

**THE EXPERIENCE OF COMBINING  
MOTHERHOOD WITH CAREER FOR  
MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE**

**By**

**SHELLEY L. GOODWIN**

**B.A. Acadia University, 1984  
Certificate of Social Work University of Waterloo, 1991**

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Department of Education + Counselling Psychology + Special Education

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date Aug 3/99.

### **Abstract**

While women have been police officers for over 100 years, women were not permitted into the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) until 1974. Past research focused on women's abilities to perform policing duties. As a result there is minimal research available which focuses on how women police officers combine their policing career and motherhood roles. This phenomenological study was conducted to explore the experiences of six female regular members of the RCMP who have combined career and motherhood roles. Using Colaizzi's (1978) method of phenomenological analysis was used to analyze the transcriptions of the in-depth, tape-recorded interviews. Results of the analysis yielded five themes: 1) perceived need to prove themselves again in the Force; 2) sense of isolation; 3) sense of shift of priorities; 4) sense of restricted choices and opportunities; and 5) struggle to redefine self. Validation interviews were conducted to ensure the themes accurately reflected the womens' experiences of combining their career and motherhood roles. Implications for future research are discussed and suggestions for counselling female members of the RCMP who are combining career and motherhood roles are suggested.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background to the Research**

In the past four decades the number of women in the workforce has dramatically increased (Mandelson, 1997; Ministry of Women's Equality, 1993). As a result of this change in workforce participation, women are now working in and outside their homes and are often tasked with multiple jobs and roles. Given that it has been suggested by Tiedje, Wortman, Downey, Emmons, Biernat, and Lang (1990) and several others (eg. DeMeis & Perkins, 1996; Swiss & Walker, 1993) that role demands are infinite, and the energies of individuals are finite, it becomes important to look at these role demands and how these demands relate to, and impact on, women's career and family aspirations. These role demands, which range from managing household responsibilities, child care, children's extra curricular activities, professional obligations, and volunteer commitments, are often demanding and conflicting. Choosing between them can be very difficult (Apter, 1993; Bergum, 1989; Wilk, 1986). As a result of women's increased participation in the work force, social scientists have become interested in the repercussions of these changes. This has resulted in studies which have increased the awareness of the social implications of combining work and family roles for women and their families (Tiedje et al., 1990; Tingey, Kiger, & Riley, 1996).

Numerous studies have been conducted which look at the possible effects of a woman's employment, including its impact on her children and the possible

stresses and difficulties which arise between partners (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1983; Gray, 1983; Tiedje et al., 1990; Tingey et al., 1996). The interest in this social research area has generated a considerable amount of information, however, there are still areas in which information is lacking, including the area which involves nontraditional careers for women. Nontraditional careers are those careers from which women have been previously excluded, including medical doctor, executive positions in large corporations, engineering, firefighting, policing and the military (Cleveland, 1997). Women have only recently begun to be employed in these areas in significant numbers, and as a result the number of women currently in these professions is reflective of this recent transition. It was the purpose of this study to focus on these issues. This study looked at the female police officer in the RCMP and how their professional and maternal desires may impact and cause conflict in their lives.

Unfortunately, as more women now choose to pursue these nontraditional careers, they may be confronted by male dominance, and discriminating attitudes from the public, their peers, their supervisors, and the management in these fields, thus making it more difficult to combine the role of mother with their roles as RCMP officers. This seems more prevalent in occupations which support the stereotypical male characteristics of bravery, courage and physical strength as an intrinsic component of the job description (Bureau of National Affairs (BNA), cited in Jones, 1995; Jones, 1986). Police officers, military personnel, and firefighters are several of these professions which appear to support and reinforce

stereotypical male characteristics (Jones, 1995; Kralovansky-Wahl & Randal, 1996; Paul, 1998). The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is an organization which can be said to encompass two of these professions.

### **Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

The RCMP is a police force which has a strong military influence and considers itself to be paramilitary. Paramilitary refers to the military beginnings and traditions from which the RCMP emerged as well as the present day structure it currently operates under. While the RCMP was initiated by Canadian Prime Minister Sir John A. MacDonald, in an attempt to ensure "that the law would precede the influx of settlers into the territories that Canada had acquired from the Hudson Bay Company" (Lotz, 1984, pp. 19), its beginnings are steeped in British military tradition including discipline procedures, uniforms and rank structure. Members played valuable roles during both World Wars, as they joined the army, Navy and Air Force, as well as several Provost regiments (Lotz). Currently, the military rank structure and uniforms exist. However, the present day RCMP act solely as a police force and is not part of the Canadian Armed Forces but continues to remain affiliated.

The designation of 'regular member' is given to an employee of the RCMP who has completed police officer training at 'Depot' division in Regina, Saskatchewan. Women have been regular members in the RCMP since 1974. Prior to this date, they only held positions as matrons and civilian employees. In 1993, 9% of the force were female regular members (Royal Canadian Mounted Police,



1993) and in 1996, the number increased marginally to 11.9% (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1996). The most recent 1997 statistics available show only a minimal increase to 12.3% (McGilvery, 1997). Given the increased emphasis placed on recruiting women (McManus, 1988), it is surprising and discouraging to note only a 3.3 % increase over four years.

In a police force which has more than 15,000 police officers (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1996), having less than 2000 female police officers is disappointing and raises questions. The RCMP has been attempting to encourage and promote women officers for the past decade (McManus, 1988). Why are there still so few women in the RCMP? One of the reasons appears to be an attrition rate which is considerably higher for female and ethnic members, specifically First Nations members (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 1993; 1996). Why is this occurring? What factors are associated with these members leaving the security of a financially stable job with excellent benefits? Perhaps women find it particularly difficult to combine their work roles and domestic roles within this stereotypical masculine police culture. Interestingly, in an effort to learn the reasons for First Nations members leaving the Force prior to retirement, the RCMP is presently compiling an exit questionnaire for First Nations members only. This raises the question as to why they are not implementing it for all exiting members, including women. Are they responding and focussing their attention on the present publicity of having ethnic police officers policing their own people and placing women's issues further back on the priority list. Does the RCMP see women's

issues as a current concern or do they feel that they have fully integrated women into their police service? It would appear from the current data that women's concerns are not a high priority with the management of the RCMP. These statistics may also indicate that women police officers in the RCMP, who experience difficulty with their professional and maternal roles, do not find support, from within the RCMP, during these difficulties and as such may see leaving the police force as an option. This raises questions as to the environment within the RCMP and the value management places on their employees and subsequently their coworkers.

### **The Police Culture**

In order to understand women's experience of combining motherhood and career aspirations in the RCMP, an understanding of the police environment and the police culture is needed. Police, including the RCMP, have held a unique position in our society. It is this unique position and its implications that are important to understand when looking at women's experience, including fulfilling career and family aspirations, within the police service. Police officers are entrusted to maintain public safety and to maintain impartiality while bringing justice to those who do not keep the peace. This has been the primary task for police departments in Canada. While this has been the RCMP's primary focus for the past 125 years, the public, who the RCMP serve, has had a keen interest and focus on the activities of the police service.

This intrigue with the police environment and culture is encouraged by the

air of secrecy and exclusivity which surrounds the 'police universe'. This exclusivity is encouraged within each department, including the RCMP, as the following indicates:

From its beginnings, the Force favoured the British tradition of understatement. An order posted at Fort Macleod in 1875 set the tone of its public information efforts: 'Nothing concerning the Force or the business of the Force to be in any way discussed with outsiders.' ..... this policy ..... earned the RCMP the name 'The Silent Force.' (Lotz, 1984, p 8).

This silence has promoted secrecy within the RCMP but it has also served to keep the public at a distance. In the past, the public were more accepting of this. However, today access to information has encourages the inquiring public to demand more information and requires the RCMP, who are in part a public servant, to be more accountable for their actions. In this current atmosphere, police officers are having to appear more community friendly and open, yet the training of their past has indoctrinated them to trust only their peers.

This information is important to understand when attempting to comprehend the seclusion a female police officers may experience within her working environment. She may find it difficult to trust, not only those who she works with given the male dominated field she is in, but also those who may want to befriend her in the public domain. While most will truly want her friendship, others will want it because of the affiliation it will bring to them because of her

position as a police officer (Black, 1997; Kirschman, 1997). This may leave the officer feeling as though she can trust no one. In the case of women, who are mothers in the RCMP, they may feel isolated and unsupported while they attempt to combine motherhood and career aspirations. Often during this time women, who are mothering, are supported by other mothers, or peers, at similar parenting stages. They may be surrounded by peers and coworkers, yet they may feel very alone. This sense of isolation can be very difficult for women as their personal and professional environments do not support their life choices.

The RCMP promotes '*esprit du corps*' as the bond which binds all members together-it is the members' motto. Translated literally, it means 'spirit of the body'. However, in practice "the aim ..... is to impress on those who join it that the organization is more important than the individuals who comprise it" (Lotz, 1984 p. 11) . The member's troop consists of 32 individuals, who they initially train with at Depot. It is here that the member experiences the comradeship of being a part of the troop and thus, the *esprit du corps*. Upon graduation the concept is expanded to include all members, Force wide. Each member becomes aware they are expected to 'protect and watch each others back.' It is believed that they must 'protect their own', which implies that others, outside of the Force cannot be trusted with this same task (Clark, 1995). This exclusivity was also noted in the MacDonald Royal Commission, which in 1977 began to look into the excesses of the RCMP. In its' report it stated: " The RCMP through its recruiting, training and management practices, engulfs its members in

an ethos akin to that found in a monastery or a religious order” (Lotz, p.11).

This environment in which the RCMP train their members is important to understand when attempting to comprehend the experience of being a female police officer within the RCMP. As well, it may serve as a distinction between the RCMP and other police forces, who hire their officers from various police academies throughout the Country.

Dunham and Alpert (1989) have theorized that the police have a culture unique to themselves. The police culture is a reflection of the beliefs of that organization and these are reflected in the department’s recruiting, policies, and training. Burke (1992) identifies several attributes which are unique to the police culture which may impact women who chose to pursue a career as a police officer. These include conservatism, machismo, and pragmatism. Police officers tend to be more conservative than the general public. While this can be seen as positive in some instances, it can also translate into closed-mindedness and traditionalistic views regarding recruitment, hiring, and promoting of women, who may be seen as physically weaker and less aggressive in their approach (Jones, 1995).

Machismo is seen as a trait characteristic of many male police officers. In a profession, which is presently predominantly male and where mental and physical assertiveness is viewed as an integral component to being competent, it is not surprising that masculinity is highly valued. It would then be easy to speculate how this impacts the male officers’ opinions of female officers (Jones, 1995).

Generally, police officers tend to be very practical and functional. However,

because of the nature of the work, officers are generally less willing to work with a female partner because they expect that their safety may be jeopardized. These attributes may make it very difficult for women to join the rank and file of the police organization and feel as if they are part of the team. This feeling of being on the outside may permeate their lives as they attempt to negotiate their career roles, and promotional aspirations, simultaneously with their social, partnered and parental roles (Jones, 1995; Kirschman, 1997).

The woman, who is typically viewed in our society and in traditional relationships as the person who should assume the traditional caretaking role of children and household responsibilities, is often placed in a position in which she must choose between her roles of professional and mother. These compromises not only affect her career and home life, but also her self esteem and sense of personal worth (Cheal, 1997; Darley, 1973; Swiss & Walker, 1993). Thus, the decision of parenthood is not just a decision about having a family but one that involves many different facets, which impact the woman's view of herself. If the woman is in a nontraditional profession, such as policing, this provides another facet to be considered when making this very important life changing decision.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Despite the increased interest in women's experience in nontraditional careers (Apter, 1993; Brown & Neville, 1996; Lunneborg, 1989) research which looks at female regular members in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who are partnered, is minimal. The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of

the female members experience of choosing to combine motherhood with their careers in the RCMP. The research question directing this investigation was: **What is the experience and meaning of combining motherhood and career for women who are regular members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?**

I attempted to gain an understanding of the women's experience of choosing to combine motherhood with their role as members of the RCMP using a qualitative, phenomenological approach. Emphasis was placed on understanding how the occupational context of the women's lives shapes the timing and nature of their reproductive choices. In particular, I hoped to stay attuned to the role of police culture and environment, and the women's career aspirations and potential role conflicts in the parenthood choices of these women. It was my goal through this study to increase awareness of the experiences of female RCMP officers as they attempt to balance their career and parenting aspirations/desires.

As previously noted, research which looks at the career and parenting experiences of female police officers is minimal. This study therefore, was intended to add to the limited amount of research available on police women who chose to combine motherhood and careers in the RCMP. Phenomenological research looks at themes that emerge from individuals' experiences (Osborne, 1990). What has been the experience of one individual may suggest that others will have the same or similar experience. It was hoped that by studying this phenomenon, other women police officers who are considering the feasibility of combining these roles can gain from this study.

In the past, police officers collectively have been reluctant to seek help from the counselling profession (Jones, 1995). However, there are indications that this is changing (Loo, 1986). As more police women feel comfortable seeking help from the counselling profession, it is hoped this research will provide counselling psychologists with information regarding the phenomenon of choosing to combine motherhood and work roles for women in the policing environment. Furthermore, as research indicates, family role conflict can impact attrition and job satisfaction for women in other professions (Gerson, 1985; Swiss and Walker, 1993). It is important for police agencies to have access to this type of information, if they are to realize their goal of recruiting and keeping more women in the RCMP.

In summary, the concept of women in the work force has changed. No longer are women restricted to certain employment opportunities as a result of their gender. With the transition from traditional to nontraditional employment, role conflicts have emerged. Women, who are employed in nontraditional occupation such as police officers in the RCMP, face these role conflicts when they are confronted with attempting to combine parenthood with their career aspirations. The purpose of this research was to attempt to develop an understanding of these female members by reviewing the current literature and by examining the lived experiences and meaning of the women who are police officers in the RCMP who have made the decision to become mothers.



## Chapter II

### Literature Review

This literature review summarizes and synthesizes the major issues relating to working women's role conflict and parenthood decision making. Specific emphasis has been placed on women police officers where research was available. This review includes published articles, books and empirical studies as well as personal communications with female members. In attempting to understand the female regular member's experience of combining motherhood with their careers, the literature review is divided into the following areas to provide a foundation for this study: (a) parenthood decision making, (b) *policewoman* vs *police woman*, (c) women's work commitment and, (d) structural and social support.

#### Parenthood Decision Making

While there is no research which specifically looks at police officers who have made this decision, there is considerable research which looks at the decision making process women go through when deciding whether or not to have children (Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Daniluk & Herman, 1984; Feldman, 1981; Hertz, 1986; Ory, 1978). For professional women who are thinking of starting a family, the decision to have a child is often pitted against the decision to rise within their chosen career area. Women have spent an incredible amount of time, energy, and personal sacrifice attempting to reach true integration in the workplace (Ministry of Women's Equality, 1993; Swiss & Walker, 1993). However, for reasons often out of their control, such as social beliefs, job requirements, and family

expectations, they have been unable to escape the role conflict between being a mother and a professional. The woman bears the responsibility of reproduction and is the one, in our North American culture, who is expected to be responsible for child care. As such, the decision to parent is often one which necessitates a comprehensive evaluation of what the woman wants and of her expectations for the future.

Gottfredson (1981), a career theorist, proposes a theoretical perspective of role conflict, and the resulting compromise. She views this compromise as a normal part of adult life. Furthermore, she states that individuals, male and female, will make their own boundaries or tolerable limits of what constitutes an acceptable job based not only on their individual evaluation of the level and field of work, but also on the perception of the sex type of the occupation. She indicates that people may compromise career aspirations as a result of the choices they must make in other areas of their lives.

In an attempt to understand this process, Gerson (1985) conducted a qualitative study in which she completed in-depth interviews with 63 women, who were between 27 and 37 years of age. In this study, Gerson looked at the difficult choices women face when making decisions about motherhood and career. Gerson found the women in her study held an intrinsic belief that one could not be a good mother and have a successful career. For most, it was an either/or choice in which they felt they needed to choose between having children or having a career. Of interest, 23 percent of the participants in this study decided against having children

and chose to remain childless, thus choosing career aspirations over motherhood.

In an attempt to understand the childbearing decision making process of dual career couples, Wilk (1986) conducted a qualitative study in which she interviewed 24 white, middle class, childless, career women, ranging from 27 to 35 years of age. The participants were divided into 3 groups: women who were ambivalent about parenthood, women who had decided they were going to have children, and women who had decided to remain childless. Wilk identified two aspects of professional life that had a negative impact on the women in her study. First, the women received contradictory messages from their employers regarding child related time off. Women felt confused by the message of "have children and be a 'real' women vs. stay in your career and be a real professional" (Wilk, 1986, p. 288). Wilk suggested that organizations will need to address this contradiction by developing policies which facilitate women to experience both parenthood and fulfilment of career aspirations. Secondly, she identified the lack of female mentors - women, who had successfully combined parenthood and professional life and obtained a high level of satisfaction in both domains.

In a quantitative study of 120 women, aged 23 to 78, who made a decision to remain childless, Veevers's (1980) identified that a significant number of women in her study were childless as a result of postponing the parenthood decision. Women in this study felt that with the decision to have a family came the decision to forego the opportunity to have a career and vice versa. This concurs with the either/or perceptions expressed by the women in Gerson's study (1985). Of

interest, participants in this study who remained childless noted their awareness of going against the cultural norms of women having children.

Swiss and Walker (1993) conducted a quantitative study which consisted of 902 questionnaires and 52 in-depth interviews with women who had graduated from Harvard Law, Business, and Medical schools. In this study the researchers looked at several issues including the myth of 'being able to have it all', which they refer to as 'the myth of Superwoman'. As well, they looked at the decision making process associated with parenthood for career women. They chose Harvard graduates as the researchers believed that these women were "some of the 'best and the brightest' " (p. 4). While many of these women believed they could have it all, few managed to maintain and keep both their career and motherhood roles. Similar to Veevers (1980) findings related to women who postpone the decision to mother, Swiss and Walker also noted that some women who postponed having children in order to promote their careers, found themselves childless. They termed this 'the biological penalty', which refers to the reduced incidence of pregnancy as the woman ages. It appears many women view parenthood and career fulfillment as dichotomous choices - to choose one means the exclusion of the other. Choosing career fulfillment over motherhood, or trying to combine both, places them in a position of going against cultural expectations.

Furthermore, these findings indicate that women put a great deal of effort, thought, and sacrifice into their parenting decisions. Many women have chosen to forego career aspirations, to go against social expectations, and to struggle in an

attempt to blend both aspirations. If they decide to blend both roles, the extra responsibilities that these women carry can be stressful and a significant burden if they are trying to find an equilibrium in their multiple roles (DeMeis & Perkins, 1996; Kralovansky-Wahl & Randal, 1996; Tingey et al., 1996). Thus, indicating the desire, which Swiss and Walker (1993) refer to as the myth of Superwoman; the woman who 'has it all', is often difficult to obtain and does not come without making sacrifices and choices in their personal and professional roles (Apter, 1993; DeMeis & Perkin, 1996; Jackson, 1997; Levinson, 1996; Swiss & Walker, 1993). It is suggested women police officers in the RCMP, struggling to blend both career and personal aspirations, also encounter these sacrifices and choices.

### **Policewoman vs. Policewoman**

Martin (1979; 1980) was one of the first to highlight the role dilemma of female police officers. In her participant observation and qualitative study of 28 female and 27 male police officers in a district of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. she looked at the conflicts between sex role norms and occupational norms that police women face in that department. On the basis of her findings she identified what she called the *policewomen* and *policewomen* dilemma. She describes *Policewomen* as those officers who strive to be accepted by the department. They are ambitious, self confident, do not feel the job threatens their femininity, and often are looking for promotion opportunities. *Policewomen*, however, are less interested in promotion, may see the job as a pay

cheque, may feel the job threatens their femininity, and may not like the patrol duties but may enjoy the helping component of the job. Police women are faced with a difficult choice as to which role they will assume.

They face performance pressures, isolation from coworkers, tests of loyalty, entrapment in stereotypic roles. Expected to outperform others, closely watched for any sign of weakness yet pressured at the same time to conform to typically feminine behaviour, and punished with such labels as "bitch" and "lesbian" for failure to act in stereotypic ways (p. 322).

While this distinction between *policewoman* and *policewoman* may appear to require choosing between one extreme role or the other, Martin views this decision as a continuum on which most female officers are somewhere in between the two extremes.

In his view of women's transition into policing, Hochstedler (1983), who studied police officer role conflict but did not conduct original research, describes the role dilemma as one of 'defeminized' policewoman versus 'deprofessionalized' policewoman. While using different terms than Martin (1979; 1980) he comes to strikingly similar conclusions. He defines 'deprofessionalized' police women as those officers who, by assuming traditional feminine roles (nurturing, and care taking), pose no threat to their male counterparts. However, by conducting themselves in this manner, the women limit their chances of better assignments and promotions. In order to be seen by the police department as suitable and deserving of a promotion, female officers must abandon traditionally feminine roles

and become more assertive, thus they are viewed as 'defeminized'. This choice carries additional problems. 'Defeminized' policewomen are viewed as a threat by male police officers who are looking for promotions. As well, and 'defeminized policewomen' often fall victim to male officers characterizing them as 'lesbians' and 'bitches'.

The role women chose may also cause conflict with their other social roles such as wife and mother. Women may find it difficult to act tough and 'non-feminine' on the job and then turn that role off at the end of shift. If women chose to have families and place their family above their job, they are viewed as deprofessionalized and as *policewomen*. However, if they fail to place their family as a priority, they may be viewed as defeminized and as *policewomen*. This may well causes difficulty for women who wish to be both *policewomen* and *policewomen* (Hochstedler, 1983; Martin, 1979). Of interest, one policewoman in Martin's study noted: "If you want to be treated like a Barbie doll, you will be. If you demand to do the job and be treated with respect, they may test you and laugh at you, but eventually you'll gain respect" (p. 317). This statement is significant as it indicates that women who chose to work hard, will eventually gain the respect they deserve. However, this respect appears to be gained at a price; perhaps at the price of rejecting more traditionally feminine roles such as that of mother.

The Bureau of National Affairs (BNA) published the Challenge of Diversity Report in 1990. This is a government report on the status of minorities, including women, in the United States. It states that assertive women are seen as too

aggressive and women who exhibit stereotypical female behaviour are viewed as too weak (BNA, cited in Jones, 1995). Women in police work are challenged with an environment which is predominantly male and where bravery, courage, aggressiveness and physical strength are seen as ideal characteristics (Jones, 1995; Jones, 1986). To respond in a manner that is viewed as ideal in the police culture, women are placed at risk of being viewed as aggressive. Yet if they do not, they may be viewed as too weak. It seems a difficult line to walk.

Frequently changing shifts (which can cause difficulty in finding suitable child care), frequent court appearances, and delayed shift endings (due to serious incidences happening at shift change) are all strains that may increase policewomen's role conflict. Policewomen who chose to work permanent day shifts, and refuse overtime and job rotations because of conflicts with child care, often experience adverse effect. Supervisors and male peers see this as a lack of commitment to the job and "therefore are unwilling to support or sponsor them" (Martin, 1980, p. 201). In most police departments, including the RCMP, it is necessary to 'do the extra' or do the less desirable duties in order to be promoted. These extras often require flexibility with the police officer's home life. This does not often fit well with childcare responsibilities. According to Martin, those officers who chose family commitments are often placed at the bottom of the list for promotions.

Policewomen who desire to raise a family and actively pursue their careers, fall somewhere between the two extremes of *policewoman* and *policewoman*



(Heidensohn, 1992). However, they often feel internal conflict regarding which comes first, police work or family responsibility. For some women the choice is made for them by the department, as they chose other officers for advancement who may appear, by the departments definition, to be more committed to the job. "Women are denied promotions because of family responsibilities" (BNA, cited in Jones, 1995, p. 229). Thus, it can be inferred that if policewomen are considering career advances, having a family will likely impede their chances of obtaining a more desirable position or promotion. The cost of choosing to become a mother then, may well be a stalled career.

One past female member of the RCMP cites her transfer from a specialized, and very desirable unit, to general duty (patrol) upon her return from maternity leave as an example of such impediments (Hynes, 1997). Her supervisor stated that they were concerned she could not commit the necessary time to her job now that she was a mother. She was not consulted prior to this decision being made. She was called at home just prior to her return date and advised she had been transferred. Of interest, the RCMP's highest ranking female officer is recently promoted Assistant Commissioner Beverly Busson. Assist/Comm. Busson is only recently married and has 2 step children (Jones, 1998). This suggests that if women wish to advance in the RCMP, having children or at least placing family as a priority would not be advantageous to advancing her career.

Another consideration for some women considering having children, including policewomen, is the idea of being pregnant. This can be very intimidating

and scary because of the sense of being unable to control what their body is doing. These feelings of loss of control pertain to weight gain, body image, restriction of activities, as well as the birthing process (Bombardieri, 1981; Whelan, 1980). In an occupation which emphasizes being physically fit (Charles, 1982), the idea of gaining weight and then feeling the pressure to return to work and fit into the pre-pregnancy uniform can be very stressful. For those women who have attempted to downplay their femininity in order to 'fit into the job', the idea of receiving special attention in the form of a light duty assignment during pregnancy can be very uncomfortable. It forces the woman to begin to ask for concessions, something she may have resisted in the past because of not wanting to appear, in Hochstedler's (1983) terms, 'deprofessionalized'. It can be suggested that this physical condition she now finds herself in, would heighten the discomfort she may already be experiencing in a work environment which views physical strength, aggressiveness, and bravery as ideal characteristics (BNA, cited in Jones, 1995).

Within the RCMP, the leave policy is comprehensive and may be considered generous by some. Upon the birth of their child, members (male and female) are entitled to a leave at 97% of their salary, for a total of six months (RCMP, 1997). These monies are cost shared between the RCMP and the Employment Insurance Benefits package. Members are also entitled to another three months of leave at reduced benefits. As well, any member is entitled to a 5-year leave of absence for child care, however, this is without pay. Members are entitled to five days of special leave which they can utilize throughout the year.

This leave can be used for many things including child care needs and doctor's appointments.

While these benefits are considerable, they do not address the need for child care support or the role conflict of women and the negative impact having family commitments can have on a women's career aspirations. Members in the RCMP are routinely transferred to different parts of Canada (RCMP, 1997) and they are often not transferred to locations close to their hometown (Lotz, 1984). This further compounds the difficulty of finding support as members extended family, including parents and grandparents, are often not available to assist in child care or other support roles.

It would appear from the available research that policewomen face a considerable number of challenges when attempting to balance career and family roles. While female members in the RCMP enjoying the comfort of an extensive benefit package, those who chose to have a family do not appear to receive the respect and structural support that they are entitled to, according to policy and possibly the law (Hynes, 1997). Furthermore, there are indications that if female members ask for, or make use of, the benefits available to them, their career aspirations of desirable positions and/or promotions may be jeopardized.

### **Women's Work Commitment**

Women's commitment to work outside of the home became a focus of research as the number of women in the paid labour market work force increased (Haller & Rosenmayr, 1971; Loscocco, 1990). As women began to apply for the

same employment and career positions, thus entering the traditionally male dominated occupations in increasing numbers, researchers became more interested in women's work commitment. This research grew out of an attempt to determine if women were as committed to their jobs as men or were they simply trying to prove their capabilities of doing these jobs. While there have been many definitions of work commitment proposed (Almquist & Angrist, 1971; Burke & Reitzes, 1991; Masih, 1967), Haller and Rosenmayr (1971) defined and operationalized women's work commitment as "feelings about work or the 'meaning' it has for her" (p. 501). This definition emphasizes the meaning the woman attaches to her work and thus, focuses on the women's perspective - a more internal versus external determination of commitment.

Confounding the issue of work commitment for women is the pressure to balance family and career aspirations in their adult lives. Externally, this choice may be viewed by their peers and supervisors as reflecting a woman's level of committedness. Such perceptions often form the basis for decisions regarding promotions and advances, therefore, having significant implications for the women's reproductive choices and their occupational advancement. As such, when looking at policewomen's experience of combining career and mothering roles, the issue of career commitment within women's lives and within the police culture, may be especially important to examine.

The only Canadian study which looks at police officers' job commitment was conducted by Linden (1983). This quantitative study of Vancouver police

officers, entailed conducting interviews with 40 female police officers, administering 200 questionnaires to male police officers, and participating in two hundred hours of 'ride-along'. In this extensive study of police officers, Linden found policemen and policewomen report an equal level of career commitment.

Jones (1986) completed interviews with 20 male and 20 female police officers, as well as administered 466 questionnaires to police officers in the Medshire police force. In this qualitative study Jones examined hiring practices in the Medshire police force with a focus on the Sex Discrimination Act of 1975. Jones looked at the early beginnings of policewomen in England and Wales and noted that historically women in these countries may not have been committed to their job as police officers. However, she suggests this is in transition as policewomen are now joining the police force with the outlook of it being a career. Research in other professions also indicates that women are as committed to work as men (Beilby, 1997). However, it must be noted that there appears to be some discrepancy as to what is an appropriate measure of 'committedness'.

Taking this into consideration, it is still significant to note the social transition in which women are taking their career more seriously and aspiring to climb the promotional ladder. This change has occurred as a result of many factors (Beilby, 1997; Jones, 1986), but most notably the legislation which promoted pay equity and discouraged discrimination based on gender. As women strive to achieve their career aspirations they appear to exhibit equal levels of commitment to their careers as police officers as do men. Male police officers are not

questioned on their level of commitment when they begin a family. Nor should women, however, this does not appear to be the case. While women should have equal opportunity to pursue and accomplish their professional goals as do men, and should not be limited by, or judged for, their desire to have a family - a double standard may well still exist within the RCMP, making it more difficult for women to successfully combine their roles as mother and officers.

### **Structural and Social Support**

When women attempt to blend the two competing entities of motherhood and career, they encounter the task of juggling these roles in an attempt to have balance in their lives (Swiss & Walker, 1993; Tingley et al., 1996). It has been suggested that women find this juggling act challenging, not because of their inability to balance their lives, but because the social environment is placing unrealistic expectations upon their shoulders (Ministry of Women's Equality, 1993). There are indications that working women are not receiving the support they need from the social structures within which they are functioning. In order to juggle the multiplicity of roles in their lives, women need greater support from not only their families, but also the social consciousness. Social consciousness refers to such issues and services as social support for women's choice to work, job flexibility, and adequate child care (Heymann, 1994; Ministry of Women's Equality; Swiss & Walker, 1993). This indicates that the balance these working women desire between these competing entities, has been a driving force behind their search for an equilibrium where they can be fulfilled in both the professional

and the maternal realms. However, the following research indicates that many working women cannot adequately balance these two very demanding and often competing jobs, and find equilibrium, without familial and social support.

In their qualitative study of 72 women who were in dual-earner relationships, Tingey et al. (1996) found that a sense of control is important to women who are performing multiple tasks and roles. Based on in-depth interviews, they found women in this study felt in control of their personal circumstances if they had a low perceived stress level. To these women, being in control meant low work-family spillover and high satisfaction with child care arrangements.

In her quantitative study of 232 married women doctors, lawyers and professors, Gray (1983) found having family members help with chores, organizing and scheduling activities carefully, and considering personal interests, were important coping strategies for women. This would indicate that support, organization, and prioritization are key factors to women managing their multiple roles.

Career role overload was noted by Kralovansky-Wahl and Randal (1996) in their review of women in the United States military. They suggest role overload, child care arrangements, living arrangements, and relocations are difficult for military women. They state women who are employed in the military look to outside resources for support. Of interest, the military has responded to this need by initiating programs that address the needs of active duty wives and mothers,

especially with regard to family support and available child care facilities. Many police agencies, including the RCMP, are considered to be para-military organizations and can be compared to the military (Horne, 1980). Thus, it can be suggested that similar issues may exist within the RCMP. However, no such initiatives have been taken within the RCMP to provide support to female officers, who are also mothers.

Kralovansky-Wahl and Randal (1996) indicate that military women who are mothers, often chose to leave the military. This is disturbing, as it indicates that women in the military are having to choose between raising a family, having a promising career, and having their husbands leave their jobs. It can be suggested that all parties are losing as the women may prefer to work, and the military would prefer to have fully trained and productive employees, but because of role conflict, women often chose to leave.

As indicated, support to the family unit, such as daycare facilities, is important in helping the female officer to stay employed in the United States Military. This support is possible because of the housing arrangements specific to the military. Most employees are housed on the Military Base which promotes easy access and availability to such facilities. The difficulty lies with providing such support to members in the RCMP. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police is tasked with policing Canada from several different perspectives (specifically federal statutes, provincial statutes, criminal code or all three, depending upon the Province or Territory). Some postings are to remote geographic locations and



logistically this makes it difficult to provide such support services to its members. It is becoming recognized within the RCMP that family demands should be considered when transferring members, however, it is not presently known to what extent these needs are being addressed.

In their social support model, which is based on a literature review, Power and Parke (1984) suggest that women who place a high level of importance on their careers tend to experience difficulty in the transition to motherhood. Overall, they report a lower level of pregnancy, maternal and marital satisfaction than those who are less invested in their careers. They further state work support programs and initiatives should be designed to assist women and these should be designed with the broadest of options available. This supports the recommendations made by Kralovansky-Wahl and Randal (1996) of childcare options, extended pregnancy leave, and having the military view the service member as a family and not as a singular unit. However, it also addresses the significance that career aspirations can play in the satisfaction levels experienced by women who chose to have children.

Policewomen, who chose to meet both career aspirations and family expectations, may bear the brunt of social expectations regarding fulfilling their career and mothering roles. It is here that women appear to need social support in order to continue in their chosen profession and be a mother. In the past, the woman was the one who would stay home and care for the children as the husband pursued his career. However, if she is now in a position to actively pursue her

career, other resources appear to be needed to support the occupational and family realities and needs of these women.

Considerable research has been conducted which looks at the female police officer's ability to perform the duties associated with being a police officer (Bartlett, 1977; Brown & Neville, 1996; Charles, 1982; Heidensohn, 1992; Linden, 1983; Linden & Minch, 1992; Sherman, 1975). However, little is known about the role dilemmas and parenting decisions and the experiences of women RCMP officers. Unfortunately, women who currently choose to pursue nontraditional careers will be confronted by a large number of males in these fields. This male dominance is especially prevalent in occupations which support the stereotypical male characteristics of bravery, courage, and physical strength as an intrinsic component of the job. Police officers, military personnel, and firefighters are several of these professions. While the RCMP has implemented a parental leave package which surpasses many, and has a very progressive policy which encourages women in all jobs and ranks, it is unknown if these policies provide support to officers who are mothers, or if, and how, they influence the parenthood decision making of female officers.

While some inferences can be made from other research which looks at role conflict for working mothers (Gerson 1985; Wilk, 1986), police officers experience a multiplicity of role dilemmas associated with their careers, in addition to the role conflicts inherent in being a working mother. Thus, while inferences are helpful, it can be suggested that in order to truly appreciate the complexities of the

policewoman's parental decision making and experiences, specific research is needed. Further to this, each police department will have different policies and procedures for transfers, promotions, and leaves. In order to understand the experience of the female 'Mountie', who has attempted to combine motherhood with her career aspirations, it is necessary to look at their experiences directly - which is the focus of this study.

## Chapter III

### Methodology

#### Research Design

This study was conducted in an attempt to understand how women RCMP members' combine the role of mother with their careers as police officers. The question that guided this study was: **What is the experience and meaning of combining motherhood and career for women who are regular members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?** To capture the essence of their experiences and to gain an understanding of the meaning of trying to combine these roles for women officers a phenomenological approach was chosen.

Phenomenology looks at the individual's lived experience as the individual experiences it in everyday life (Colaizzi, 1978; van Manen, 1990). Unlike other forms of research, it is the subjective experience, in which the phenomenological approach is interested (Munhall, 1994; Osborne, 1994). In utilizing this approach, I attempted to discover and describe the phenomenon of the participant's subjective experiences, feelings and views, and descriptively interpret the lived experience of each study participant. It was anticipated that a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of the everyday lived experience of the participants, female members of the RCMP, would emerge .

In allowing each participant the opportunity to tell her story in complete detail, it was hoped that an understanding would emerge as to her subjective experience relating to her experience of combining motherhood with her career in

the RCMP. According to Van Manen (1990), "Human experience is only possible because we have language" (p.38). He indicates that we are able to reflect and recall experiences because we are able to speak and communicate with each other. Thus, it seemed essential in order to understand the 'humanness' of this experience, to provide women in this study with the opportunity to tell their stories in an attempt to understand their experiences and the meaning they make of these experiences. Furthermore, it seemed appropriate and natural to use the phenomenological approach which allows the researcher the opportunity to interact personally with the women police officers, and in doing so enables empathy to develop.

Empathy involves being able to take and understand the stance, position, feelings, experiences, and worldview of others . . . The capacity for empathy, then, is one of the major assets available for human inquiry into human affairs". (Patton, 1990, p. 56)

The experience of attempting to combine family and career is often viewed as personal, difficult, and private (Swiss and Walker, 1993); and this approach provides the opportunity to be sensitive to the participant's feelings, needs and views. As this was a research study which looked at a private and intimate phenomenon, I attempted to be considerate and respectful of the participants' experience. This approach facilitated this as well as ensured rigorous research was conducted.

According to van Manen (1990), it is important for the researcher to be

guided by the research question. In this study, I examined how female regular member's of the RCMP construct and give meaning to their experience of combining motherhood with their career. By understanding the member's subjective experiences, I believed an appreciation evolved for the person's experience in terms of the subjective meaning the individual attaches to it (Janesick, 1994; Patton, 1990). By looking at the experience of the participants, I attempted to identify and describe the phenomenon as well as interpret the process associated with the female police officer's experience of combining motherhood with their RCMP careers.

Interpretive methods of research, such as the phenomenological approach, proposes an active, involved role for the researcher. This is believed to provide the researcher with an opportunity to gain insight into the social knowledge of the participants. Furthermore, Wirth (cited in Patton, 1990) states:

[insight] is arrived at by being on the inside of the phenomena to be observed. . . . It is participation in an activity that generates interest, purpose, point of view, value, meaning, and intelligibility, as well as bias (p. 58).

By allowing participants to share their perspectives with me, I was able to access information and perspectives which would otherwise be unavailable.

### **Personal Assumptions**

Van Manen (1990) states that the researcher should attempt to uncover any personal presuppositions and biases that may lead to inaccurate interpretations of

the phenomenon. This personal exploration allows the researcher to be aware of their biases and preconceived ideas. Osborne (1990) and Colaizzi (1978) also recognize the inevitable presence of the researcher in the investigative procedure. Osborne suggests:

“[that the researcher should attempt] to articulate predispositions and biases through a process of rigorous self reflection (bracketing); In this way, those who read reports of the research will be able to take the researcher’s perspective into account” (p. 81).

Colaizzi (1978) elaborates further and indicates that the researcher should become aware of the specific reasons they have chosen to pursue this particular research phenomena.

With these issues in mind, I attempted to explore my reasons for choosing this phenomenon, in an effort to become aware of my biases and preconceived ideas. In May 1997, I retired from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. After serving 11 years as a regular member, I chose to take advantage of an early retirement package. I had been commuting to Vancouver from Vancouver Island for three years. The commute required that I be away from home for five days out of every eight days. My husband, who is a civilian member in the RCMP, and I had been trying to start a family for some time and, for several reasons, we did not want to be raising a family and have me continue to commute. Further to this, I had miscarried twice, and the Personnel Directorate of the RCMP, with knowledge

of my lost pregnancies, had advised that a transfer to Vancouver Island was not in the foreseeable future. It became clear that motherhood and my career in the RCMP were not compatible. Thus, we decided that I would retire from the Force.

I have made the transition from police officer to civilian with relative ease. However, I am aware of the strong ties that connect me to the RCMP. The Force is a form of family, which I enjoyed and was very proud to be a part of. I am aware that as a spouse of a member, and as a retired member, I still enjoy the connection of being a part of the Force. However, I am also aware of the difference in my position within the organization. I will call this 'a feeling of distance'. This distance causes me sorrow as I am aware of a sense of loss; similar to the loss I felt when I left my home and family in Nova Scotia to move to British Columbia.

As a member, I was able to travel extensively throughout the country and internationally. During this time, I was able to speak to many female members in the RCMP and fellow policewomen from other departments and countries. It was through these personal interactions with other female officers and the awareness of the lack of information and research concerning the issues women officers face, especially those relating to parenting, that I have decided to pursue this topic. As a student pursuing my Masters of Arts in Counselling Psychology, I felt I had an opportunity to explore, and possibly provide information, which may positively impact both present and future female members in the RCMP.

I was aware that I may encounter some resistance from members, as I am



no longer 'one of them.' As well, I was aware that I may encounter resistance from management within the RCMP. These individuals are predominantly male and may be reluctant to offer their support to a retired female member. Another aspect of consideration is my education level. Higher levels of education are often reflected upon in a negative light, especially by management who may have joined the force when a grade twelve education was the standard level of education. These are all personal assumptions which I needed to be conscious of throughout the study.

In this study, I expected to find that the participants had lived a broad range of experience and yet there would be themes which would emerge through the diversity of the experience. Women in this study will have chosen police work as a career, which is a nontraditional profession, and as such I expected that they would have experienced the challenge of working in a male dominated environment. As this environment is male dominated, I anticipated that the women may have experienced gender specific harassment and/or discrimination and have been in situations in which they felt pressure to place their family responsibilities in second place to their profession.

As it is often important to have a secure income before deciding to have a child, I expected some women may have delayed childrearing in order to establish their careers. Based on the research literature of other professional women (Veevers, 1980), I expected the experience by which these women combine motherhood and career roles to be a process which was pitted with both highs and lows; social, family, and professional pressures; as well as personal compromises.

With my preconceived ideas and biases identified (Colaizzi, 1978; Osborne 1990), it was hoped that I would recognize the biased lens in which I viewed the data from this study and as a result, be able to analyse and understand the female regular members' experience more clearly.

### **Participants**

Participants in this study were six currently employed regular female members of the RCMP, who had decided to become mothers while in the Force, and who are partnered. Only partnered members who had become mothers were included in this study because the issues of sole support parents may be even more complex. The six participants were mothers to elementary school children or younger. This provided research participants who had experienced the phenomenon, yet had some distance from it and this resulted in a consistent cohort of research participants. Each participant experienced the phenomenon of combining motherhood and career roles and they were able to articulate their experience. Five to eight participants were sought to provide an adequate sample (Colaizzi, 1978). It was believed this number of participants would enable themes to be illuminated which would be reflective of the sample and would not be random in nature. A total of twelve people responded to the search for participants. Five did not meet the research criteria, one cancelled with no reason given, and six respondents met the research criteria and became study participants.

Participants were sought from Vancouver Island and surrounding Gulf Islands. These areas were chosen to ensure an adequate sample was available and

based on geographic accessibility to the researcher. Participants were solicited by advertisements (see Appendix A) posted in detachment female locker rooms, on detachment bulletin boards, and by word of mouth. Participants were volunteers who contacted the researcher by phone if they were interested in participating in the study. When volunteers contacted the researcher, a decision was made by the researcher as to the appropriateness of each individual based on the above criteria. The first six volunteers who fit the study criteria were selected.

### **Procedure**

An initial interview was arranged with the first six volunteers. During this interview, I placed importance on establishing a relationship in which the member was comfortable and I was able to connect with her in an empathic manner (Osborne, 1990). Confidentiality was discussed and the ethical consent form read and signed (see Appendix C). The member received a copy of this consent form. As well, an opportunity was given for each participant to use a pseudonym to ensure anonymity. This pseudonym was used throughout the study.

During this time the purpose of the study was reiterated to the member by reading the general orientating statement (see Appendix B). This promoted an opening for questions and concerns to be raised at the outset. Once all questions and concerns were addressed and answered to the participant's satisfaction, I reminded the participant that their involvement was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the study at anytime. No participants withdrew from the study.

During the next phase of the interview, I was guided by my research question (van Manen, 1990) and used an open interview style. I utilized advanced empathy skills including paraphrasing and immediacy to encourage participants to share their lived experience. To do this, I used open-ended questions, when necessary, to help guide the participants to deepen their exploration and more fully share their story of deciding to combine motherhood and their careers in the RCMP (see appendix D).

All interviews were audio taped and transcribed. I took field notes during the interview to document nonverbal communication, including body language, which may have become important information relative to the participant's emotions and thoughts as they reflect on their experiences. The initial interview took approximately two hours and no participant expressed a need for more time to fully express their story. Upon completion of this phase of the study, the researcher scheduled a follow up interview of approximately one hour so each participant was able to validate her own bio-synopsis as well as the common themes the researcher had identified after analysing the interview transcripts.

### **Data Analysis**

Upon completion of the interviews, all audio tapes were transcribed. I analysed the transcripts using a seven step method of analysis proposed by Colaizzi's (1979). This method included: a) initially reading the transcripts, which Colaizzi refers to as protocols, to get a feel for them; b) rereading the protocols and highlighting significant phrases or sentences, which allowed me to get a deeper

sense of the participants' experience; c) extracting themes from the transcripts, which may go beyond the actual transcribed words, and may have included what Colaizzi refers to as "creative insight; [as the researcher] must leap from what his subjects say to what they mean." (P. 59) in order to formulate possible themes and meanings, which the participant may not have voiced verbally; d) repeat the previous steps with each protocol and cluster common themes together; e) integrating the themes into an exhaustive description of the lived experience of choosing to have a child for women in the RCMP; f) formulate a bio-synopsis which reflects the experience of the participants; and g) return to each participant with this encapsulation, so they have the opportunity to validate the accuracy of the analysis and establish the goodness of fit (Osborne, 1990).

Throughout the study, including data analysis, I took all precautions to ensure my biases did not invade and intrude upon the analysis of the participants lived experiences and meaning making. This allowed the participants experiences to be evident and illuminated without imposition. According to Colaizzi (1978) "What is logically inexplicable may be existentially real and valid" (p. 61). Thus, while it may have been tempting to discard or ignore themes or findings which were unexplainable or did not fit but I needed to recognize that they were also important and valid. Therefore, it was meaningful to keep irregularities or unexplainable data as part of the study, as these may be of importance and may be the real findings of the study. Furthermore, it was also important to allow ambiguity to occur, where it did so naturally, and not feel it necessary to have

results which were definitive. Definitive answers and findings may not always be available in research which looks at lived experiences. Therefore, I allowed this to occur and did not attempt to embellish in order to achieve definitive findings.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation was the exclusion of the male partner from the study. This did not promote the voice of the male in the parenthood decision making process. However, it is acknowledged that their voice may be highlighted by their partner in her telling of her story. This intentional exclusion was due to several factors including interest in the female perspective, as well as resource and time constraints.

A second limitation is the number of participants. Given the number of women (6) and the limitation of two interviews, there may not have been sufficient time to adequately capture a comprehensive picture of the women's lived experiences of combining motherhood and her career in the RCMP. However, this time allowance was sufficient to give an accurate reflection of these member's lived experience. Furthermore, these are the experiences of female police officers within the RCMP and generalization to other police forces may be limited because of the different environments and policies within each police force.

Another limitation may be the members' reluctance to disclose all information. They may want to have trusted the process but because of their role as a police officer, and their tendency to be suspicious (Burke, 1992), they may not have been willing to fully tell their stories. While my past experience may have

been important in the initial acquaintance stage, as the participant gets to know me and tell her story, it may have become a limitation. As the policing community is very close knit, the female member may not have been willing to be fully candid in sharing her story for fear of being known as one of the study participants.

The fourth limitation refers to the study finding of members returning to work from maternity leave and being placed back on General Duty when they had been on a specialized section at the time of pregnancy. This finding may be specific to smaller detachments and may not be experienced in larger detachments, in Federal sections and in Regional or National Headquarters.

The final limitation of this study is the difficulty in replication. While replication of this study would be difficult given my intimate involvement in the study, it is important none-the-less, to be thorough in documenting all aspects of the study.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

In this chapter I will present a brief bio-synthesis of each of the six participants as well as the five identified themes which emerged as a result of the analysis of the narratives. The identified themes were woven throughout each participants' narrative and reflect the meaning each woman attaches to her experience of combining motherhood with her career in the RCMP.

#### **The Participants**

Six regular women members of the RCMP participated in this study. Four of the participants volunteered to be a part of the study after viewing the advertisement posted in their detachment. Two of the participants volunteered after their respective husbands or fellow members, brought the bulletin home. Six other women responded to the request for participants, however, five did not meet the study criteria and the sixth woman decided not to participate for unknown reasons.

**Lynne.** Lynne is 35 years old and joined the RCMP in 1987. Currently, Lynne is on a leave of absence for spousal relocation. She is married to a member of the Force, who is serving in a Limited Duration Posting (LDP) in southern British Columbia. Lynne and her husband have two children. Lynne, who has a degree in Early Childhood Care, always knew she wanted to combine motherhood with her career. Lynne has been on a leave of absence for 2 years and plans to return to work in 2000.



Lynne and her husband began their respective careers in eastern Canada but in 1992 they transferred to British Columbia. At this time they decided to start their family and while on Highway Patrol Lynne became pregnant. She says she tried to stay on the road as long as possible but two things occurred which made her rethink her position. Her uniform began to get small and uncomfortable and she encountered a situation which placed her and her baby at risk. She decided to come off the road and go on light duties in the office. She felt supported by her coworkers and the detachment administration, though initially she was concerned her Staff Sergeant would not be supportive of this change. This was as a result of comments he had made previously about her not getting pregnant while she was at his detachment. However, she was pleased to discover that he was supportive of her pregnancy and was willing to facilitate changes to help her during this time.

According to Lynne, she feels the current policy regarding pregnancy punishes the woman's watch because the watch is short a member while the woman is pregnant and on maternity leave because they can not replace her. She refers to the Doctor's Locum replacement as a possible solution. She indicates that she felt as though she was letting her peers down on her watch and this was frustrating to her. Lynne says she had an easier time while pregnant, in part, because of the female member previously at her detachment who had been pregnant while posted at the detachment. This member, who had been perceived as a hard worker, and as not having taken advantage of the system, was also well respected.

Lynne took six months off after the birth of her first child. Lynne says that not returning to work was not an option, as they needed the second income while living in the Lower Mainland. She says she was lucky to have her sister-in-law close by who was willing to take care of her child when she returned to work. She was finding it very difficult to find adequate child care until her sister-in-law offered, especially given their frequent 12 hour shifts. Lynne noticed that upon her return from maternity leave she had a heightened awareness of the need for safety on the job and the need to get home safely.

Shortly after Lynne returned, she and her husband approached Staffing and Personnel and asked to be considered separately for an LDP. They had decided that if one of them could get a LDP the other would take a leave without pay (LWOP). Lynne said that while it was a possibility that she would get the LDP it was more probable her husband would get it because of his broader policing experience. As it turned out, just prior to her husband getting the LDP Lynne became pregnant with their second child.

Lynne says that she misses her family who live in central Canada. She also sees the child rearing support that her brother receives, who lives close to their parents, and recognizes that she is missing out on that support. Her mother was recently diagnosed with cancer and it has been difficult being so far away. As well, it is very expensive for the family to fly home and this is an added concern. Her husband's parents, who live in Atlantic Canada, can not fly so it means an additional trip in order to maintain family ties.

Support from her husband has been crucial for Lynne as well as the understanding that he has for her career. Lynne says he helps her with all duties around the house and she appreciates his moral support. She believes his inside understanding of her job has been very beneficial to her being able to combine motherhood and career. She has found moving from place to place difficult in keeping and maintaining connections with friends as she cultivates friendships and then has had to leave the area.

Lynne says her experience of being on leave has been a wonderful one, however, there are days she believes it would be easier if she was working as a police officer. She has considerable pride in her role as mother to her children and believes that what she is doing is extremely important to the well being of their children. Lynne believes that when she returns to work next year she will be very motivated and rejuvenated. She is looking forward to getting back into her career. She also says that the Force has changed considerably since she first joined and that this is disappointing to her. She refers to the promotional system, home province moves, entrance standards and training procedures as examples of this. But she recognizes that she has also changed her outlook. In Depot she followed her fathers advise, who is a police officer for a city police force, of jumping when the Force said jump. Today she states she loves her job as a police officer but has come to terms with her career aspirations not being her first priority and she is not willing to jump as high when the Force says jump.

Lynne recognizes returning to work after being off for 3 years will be

difficult since there have been so many changes since she left. Recently she overheard a ten code she was not familiar with and asked her husband what 10-11 meant. She was surprised that it was the same thing she had known as 10-69. She was astounded that even something as basic as the 10 code could have changed while she was away. Lynne acknowledges the negative impact the leave of absence will have on her career especially with regards to promotion under the new exam and PRP guidelines. She states she will be a Constable for life unless there is a big miracle. She says she is frustrated at the continuous change relating to promotions but does not wish she had done anything any different. Lynne is content and confident with the decisions she has made with regards to combining her career and motherhood roles. She states that being a Mother, living in a place that she and her family are happy living in, and remaining a Constable for the rest of her career will be worth the sacrifices that she has made.

**Margaret.** Margaret is 40 years old and has been a member of the RCMP for 20 years. She is presently in charge of a specialized section, in a small detachment located on Vancouver Island. She has been married for 14 years and is married to a retired member of the RCMP. They have two children. Margaret says she was pregnant with her first child 12 years ago, while working in a specialized section in a non-contract province and she was pregnant with her second child while working General Duty in British Columbia 3 years later.

She states that when she first joined the Force she had no intention of getting married or having children. She joined the Force for the demanding and

challenging career she thought police work would be. As women had just begun to join the RCMP as police officers she was an anomaly of sorts as it was uncommon to have women as regular members. At that time she says she believed that if she had become pregnant and had a child while being a member of the Force she thought they would kick her out. She states that she was extremely career focused during the first part of her career.

Six years into her career she married her husband, who she had come to know from working in the same detachment. Immediately after her wedding they were transferred to Ontario, as he was part of a specialized section and was needed there. She was transferred to Ontario as well. She says she saw a large difference between 'E' and 'O' Division with regards to the acceptance of women. She felt like she had left her forward moving career back in BC, where she was beginning to be recognized for her work. Within a year she was pregnant with their first child and found that people in her detachment did not know what she was capable of doing while pregnant, since she was one of the first women on the Force to have a child. Administration questioned whether she would return to work, which is something that she said had never even occurred to her. She refers to this as a difficult time. She took six months off after the birth of her child and returned to work.

She considers herself lucky during this time as her in-laws were close by and could assist her with her newborn child and her husband was away working for several months immediately following their daughter's birth. When she returned to

work, she found it difficult leaving her child and finding regular day care but working Monday to Friday and eight hour shifts was much easier than what was to come.

After several years her husband was transferred back to the Lower Mainland of BC and the RCMP transferred her as well. She describes this as her most difficult time. She believes that if ever she was going to quit, this would have been the time. She was working 12 hour shifts and her husband almost straight nights. Responsible and reliable day care was difficult to find during this time. She refers to this time as one of sleep deprivation, for all family members. At this point she became pregnant with her second child. She took six months off after the birth of their son. When she was to go back to work, her husband needed to leave for a 3 month assignment out of the province. At this point they decided to hire a person to come into their house for childcare. This was a great relief to Margaret who observed that as a result all their lives became less disruptive. She says she had no idea how extremely difficult it could be attempting to work shift work, especially 12 hour shifts, and arrange for daycare.

Margaret says this job is not a 'jobette', referring to some jobs where it is possible to take time off from work and then return easily. The difficulty in returning to police work, according to Margaret, is so many things change over a short period of time and you lose touch with what is going on and almost need to be retrained. She has never considered taking an extended period of time off with her children but does sometimes wish she could spend more time with her children.

Margaret gives her husband considerable credit for the support that she has received while attempting to integrate career and motherhood roles. She recognizes that he has made choices in the past, where he placed family first, which had an impact on his career promotional opportunities. She is very proud of her husband and the choices he has made to support her and their children. It was a conscious decision for him to retire several years ago, since he had pensionable service, and thus could have the time to play a more active role in the raising of their children. She feels that he has provided the balance that is necessary for her to integrate family and career roles.

Margaret feels considerable pride in her promotional opportunities. She feels this allows her to have some level of control over her career, which she appreciates. She has chosen not to take any of the promotional opportunities that have been offered to her to date, as they have necessitated a move which she is not prepared to make. She says she is happy where they currently live, as are the other members of her family, and she is not willing to move again. She is only willing to take a promotional move if it is to a neighboring detachment which would not necessitate a move for her family. She mentions her childhood in which her family moved frequently. She says she is envious of her husband who did not experience frequent moves and as a result has ongoing childhood friendships. Margaret says she wants her children to be able to have long term friendships and not have to experience constant uprooting. She recognizes this decision will negatively affect her promotional opportunities, however she believes this is the best decision for

her and her family. She is decisive when speaking of the choices she has made in order to accommodate her family and mother roles. She emphasizes these choices were made willingly and she speaks with pride regarding these choices.

**Judy.** Judy is a 10 year old regular member of the RCMP, who has 10 years service. Currently Judy is on secondment to a specialized section on Vancouver Island. She is married to a member of the RCMP and they have two children. During both pregnancies Judy was on general duty (GD) and returned to this duty after each maternity leave of absence.

Judy stated that during her first pregnancy, which occurred 8 years ago, she was much more nonchalant about being pregnant and being on active duty. She states that her husband was very supportive of her throughout both pregnancies, however, he was concerned when she would not go on light duties when she began to show her pregnancy. He did not express this concern to her until the second pregnancy. During this second pregnancy she removed herself from active duty earlier in her pregnancy and recognizes now that she was foolhardy to have been working general duty so late in her pregnancy.

Upon her return to work after the first pregnancy Judy found arranging child care to be difficult especially with both she and her husband on shift work. She also found it difficult integrating the roles of motherhood and career. With she and her husband both working shift work, finding day care to accommodate both being on night shift, as well as early morning shift starts was a real challenge. It was especially difficult when her husband got off work late. and as a result come



home late. This meant she was late for work. This forced her to choose between being a responsible Mother and staying with her children or arriving late for work. She says she finally came to a level of peace around her decision making since she has come to realize that her children will always be more important than her job. However, initially this was very anxiety provoking.

Judy says she has never spoken to another female member about what it is like being a Mother and a member of the RCMP. She has always worked where she was the only female member on a watch or in the detachment and she has never had the opportunity to sit and talk to other female members. Further to this, she feels there is a lack of solidarity among the women officers in the Force. While she recognizes the difficulty in getting women members together with the small numbers involved, she misses this fellowship.

Judy believes that motherhood has impacted her career and that she would have had more varied experiences or at least opportunities within the Force if she had not had children. She says child care arrangements is one of the major considerations whenever she has been offered a different position. Judy states that she initially had aspirations of applying for several different specialized sections but has come to realize that these sections are not suitable for mothers. She refers to the Emergency Response Team (ERT), GIS and drug sections as ones that are definitely not suitable for mothers, in her opinion. She states that these positions require people who are able to be away from home for extended periods of time and at a moments notice. While she recognizes that she is not willing to take these

positions because she has a responsibility to her children as a mother, she also believes that the Force is not willing to take mothers because they would have to make concessions for the commitments mothers have. She states that she has had to come to terms with these career aspirations being closed to her.

Judy's family is from Ontario and Eastern Europe and her husband is from Atlantic Canada and she finds it difficult to be so far away from them. She says she recognizes that members, including herself, are often placed at a disadvantage from other young couples when it comes to receiving family support with child rearing. As family is so far away, asking for help from parents and siblings is difficult and sometimes impossible. She has built up, what she believes is a large support network of friends who are able to help her with child care and give her support. While a few are members, most are other mothers who she can swap child care time with. She says she also has considerable support from fellow members and supervisors who are willing to accommodate each other with shift changing and other forms of support.

Judy says she has noticed a change in her perspective from when she initially joined the Force. She says she initially believed that the Force was the 'be all and end all'. However, since becoming a mother she sees that she has changed her perspective and her priorities. She says that she has come to view her first priority as her children as they will be there for her in her later years and the RCMP may not be. She has also come to see her work and her family as two separate entities and believes this has helped to make decision making easier for

her when the responsibilities of these two roles are in conflict.

**Lynn.** Lynn is 29 years old and has been a member of the RCMP for 10 years . She has one child who was born 6 years after she joined the Force. Lynn is posted at a medium sized detachment on Vancouver Island. She is currently on a secondment to a specialized section. Lynn has been married to her husband, who also is a member, for 6 years. She states he is older than she is and has more service within the Force. Both were in specialized sections when the decision was made to have a child, however, at the time Lynn believed her position was for several months only and would end soon.

Lynn views her decision concerning motherhood as one which was separate from her career decisions. In saying this she recognizes that because she is choosing to combine both motherhood and career roles, the decision has implications for both areas of her life. However, she says she did not decide to have a child based on her career aspirations and goals. Furthermore, she believes she makes career and family decisions in isolation of each other, stating she hasn't stopped herself from proceeding in a certain avenue or direction because of interference from the other.

During her pregnancy Lynn remained on the specialized section for 6 months. However, due to the successful work of this section, it was decided by the administration to extend the duration of the section for several years. When Lynn realized this, she was disappointed she had left the section to go on light duties. She felt she had missed an opportunity to further her experience and knowledge.

To date that section has never been offered to her again.

Lynn took six months leave after her child was born. However, she states that at the 4 month mark she knew that she wanted to get back to work. She says she needed the adult socialization and she was enjoying her career and wanted to get back to it. However, she was aware that several of her troop mates had not returned to work after having children and she had thought about this although it was not an acceptable option for her.

She returned to work and was assigned to General Duties which involves 12 hour shifts, 4 days on and four days off. She states returning to work was not difficult except when it came to finding daycare for a 6 month old baby. Lynn found it very difficult to find someone who would care for such a young baby and who could be available for long hours, often beginning in the very early morning. Her husband works a different shift and this adds to the strain. Additionally, her husband's job requires that he could be called out at anytime. Several times he was called out in the early hours of the morning while she was working. Because no childcare was available she needed to leave work so that he could respond to his call.

After being back at work for 2 years, Lynn became frustrated as she felt she was being overlooked for available positions in specialized sections. She says she felt she was not being taken seriously for these positions because couples often have more than one child and while she did not, she was being over looked for these opportunities because of a belief on the part of administration that she would

be off work again soon to have a second child. Lynn says she feels she must prove herself over again each time she begins a new position even if it is in the same detachment. She feels that men do not need to do this but she feels she must even though she knows she is a hard worker and her peers and supervisors acknowledge this. Lynn also says she feels supported by her coworkers and believes her strong work ethic has helped her to be seen as a productive member regardless of the fact that she is a mother.

Lynn and her husband, who are from the Prairies and Central Canada, have found it difficult to not have family support close by. She recognizes her relationship with her family members is not as close as a result of being so far away from them, and she is also aware and disappointed that family connections between her child and her parents and her husband's parents will most likely be affected by the distance between them. She says she resents having to always take holiday time to do family visits and feels this negatively impacts the quality time that she and her husband have together as a couple. They can not just get away for a few days together as some couples can by dropping off their child at their grandparents. Lynn and her husband must organize and pay for child care if they want to take some time for themselves.

Lynn appreciates the support that her husband gives her, not only with regards to being a mother but also in terms of her career. As Lynn states, "We support each other in our careers and hand each other the Tylenol when we have headaches". The only difficulty between them has been with regards to Lynn

wanting more for their child from the child care experience. She feels he is content with the current arrangements while Lynn would like for more educational content.

Of considerable pride to Lynn is her recent high ranking on the promotional list. She feels this allows her to have some level of control over her career. She has chosen not to take any of the promotional opportunities to date, as they have not met her requirements for a promotional move. She enjoys the facilities and services that are available to her currently and is not willing to move to a less desirable location in order to further her career. Another significant consideration for Lynn is the resulting transfer for her husband if she chooses to take a promotion to another geographical location. She states that neither of them want to ruin one person's career in order to further the other's. Currently Lynn sees herself as "completely fulfilled" and enjoys the constant challenges that are provided in her career.

**Alison.** Alison is 27 years of age and has 6 years service with the RCMP. She is presently posted to a medium sized detachment on Vancouver Island. She is married to a man who is close to her age and who is employed as a truck driver for a local business. Alison has a 2 year old child and is 6 months pregnant with their second child. Alison is on 'light duties' due to her pregnancy and is currently doing administrative duties in the office.

Alison and her husband made a conscious decision to have children approximately one year after their wedding date. Alison knew that she would have

both a career and motherhood so when she and her husband decided to have a family Alison sat down and looked at how it would impact her career. She was on General Duty (GD) when she first became pregnant. Alison stated that her first pregnancy was different from her current one. She felt physically better during her first pregnancy and was able to be more active. During her first pregnancy she was offered a position in the General Investigative Section (GIS) where she was able to work on statements, search warrants, surveillance and other investigation related duties which did not place her at risk. She enjoyed this opportunity immensely and felt she benefitted from this experience. Her current duties are not as interesting to Alison, however, she feels they are more conducive to her getting the rest she requires during her more difficult second pregnancy.

Alison also noticed a difference in the support she received from her supervisors during each pregnancy. She sees her current Staff Sergeant as being incredibly supportive and attributes this to him being a man who values his own family. She felt very supported during her first pregnancy by her Corporal who advocated her getting the GIS position but quite unsupported by the Staff Sergeant at the time, who she said would make snide remarks about her taking time off for appointments and being sick.

Alison took 6 months off from work after the birth of her first child. Her in-laws, who are retired, were willing to move to BC and lived in the in-law suite in the basement of their home. They provided daycare for the baby when Alison returned to work. This was a huge relief for Alison as she was finding it very

difficult to find daycare that would take a 6 month old child. She acknowledges that having her in-laws as child care providers was very stress relieving and provided her with freedom from worry while at work, as she trusted them completely and appreciated the easy access to them. Since they have left to return to their home province she has found child care more difficult to find. Shift work, in particular, has negatively affected her daycare options. Fortunately, her husband's shifts have been easier to work around than most people and the result has meant fewer days in daycare for her child than initially thought.

Alison states she returned to work rejuvenated and very eager to get back into policing duties. While she appreciated the opportunity to stay at home with her child, she was eager to return to work as she enjoys her duties especially bike patrol, which she was recently on. Alison sees her pregnancies as an opportunity to gain experience that she would normally never have obtained so early in service, specifically the GIS and administrative experiences. One difference for Alison since her return from maternity leave has been the heightened awareness of the need for safety on the job and the need to get home safely. This especially became apparent after one particular file she was assigned involving a small child and the loss of their parent.

She feels her husband is very supportive of both her career and motherhood roles. He also has an inside understanding of her role as police officer since he is an auxiliary police officer and an applicant to the Force. She states that they both place family first, and yet are committed to making the combination of



career and motherhood work for her. Alison's Father is a member of the Force and she recognizes that he placed family first throughout his career and she sees him as a role model as to how she wishes to combine career with her own family. She also recognizes that his promotional opportunities were limited as a result of his choices.

Alison recognizes the nontraditional role she is playing especially when she goes out with her fellow watch members for a social evening and she is the only woman there. She states that most of her friends are members and she receives support from her fellow members who are, themselves, raising young children. However, Alison also recognizes that there is a difference in their experiences, as she is the Mother and they are the Father, and they often have wives at home. Alison says that it is sometimes difficult to juggle both roles, however, she feels very supported by her husband and realizes that it is not an option for her to leave her career. She believes that she can have both successfully.

**Caroline.** Caroline is 27 years of age and has been a member of the RCMP for 5 years. She is currently posted to a Watch doing General Duty at a medium size detachment on Vancouver Island. She has one child, who is two years of age. She is married and her husband is employed in the private sector. She says her husband is very helpful with child care and household duties while also being very supportive of her career. While she had planned to have children in her life at some time in the future, her pregnancy was unplanned and caught her by surprise. She conceived while on birth control medication. When she discovered she was

pregnant she had just been assigned to a specialized duty. She states that she did not go to the new section because she took 'the hint' from the Operations NCO that because she was pregnant and would be off duty in six months time and this position required a longer commitment, it would be better if someone else filled the position. She was disappointed at the loss of this position but states she understood their reasons.

While pregnant she worked regular duties till the third month of her pregnancy at which time she chose to work light duties in the office but to remain with her watch rotation, as she enjoyed the camaraderie among her watch members. Furthermore as she did not enjoy the daytime busy atmosphere in the office she felt this was a good option for her. In this position she dealt with phone complaints which required no police attendance and paperwork duties. She also completed paperwork for fellow members who were on the road. Particularly difficult for Caroline during her pregnancy was the stigma on the part of members of the administration, that remained in the detachment, from their previous experience with a female member who had been at the detachment while pregnant. This member had not been viewed by others as a productive member while she was pregnant and Caroline felt this carried over to her regardless of her reputation as a 'hard worker'. However, Caroline her coworkers and peers, were very supportive of her during her pregnancy.

Caroline planned to work till her delivery date, however, 8 ½ months into her pregnancy her Doctor told her she needed to get off her feet and rest as her

blood pressure was too high. After the birth of her child, Caroline chose to take six months leave from work.

Upon completion of her six months leave, Caroline had difficulty finding daycare for a 6 month old baby. She lived in an area where the population was mainly retired and found facilities for young children lacking. She also stated that returning to work, having been away from regular policing duties for over a year, was particularly difficult. She found that she had difficulty remembering her powers of arrest, street locations and personnel, including her direct supervisor, had also changed in the detachment, further compounding her difficulty in making this transition back into the work force.

Caroline believes that motherhood has impacted her career and, in fact, that it has stalled her career. She believes that she would have had more varied experiences on the Force now if she had not become pregnant. Caroline states that there have been opportunities for her to change her responsibilities since her return to duty, in fact, she was offered the section that she had given up when she was first pregnant. However, she has chosen to remain on general duties because of the enjoyment she feels from this working environment and her relationship with the members on her watch. Child care arrangements also play into this decision.

As Caroline is from Eastern Canada and her husband from the Prairies, she has found it difficult to not have family support close by. She relies on a few friends, fellow members and their wives for support and, sometimes, childcare. She says she was raised in a warm and close family and finds the distance from her

family of origin difficult. She also is aware and disappointed that family connections between her child and her parents, brother, sisters, nieces and nephews will most likely be negatively affected by the distance between them.

### **Common Themes**

The following are the five identified common themes that emerged from the narratives of the six women regular members of the RCMP related to their experience of combining motherhood with their career in the RCMP. These themes were extracted from the participants in-depth protocols and were validated by the participants during the second interviews. While each participant's experiences were individual, these are the common themes which ran through each narrative and reflected the shared aspects and meanings of the womens' experiences.

The themes include:

1. perceived need to prove themselves again in the Force
2. sense of isolation.
3. sense of shift of priorities
4. sense of restricted choices and opportunities
5. struggle to redefine self

A detailed description of each theme follows. Whenever possible quotations from the participants were used in these descriptions to highlight the nature and meaning of the womens experience.

#### **Theme 1: Perceived Need to Prove Themselves Again in the Force.**

Consistent in all participants narratives was the perceived need to prove

themselves over again within the RCMP. In each of their narratives it was apparent that, although they had previously felt like they had to prove that as women they could be effective officers, once they added pregnancy and motherhood to their roles, they felt that they again needed to prove themselves capable of working effectively in this traditionally male environment. While each participant spoke of working environments where they were the only female member on the watch or in the detachment, their perceived need to prove themselves as reliable, competent, and valuable members of the Force reached beyond their particular detachments.

Within each narrative was the recognition on the part of these women that when they were pregnant and when they returned to work after being on maternity leave, they felt it necessary to prove to those around them including coworkers and supervisors, that they were still very committed to their careers and capable of being both mothers and police officers. One participant spoke succinctly about her experience:

And I always feel like I'm having to prove myself all over again to that person, or to that group of people, or to that team. Even though my work and my past, should speak for itself, like everybody else.

All of the women spoke of the challenge and diversity of their jobs as well as reiterating their desire to be competent and capable members of the RCMP. It was important to each of them, for their own sense of self, to be viewed as competent at their profession. Adding to the challenge of combining their responsibilities as mothers to their professional obligations, were the changes that

appeared to have occurred in policing duties while they were off work on maternity leave. Each of the participants talked about the need to quickly adapt to these changes so that they would be perceived as proficient officers who were still committed to their jobs. The words of one of the participant's accurately captures the sentiments expressed by all of the women:

When I got back I had four years in the Force but I only had three years experience. It didn't make me feel as secure as far as the job goes. I was off the road for 6 months and then totally gone for another 6. Oh my god, it was like coming back from training. The laws changed and people in the office changed. While I was gone the administration had changed and my direct supervisor had changed too. It was hard re-learning everything except, it's like riding a bike. You know how and you just have to get back on. It was hard. I felt I had to re-prove myself to them, to show what I can do.

The participants in this study were acquainted with members of the Force, both male and female, who were viewed as 'slugs' by their coworkers and they were very cognizant of not wanting to be seen in the same light. They perceived that by taking time off for motherhood reasons, whether it be to give birth or to attend to a sick child, they were concerned that their co-workers might label them as 'slugs', for not carrying their loads. One participant reflects of this time:

When I was pregnant the first time I was doing too much. The doctor had taken me off, he said desk duty only and yet I was still out there doing too

much.

The idea that they might be thought of in this manner distressed them greatly, and as such, they sometimes made choices that compromised their health or their expectations of themselves as “good mothers”. For example several participants spoke of instances while they were pregnant when they came to work feeling as though they should have stayed home but chose to come to work because they felt that not to do so would result in them being seen by their co-workers as incompetent or uncommitted to their career. For example one participant shared:

I came to work, you know, I came to work every day no matter how I felt because I knew that there would be those comments and that's just, that's stressful.

Or in another participants words:

There were times when I should have stayed home with my kids, and I didn't. Because, I thought, Oh gees, you know, you gotta show them that you're committed to your job.

There was a sense in each womens narrative that if they worked hard enough and meet the expectations of the people around them they would somehow ward off the impending backlash of them being on light duties. Of interest, while all participants expressed great support from their co-workers they also recognized that, by being pregnant and on light duties, they were increasing their co-workers work load. This awareness of increasing their co-workers already busy schedule is expressed in the words of one member:

The RCMP has it set up that when you are pregnant you punish your Watch. Because. . . basically, they are the guys that are going to pick up the slack cause there is nobody to fill in your position.

Participants spoke of “feeling bad” and “feeling crappy” for putting this additional workload onto their fellow members. Most attempted to help their coworkers in whatever way possible, unfortunately, in some instances this included over extending themselves physically.

In view of the participants willingness to be seen as capable and productive, there were incidences experienced by several participants which made them question the administrations expectations of them. A poignant example of these expectations placed on some of the women, who were pregnant, is expressed in the following participant’s words:

And I worked with the watch up to the last two weeks of my pregnancy and I remember because it was Halloween night . . . my duty on Halloween night was to work in the cell block. Look at me. I was round as a beach ball. If there was a place that is dangerous, it’s with all those drunks. I refused to work there . . .

The three participants who were on specialized sections in contract provinces when they became pregnant were not given the opportunity to return to those sections after they came back from maternity leave. Rather they were placed on General Duty upon their return to work which further contributed to their sense of having to prove themselves again within the Force and within their particular



detachments. One participant's words speak clearly to this:

Immediately after having my child I felt like I wasn't being taken serious for positions that came up. I had put my name down for some specialized sections and the question in my mind was are they taking me serious because they made it clear that, not clear, I assumed that I was being overlooked because I was still in the family way, you know, like here she has a daughter she's only a year. Everyone had these perfect ideas of families being two or three kids and we had made a decision that was it and yet people still didn't take it serious. They were afraid to put you on some specialized section for fear, oh god forbid if she were to become pregnant in the next couple of months or next year, she wouldn't put in the quality work and be committed to our section, or whatever. I felt very frustrated, and still somewhat do, because that still is an issue with people. But I feel like I had to come back and prove myself all over again, plus prove to people I will do my job.

In a sense having been 'demoted', these participants felt they needed to once again prove themselves as committed police officers before they could return to a specialized section. An experience that they noted was not the case for their male counterparts. Quite the contrary, when their male colleagues became Fathers or when they took leave for educational and travel purposes, they often returned to the same positions they had before they left. The inequity of this reality, and the participants' frustration with this apparent bias against working mothers in the

Force is highlighted in the words of one woman :

I always feel like I'm having to prove myself all over again. Even though my work and my past should speak for itself, like everybody else, it's just something within me, and I think it's because I am a woman. . . It does not affect me at home or relationships or family or friends or anything like that, or sports. If a guy takes a leave of absence and goes back to school, he's looked at very positively and nobody has an issue with it. But when a woman takes a leave of absence to have children, I think their having to come back and prove themselves all over again and show that there committed to the career and it is really unfair. I don't like it.

Interestingly, the participants did not feel a similar need to prove themselves in other arenas of their life outside of the Force (e.g. community activities, home life, sports). It occurred for them only in their professional context when they attempted to combine their roles as mothers and police officers. The reality of this perception, however, left some participants questioning themselves in terms of low self esteem. Others saw it as a result of the police environment and culture. Irregardless of the source, however, all the participants were clear that they had lost ground professionally by attempting to combine these two roles in their lives, and that, unlike their male colleagues, they had to continue to prove their dedication and commitment to their careers.

**Theme 2: Sense of Isolation.** Isolation was a common tread woven through each participant's narrative. When reflecting on their experience each

women talked about feeling isolated, being alone, set apart or different from their co-workers. While to some degree this was perceived as a result of their gender, all the women were clear that it was also a consequence of their motherhood roles. This theme was apparent in their relationships with male and female colleagues, their friendships outside of the Force, and in terms of their geographical distance from their families.

Being the "first female in the detachment", "being the only female member on the watch" or "only woman on the section" was experienced by all participants and was one source of their sense of isolation. Participants expressed that while on the whole, they felt accepted by the watch and the detachment, they missed the opportunity to talk and connect with other female members. As one woman expressed:

Like I have been very happy with the guys I have worked with. I have always felt like I am part of the team, and been very well accepted but you do realize that, wait a minute, I'm the only girl, all the other girls are on the other watches".

This isolation was experienced not only within the detachment but Force wide. As one participant said, "women are so isolated within the Force, not only divisionally but Nationally.

Another source of isolation for these women was when they were pregnant and fellow members were unable to relate to their experiences of being pregnant RCMP officers. Participants spoke of feeling that both female members without

children and male members were not able to relate to their experiences of pregnancy and motherhood. The words of one participant capture this experience: "As far as for motherhood goes, I have never talked to another female officer about being a mom". The women reflected on how they first noticed this sense of isolation when they were assigned to light duties in the office. All the participants spoke of this time as a time when they attempted to be productive and helpful. As one participant said: "the office, paperwork, small RTCC reports, like shoplifters, I would do that for them so that they could go out on the road". However, despite their efforts to continue to be productive members of the team, the separation from their coworkers, heightened their sense of isolation. "You leave the guys", and "Now I am no longer on the watch I can't commute with the guys" were common sentiments expressed by the participants. While in several instances the women, during their pregnancies, worked the same shift as their coworkers, they were aware of being treated differently than, being apart from their peers.

They often felt they had no one to share experiences with, discuss concerns, or 'go and talk to the other women who may be able to help you'. Several mentioned that they missed having a mentor who could guide them the way they saw other male members being mentored in their relationships with senior male members. As one participant expressed:

"If I had had someone to warn me about all this, it would have been different for me too." Several participants also reflected on how they had experienced a sense of isolation and loss of camaraderie with their fellow women officers, whom they

had met in Depot as troop mates. Four participants talked about the valued relationships they had formed while at Depot and about their disappointment at not being able to have closer connections to these valued women colleagues once they left Depot. Several participants had remained connected with their troop mates for several years and recently, as a result of geographical transfers, had lost that opportunity to sit down for coffee and chat. They really missed this connection, especially in terms of being able to share their experiences of combining motherhood with their roles as officers

Another source of isolation for these women was their limited number of friendships outside of the Force. All participants except one, had most of their friendships within the Force. This sense of isolation was two fold as one woman explained:

Most of my friends are members so, you know, it happens to be the Dads that are the ones that have the career and the Moms that are at home. So it's kind of a little bit different because you know the male a lot better than you know the female and it's, it's a different relationship friend-wise, I guess than it would normally be where the woman would know the woman and you know the guys would hang out.

This male-female member friendship separates women not only from themselves but also from the civilian world. The insular nature of the police culture isolate the women further from reaching out. Further to this, was the reality that members were frequently transferred and as a result friendships of this nature would be

affected by geographic distance. Some talked about this being similar to the experience of losing connection with troop mates after Depot.

All participants also reflected on their sense of isolation from their families - an isolation that was heightened when they began families of their own.

Geographical distance was one of the most common factors that contributed to their sense of isolation. All of the participants were geographically removed from their families of origin and this created considerable difficulties for these members.

One participant spoke of this logistical difficulty associated with holidays:

You have to travel to go visit family because you're so far away. You're spending a lot more on travel. You've got to visit two families in two different provinces because we've both been transferred away from our home provinces.

Participants spoke of aging parents, illness and death in the family, financial consideration, and childcare as instances where they felt particularly alone and apart from their family. As one participant reflects:

Like my mother has cancer so I am taking the kids to see her and its 5 hours on the airplane, with a 15 month old and a 3 year old. It's going to be the trip from Hell. Because my 15 month old wont sit on me for 5 hours and I am not paying \$800-\$900 on sale to get a seat for him.

The women also talked about their sense of being alone in the raising of their families. If participants were to ask for family help, they knew it would involve their family member having to fly in from another province in order to lend

a hand. This is highlighted in the words of one woman:

We are not from here and there is nothing for support. We don't have family support so, like in NS, my husband has tons of family. Not that you want them to raise your kids, but it would be nice to have the support. Most people would drop off their kids at Grandma and Grandpa's but we don't have that and it makes it hard.

These women struggled with the reality of having to raise their children without the help or assurance of having extended family close by. While several women spoke of periods of support from family, which were greatly appreciated, these were necessarily limited because of the family members' needs to return to their own homes or because the member or her partner were transferred.

The women also expressed an awareness of missed opportunities and separation from family. Especially significant was the awareness that their children were not going to have a close relationship with family members, particularly grandparents. The words of one of the participants accurately captures the sentiments expressed by all the women:

Just that whole lack of her knowing her grandparents, because both sets of grandparents lives so many provinces away. It affects me and it affects my husband because with the phone calls and saying 'hi, Grandma', tell her one little thing about what happened in your day. It just doesn't cut it. We try and see each other, once a year and either they come here or we go there. One participant summed this sense of isolation in these words, "taking

people away from their support system, the family, is very difficult on the people.” However, whether the isolation was from family, friends or coworkers all of the women shared a sense of being apart, or separate from, significant people in their lives as a result of attempting to combine their roles as mother and members of the RCMP.

**Theme 3: Sense of Shift of Priorities.** Consistent in all the participants’ narrative was the awareness that with the birth of their children they experienced a change in priorities and for all participants this was, to varying degrees, unexpected for them. This sense of changing priorities was evident in their narratives in several areas including their awareness of needing to get home safely from their job, an unwillingness to take less desirable postings in order to further their careers at the expense of their families, and having their children higher on their list of priorities than the Force.

Three of the women had joined the Force and become members thinking they would not have a family. For them the role of motherhood changed their perspective of their careers and their lives. One participant’s words expressed this particularly well:

I thought the Force was the ‘be all and end all’ of existence and couldn’t imagine having children. So in that way having children has been great.

The Force is, now, not the ‘be all and end all’ of existence. Your children, your family are the focus. It’s been great because I’ve put the Force into perspective and I have something to go home to. The Force moved further



down.

For these women, having children changed their approach to their careers and integrating the roles as mothers in to their lives became their priority.

The women talked about how prior to having children, they felt assured of their priorities. However, once they had children they felt their priorities shift to accommodate the new role and responsibilities of motherhood. The women spoke of their awareness of the importance and endurance of children, in terms of the continuance of family or posterity, while careers are more transitory. This belief is well expressed in the words of one participant:

“Someday I am going to retire and the kids will still be there and then grand kids will be there and there is posterity there.” The participants came to see their eventual retirement from the Force as a termination of their relationship with this organization, while their relationship with their children represented their bridge to future generations.

The three participants who entered the Force with the expectation of combining career and motherhood also experienced an awareness of shifting priorities, although more subtly than the other participants. These women had anticipated that they would be able to combine their career and motherhood roles with relative ease. However, after the birth of their children they realized that they were no longer responsible only for themselves. Now they felt responsible for someone else, as their children relied on them. As one participant said:

When you have kids, they are the priority and when they need something,

you have to go and do that. Before, when it was just work and the house everything got done. Now, it's work, house, kids, and everything else that goes with it, swimming lessons, karate, you name it. They are responsibilities that are not necessarily for me, but for them. They are the priority now.

All six women found that, among other things, their career experiences impinged upon the way they viewed their motherhood roles. Several spoke of dealing with a situation or file that strongly reinforced for them the importance of family and the value of their children in their lives. One member expressed this in the following way:

Like I got smoked twice by a car. I got rear-ended one time and one time I got clipped on the side of road. . . If there's just you, it's not bad but when you got children, it's like you got more than yourself to watch out for, you gotta watch yourself for somebody else, . . . because they rely on you.

Another example of their shift in priorities was evident in the women's refusal to disrupt their family lives or take unnecessary personal risks in their career. For example, these women recognized that taking undesirable postings could adversely affect their family lives. They recognized the negative affect this may have on their children and were not prepared to place their children and themselves in this environment even though not doing so might negatively affect their career opportunities. In the words of one member:

I don't think promotion is that important anymore. If you are where you are and you are happy where you are and with the work you do. Be a Corporal in Surrey and be miserable or be a Constable in Courtney and be happy, I would rather be happy.

Several participants experienced this in other ways, as their fathers and/or husbands, who were also members of the Force, had also chosen to reject less desirable postings because of the hardship this would be on their family. The women who experienced this respected and appreciated their fathers or husbands for making family their priority, and attempted to make similar choices in their own lives. In the words of one member:

My father is a member, not your typical member. He's only a Corporal right now because he put his family first. He didn't move us to those crappy little towns that we could have lived in and suffered through. He always thought of us first. He's my role model.

The women also talked about their heightened sense of responsibility to make work-related choices that ensure they are able to come home to their children. This sentiment is encapsulated succinctly in the words of one participant:

It used to be just me, me, me and now it just can't be me. I got to think of the people at home, I've got to get home, you know. Like I said the chances that I would have taken before, maybe going to that domestic alone even though you're not suppose to, now it's I'm waiting for backup. I'm not going to ruin (pause), it's more than just my life now.

All the women in this study recognized the increased need for them to be safety conscious and that the result of not practicing safety measures would negatively affect not only themselves but their children. While they had always recognized that they needed to be safe for their husbands, there clearly was even more of an onus on them to be safe now that they were mothers. One participant spoke particularly concisely about this added responsibility to be there for her daughter:

He could cope without me, but when it's a child, it's a different story. I love my husband to death. I love my child to death but my child depends on me more than my husband ever does and it's just the different feeling between mother and child. It's no longer just me, I have to think of my family and make sure that I get home and I'm there for her, you know. She needs me.

All the women joined the RCMP with the intention of pursuing a long-term career. However, for each women, their career aspirations have become less of a priority relative to their motherhood role. While participants still see themselves pursuing a career and have hopes and desires of advancement within the ranks, their outlooks have changed as their priorities have changed. One participant spoke of this sense of shift in priorities, comparing when she joined the Force to her present outlook :

The RCMP is a good job and I work hard. But it's like when I went to Depot, my father says it's the Mounties. If they say, hit the wall, you hit the wall, and you ask the questions afterwards. Its not like that anymore. I ask

the questions before now, if it doesn't work out, I will deal with it.

All the participants were less willing to unquestioningly accept what the Force and their career offered them. They found themselves questioning the value of different aspects of their career, and making choices to ensure that they would be available to raise their children. While they attempted to "balance work and being a Mom" they all came to recognize that the "kids will always come first".

**Theme 4: Sense of Restricted Choices and Opportunities.** Throughout all participants narratives the theme of restricted choices and opportunities emerged. Each participant experienced restricted choices and opportunities during pregnancy as well as with the birth of their children. In becoming mothers they became aware that certain career choices and opportunities were no longer available to them. Furthermore, this sense of restricted choices continued to follow them throughout their career. This was both externally imposed, by the RCMP, and internally imposed, by their own decision making process.

All participants spoke of family planning and how they attempted to plan their pregnancies so as to have the least impact on their careers and their career goals, while still fitting within some reasonable time frame, in terms of their personal lives and family planning goals. For some, this was more successful than others as the timing of their pregnancies turned out to be difficult. The participants spoke of "wanting to wait till I had 3 years service", and "some solid experience under my belt". Others talked about how they "decided to start trying for a family now as it wasn't going to interfere with a career move". Another reflected on how

she “sat down and thought about how it would effect [her] career”. What emerged in each narrative was that the women had an awareness that motherhood, even in its earliest stages, would affect their careers in some manner. They attempted to plan their pregnancies so that it would best suit their own lives and goals while hopefully minimizing any negative affect on their careers.

Participants, who were on specialized sections prior to being pregnant, experienced having to “go back to GD for a while” when they returned from their maternity leave as a penalty for taking time off to have their children. General Duty is similar to walking the beat, and while the GD member is often described as the ‘backbone of the Force’ most view this posting as working in the trenches, and they aspire to leave this demanding, and often unglorified section, for a specialized sections. In these specialized sections participants found the shifts to be more regular and often these sections did not entail night work. This was easier on their daily living routine but also facilitated childcare. These sections were often plainclothes and hold certain freedoms and privileges that are not available to the GD member. In the words of one participant: “I got transferred to GI and I worked a straight shift Monday to Thursday, 10 hour shifts. Which was waaaay better because then at least one of us got to sleep at night and I was often there with the kids so that was really excellent and I think that probably saved us because those 12 hour shifts were just ridiculous and then with him (referring to her husband) working virtually straight nights we had no life.”

Participants viewed transfers to specialized sections as advancements,

although there is no rank promotion associated to these transfers. To return to the position of General Duty after having been away for maternity leave, left the participants feeling they were being 'demoted' because they decided to take time off to have children. They did not see their male colleagues experiencing the same treatment when they became fathers or they returned from leaves, emphasizing the inequity between women and men in the Force, and especially inequity in the treatment of women members who chose to combine motherhood with their police careers. In one participants words:

I think women get hit harder and get harder images especially around the day-care or taking leave from the Force for child issues or pregnant issues. . . I think, it's real. . it's negative. I've seen guys go back into the same section they left, nobody has an issue with it. But women come back and go to GD and have to prove themselves all over again.

Participants in this study sensed that as a mother they were not being "taken seriously" for different positions, specifically specialized sections. They sensed that they were "being over looked" in favor of members who did not have children or who did not appear to have child care responsibilities. The women in this study recognized that while they no longer saw certain sections as options for them, the Force would not seriously look at them for these specialized sections either. For example one participant shared her perceptions that:

There might be people that deny, deny, deny, and say there is no discrimination or differentiation, they're blind. Because don't tell me that

the young single male doesn't have more opportunities open to him than a married female with kids. I am not going to take the isolated post when my kids are finishing high school, or . . . the ERT position. . . , or the GI position or the drug position that I have to be away from home for weeks at a time. I'm not going to take them. That's that's my choice. But the Force also doesn't want me there because, my God, they have to accommodate when I can't go.

Some participants talked about being over looked for specialized sections, not just because they'd had a child but because the administration personnel expected that they would eventually have a second child. So in some respects they were double penalized for their decisions to become mothers. Those who weren't planning on having another child were especially frustrated by this implicit assumption. As one participant lamented:

Don't keep this thing over my head while I'm in that 'family' age group and we just have one kid. Its frustrating, very frustrating.

Their career progress was effectively limited by fear on the part of administration that if these women were placed on a section, and decided to become pregnant, it would some how negatively affect the section. The words of one participant accurately captures these sentiments:

You're always kinda behind the eight ball in proving that my family is over with now and I am fully 100% career. Well, you know, nobody knows those answers and should you actually have to answer to those questions?



I mean, men cannot have kids so why should it be such a huge issue for females for the advancement in their career. I understand why they discuss it as an issue but in the end it shouldn't stop a female from progression in her career and I firmly believe that it does.

Several participants who were married to regular members of the Force, noted that their husbands did not experience a similar restriction of choices or opportunities based on their fatherhood role. It appeared to the women in this study that men in general were not restricted or limited based on their parental status, thereby exacerbating their sense of injustice related to the impact on the career progress when they became mothers. As one participant said:

A member that wants to have a child can be on any section. They should not be stopped from advancing their career because they might have a child.

However, the women also acknowledged their own roles in restricting their career progress and in rejecting potential opportunities for advancement, based on the needs of their children. All the women in this study, when offered a position, looked at the many variables associated with the new opportunity including commuting times, community resources, access to recreational facilities, the demands of shift work and the availability of childcare with these new shifts. The reality of these two latter variables in particular caused the women in this study the most difficulty. "Good daycare", "finding child care that will take a child during the evenings and nights", "balancing home, family and shift work" were factors

women these consistently looked at when presented with new career opportunities or choices.

Several women also spoke of career aspiration that will not become a reality because they will not leave their children for the necessary training time requirements or because of the high flexibility demands placed on them as a result of the desired position. For example, one participant reflected on the difficult choice of having to reject a very desirable and deserved career opportunity, because of the needs of her family:

I think there are opportunities I could have taken and I can't now because

I'm a mother and the biggest one I could see, to tell you about would be the dog section. I was a senior female dog person, person on the list that could have gone, and would have gone, and then of course I had a baby.

And you have to go for six months in Alberta to train for a dog and there is no way I could leave my kids for six months. There is just no way.

Interestingly, while all the women in this study were conscious of restricted career choices and opportunities they now encounter as a result of their motherhood role, they have all come to terms with this reality in varying ways, based on their commitment to their families and the primacy of their mothering roles. The following quotes aptly capture and reflect these sentiments.

"So I made the conscious decision not to go any further in my career. If a promotion came up it would have to be no cost, and that limits me severely. But that is my choice." Another participant reflected on how she's "come to terms with

it. I think there's a balance, you decide what is the meaning of life. And if it's the kids it's an easy decision because then you don't want that position anyway."

Regardless of who the women saw as imposing the restrictions, the participants themselves or the implicit beliefs of the RCMP, the women in this study experienced a sense of restriction in their career opportunities based on their maternal roles. However, the participants had come to some sense of reconciliation with this restriction of choices and opportunities based on the primacy of their mothering roles.

**Theme 5: Struggle to Redefine Self.** In each narrative the struggle to redefine self was a common theme woven throughout each women's experience. This involved a process of adjusting to, and coming to terms with, the birth of their children and needing to integrate the role of mother and the demands of mother into their existing roles as police officers. Some women were expecting to combine these two roles, "my thoughts were always that I would have a career and be a mother, that I could combine the two." Others had "absolutely no intentions of getting married or having children and that was really adamant in my mind". Whatever their initial intentions, however, each woman talked about her struggle to define herself as a mother and a police officer.

The women in this study recognized they that did not fit into the traditional roles of either mother or career women making it more difficult to define themselves relative to other stay at home and employed mothers. For some this difference was heightened when they looked at the mothers of their children's

friends. As one participant shared:

They're stay at home Moms. They're into jogging. And I resent that sometimes because they have what I wish I had. But then I have a lot of benefits too and I love my family but I think I do a good job at what I do too. And I love the fact that I put bad guys in jail. . . And that, I'm a valued member of the community. So it's a trade-off.

The women also spoke of not fitting into the traditional role of the typical

Mountie. One participant describes this role confusion very succinctly:

You know, here is the image, single, stand-alone Mountie, braving the world, well, here's the mom, one kid in each hand, braving the world, there with the frying pan, that does not fit the image of the Mountie.

The members in this study sensed that they did not fit into either traditional scenario, that of mother or RCMP officer. As a result, they struggled to define themselves in both roles. This struggle was particularly salient during the year after their first child was born, when the demands of returning to work, arranging proper childcare, dealing with shift work and a lack of sleep were most challenging.

For all the women in this study, staying at home and giving up the Force was not an option. They wanted to work as police officers and be mothers. While this was a struggle of discovery and they had few role models to pattern themselves on, none of the women were prepared to leave their jobs. These women were aware that they would not "be completely fulfilled as a person" if

they only stayed at home. All talked about how they eventually found ways to make both roles work together, albeit with some significant compromises. This struggle is encapsulated in the words of the following participant:

I realized gee I can do this, I can be a mother but I need to go back to work. I never thought ever about quitting. I thought there's got to be a way I can work it out and I did.

For several of the participants the struggle to define themselves in the nontraditional role of female police officer was brought to the forefront by their own children. One participant recalled her experience with her child:

I remember when my son was in kindergarten, he came home all excited. He said, 'Oh Mommy, Mommy, we had a policeman in school today'. And I looked at him. I come home in a marked car, wearing a uniform with the gun from day one, and I said, 'what do you think I do'? And he says, 'well, I mean real policeman'.

The words of the following participant, who is married to a regular member of the RCMP, also reflects the ongoing need for these women to affirm who they are as mothers and police officers:

Like my three year old thinks its great that Dad's a policeman and I tell him, Mommy is a police woman too, you know. Today I tried on my uniform so he was wondering why I was wearing Daddy's stuff. No, no its not Daddy's stuff, its my stuff. Like I am still really proud of it.

Of commonality in the womens experience is the manner in which all the

women have reached out within their careers to express their new found sense of self. All spoke of work within the community, specifically the school system where they have enjoyed combining the role of mother with the role of police officer. It is as though they have found a niche within the police culture where they can be a police officer and yet, express who they are as mothers. Within this environment they sense they are building bridges to the future. Using their skills as police officers and their greater understanding of children these women feel they are able to express their sense of who they are while also reaching out to others. One participant reflected on this:

I think it's a benefit for the kids because they see me walk-in as a Mom and they see me walk-in as a police officer and it's really helped the school and the kids because there are certain kids who had personal problems that they wouldn't have talked to the police, but they'd talk to me.

All women spoke of their struggles to define themselves as mothers and police officers in terms of the benefits they reaped. They said such things as it "made me a better officer", and being "a better person". They talked about now having a "more rounded perspective" and about being "better at performing my duties" as a result of combining motherhood and career. Participants spoke of an awareness of having "more compassion" for the people they deal with, of wanting "to help this person emotionally". "The compassion that I now have, it's not only just children, it's for other people too". Through the narratives of these members came a sense of pride, excitement and respect for the new person they have

become as a consequence of becoming a mother. Participants spoke of the attributes, “skills” and “compassion” that they “brought to the Force” as a result of their motherhood and how these helped them be a better police officer.

The women also spoke of the strengths and abilities they acquired as part of their training and experience as police officers, which helped them in their roles as mothers. As one participant shared: “I think its part of the RCMP. They show you a way of thinking and a way of doing things and you can’t leave it behind. Its part of you.” The women felt the abilities and strengths from one role helped inform the other and were not exclusive. Each women felt a sense of accomplishment of having combined these two roles in the manner that they chose. All women in this study currently view themselves as “very competent”, “strong”, and “self-confident”. They all spoke of having redefined who they are, not singularly as mothers or as police officers, but who they are as women within the many roles in their lives.

In this chapter I have described the common themes within each woman’s narrative. These descriptions speak to the meaning the women have made of their experiences of combining motherhood with their careers in the RCMP. In Chapter Five I will look at how these themes relate to the available research literature and will discuss the implications of these findings for counselling women officers. Additionally, I will discuss possible avenues and topics for future research.

## Chapter V

### Discussion

As previously noted there is a minimal amount of research conducted on police women who are mothers. The purpose of this study was to gain some understanding of the meaning and experience of being a mother while having a policing career in the RCMP. This study was guided by the research question: **“What is the experience and meaning of combining motherhood and career for women who are regular members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?”** In this chapter I will focus on the significant research findings of this study, comparing them to the literature previously discussed in Chapter Two. Additionally, the implications for future research and for counselling practice will be discussed; specifically how the findings of this research may relate to police officers who combine career and motherhood roles.

#### Comparison to the Literature

There is an abundance of literature which looks at the female police officer's ability to perform the duties associated with being a police officer (Bartlett, 1977; Brown & Neville, 1996; Charles, 1982; Heidensohn, 1992; Linden, 1983; Linden & Minch, 1992; Sherman, 1975). However, there is a scarcity of literature relating to police women and how they combine their career and motherhood roles. The available literature will be compared and contrasted with the findings of this study.

Childcare was an issue that all women in this study found particularly



difficult. The requirement to do shift work, with their shifts often being 12 hours, proved to be particularly difficult. This tended to be especially difficult for the women when their children were very young, as many child care facilities did not take children under a year of age. Several researchers (Funk & McLean Hughes, 1997; Kralovansky-Wahl and Randal, 1996; Swiss & Walker, 1993; Wilk, 1986) noted similar difficulties in arranging adequate child care for the participants in their studies. In particular, in their study of women in the United States military, Kralovansky-Wahl and Randal noted the additional stress associated with finding child care to accommodate extended hour training sessions and work commitments away from home for the participants in their study. Flexibility was stressed as very important for child care for the women in my study, as their shifts were sometimes extended due to emergency or unexpected work related duties. Kralovansky-Wahl and Randal also speak to this difficulty for military women who must go on night training, extended training sessions, or foreign duty. While the United States military offers child care facilities on some of their military bases, the RCMP does not provide this service. Certainly, several women in this study mentioned the potential advantages of having child care facilities located in their detachments, similar to the services some banks and business offer their employees. In fact one participant in my study was approached by a senior administrator who suggested there be a steering committee started to look at the possibility of a daycare being placed in the new detachment that was being built. However, as there was insufficient member involvement for this project, it was later dropped.

These findings indicate that the Force maybe lagging behind other business and organizations when it comes to offering women options for child care.

Furthermore, given the experience of these women in the RCMP, there are indications that the Force's perspective on this issue is one in which the members must come up with their own options and plans. This placement of responsibility is reminiscent of the *police* woman vs. *police woman* dilemma that Martin (1979) discussed. If the women pursue child care options within the RCMP and draw attention to themselves as mothers, they risk being seen as *police women* with all the associated negative connotations. If, however, they do not draw attention to themselves by focusing on their needs for adequate child care they are more likely to be viewed as *police* women and experience the Forces' acceptance of them, at the expense of having their child care needs adequately met.

Additionally, participants in this study indicated that finding adequate and appropriate daycare was often very difficult especially when they were posted to small detachment areas and were geographically isolated (Lotz, 1984) from their families of origin. In smaller detachment areas, appropriate child care resources were very limited and difficult to find. Placing children in inappropriate and inferior childcare was frightening for these members, and many spoke of the stress and difficulty of this experience. Several of the women mentioned using all their policing skills and resources to screen potential child care providers. These women recognized that they wanted to do everything in their power to ensure that their child or children were well taken care of while they were at work. This concern is

echoed in the research literature on working mothers (Glass & Estes, 1996; Hunt & Hunt, 1987; Swiss & Walker, 1993; Tingey et al., 1996). Notably, in these studies researchers reported that many of their participants found child care difficult to find and often these women had concerns of leaving their children with inappropriate or inferior child care.

Hunt and Hunt (1987), and the Ministry of Women's Equality (1993) both underscore the common cultural misunderstanding that women should be principally responsible for child care, particularly with young children. While all participants in my study noted a high level of support from their husbands, several of the members indicated that it was predominantly their responsibility to arrange for childcare. This would suggest that many working mothers, including police officers, feel responsible for, and concerned about finding appropriate child care. It would appear that they are the ones who are delegated in their relationships and within the RCMP with the responsibility of ensuring that adequate child care is obtained for their children if they choose to continue their careers.

The women in this study also spoke of needing to prove themselves upon their return from maternity leave, unlike their male counterparts who had taken leaves for other reasons. Furthermore, they felt it necessary to prove to those around them, including co-workers and supervisors, that they were still very committed to their careers and capable of being both mothers and police officers. Police research (Jones, 1986; Heidensohn, 1992; Martin, 1979) indicates that police women often feel they must prove themselves as capable officers who are

able to do the job within this male dominated culture. However, as there is currently no research available which looks specifically at police officers who chose to become mothers, it is unknown if this is common to women in other police forces. Certainly for the women in this study, the need to reprove themselves indicates they perceived a cost associated with their decision to include family in their lives. Upon returning to work from maternity leave, the women felt they needed to spend extra energy and often time proving their loyalty to their careers and the Force. This has also been noted by Swiss and Walker (1993) in their study of mothers in other professions, specifically law, medicine and business, suggesting that this may not be specific to the police culture but perhaps is common in many traditionally male dominated professions. Interestingly, the participants in this study did not feel a similar need to prove themselves in other arenas of their lives outside of the Force (e.g. community activities, home life, sports). It occurred for them only in their professional context when they attempted to combine their roles as mothers and police officers. This implies their working environments, specifically the police culture, challenged the addition of this new role in these women's lives. In addition it implies that women who are a part of this male dominated profession may well pay an additional cost for taking time off, as they must once again prove their abilities, commitment and loyalty to their careers if they are to advance and be seen as *police* women (Martin, 1979).

Similar to the findings of Linden's (1983) study of Vancouver police officers and Jone's (1986) study of Medshire police officers, this study found the

participants very committed to their jobs. While Jones and Linden looked at women only and not specifically at mothers, this study found that the members were committed to making the combining of career and motherhood work. Of particular interest was the energy the members in this study expended in attempting to integrate the role of motherhood into their work lives. Many tried to plan or pick the "best time" in their careers to have children. Similar to women in other professions (Swiss & Walker, 1993; Tingey et al., 1996) the women in this study put a great deal of effort, thought, and sacrifice into their decision to combine motherhood and career. Though there were varying ways that each woman tried to combine these two roles, each member was highly committed to her career. Of interest, four of the six women were married to male members of the RCMP. Several women reflected on how their spouses were not questioned, nor was it implied, that they would be less committed to their careers as a result of taking on the role of "father." Yet the women felt that they needed to reprove themselves as committed to their careers upon their return to work once they became "mothers". Although women in Canada are suppose to have equal opportunities to pursue and accomplish their professional goals as men, and according to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms should not be limited by, or judged for, their desire to have a family - a double standard may still exist within the RCMP, which makes it more difficult for women to successfully combine their roles as mother and officers.

It also seems important to note the sense of isolation the women reported

experiencing within the Force in general, and more specific to this study, as mothers. Participants spoke of not having the opportunity to talk and connect with other female members on issues related to motherhood, uniform and Force policies. As noted in Chapter Four, they experienced being the "first female in the detachment," "being the only female member on the watch," or the "only woman on the section." This sense of isolation was also noted in the research studies of Martin (1979; 1980), who looked at the women police officers of the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. Her participants talked about being the 'token' woman or ethnic member. Given the date of Martin's studies, which was twenty years ago, it would appear that women are continuing to experience separation and isolation even though the RCMP has attempted during the past decade to increase the number of women within the ranks (McManus, 1988).

This separation or isolation from other women was heightened for many of the members in my study because they had enjoyed the camaraderie of their troop mates while in training. However, upon graduation many found themselves with no other women members close by. Upon their entry into motherhood this sense of isolation further compounded as there were very few, if any, women police officers who were mothers in their detachments. As such the members found themselves forming alliances with office stenographers, dispatchers, and clerks who were also trying to juggle their roles of motherhood and career.

Additionally, several of the women in this study noted the difficulty in finding a mentor within the Force. As Gilligan (1982) notes, women often define

themselves through the relationships they are involved in and these relationships can give them strength. It is this 'connectedness' that helps to give significance to women's social and professional roles. A mentoring relationship, as noted in the literature (Betz & O'Connell, 1997; Jeruchim & Shapiro, 1992; Ragins & Cotton, 1991; Wilk, 1986), can be particularly empowering for women, and may be very beneficial for career advancement. Participants in this study noted how many of their male colleagues had mentors in the senior ranks, and said that they wished they too could experience the same type of mentoring relationship. These findings suggest that women's career advancement in the RCMP may be hindered by the lack of mentoring opportunities - a reality that may be compounded by the demands of motherhood.

All the women in this study also noted the important role their spouse played in their ability to combine their career and motherhood roles and responsibilities. This finding is consistent with the research literature (Swiss & Walker, 1993). Most notable in the research literature is the importance of having a supportive spouse. The women in the Swiss and Walker study indicate that the successful combination of the two roles was greatly enhanced if they had a supportive spouse. The women in my study supported this view and emphasized that they found it a necessity to have a supportive spouse. This implies that if mothers who are employed in traditionally male dominated professions, are to be successful in the combining of these two roles, having a spouse who is supportive of their aspirations may be especially critical. Additionally, it was noted by those

women whose husbands were members or applicants, that it was particularly beneficial to have a partner who understood the demands of the job. The women noted that as they were residing geographically apart from their families of origin, their husbands were often the major source of support for them. While the support their husbands gave varied on an individual basis, the women noted that they perceived their husbands' support to be an affirmation of their career aspirations as well as an affirmation of their motherhood aspirations. This support and affirmation was important to the women as it validated their own beliefs, desires, and goals of being both mothers and police officers. Furthermore, they felt that this support was critical to having both a career and motherhood, or 'having it all' (Swiss & Walker, 1993).

The findings of this study support current research (Ministry of Women's Equality, 1993) which suggests that the social environment is placing unrealistic expectations upon the shoulders of women. The participants in this study appeared to be very capable, competent, and determined women who were attempting to juggle the multiple roles of their lives. These women found this juggling act challenging, not because of their inability to balance their lives, but because of the social environment and cultural expectations of the police milieu. In order to juggle the multiplicity of roles in their lives, it would appear that women need greater support from not only their families, but also the social consciousness. Social consciousness refers to such issues and services as social and structural support for mother's choices to work outside the home, job flexibility, and



adequate child care (Heymann, 1994; Ministry of Women's Equality; Swiss & Walker, 1993). Given the relocation policy of members which often takes them away from their families of origin; difficulty finding child care for young children for 12 hour shifts, being placed on General Duty upon their return from maternity leave with the resulting 12 hour shifts; and night shifts; and the need to reprove themselves by virtue of them becoming mothers, it would appear that the social consciousness within the RCMP does not adequately support women members who chose to become mothers.

Of interest, given the aforementioned, is the finding that all the members in this study praised the comprehensive benefit packages available to them as new mothers (RCMP, 1997). They perceived the leave package to be very generous. They also made note of the job sharing option. However, they were disappointed at the rigidity of the requirements in order to be able to take advantage of this employment option. It was also interesting to note the emphasis that participants placed on their feelings of being burdens to their colleagues when they were on light duties and on maternity leave. They noted that fellow officers were forced to carry an additional work load as a result of their absence on the road. All expressed distress at this inequality and felt the Force needed to address this as part of the administration maternity package. They stated they felt their pregnancies and resulting leaves penalized their co-workers. Even though they spoke of attempting to lessen the impact on their fellow co-workers, all stated their co-workers were very supportive of their pregnancies. However, in exploring this

further and relating it to the research available from other professions (Ministry of Women's Equality, 1993; Swiss & Walker, 1993), one might question how this additional workload might adversely affect the working relationships for women who elect to become pregnant while in the Force.

It was apparent in this study that members had spent some energy exploring the options to resolve this dilemma. Suggestions by participants included back filling their position or having members act as locum tenens such as those employed by doctors or clergy. The current practice of maternity leave benefits may well be a form of systemic discrimination. This inadvertent form of discrimination is often imbedded in policies or practices that appear neutral on the surface but have an adverse impact on a specific group of people for reasons that are not job related or required for the safe and efficient operation of the organization (Jones, 1986; Dessler, Cole, & Sutherland, 1999). No participant in this study expressed the belief that they were discriminated against. In fact, they attempted to dispel any such idea. However, given the definition of systemic discrimination and the realities faced by women in this study, it may well be that women in the RCMP who chose to become mothers may be subject to this type of inadvertent form of discrimination.

Finally, each member in this study noted a shift in her priorities after having children. All the women experienced a changed in how they prioritized the roles in their lives after the birth of their children. Some participants had believed they would not become mothers and others always knew they would be mothers, but all

knew they were committed to having a career as police officers. Regardless of their original beliefs about motherhood all the women in this study welcomed and rejoiced in the birth of their children. With this addition to their lives the women noted a change in focus. This sense of changing priorities was evident specifically in their awareness of needing to get home safely from their job, in their unwillingness to take less desirable postings in order to further their careers at the expense of their families, and in placing their children higher on their list of priorities than the Force.

This sense of changing priorities is alluded to in the police literature (Jones, 1986; Heidensohn, 1992; Weisheit, 1987) as a possible outcome of motherhood and is specifically noted in literature which has looked at the phenomena of professional women who become mothers (Ministry of Women's Equality, 1993; Swiss & Walker, 1993; Tingey et al., 1996). Women in other professions have made adjustments in their lives which highlight their changing priorities. These include hiring live in nannies, taking an extended leave of absence from work, working from home, working part-time, and not pursuing promotion until their children are older.

In summary research has indicated, and this study supports these findings, that women attempt to balance the roles of motherhood and career in a manner that will allow them to have both (Swiss & Walker, 1993; Tingey et al., 1996). The women in this study were not prepared to give up either of their roles as each were important to them. Thus it becomes even more important to have in place

support systems which facilitate the combination of these roles.

### **Implications for Future Research**

As indicated previously, there is very little research which looks at police women who have combined motherhood with their policing career. Within the RCMP, there is currently no such research. Therefore, this initial study reveals some areas which may help focus future researchers.

The sample in this study was respectfully small due to limited time and the resources of the researcher. While the themes identified were reflective of the experiences of the six women in this study, use of a larger sample in subsequent studies will help to ensure a more complete explication of all common themes. A larger and more diverse sample will help to further refine the themes that are common for women RCMP officers who are attempting to combine motherhood and career roles, as well as identifying important differences.

The participants in this study were all women members of the RCMP who were married. The results may not apply to single and/or lesbian members who elect to have children. This study also did not access the voice of the male partners. All the women in this study spoke of the important role their spouse played in their being able to combine motherhood with their careers. Therefore, future research may look at the dual career couple and the role that each partner plays in the combining of career and parenthood. Also four of the six participants were married to fellow members of the RCMP. This is consistent with previous findings (Laronde, cited in Linden & Minch, 1992) in which twelve of fourteen

female members were dating male members and five of seven married female members had husbands who were members. Given the number of women regular members of the RCMP who are married to male members of the RCMP, it may be important to study this group of dual career police parents.

As all the participants in this study were members of the RCMP and the RCMP, as previously mentioned, is notably different from most police forces. The members all spoke of being geographically distant from their families and of the sense of isolation they felt as a result of not having family support and contact with grandparents, siblings, aunts, cousins, etc. Provincial and city police forces tend to hire and post officers geographically closer to their families of origin due to the type of policing and jurisdiction that is involved. They may also have a different benefit package. Therefore, women officers in these police forces may encounter different experiences when attempting to combine motherhood with their policing careers. It will be important to conduct further research with other police forces to see the similarities and differences in the experiences of women officers from other forces.

Finally, in this research study the women chose to combine motherhood with their policing careers. However, several of the participants spoke of members they knew who had chosen to leave the Force to become full time moms. It may be important to look further into this phenomena in which women who are mothers, have elected to leave their police careers in the RCMP and to explore the reasons for their leaving. While several participants suggested these women left because of

conflict between their mothering and career roles, it is important to explore with these ex-police officers their reasons for leaving their policing careers.

### **Implications for Counselling Practice.**

As more women enter into non-traditional careers and attempt to combine their careers with motherhood, it will be important for the counselling profession to become aware of the issues these women face. Therefore, the findings of this study are pertinent to the professional counsellor who may find these women seeking their professional services.

It is important for all counsellors to examine and be aware of their own biases, values, and pre-conceived ideas about human behavior. If counsellors are not aware of these personal beliefs there is the potential for counsellors to be counterproductive or ineffective. This is particularly pertinent when counsellors are counselling individuals from different cultural backgrounds. As previously noted, the police culture is significantly different from most working environments and police officers, specifically the RCMP, are indoctrinated into a profession which places demands on their employees that far exceeds those placed upon employees in non-paramilitary places of employment. Counsellors need to be familiar with the police culture as it will facilitate their understanding of client concerns and issues. Furthermore, counsellors should be cognizant that police officers are generally reluctant to seek help as the police culture looks unfavorably upon members who can not handle their own problems. Of interest, one study participant noted that early in her career she would have been reluctant to seek help if she had needed it.

However, she would now be less reluctant as she is more familiar with the availability of the resources and the RCMP, in general are beginning to view help seeking more positively. It would appear from this study as well as the research literature (Ebart, 1986; Jones, 1995) that the skepticism of the helping profession may be abating somewhat, although counsellors need to be aware of this cultural nuance.

All participants in this study experienced a sense of isolation. Counsellors who chose to work with mothers who are police officers or police women who are considering becoming a mothers, need to be aware of the isolation these women may experience in their roles as mother within the police environment. Often mothers receive support for this transition from other mothers and members of their family. For women in the RCMP this type of support may not be as readily available. The members in this study found themselves isolated from these usual sources of support. They spoke of being geographically removed from their families and they also noted that often they were the only female member or mother in the detachment. Given the police cultures' hesitation to associate outside of police circles it may be increasingly difficult for the mother, who is a police officer, to find support. Cormier and Hackney (cited in Schlossberg, Waters, & Goodman, 1995) underscore the importance of assisting clients in transition with establishing a support group. Therefore, it may be important for counsellor to focus on building these support networks as they begin counselling RCMP officers who have made the transition to motherhood. These avenues of support may

include becoming involved in organizations oriented to women police officers such as the International Association of Women Police (IAWP). Women officers may also need to be encouraged to look to other professions for mentors, including sheriffs, probation officers, and military personnel.

In this study police service ranged from 5 years to 20 years, with the average being 10.5 years of service. Using Riede's (1986) career development and police officer adjustment stages the participants in this study were either in the adolescent or established stage of their career development.

The adolescent officer stage of development is characterized by the officer attempting to identify with what he [or she] believes to be the roles of a very capable officer . . . [while] in the established stage the officer has matured to a level where he [or she] is accepting of the duties and limitations of a police officer ( p. 182).

The concept of career development as well as women's adjustment to their role as a police officer may be important aspects when looking at the transition that women police officers make as they become mothers. All participants spoke of the effect becoming a mother had on their career aspirations within the Force.

Additionally, all spoke of their struggles to redefine who they were as mothers and as police officers. It may be helpful for counsellors to be cognizant of each clients stage of career development when making this personal and professional transition.

Several researchers (Levinson, 1996; Swiss & Walker, 1996) noted in their studies the sense of struggle to redefine self and the sense of changing priorities



that the women in this study experienced. Career women who become mothers appear to experience what Gallos (1989) and Levinson call 'split dreams'. Gallos describes this as "a realistic and adaptive response to womens's developmental needs, shifting societal expectations, changing job opportunities and the realities of pregnancy and children" (p. 125).

These theorists also note the limitations of theories proposed for career counselling based on studies with men. Women may well have distinctive career developmental needs. Gallos (1989) further states that if we compare women's career development to men's career development we may do them a disservice as research has shown that "women do not have less career motivation as much as a different perspective towards what career means to them" (p. 125).

Given this variance between women and men's career development it will be important for the professional counsellor not to assume police women, as a result of their non-traditional career, will follow the same career development path as men. Counsellors who are cognizant of women's different career development and their adaptive process (Gallos, 1989; Levinson, 1996) in attempting to redefine themselves and their priorities can help the police woman explore her feelings and her process. As a counsellor it may be advantageous to provide information and education which may highlight for these women that they have no control over societies views, yet they can develop a power over their own reaction to these views. This may be empowering for these women.

Career costs associated with electing to be a mother are highlighted in the

research literature (Faver, 1984; 1997). In this study the women experienced this phenomena in their needing to prove themselves again, and their restricted choices of transfers as well as career opportunities. These career costs may be particularly frustrating for women who seek professional help for this personal and career transition. It will be important for the counsellor to be aware of this possible issue and facilitate women through this experience. To help clients resolve this salient issue counsellors may help clients explore their definition of self-concept and self identity, as well as explore career expectations and goals.

Child care was stressed by all the women of this study as a significant concern to them. This is echoed in the research literature (Glass & Estes, 1996; Harrell & Ridley, 1975; Swiss & Walker, 1993, Tingey et al, 1996; Willie, 1997). Given that satisfaction with child care arrangements is positively correlated with a women's work satisfaction (Harrell & Ridley,) child care is an important aspect which needs to be addressed with career women who are seeking help in making the transition to motherhood. As noted by Funk and Hughes McLean (1997), when child care is provided under the following circumstances: by non-relatives, for young children, out of the home environment, or needs to be flexible to accommodate shift work, women experience a greater level of stress and child care problems. This awareness of child care needs and concerns should be brought into the counselling environment and the women supported through these issues. Additionally, Willie (1997) notes the important role of education to women regarding child care options and issues relating to mother-infant separation and

substitute care. These are areas in which counsellors can assist and educate their clients. Within all this is the benefit which women and employers will receive when each mother's ability to function in the workforce is enhanced by her knowledge that her children's needs are being adequately met.

### **Summary**

Motherhood is often an important experience in women's lives and as such, is a significant focus of research. The participants in this study appear to have found ways to combine their roles as mothers and police officers and have been able to develop a perspective of this experience. With time these members have been able to redefine themselves as mothers and as officers, while acknowledging the struggles which they experienced after the birth of their children. They expressed appreciation for the members before them, who 'blazed the way', and concern for the members to follow. All spoke of hope that changes will occur which may improve the process for other the members of the RCMP in the future.

Through their openness, forthrightness and willingness to risk trusting a researcher, these members have provided an insight into their experience of combining motherhood with a policing career. It is hoped that the exploration of police women's experiences in the RCMP and other police forces continues. It is with continued exploration and research that we will be able to come to an understanding and appreciation of the lives and realities of women in this and other traditionally male careers.

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## **Appendix B Orienting Statement**

The following statement will be read by the researcher to all participants at the beginning of the first interview.

I am interested in learning about your experience as a female member of the RCMP who has chosen to combine motherhood with your career in the Force. There has been very little research completed in the area of female police officers who have made this decision. The main question I am asking you is:

**What is the experience and meaning of combining motherhood and career for women who are regular members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?** During the interview I may ask you for more information or to clarify something that you have said in order that I may understand your experience. It is important that you understand that you are in no way obligated to answer or discuss anything you do not feel comfortable with.

The decision to combine motherhood and a career is a very important decision in a woman's life. For some, there are many things to be considered, while for others it was an easy decision with few considerations. Please take your time to reflect on and answer this question. It may be helpful to think of this experience as a story with a beginning- perhaps when you first made the decision to have children while in the Force; a middle-when you were pregnant and raising your child/children; and an end-when you came to understand your experience and its impact on you as a police officer and as a woman. Do you have any questions before we begin?

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions

#### General research question:

**What is the experience and meaning of combining motherhood and career for women who are regular members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police?**

#### Additional interview questions:

1. Looking back to when you first decided that you wanted to combine motherhood with your career as a police officer, can you tell me a story that involves this awareness?
2. What has it been like for you trying to combine motherhood and policing?
3. What do you feel the effect has been on your career?
4. Has your sense of self been effected as a result of attempting to integrate family and career?
5. Has there been support for this decision from you family, friends and partner?
6. What has been most helpful to you in trying to combine motherhood with your role as an officer in the RCMP?
7. What has been most challenging to you in trying to combine motherhood with your role as an officer in the RCMP?