces? What is/was the length of deployment and dates?
9. Has your spouse had previous deployments? If so, when are where?
10. Does this current, or most recent deployment differ in any way to previous deployments? If yes, how so?
11. What was your main concern(s) during your spouse's deployment?
12. How did your children cope with their father's/mother's deployment?
13. What are some coping mechanisms you developed to deal with the absence of your spouse?

### **Support and Assistance:**

14. Did you make use of the services of the Military Family Resource Centre at any time prior to, during or after your spouse's deployment? What activities, if any, did you take part in?
15. What other resources were of assistance during your spouse's deployment?
16. What additional resources addressed the needs and interests of your children during your spouse's deployment?
17. How could these resources be improved to address your needs?

### **Methods of communication and media consumption during deployment:**

18. How often did you communicate with your spouse while s/he was/is deployed?
19. What method of communication do you prefer?
20. What is the length and duration of communication? Was it sufficient?
21. Do you consume media related to the Canadian Forces mission in Afghanistan while your spouse was/is deployed?
22. If yes, what kind; newspapers, television, radio or online news? And for what duration?
23. Why do you choose to consume media at this level?
24. Have the Military Family Resource Centers provided with you with guidelines for media consumption, or how to cope with media coverage of the Canadian Forces mission in Afghanistan?
25. In your opinion, does the mainstream media provide accurate coverage of the Canadian mission in Afghanistan and C.F. members and families?

### **Annex III: Interview Questions for Military Family Resource Centre Personnel (KMFRFC)**

1. What is your name and position?
2. What does the MFRC provide to the military community?
3. How does the MFRC contribute to combat readiness?
4. How long has the MFRC been operational on the Kingston Base?
5. How many families/spouses in the Kingston area currently have spouses deployed in Afghanistan?
6. How does the MRFC get in contact with member's families?
7. Are there unique challenges to provide support for military member's families at the Kingston base, versus a larger Army base (ex) Edmonton) where there would be a larger contingent of CF members deployed for a rotation?
8. How is the MRFC involved in pre-deployment?
9. What services does the MFRC offer to the families/spouses during deployment?
10. How is the MFRC assist with post-deployment re-entry?
11. How long does it take for families to get 'back on track' post-deployment?
12. What are some common challenges that families face during deployment?
13. Have there been changes in programming and services offered during the current mission in Afghanistan versus previous CF deployments?
14. Does the MFRC encourage/discourage the consumption of media while the CF member is deployed in Afghanistan?
15. Does the increasing coverage of the Afghan mission have an impact on military families?