

# The role of military culture in military organizations' responses to woman abuse in military families<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper reports on a study of the Canadian Forces' (CF's) response to woman abuse in military families which was conducted using institutional ethnography feminist methodology. A 20-person multidisciplinary team conducted 126 semi-structured interviews in four Canadian provinces with: (1) present and former civilian female partners of CF members, who were survivors of abuse [64]; (2) regional civilian and CF social service providers, and CF supervisory personnel [52]; and (3) National Defence Headquarters program administrators and generals in Ottawa [10]. Analyzing these interviews enabled us to identify and elaborate on some of the military social relations in which the experiences of military spouses who are woman abuse survivors are embedded. This paper discusses the difficulties created for military spouses by geographical transfers and military housing neighbourhoods, and establishes the crucial role played by the chain of command in military organizations' responses to spouses who have been abused. The paper then shows how military leaders, especially those who supervise combat units, respond to woman abuse in ways that reflect their participation in the *hypervigilance* and *unit cohesion* features of military culture. The paper concludes by reflecting on Western militaries' responses to woman abuse in military families in light of their responses to the events of September 11, 2001.

During the early 1990s, members of the Canadian Airborne [army] Regiment organized a boisterous banquet to celebrate the anniversary of December 6, 1989, the afternoon that a gunman had entered a classroom at Montréal's Ecole Polytechnique and slaughtered 14 female engineering students (Whitworth, 2004: 106–7). Several years later, when she was interviewed by our research team, a Canadian Forces (CF) [navy] spouse recounted being assaulted by her husband (I'll call him Fred) in front of all the guests at a naval social event. No one appeared to take any notice until, after five minutes had passed, another navy wife crossed the room to give Fred a hug. Both these incidents involved members of a military community, and both displayed a callous attitude towards violence against women. Nevertheless, there is also a contrast between them, one which illustrates the paradox whereby violence

against women is overwhelmingly visible to those who can (or must) see it, yet most organizations and communities conduct their routine business in ways that conceal it and pre-empt the voices of its victims.

A case in point is the child custody<sup>2</sup> and access decisions that are rendered by family court judges in instances where woman abuse<sup>3</sup> had characterized the spousal relationship. The reality of the male partner's abuse, and the harm it caused his children during the marriage,<sup>4</sup> are routinely made to 'disappear' by statutes and decisions which reflect the assumption that children benefit from having their fathers in their lives under all circumstances (Hester and Radford, 1996; Rhoades, 2002; Neilson, 2000, 2004). Within this construct, any father who expresses the desire to spend time with his children is regarded as a father who is 'good enough' (Eriksson and Hester, 2001). This occurs, despite the fact that longitudinal research conducted since 1985 has found that children of broken marriages who develop successfully do so as a result of the psychological well-being of their primary caregiver and an ongoing relationship between their parents which is characterized by, at most, low or moderate conflict. They do not thrive on contact with either parent *per se* (Kelly, 1998; Neilson, 2000; Hester, 2002). Research has also shown that abusive men make poor fathers, and that those of them who seek post-divorce contact with their children are less motivated by parental love than by their desire to use access or joint custody as a means of continuing to abuse their former partners (Holden and Ritchie, 1991; Radford, Hester, Humphries and Woodfield, 1997; Rosnes, 1997; Hague, 1999; Hester and Harne, 1999; Cuthbert *et al.*, 2002; Neilson, 2000, 2001; Eriksson and Hester, 2001; Hester, 2002; Bancroft and Silverman, 2002). In fact, recent studies in the U.K., Denmark, the U.S., Australia, and Canada have found that separated and divorced abusive men harm their children during access visits by hitting them, threatening them, neglecting them, exposing them to dangerous situations, and forcing them to witness violence directed at their mothers and/or their new partners (Hester, 2002; Cuthbert *et al.*, 2002; Rhoades, 2002; Neilson, 2001, 2004).

It is research conducted between 1975 and 1985, unfortunately, that has exercised decisive influence on recent custody legislation in Europe, North America, and Australia. This earlier research, whose participants had been members of 'ordinary' families (that is, not screened for family violence), had found that children of divorced parents, especially boys, were likeliest to thrive as adults if, as children, they had continued to have contact with their fathers (Neilson, 2001; Hester, 2002; Rhoades, 2002). This finding, combined with fathers' rights movements and the desire of right wing governments to shrink social program expenditures, has led to an over-promotion of contact with fathers by legal systems and legal actors during the past 20 years (Rosnes, 1997; Hester and Harne, 1999; Neilson, 2000, 2001; Eriksson and Hester, 2001; Hester, 2002; Rhoades, 2002). In the U.K., for example, the Children Act of 1989 replaced the terms 'custody' and 'access' with 'shared responsibility,' a notion that presupposes a two-parent childrearing model under all circumstances (Radford, Hester, Humphries and Woodfield, 1997;

Eriksson and Hester, 2001). In general, when assessing the relative parenting abilities of a mother and a father who was an abusive marital partner, family court judges in Europe, North America, and Australia have recently tended to focus more on the mother's 'recalcitrant' refusal to trust her former partner as a co-parent than on the father's abusiveness (Hester and Radford, 1996; Radford, Hester, Humphries and Woodfield, 1997; Rosnes, 1997; Hague, 1999; Hester and Harne, 1999; Eriksson and Hester, 2001; Rhoades, 2002). They have consequently accomplished or reinforced the social invisibility of the abuse, and increased the likelihood of further harm being directed at the mother and her children.

Family court is one example of an institution whose actors' routine decisions make woman abuse 'disappear,' and consequently revictimize woman abuse survivors. Militaries are another. Like family court judges, military leaders are state actors who have undergone rigorous occupational socialization, have access to a highly specialized body of knowledge, have been entrusted with the responsibility to protect vulnerable human beings, and are subjected to remarkably little public scrutiny respecting the human rights<sup>5</sup> violations they commit concerning violence against women. While no comparative quantitative research on woman abuse in military communities has been carried out in the U.K. or Canada, research conducted in the U.S. suggests that the rate of woman abuse is higher in military than in civilian families (Martin, 1976; Griffin and Morgan, 1988; Thompson, 1994; Cronin, 1995; Heyman and Neidig, 1999). This paper reports on a qualitative exploration of how Canadian military leaders respond to the woman abuse committed by their subordinates against their civilian female partners.

## Background

During the early 1990s, I collaborated with a family law lawyer, and co-founder of the [Canadian] Organization of Spouses of Military Members, to research and write a book on the unpaid work CF spouses routinely perform for the CF institution (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994). A number of the women we interviewed had been abused by their CF partners, and their stories were compelling, especially so since they emerged during the research process rather than having been solicited. The idea for a project on woman abuse grew out of this experience. Additionally, no literature existed on woman abuse in Canadian military communities, apart from three discussion papers that had been prepared by the CF during the mid-1990s (Department of National Defence Canada, 1995a, 1996, 1997).

The team assembled for the woman abuse project had 20 members, based in New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Ontario. The team included academics, civilian community practitioners, and several CF members (including a ranking general officer).<sup>6</sup> The inclusion of CF members ensured that we would have access to CF supervisors and service providers. In 1997, the Department of

National Defence (DND)'s Assistant Deputy Minister of Military Human Resources sent an endorsement of the project by email to all CF commands<sup>7</sup> and bases.

Our purpose was to identify some of the social processes which shape CF leaders' response to the woman abuse committed by their subordinates. We additionally undertook to recommend 51 concrete actions which we believed would improve the CF's response. We submitted our *Report on the Canadian Forces' Response to Woman Abuse in Military Families* to the Minister of National Defence on May 8, 2000 (Harrison *et al.*, 2000). As a result of the *Report's* extensive national media coverage, DND tasked its Quality of Life office to draft a *Family Violence Action Plan* (Department of National Defence Canada, 2003a).<sup>8</sup>

## Method

Between 1996 and 1999, we conducted 126 lengthy semi-structured interviews in three phases. Phase One, carried out in CF communities in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Manitoba,<sup>9</sup> consisted of 64 interviews with English- and French-speaking female partners and former partners of regular male CF members who were survivors of abuse. These interviews focused on the survivors' coping strategies, their attempts to find help within the military and civilian communities, the results of these attempts, and the ensuing consequences. Phase Two, carried out in the same locations, consisted of 52 interviews with regional civilian and CF service providers (e.g., social work officers, chaplains, and military police) and CF supervisory personnel. Each Phase Two interview focused on the participant's job description; military practices that affected what happened to woman abuse survivors; the participant's perspectives on the problems identified during the interviews with survivors; and, for civilian service providers, the situations that, in their view, were unique to their military community clients. Phase Three, consisting of 10 interviews with National Defence Headquarters program administrators and generals in Ottawa, focused on job descriptions; military policies that were relevant to woman abuse; and responses to the problems that had been identified during the first two phases. During early 2000, four voluntary focus groups were organized in New Brunswick and Manitoba to enable survivors and CF service providers to provide feedback on the team's tentative recommendations.

Our methodology was *institutional ethnography* (IE). This methodology, developed by Dorothy E. Smith, builds on Karl Marx's theory of alienation, his understanding that those who have been excluded from 'the making of ideology, knowledge, and culture' find themselves participating in activities that are structured in such ways as to alienate them from their own lived experiences (Smith, 1987, 1999, 2005; Campbell and Manicom, 1995; Campbell and Gregor, 2002; Devault and McCoy, 2002; Bell and Campbell, 2003; Campbell, 2003). Like other methods situated in the Marxist tradition, institutional ethnogra-

phy makes the assumption that knowledge is socially produced. It therefore rejects the positivist assertion that there is a detached position, uncontaminated by researcher values, from which social phenomena can be scrutinized; and it assumes that every observer chooses, more or less consciously, the standpoint from which s/he will collect and interpret his/her data.

Institutional ethnographers choose to produce organizational knowledge for the benefit of persons without power. They endeavour to use social actors' local experiences as starting points for identifying and analyzing how the actors' lives have 'come to be dominated and shaped by forces outside of them and their purposes' (Campbell and Gregor, 2002: 12). They attempt to show how the local activities of relatively powerless persons are structured/managed/ruled by 'social organization that extends beyond them' (Campbell and Gregor, 2002: 44). IE researchers do not test hypotheses or derive research questions from existing literature. Instead, they position themselves in the actors' local setting in a way which will enable them to 'see (in it) a social organization to explore' (Campbell and Gregor, 2002: 46). By doing so, they adopt an epistemological stance which is outside, and usually critical of, the standpoint from which the organization/institution is managed or ruled. Following Marx, they adhere to a materialist interpretation of human existence and social experience which differs from the postmodernist notion that no human or social reality exists apart from the pseudo-realities that are constituted by discourses (Smith, 1999; Campbell, 2003: 18–20). What IE researchers identify as a *text* (e.g., a document, photo, video or sound recording, or even an ethos that serves as a reference point for routine organizational work) typically mediates the ruling relations that comprise the objects of IE investigations by organizing (or serving as a catalyst for) activities across multiple sites (cf. Devault and McCoy, 2002: 753, 765). For example, the official grade transcript of a graduating college student, a text which is replicable across multiple sites, mediates the international ruling relations of accreditation and qualification by socially accomplishing the student's success (or failure) and standing in for (and therefore suppressing) the student's independent human agency (cf. Smith, 2005: 145–9).

In DeVault's and McCoy's formulation, an IE study's goal is 'to explore particular corners or strands within a specific institutional context, in ways that make visible their points of connection with other sites and courses of action' (Devault and McCoy, 2002: 753). An IE normally starts from ordinary persons' everyday activities, and follows the sequence of: '1) identifying [a local] experience, 2) [discovering] some of the [translocal] processes [ruling relations] that are shaping that experience, and 3) investigating those processes in order to describe analytically how they operate as the grounds of the experience' (Devault and McCoy, 2002: 755). The shift from first to second phase may involve a shift in research site, but not in standpoint. At every stage, the standpoint of the group for whose benefit the research is being carried out determines the focus of the inquiry. Since we adopted abused CF spouses' standpoint at the outset of our work, and were anxious to understand (and

overcome) the difficulties they encountered when they sought the assistance of CF supervisors and service providers, the problem-centered focus of IE made this method of inquiry an obvious choice.

Hence, we began by gathering and reflecting on the experiences of abused CF spouses and then, from the vantagepoint of *their* perspectives and interests, questioned our Phase Two and Three participants. Interviews with the latter participants served to elaborate on the survivors' testimonies and to provide insights into the military social relations that appeared to have shaped their experiences. In narrative (but not necessarily analytical) terms, the interviews with civilian service providers and military supervisors usually corroborated what the survivors had told us. Phase Two and Three interviews resembled dialogues, as later interviews built on knowledge obtained during earlier interviews, and interviewers felt free to check out their tentative interpretations with participants (Devault and McCoy, 2002: 757). In the sections of the paper that follow, I have sometimes juxtaposed the narratives of service providers and military supervisors with those of survivors in order to illustrate how closely they correspond.

Space considerations permit discussion exclusively of examples pertaining to CF leaders and supervisors; discussion of the responses of CF service providers can be found elsewhere (Harrison *et al.*, 2000, 2002). The present discussion is also confined to the structural problems that constituted our main findings: that is, what seems to happen fairly regularly to woman abuse survivors on a CF base, as told to us by the survivors and elaborated on by leaders/supervisors. A minority of the survivors we interviewed had been fortunate enough to encounter compassionate and courageous supervisors when they had sought CF help; we based some of our recommendations to DND on the 'good practices' that their narratives had revealed.

### **The military way of life and its impact on CF spouses who are woman abuse survivors**

The CF comprise a volunteer (and, since 1968, integrated) armed force whose regular and reserve members are professionally trained. The regular CF are 60,174 persons strong.<sup>10</sup> Approximately 87.6 percent of regular CF members are men.<sup>11</sup> More than half of regular CF members are concentrated at the lowest two ranks of private and corporal (Department of National Defence Canada 2000a).<sup>12</sup> Approximately 49 percent of regular CF members belong to the land element (army), 32 percent to the air element, and 19 percent to the sea element (navy).<sup>13</sup> Sixty-seven percent of regular CF members are currently married.<sup>14</sup> According to the civilian spouses we interviewed, two aspects of CF life – geographical transfers and military housing – are essential to our understanding of the typical circumstances of CF spouses who are woman abuse survivors.

Most CF members are transferred to a new geographical location every few years, although the frequency of this practice has declined. The higher the

rank a member achieves, the more transfers s/he can expect. The normal CF career involves around 10 moves; fast-track careers involve more (Freeman, 1994).<sup>15</sup> While many civilian organizations transfer managerial employees, the military is one of the few employers which transfers employees of every rank. Geographical transfers significantly disadvantage army and air element military spouses in the labour market. Most of these spouses are forced to accept part-time or low-wage jobs; the professionally qualified among them (e.g., teachers, nurses, lawyers) find it difficult to acquire seniority, maintain professional qualifications, or reach levels of pay that are commensurate with their abilities. Most geographically mobile CF spouses are unable to contribute to employer pension plans or RRSPs [Registered Retirement Savings Plans], and are thus prevented from accumulating their own pensions (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994; Department of National Defence Canada, 1995b). Geographical transfers put long distances between CF spouses and their extended families, prevent spouses from putting down civilian community roots, and make it difficult for a spouse who is being abused to find the emotional support she needs in order to recognize her relationship as abusive, and decide whether to leave or stay put (Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 28–32). Most CF woman abuse perpetrators thus exercise considerable economic and social power over their partners.

About 30 percent of CF members live on base (or station) in Permanent Married Quarters (PMQs) at any one time; over the last several years, this proportion has been shrinking (Canadian Forces Housing Agency, 1997). Nevertheless, most noncommissioned CF members still live in PMQs at some point during their careers. The CF exercise more control over the member who lives in a PMQ than they do over the member who lives off base. Even though the CF have recently subcontracted the management of PMQ neighbourhoods to a civilian housing agency, they continue to exercise decision-making power over these neighbourhoods and to assume the role of landlord. PMQ residents pay rent to the military, submit to military rules about how to paint, clean, and maintain their dwellings, and participate in such regularly scheduled military activities as ‘neighbourhood clean-up.’ The PMQ sections of most bases in Canada are patrolled by military, rather than civilian, police, and infractions of the Criminal Code or the military National Defence Act committed by members, which are defined as such by the military police (MPs), are reported to the appropriate authorities, as well as to the chain of command. Criminal Code infractions committed by members’ family members, as defined by the MPs, are also reported to the chain of command.

The fact that military housing neighbours work at the same place paradoxically produces a culture of secrecy in most PMQ neighbourhoods. Since the consequences of being labelled as an abuser by the CF can be severe, a silent pact exists among CF members to keep information about one another’s social problems from the chain of command, especially in PMQ neighbourhoods. A former abused spouse recalled:

I would run right out in the middle of the parking lot to get away. And he came right out there when I was like eight months pregnant and busted my nose right in front of them. He was choking me. They just drove by me – not one of them would help me. They seen me beaten up. They just pretended it didn't happen. . . . I remember one night . . . he held me in the basement for hours. And I screamed and screamed, 'Please call the police! Somebody help me!' They just turned their stereo up. Nobody helped me. (Interview A6)

Speaking from her professional experience, a civilian family mediation worker verified the existence of a silent pact in PMQ neighbourhoods.

When I've done custody assessments and people have said, 'I want you to talk to my neighbour about, you know, so and so next door. They heard the noise and heard everything.' And the neighbours would say that yes they did, they heard the shouting, they heard the yelling, but they weren't about to interfere. That was . . . the code. They couldn't interfere. They felt they couldn't interfere and couldn't become involved. . . . You're less anonymous . . . on the military base than you are in the community. (Interview C16)

While it counteracts the control that the CF exercise over their PMQ-quartered members, this silent pact increases the control of members who are woman abuse perpetrators over their victims. Perpetrators' power is also enhanced by the fact that living in a PMQ represents significant social isolation in the many instances that the base is geographically distant from urban social services.

PMQ housing is available to the spouse only as long as her relationship lasts. If the relationship dissolves, the CF member is expected to move into barracks and his estranged spouse is evicted within 30 days.<sup>16</sup> At the discretion of the base commander, the estranged spouse may be allowed to stay in the PMQ slightly longer, often until the end of the school year. However, if the member has custody of the children – or even access – he may be permitted to retain the PMQ for himself. Indeed, if the member retains the PMQ and files for custody of the children, he may be granted custody by the court because the children's mother now has no home. The estranged spouse who has been permitted to remain in her PMQ often subsequently discovers that her former partner has decided to stop paying the rent. As soon as this fact becomes clear to the base housing authorities, she is evicted. An economically dependent Canadian civilian woman (or military spouse living off base) who was separating would be unlikely to encounter this situation because, as long as her partner had signed or co-signed a civilian lease or mortgage agreement, he would be obligated to make the payments whether the couple was separated or together.

Military transfers and, where applicable, residency in a military housing neighbourhood, contribute to the social and economic vulnerability of all military spouses, and exacerbate perpetrators' control over spouses who are being abused. Civilian woman abuse perpetrators typically work hard to acquire the powers that many military woman abuse perpetrators exercise over their spouses automatically: social isolation, economic dependence, and no legal right to the roof they have over their heads. Employers are not normally expected to concern themselves with the difficulties employees' spouses encounter in their family lives. However, female military spouses' social and economic vulnerability makes them easy targets for abusive men. Furthermore, the UN *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* and the UN *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* have established that state organizations (including militaries) are legally obligated to protect women from torture and ill treatment, including intimate partner violence (Amnesty International, 2001a, 2001b, 2004). Both these considerations require militaries to take a proactive role in preventing, treating, and mitigating the impact of the woman abuse that occurs in their communities.

### **The commanding officer's discretion**

Respecting family violence or any other behaviour they regard as deviant, the CF have a series of increasingly severe administrative penalties which, at their discretion, CF supervisors can invoke against their subordinates (in ascending order of seriousness: Informal Counselling, Recorded Warning, and Counselling and Probation [Record of Shortcomings for officers]). If a member/officer who has been issued the latter gets into further trouble within six months, s/he is normally released from the CF. DND policy requires that the CF's national Career Review Board receive official notification of every court conviction for woman abuse (or any other Criminal Code offence), accompanied by a letter from the member's commanding officer explaining why the member should be released from the CF or retained.

Many supervisors used the term 'zero tolerance' when we interviewed them about the CF's policies regarding family violence. Additionally, on May 15, 2000, seven days after our team had released its report, Canada's Chief of Defence Staff issued a Canadian Forces General Message (CANFORGEN) to all CF members, which read in part: 'Family Violence, in any form, is abhorrent and cannot be tolerated in the CF' (Department of National Defence Canada, 2000b). But the CF's current Defence Administrative Order and Directive (DAOD) on *Family Violence* merely instructs commanding officers (COs) to '... determine whether administrative action is to be taken in accordance with applicable regulations and orders with respect to a CF member who has committed an act of family violence' (Department of National Defence Canada, 2003b). Thus the phrase 'zero tolerance' appears

nowhere in managerial protocols, and the CF allow perpetrators' commanding officers virtually limitless discretion to respond to woman abuse in the manner they choose. The judgment of commanding officers is also permitted to prevail over that of professional practitioners. An MP we interviewed summarized the division of labour that takes place between his office and the chain of command when there has been an incident in a PMQ neighbourhood that MPs patrol.

After we're finished with him, he's done with us. We will generate a report that goes to his commanding officer. [The report] will say exactly what went on in the house . . . The commanding officer is the only person that we distribute reports to. And whatever he does with the information is up to him. (Interview A81)

Given the discretion allowed the perpetrator's CO, it is not surprising that our interviews revealed differences of opinion regarding the usual point in the woman abuse perpetrator's 'career' at which COs decide to intervene, to initiate administrative penalties and/or refer the perpetrator to appropriate counselling. The official view is as soon as possible, so that perpetrators may receive help before their problems escalate, and a paper trail may be established to make repeat offenders easier to release. The commander of an army base told us that early intervention into any kind of family violence is essential organizational policy.

I'm particularly concerned with the emotional dimension of that, because that's usually the precursor to physical intimidation, physical violence, or physical abuse. And I have made it fairly clear to the people that work for me that I am going to intervene and I expect them to intervene in circumstances where we are aware that emotional or non-physical intimidation, violence or abuse ha[s] taken place, to prevent it from becoming physical or physically violent. (Interview C23)

However, an adjutant at another base told us that his office would not act unless the military or civilian police had laid charges. A senior air element officer at still another base told us that, in order to be as fair as possible to the perpetrator, his office would take no action unless the perpetrator had been both charged *and* convicted.

We have had one case that I'm aware of that went down that path [was prosecuted], and eventually the charges were stayed or dropped or whatever. And from the military's point of view in those circumstances, that's the end of the story. There's nothing you can or likely should do to the individual. . . . You can't just say, 'Well, I think you fooled the authorities

downtown – I think you're guilty. And therefore I'm going to put this reprimand on your record.' Don't know how to get around that at this point in time. (Interview B17)

Since comparatively few woman abuse incidents result in charges, and fewer still result in convictions, even in North American civilian communities, this officer's revelation was not reassuring.<sup>17</sup>

From our interviews, it would appear that the base commander quoted above was describing the ideal, rather than the usual, response of CF supervisors to the woman abuse of their subordinates, and that, contrary to his account, female CF spouses who indicate to the chain of command that physical or emotional abuse is occurring, are typically ignored. For example, the spouse of an abusive air element member, who requested help from her husband's warrant officer, was told that the CF had no mandate to intervene in a member's home life unless his behaviour was affecting his performance on the job. Corroborating her account, an MP whom we interviewed told us that the CF had no interest in intervening in a member's home life unless his behaviour was *conspicuously* affecting his performance on the job.

Unless the individual creates a problem – an administrative problem whereby he's always in trouble and they're always having to send him back from courses to show up for court, and he becomes a headache that way and an administrative problem – they're not going to do anything about him. (Interview A53)

Like their counterparts in the U.S. Marines (Marshall and McShane, 2000), CF supervisors appear to take only minimal action regarding instances of woman abuse that come to their attention. When a woman abuse incident has occurred in a PMQ and the military or civilian police have been called, most supervisors seem content with the typical military police response of separating the couple for one night. The chain of command either takes no further action or orders the perpetrator to attend one or two meetings with a counsellor (Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 79–86). DND's Assistant Deputy Minister of Military Human Resources summarizes:

The couple – let's say they have a major disagreement. The MP shows up, then he is taken to quarters, they cool off, and then the next morning either he has to go back or she calls back and says, okay, that he can come back, and then they get back together on a mutual consent. (Interview A71)

This is an inadequate way of dealing with abuse that is escalating, especially given that women in the general Canadian population endure between 18 and 35 incidents of abuse and/or violence from their partners before calling the police (Jaffe, Wolfe, Telford and Austin, 1986; Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General [British Columbia], 2000), and military police consequently

have little way of knowing how many times abuse occurred in a particular home before the first time they were called.

From our interviews, it would seem that the safety of spouses is seldom foremost in the minds of CF supervisors who use their discretion concerning interventions for woman abuse perpetrators. Indeed, the actions of some CF supervisors place abused CF spouses at increased risk. The most dramatic example we learned of was a spouse who had left an extremely violent CF member and moved 2,000 kilometres at her own expense, only to have the member posted to her new location by a commanding officer who believed the member's story that he wanted to 'reconcile' (Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 108).

One difficulty is lack of knowledge. Most CF supervisors know little or nothing about woman abuse dynamics, especially the dynamics pertaining to victims' safety. To date, no CF supervisor has received any CF-sponsored training in this area. Relatedly, CF supervisors who recommend counselling for a subordinate who is a woman abuse perpetrator often recommend couple counselling, despite the fact that most experts consider couple counselling to be an ineffective method, which can increase the danger to woman abuse victims (Dobash and Dobash, 1992; Golden *et al.*, 1994; Dutton, 1995). Although the social work offices on some bases offer woman abuse training to operational units, the offer appears to be taken up infrequently. A civilian social worker working on an army base told us:

When the units require it, [we] make presentations regarding our social work services on the base . . . [If I were asked to estimate the percentage of units that request us to make this presentation] . . . 10 percent would be high. (Interview A47)

In short, CF supervisors exercise significant discretion in an area in which they are mostly ignorant.

Aside from CF supervisors' lack of training, two characteristics of military culture – *hypervigilance* and *unit cohesion* – appear to be implicated in their minimalist response.

## **Hypervigilance and the silent pact**

Military hypervigilance derives from the high risk nature of military work and militaries' consequent need to know who among their members are physically, emotionally, or socially unable to be deployed (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994: 191–4; Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 51–63). The dangerous nature of military work thus precludes military members from enjoying the same rights to privacy in their home lives that civilian employees can take for granted. On one level this hypervigilance reflects militaries' reputation for 'taking care of their own,' and their desire to protect the financial and social investments they have made in training their members. A base commander noted:

I think the threshold of the Armed Forces tends to be very high. We would go the distance to save a member, whatever the circumstances are. We have gone to a lot of trouble to rehabilitate drunks. We have gone to a lot of trouble to fix people when they get sick, to fix people when they get hurt. We have gone to a lot of trouble to fix people who have emotional problems, who are mentally ill. (Interview C23)

In other words, it would be appropriate for a commanding officer to intervene in the early stages of a subordinate's abusive relationship, as the same base commander (quoted earlier) narrated, whether the subordinate was the perpetrator or the victim. In theory, the CF treat woman abuse as a mental health issue that, like alcoholism and other illnesses, requires early intervention and treatment (e.g., counselling) to restore the member to his combat-ready state. An army officer emphasized that help for a member in such a difficulty is readily available from the CF and unaccompanied by negative career repercussions.

We instruct our soldiers normally once a year . . . Things like drugs and alcohol – the padre talks to them about assistance, and how we can provide assistance if you're having problems, family problems, and you need to talk to somebody about financial advice, or you feel like things are not stable in your family and you're abusing your kids or whatever . . . We talk with the veterans and say, 'Okay, if you're having these problems we have to know about them. And we're not going to kill you and we're not going to crucify you, we're going to help you out.' And that's where we try and defuse this thing about 'Your career is finished if you come and see us.' (Interview C24)

On the other hand, members who appear to be permanently injured or chronically ill are regarded as expendable. So are members who create problems for the organization by getting into difficulties that consume supervisors' time, such as repeated court appearances, repeated bank overdrafts, or repeated trouble with the military police. In the CF, most members in these expendable categories are released. Members therefore share amongst themselves an interest in keeping illnesses, injuries and, where applicable, law-breaking behaviour, hidden from the chain of command. Since team work is highly valued in military organizations, the typical noncommissioned member of a CF subculture quickly reasons that the best way to protect himself is to refrain from informing on any of his peers. It is thus unsurprising that an unwritten *silent pact* constrains CF members (and their spouses) who might under other circumstances be tempted to inform on one another's illnesses and crimes.

IE researcher Liza McCoy (1995) has shown how the wedding photo album functions as a translocal text which organizes activity across multiple local sites. Mediating the ruling relation of the 'wedding discourse,' the wedding photo album text organizes wedding consumers to regard its photographic

images as an indispensable element of the wedding day: the 'local realization of the ideal' of what a newly-joined couple and their families normally aspire to represent. When a bride and groom hire a wedding photographer, they activate the wedding photo album text for the purpose of socially accomplishing their embodiment of the so-called ideal heterosexual union, i.e., one that has been constructed on the enviable foundations of physical attractiveness, love, prosperity, and exquisite taste. I suggest that the silent pact observed in military communities analogously mediates the ruling relations of combat readiness in its capacity as a text which a military community member activates for the purposes of sustaining the apparent orderliness (and deployability) of him/herself or a peer, and shielding self or peer from the organization's surveillance. In a similar manner as the wedding album, the silent pact comprises a 'local realization of the ideal,' which stands in for and suppresses what otherwise might have been the visibility of members' actual (and messier) lived experiences. In a hypervigilant organization like the military, the silent pact officially comprises deviant behaviour; it nevertheless structurally buttresses the combat readiness ruling relation, as we will see below (cf. Campbell and Gregor, 2002: 37).

The silent pact's status as perpetrators' and peers' favoured response to woman abuse is reinforced by the one-dimensional mindset military supervisors typically bring to woman abuse and woman abuse dynamics. Most noncommissioned CF supervisors are unwilling to discuss complex social problems with their subordinates, and send out signals accordingly. The response of such a supervisor to evidence that a member is a woman abuse perpetrator is often 'Don't let me catch you doing that again!' – an admonishment that usually really means 'I don't want to *hear* about this again!' An infantry sergeant we interviewed illustrated this attitude, while displaying his misunderstanding of the time and effort that are required to change the behaviour of a male batterer.

I will go up through the chain of command! I will go up through the chain of command! I will tell him that prior. I'll say, 'Okay, I'll give you the help. We'll do this, that, and the other, and we'll see the social worker. But if I find out you're beating her up after this, disciplinary action will be taken, do you understand me? . . . Don't let me hear that you've touched her again or disciplinary action will be taken!' (Interview A46)

Some CF supervisors refuse to even listen to woman abuse perpetrators who approach them for help. The abused spouse of a member who was treated this way told us:

[My husband] went to his warrant and said to him, 'You know, I repeatedly hit my wife and I need help.' . . . He told the warrant that if he didn't get help I was leaving. He told the warrant that, you know, 'Things are bad –

things are really bad.' His warrant told him that if he caught him again, [he would] . . . reprimand him through the system . . . he threatened him. (Interview A15)

When asked why he did not seek assistance from his supervisor, a corporal who is a self-confessed woman abuse perpetrator replied:

The military don't want to hear your personal life. [It's] just the way they are. Like your daughter's sick or your wife is sick, they don't care. . . . Like, they just don't take your feelings into consideration . . . They look at production and looking good, and that's it. They don't look at the guys as individuals. You don't dare mention about it if you have administration problems or financial problems or some problems going at home . . . You can't, you would be shunned upon. (Interview A12)

One reason for this mindset is the hypermasculine<sup>18</sup> culture that generally exists within military organizations, and the consequent low priority assigned to 'feminine' social problems as legitimate topics of discussion (cf. Whitworth, 2004). Exemplifying this culture, a senior noncommissioned navy officer we interviewed informed us:

That's not our primary job, to be a social welfare state. Our job primarily is to go out there and fight – kill somebody, frankly. (Interview A57)

Since combat readiness is military organizations' crucial operational imperative, another reason is the fact that each commissioned and noncommissioned supervisor has been trained to focus almost exclusively on the goal of meeting his/her unit's share of the deployment quota for the upcoming overseas tour. A senior social work officer at DND told us that pre-deployment pressure on supervisors has grown in recent years as a result of the downsizing within the CF, coupled with the CF's increased participation in overseas missions.<sup>19</sup>

There is more of a pressure from higher above to say, 'Regiment number 103, you are scheduled to go – you have 630 people in your regiment – 630 people are scheduled to go to Bosnia in six months – all will go.' Now, there's a pressure for 630 members to go. That is a truth – that is a reality. (Interview A74)

The CF's stepped up operational tempo may partially explain supervisors' tendency to confine themselves to those social problems (e.g. alcoholism) which most conspicuously compromise a member's performance on the job.

In an organizational climate with these characteristics, leaders whose units appear to have a significant number of members with social problems risk being labelled as deficient. The commander of an army base told us what he

would do if he discovered that one of the units on his base contained a disproportionate percentage of woman abuse perpetrators.

Let's say you'd have data right now that would show me the unit – 25 percent, 10 percent, doesn't matter the percentage – according to you, [\_\_\_\_] military members abuse their spouses. I would be greatly alarmed. Let me tell you, I would go see that unit commanding officer right away and we'd try to find out what is the situation. It doesn't mean that guy is a failure as a leader, but he's got a problem right now. And if you tell me that he's in the infantry school – I always like to pick on the infantry – the others have 5 percent spouse abuse and the infantry school has 30 percent. Well, let me tell you, Lieutenant-Colonel is going to be here and he'll have to tell me a lot more than the little I know about this. What does he know? What are the major cases? What has he and his chain of command done so far? What additional help have they asked [for]? What is his plan of action to try to improve this situation? Absolutely! (Interview A65)

It follows that supervisors have career motives for keeping silent about their subordinates' difficulties. Along these lines, a senior noncommissioned infantry officer, whose subordinate had been arrested for throwing bottles at his girlfriend, confessed to us:

What we're going to do is charge him, which is not that bad – he'll just get what we call a minor charge; he'll go up in front of his OC.<sup>20</sup> . . . Would the anger management come? I don't think so, because . . . if we send him there, guess what, it's got to go through the chain of command. (Interview A45)

As a deputy provost-marshal<sup>21</sup> at DND summarized: 'The sergeant isn't going to report it to his regimental chain of command because he's rated, or his perception is he's rated, by how he solves problems' (Interview A72).

The upshot of these considerations appears to be that most CF supervisors refrain from putting the organization's alleged benevolent interventionism regarding members' woman abuse into practice. The actions of these supervisors reinforce the silent pact adhered to by CF woman abuse perpetrators and their peers. The silencing impact on economically and socially vulnerable abused spouses is even more profound. As one CF woman abuse survivor we interviewed put it: 'In the military you don't say anything because it's to get twice the blows. You get shunned from the other people. If you rat on somebody, you get shunned' (Interview A7). Additionally, spouses who might have gone to the aid of peer spouses who are being abused are usually prevented from doing so by their partners. One such spouse, whose peer spouse was beaten by her husband at a dinner party, recounted:

. . . something was not cooked right. I can't remember what it was, but he just hauled off and smacked her. . . . [And my husband said], 'You don't talk about what happened in there . . . Just don't say anything – it's like you didn't even see it.' (Interview A11)

According to our interviews, abused CF spouses sometimes do manage to help one another. However, they do so in ways that are small, and usually hidden from the perpetrator and the CF. Their gestures to one another include providing overnight accommodation, babysitting children, or just listening. As one survivor told us: 'If you know somebody is being abused in the military you can't tell anybody, but you go over and you say "Look, it will get better."' Speaking of a peer she had helped, she added:

I used to tell her . . . 'Get out of it,' and she said, 'I can't.' She was from [Province 1], they were both from [Province 1], and it's like, 'What am I going to do if I don't have it?' You know, like anybody would ask the same question. Like, 'What am I going to do if I don't have a husband and money?' So I took her in and she stayed with me for I think about a week. And . . . back she went home, you know, nobody any more the wiser. Like nobody knew. Nobody in charge knew. They never went for counselling. (Interview A7)

The covert nature of abused spouses' support systems reflects spouses' (unfortunately accurate) assessment of their powerless position in the military community (Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 74–6). It is structurally similar to the support evangelical Christian women quietly provide one another, in place of challenging the denial of family violence that is perpetuated by many church leaders (Nason-Clark, 1997).

In the minds of most members of the CF community, military hypervigilance threatens the woman abuse perpetrator with dire consequences, should his superiors discover his secret. While the flagrantly visible woman abuse perpetrator may be released because the CF have no interest in protecting him, it would appear that, for as long as possible, the majority of CF woman abuse secrets are kept. From the short term standpoint of the organization, everyone except the abused spouse seems to benefit: the unit's deployment quota is achieved; the supervisor's leadership appears exemplary; and his subordinate, the perpetrator, retains his job.

### **Military unit cohesion**

Unit cohesion, the second characteristic of military culture we identified, is a special form of primary group bonding which militaries foster within their small units to facilitate the fierce personal loyalties that are considered essential to surviving in combat. When present, unit cohesion is believed to minimize the possibility of any member deserting his unit while under fire, and to psychologically prepare members to die, when necessary, to save one another's lives (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994: 27–34; Grossman, 1995: 149–50; Morris, 1996: 691–8; Kier, 1999; Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 22–7). The greater part of unit cohesion loyalty is extended to the member's (and/or supervisor's) immediate

peers rather than to the military as a whole; sometimes it positively reinforces behaviours that conflict with official policy (Morgan, 1994; Winslow, 1998). Unit cohesion explains why military members engage in combat not for political ideologies or patriotism, but to protect the other members of their team – their buddies. As a retired CF member puts it: ‘A little private out in the trenches doesn’t know beans about why he is there, except he is there with his buddies and they will die for one another. It’s as simple as that’ (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994: 27). Although the unit cohesion ethos encompasses every military member to some extent, it operates most strongly in units whose members are trained for combat roles. A noncommissioned navy officer explains:

Everything I need is in the Armed Forces, therefore I think of nothing outside. I mean, your thinking is nothing else. . . . It’s the way we do things, it’s parades, it’s the Mess. It’s all done that way to make the bonding this closely. The higher the risk job, the greater the call for the bonding. (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994: 27–8)

According to military analyst LCol David Grossman, unit cohesion is as necessary a condition for killing in combat as it is for survival. Grossman theorizes that the cohesive combat unit breaks down each unit member’s resistance to killing by subjecting him to intense primary group pressure and at the same time absolving him from guilt; hence the soldier kills so as not to let down his comrades, and also because the presence of the group around him enables him to avoid assuming individual responsibility for his act (1995: 149–53). Applying the same principle more generally, the kind of primary group bonding that is found in cohesive combat units is believed to increase the probability that each unit member will commit acts which express the group’s shared ideologies, including some which are considered antisocial by military authorities and civilians (Morris, 1996: 690). Unit cohesion comprises a military ideology because cohesive units are believed by military organizations to be desirable. Military units also espouse specific ideologies (e.g., hypermasculinity) which they believe will strengthen their cohesiveness and sense of distinctiveness from the civilian world.

The unit cohesion behaviour which is most relevant to military organizations’ response to woman abuse is the tendency of members of a cohesive unit to cover up for each other’s rule-breaking and crimes (Bryant, 1979: 58). Since team work is considered essential to both unit cohesion and unit morale, teaching members to cover up for one another begins during basic training, where recruits learn that if one member of the platoon makes a mistake *everyone* will be punished. Each platoon member therefore comes to believe that he will serve his interests, the interests of his peers, and the group’s overall morale if he covers up for his peers’ errors. During basic training and long afterwards, covering up for peers’ deficiencies is believed to create solidarity,

contribute to combat readiness, and promote the kind of polished exterior appearance that is considered essential to the task of demoralizing an enemy (Harrison and Laliberté, 1994: 196).

Like the silent pact, discussed above, the *cover up ethos* of unit cohesion functions as an informal corrective to formal military hypervigilance. It is also a textual resource for military behaviour across multiple sites, socially accomplishing (or sustaining) military orderliness by withholding information, this time for the sake of an orderly cohesion and morale. Like the silent pact, the cover up ethos is not confined to behaviour among peers. Several of the supervisors we interviewed, notably noncommissioned supervisors, admitted to having helped their subordinates cover up woman abuse when they had believed that doing so would preserve some aspect of their unit's cohesion and morale. An infantry sergeant told us that if he did otherwise he would risk destroying the relationship of trust that existed between himself and his men. Citing a hypothetical instance, he said:

Private Bloggins comes in and says 'Sarg, I need help – I've been beating the wife up lately, can you help me? Can you get me some help?' 'Hold it right there, Corporal Bloggins – Warrant, get out here! I've got a wife abuser here!' Or, 'Just leave the room for a minute.' I call [the warrant] up and say 'Listen here, this guy just told me he beats up his wife on quite a regular basis, and he wants help!' Once it gets found out that I did that, no one is ever going to come to me again. And then it's gone completely underground. Do you know what I'm saying? (Interview A46)

An air element warrant officer in another province said something similar.

If you get to work with somebody for a period of time, you get to know them. If you work with them, or they work for you, or you work for them, it's a closely knit thing. So, anybody's having any problems, you sort of feel it or sense it, and then you try to get them to talk about it, or they talk about it voluntarily, and you're not in the position to do anything about it. . . . You're not going to rat on your friend. (Interview B12)

Under given circumstances, both these supervisors felt justified in refraining from passing information about their subordinates' social problems to their superiors in the chain of command, despite the fact that military hypervigilance required them to do so. They apparently believed that when the objectives of hypervigilance conflicted with the objectives of unit cohesion, the latter objectives should be given priority.

Although senior CF officers are generally considered to be better trained and more enlightened about social problems than their noncommissioned counterparts (Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 101), their subordinates' deviant behaviour is especially likely to be covered up, for reasons relating to cohesion and morale on a larger scale. Military organizations have an even stronger vested

interest in protecting an officer's public reputation than they have in covering up for a noncommissioned member. The organization's image in the civilian community is the obvious consideration; the crucial operational concern is the officer's image in the eyes of his subordinates. Military philosophy dictates that persons who give orders must appear infallible to their subordinates so that their orders will be obeyed. This socially constructed infallibility is considered essential to the maintenance of unit morale and to the prevention of outbreaks of mutiny. A senior CF officer explains:

It's very important that you have confidence in your superiors, because one day they may ask you to do something very dangerous. And we train for war, we don't train for peace. And so the whole thing, if you carry it far enough, it's all done because one day you're going to need to call on that trust and confidence in your people. (Harrison, 1999: 253–4)

Hence, while cohesion and morale considerations govern the covering up of deviant behaviour at all ranks, they appear to be operationally most urgent when it comes to covering up the deviant behaviour of officers. Officers' crimes are also easier to conceal than the crimes committed by noncommissioned members, because the higher the officer's rank the fewer the number of members exist who outrank him and need to be apprised of what he has done. In other words, many more superiors need to cooperate with a private who wants to keep his woman abuse hidden than with a perpetrator who is a lieutenant-colonel. A senior noncommissioned army officer described how the chain of command at his base covered up the fact that a major had assaulted a sergeant.

Every sergeant and warrant officer knew about it; I knew about it; I went forward with it to the chain of command, then the CO got hold of it, and he covered it up, 'cause he told me, he said, 'That's enough – you will not.' He says, 'It's in my hands,' and I said, 'Yes sir.' . . . Now [if] that would have been a sergeant grabbing a corporal, that sergeant would probably be in Edmonton right now, in [CF] prison.<sup>22</sup> But, see, that's the way that works. . . . They do look after one another. (Interview A45)

He added that most officers who become identified as woman abuse perpetrators are quietly transferred to a new location.

They wouldn't condone it, but they'd want to keep that hidden. Because then of course if it gets out to the press then it looks bad on the officer corps. And probably what you [would] find there, I would say from my experience, is [that] they [would] post him. (Interview A45)

A staff member of a women's shelter located close to an army base corroborated his account, adding that in her experience even some noncommissioned

perpetrators are transferred (Harrison *et al.*, 2002: 103). Whenever a perpetrator is posted to another Canadian province, the chances of his spouse obtaining a fair support and/or property settlement, in the event of a legal separation, diminish markedly.

Even woman abuse that has become public knowledge is an unpopular discussion topic on a CF base, because it is feared that such a discussion would spoil community cohesion generally. A chaplain we interviewed told us how he counselled woman abuse survivors in base communities that were geographically isolated.

When something like that would happen you'd say 'Oh gosh, you know, now don't be a troublemaker, dear – he only gets drunk on his birthday. It's going to ruin his career if this comes out.' So often times it's kind of suppressed, because you don't want it to ruin the group that's there. (Interview B13)

In a culture which holds cohesiveness in such extraordinary esteem, even spouses (including victims) are expected to uphold community morale. For this reason, spouses tend to close ranks around woman abuse perpetrators, and terminate their friendships with victims who have encouraged police to lay criminal charges, or otherwise 'gone public' about what occurred. Of the survivors we interviewed whose male partners had been charged by police, several reported having been ostracized by everyone on the base, including their friends amongst the other spouses. Most commonly, spouses of woman abuse perpetrators' peers had abruptly withdrawn their friendship. In a few instances, such as this paper's opening vignette about 'Fred,' spouses of the perpetrator's peers had provided the perpetrator with public support. Since the primary purpose of unit cohesion is the creation or maintenance of morale, an important unit cohesion practice is the assumption that, until the courts have found them guilty, military members who have been accused of crimes are considered innocent, and their accusers are not believed. Anticipation of being ostracized by their peers may be an additional reason that spouses who are being abused delay disclosing the abuse to other military spouses or police.

Like adhering to the silent pact, maintaining unit cohesion following a woman abuse incident benefits everyone in the short term except the abused spouse: the military organization retains its image; the unit members retain their cohesion and morale; and the perpetrator is protected (as much as possible) from being held accountable. In many instances the survivor separates from her military partner, but lacks the money to return to her original province, which may be on the other side of Canada. She therefore remains as an invisible presence close to, but estranged from, the community that until recently had been her home. A civilian family law lawyer who practises in such a community comments on the psychological damage that this former spouse typically sustains:

You accrue all these benefits as long as you stay in this construct, but as soon as you don't they go away . . . I think that really puts them in a vulnerable position . . . [The] best case scenario [is to] move out of there, pack up and go, get yourself out into another social world, and get yourself to a point where there is some sense of realism: that what you're entitled to is what you're entitled to. If he treated you really badly, [to] have that reinforced all the time. Whereas if you stay here it's not going to be reinforced. (Interview A60)

It is from this psychologically demoralized standpoint that the recently separated survivor is frequently forced to assert herself: to pursue assault charges, negotiate custody and access, and/or attempt to obtain her rightful share of the couple's joint assets. From a survivor's perspective, an important component of healing, following years of an abusive relationship, is having the reality that it *was* an abusive relationship validated by others. When institutional or community processes render the abuse invisible, neither the validation nor the healing can occur.

## Conclusion

CF supervisors typically intervene in their subordinates' woman abuse situations only minimally, despite military spouses' pronounced economic and social vulnerability, and the organization's stated 'zero tolerance' policy on family violence. Apart from the fact that these supervisors have received no training in woman abuse dynamics, two characteristics of military culture appear to shed some light on what goes on. First, military hypervigilance policy, which insists on COs knowing at all times 'who is deployable,' is identified exclusively as potential punishment in the minds of most military members and, from a slightly different standpoint, their supervisors. Military hypervigilance consequently brings into being the paradoxical counterweight of an organization-wide informal silent pact regarding negative information about members that would be of interest to the senior chain of command. Second, unit cohesion, perhaps the keynote operational reference point for military members, complements the silent pact by legitimating morale-related cover-ups, and collective denials, of peers' (and subordinates') misdemeanours and crimes. In IE terms, the silent pact and the cover up ethos function as *texts*, as reference points for community members' behaviour that organize responses to social problems at multiple levels of the military hierarchy, in order to accomplish, reinforce, and protect the appearance of combat readiness. The silencing of abused women is accomplished at the same time.

The silent pact, unit cohesion, military spouses' economic and social vulnerability, and their de facto dependence on military supervisors' largesse, are aspects of military organization and military culture which compromise the abused spouse's preparedness for the risks involved in reporting the abuse,

pursuing assault charges, leaving her relationship, or doing anything other than cooperating with her partner to keep the abuse hidden. For these and other reasons, women who live with male military members are more vulnerable to victimization by woman abuse than most women liaised with civilians.<sup>23</sup> As noted earlier, various UN conventions and declarations obligate nation states to protect women from torture and ill treatment. The fact that most (if not all) militaries conspicuously fail to fulfil this obligation makes them organizational enablers of woman abuse, and puts them in violation of international human rights law (Amnesty International, 2001a, 2001b, 2004; Harrison *et al.*, 2002).

The impact of 9/11 and its aftermath has exacerbated the problems of woman abuse survivors in military communities. The current situations in Afghanistan and Iraq have stepped up the operational tempo of most Western militaries, a fact which is cause for concern, given the number of U.S. studies which indicate that woman abuse in military families usually escalates during periods immediately following deployed members' return home (Laufer and Gallops, 1985; Solomon, 1988; Jordan *et al.*, 1992; Gimbel and Booth, 1994; Byrne and Riggs, 1996; Riggs *et al.*, 1998; McCarroll *et al.*, 2000). In the U.S., the number of women abused by their male military partners who contacted the Miles Foundation between August 2002 and February 2004 was double the number who had contacted them during the 18 month period prior to 9/11.<sup>24</sup> During one six week period in 2002, four soldiers stationed at the same U.S. base (Fort Bragg, North Carolina) murdered their wives. Three of the four had just returned from their deployment to Afghanistan (Jonsson 2002). For several weeks following the killings, family support organizations at Fort Bragg received anxious calls from spouses of other soldiers whose violence had worsened since they had returned from the same deployment (Biank, 2002).

Despite the fact that military woman abuse has increased since 9/11, even less is being done about it. Speaking from her experience in Israel, Madelaine Adelman (2003) recently theorized that whenever a nation manages to convince its citizens that they are collectively at risk of violence, public sympathy evaporates for victims of individual forms of violence, such as domestic violence, especially when the perpetrators of the individual violence are the persons who have been entrusted with the responsibility of 'protecting the homeland.' Recent events in the U.S. and Canada bear her observation out. In the U.S., almost immediately after 9/11, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld cancelled a training initiative on family violence that he had previously planned for all U.S. military police.<sup>25</sup> In 2005, the Canadian Department of National Defence declined to participate in a woman abuse training program for military and law enforcement supervisory personnel, which would have addressed some of the sociocultural issues discussed in this paper, and been financially underwritten by the Community Safety and Partnerships branch of the new Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness federal ministry.<sup>26</sup> The CF have generally become less publicly accountable for their treatment of vulnerable civilians than they were during the mid-1990s, shortly after members

of the now-disbanded Canadian Airborne Regiment (the regiment mentioned in this paper's opening paragraph) had horrified Canadians by torturing a teenager to death during a peacekeeping mission in Somalia (Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia 1997). Since September 11, 2001, Canadian public discourse has shifted from problems of CF culture to problems of CF resources, from how the CF treat women, gays, and citizens of Third World countries to whether the CF will be allocated sufficient tanks and helicopters to shoulder their share of the burden of the 'War on Terrorism.' In North America and elsewhere, it will likely be some time before woman abuse and other forms of military violence against women regain even the visibility and public condemnation they enjoyed during the final decade of the last century.

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Received 29 June 2004  
Finally accepted 22 July 2005

## Notes

- 1 I would like to acknowledge the contributions to this paper of Marlene Bertrand, Elizabeth Blaney, Stephanie Bruce, Karen Davis, Jean Louis Deveau, Jerry Deveau, Gaila Friars, Joan Hanley, Christine Hansen, Marianne Hester, Paul Higate, Ann Koller, Michelle LaFrance, Lucie Laliberté, Linda Neilson, Leora Rosen, Walter Schenkel, Jane Ursel, Rosemary Deem, and the anonymous reviewers.
- 2 Since the passage of the Children Act of 1989 in the U.K., the word 'residence' has replaced 'custody' in texts referring to the guardianship of children. See Hester 2002.
- 3 Given the institution which is the subject of this paper, I consider it appropriate to use the feminist term, woman abuse, and the definition: physical, sexual, psychological, and/or economic suffering inflicted on a woman by her current or former male intimate partner.
- 4 By the term 'marriage' (or 'wife,' 'husband,' or 'spouse'), I also mean commonlaw partner.
- 5 For an excellent analysis of the human rights violations committed by family court officials, see Cuthbert *et al.*, 2002.
- 6 Team members were Beverley Bailey, Marlene Bertrand, Elizabeth Blaney, Chantal Bourassa, Jerry Deveau, Penny Ericson, Gaila Friars, Kelly Gorkoff, Joan Hanley, Deborah Harrison, Ann Koller, Sharon Kuropatwa, Michelle LaFrance, Lucie Laliberté, Francine Langlais, Eric Linden, Henry Matheson, Mary Jean Merry, Kathy Phillips, Jurden Rice, Beatriz Sainz, and Jane Ursel. The project was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and Status of Women Canada. Our organizational partners were River Valley Health Corporation in New Brunswick and the Family Violence Prevention Branch of the Province of Manitoba.
- 7 Each element of the Canadian Forces – land, sea, and air – reports to a separate chain of command.
- 8 The *Plan*, which has been an evolving document since June 2000, contains a response to each of the *Report's* 51 recommendations. It can be found on the website [http://www.forces.ca/hr/qol/pdf/FVAP\\_e.pdf](http://www.forces.ca/hr/qol/pdf/FVAP_e.pdf). The team's *Report* can be found at website <http://www.unbf.ca/arts/CFVR/publications-research-team.php>.
- 9 Respectively comprising land and air elements (New Brunswick), sea and air (Nova Scotia), and land and air (Manitoba).
- 10 As of January 30, 2005. Retrieved from Canadian Defence Information.htm, 2005.
- 11 As of January 30, 2005. Retrieved from Canadian Defence Information.htm, 2005.

- 12 Private and corporal are the lowest noncommissioned land and air element ranks (navy equivalents are able seaman and leading seaman). Senior noncommissioned members (warrant officer and above) are regarded as noncommissioned officers. Officers (second lieutenant and above) comprise the commissioned ranks.
- 13 As of September 27, 2001. Figures provided by Department of National Defence Director General, Military Human Resources Policy and Planning.
- 14 As of January 30, 2005. Retrieved from Canadian Defence Information.htm, 2005.
- 15 Most sea element members of the CF are geographically relocated far less frequently than members of the land and air elements, but spend about six months of each year at sea.
- 16 In the U.K., separated spouses are also evicted from military housing, but are given 93 days to vacate. See Euler and Welzer-Lang, 2000.
- 17 For North American research on the (low) percentages of woman abuse assaults that result in calls to police, calls to police that result in charges, and charges that proceed to prosecution, see Johnson, 1996; Rigakos, 1998; Hannah-Moffatt, 1995; Worden, 2000; Ursel, 2002; and Davis, Smith and Nickles, 1998.
- 18 Often referred to as *hegemonic masculinity*. For definitions of hegemonic masculinity, and discussions of its applicability to military settings, see Connell, 1987, 1995; Messerschmidt, 1993; Morgan, 1994; Barrett, 1996; and Schwartz and DeKeseredy, 1997.
- 19 Whereas CF members were deployed on 25 peacekeeping missions between 1948 and 1989, they were deployed on 65 missions between 1989 and 2001 alone (Department of National Defence Canada, 2000a).
- 20 Officer who is responsible for discipline, and reports directly to the Commanding Officer.
- 21 The most senior member of the CF's military police branch.
- 22 Canadian Forces Service Prison and Detention Barracks.
- 23 Additionally, military woman abusers are trained in control, violence, and the use of weapons, and some military subcultures actively denigrate women and provide peer support to men who abuse them.
- 24 The Miles Foundation, located in Newtown Connecticut, is an independently funded advocacy organization for victims of violence in U.S. military communities. The 2002–04 number of women callers was 1,973, as compared with around 1,000 during recent previous 18-month periods. Source: Miles Foundation Executive Director's statement to the press conference inaugurating Amnesty International U.S.A.'s two-year campaign to eradicate military violence against women, National Press Club, Washington DC, March 5, 2004.
- 25 Personal communication from Christine Hansen, Miles Foundation Inc., March 5, 2004.
- 26 Letter to the Director of the Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research, University of New Brunswick, from the Assistant Deputy Minister (Human Resources – Military), Department of National Defence Canada, May 2, 2005. The training program had comprised one of the recommendations of our research team's *Report*.

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